

ISAIAH

Chapter 58

True and False Fasting

“Cry aloud; do not hold back; lift up your voice like a trumpet; declare to my people their transgression, to the house of Jacob their sins. 2 Yet they seek me daily and delight to know my ways, as if they were a nation that did righteousness and did not forsake the judgment of their God; they ask of me righteous judgments; they delight to draw near to God. 3 ‘Why have we fasted, and you see it not? Why have we humbled ourselves, and you take no knowledge of it?’ Behold, in the day of your fast you seek your own pleasure and oppress all your workers. 4 Behold, you fast only to quarrel and to fight and to hit with a wicked fist. Fasting like yours this day will not make your voice to be heard on high. 5 Is such the fast that I choose, a day for a person to humble himself? Is it to bow down his head like a reed, and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him? Will you call this a fast, and a day acceptable to the LORD? 6 “Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the straps of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke? 7 Is it not to share your bread with the hungry and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover him, and not to hide yourself from your own flesh? 8 Then shall your light break forth like the dawn, and your healing shall spring up speedily; your righteousness shall go before you; the glory of the LORD shall be your rear guard. 9 Then you shall call, and the LORD will answer; you shall cry, and he will say, ‘Here I am.’ If you take away the yoke from your midst, the pointing of the finger, and speaking wickedness, 10 if you pour yourself out for the hungry and satisfy the desire of the afflicted, then shall your light rise in the darkness and your gloom be as the noonday. 11 And the LORD will guide you continually and satisfy your desire in scorched places and make your bones strong; and you shall be like a watered garden, like a spring of water, whose waters do not fail. 12 And your ancient ruins shall be rebuilt; you shall raise up the foundations of many generations; you shall be called the repairer of the breach, the restorer of streets to dwell in. 13 “If you turn back your foot from the Sabbath, from doing your pleasure on my holy day, and call the Sabbath a delight and the holy day of the LORD honorable; if you honor it, not going your own ways, or seeking your own pleasure, or talking idly; 14 then you shall take delight in the LORD, and I will make you ride on the heights of the earth; I will feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father, for the mouth of the LORD has spoken.”

Chs 58–59 Left to their own devices, all sons and daughters of Adam cannot help themselves from rushing headlong down “the way ... that leads to destruction” (Mt 7:13). If there is to be a way to glory, God must provide it. And Isaiah says He did. The way to glory is constructed on the solid roadbed of God’s redemptive mercy (Is 40–48). The Servant, His own Son, paid for our sins by suffering and dying in our stead (chs 49–57). The way to glory, open to all who repent and receive the sacrifice of atonement for their sins, stretches far into the future. It leads to vistas under “new heavens” and on “a new earth” (65:17; 66:22). It brings into view “the glory that is to be revealed” after “the sufferings of this present time” have passed (Rm 8:18). The reader may be puzzled to find the promises of a glorious future, recorded in the closing chs of Is, interspersed with denunciations of sin and threats of judgment. Condemnation of ungodly behavior may seem out of place amidst assurances of salvation. However, God knows how necessary the unremitting preaching of Law and Gospel is because the human “heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick” (Jer 17:9). Two facts are stressed: it is an insult to God’s redemptive grace if people only pretend to honor Him, and God’s goodness cannot be trampled. Not

peace but outer darkness and gnashing of teeth await those who follow the impulses of their wicked heart. (TLSB)

Ch 58 The prophet renounces hypocritical observance of two religious rites (fasting and praying, while they sneer at His command not to exploit their fellowmen) and insincere Sabbath observance (vv 13–14). (TLSB)

Chapter 58 moves away from the more pointed discussions regarding foreigners and eunuchs (56:1–8), unfaithful leaders (56:9–12), the Righteous One and his followers (57:1–2), idolatrous Israelites (57:3–13a), and the contrast between the contrite and the condemned (57:13b–21). Isaiah 58 addresses the apostates in more general terms. Outwardly observing religious fasts but internally having no heart for those in need (cf. 1:10–20), they foreshadow the Pharisees, with their hypocritical fasts (cf. Mt 6:16–18; 23:1–7; Lk 18:11–12). Just like the apostates (Is 58:6), the Pharisees fasted for show while placing heavy burdens upon others (e.g., Mt 23:4). While the Father sent Jesus to free people from this abuse (e.g., Matthew 23), in Isaiah 58 the divine commission is directed toward Isaiah, who is commanded to assist the persecuted remnant by speaking “with [your] throat” and “like a trumpet” (Is 58:1). (CC)

58:1 *voice like a trumpet*. God’s powerful voice is compared to a trumpet blast at Mount Sinai (see Ex 19:19; 20:18–19). (CSB)

sins. From all outward appearance, they were a righteous nation. No doubt that meant that they observed the worship regulations, including fasting, outline in the Law of Moses, and they observed the Sabbath. But on the other hand, God described them as rebellious and sinful and their worship as unacceptable. (PBC)

“Go down and show how shamefully they live, even though their appearance is most attractive.” (Luther)

58:2 *seek me daily*. Cf. the frequent sacrifices of 1:11. (CSB)

Not only do they forsake the commandments of God and all His ceremonies, but they want this too, that while they keep their own ceremonies intact, they would like to fight with Me. In their affliction they murmur against Me like people innocently afflicted. They want to know why I act the way I do.” So “wisdom is justified by her children” (Matt. 11:19), and (Ps. 51:4) says, “So that Thou art justified in Thy sentence.” They want to know the will of God, why God does thus and so, and they want to argue with God. “They want to know the reason why I do not justify them, why I condemn and blame them, because they say, ‘Why do You afflict me, since I fast twice on the Sabbath and give the tithe?’ ” (cf. Luke 18:12). (Luther)

My ways. From the human perspective, Israel believes that they are doing what the Lord asked. They wonder why He is not acknowledging their actions. But like other abuses mentioned, the people are going through the actions while begrudging the Lord’s imposition on their lives. (TLSB)

delight to draw near God. The same hypocrisy is mentioned in 29:13. (CSB)

Israel may have a right relationship with the Lord only if they have a right relationship with one another. When God’s people claim to love Him but disregard their neighbor, both tables of the Law are broken. (TLSB)

58:3 *fasted*. See v. 6; a time of self-denial and repentance for sin. After the fall of Jerusalem, the number of fast days increased. (CSB)

The specific fast Yahweh refers to is not identified. It seems connected to the Day of Atonement (Lev 16:29), though sometimes people fasted spontaneously in repentance upon hearing bad news (1 Ki 21:27; 2 Chr 20:3), when locusts attacked (Joel 1:14; 2:15), or when oppressed by enemies (1 Sam 7:3–6). Individual Israelites went without food when someone became sick (e.g., 2 Sam 12:15–23) or died (e.g., 1 Sam 31:13). David even fasted for his enemies (Ps 35:13). After the exile, Zechariah records that fasting took place on the anniversary of Jerusalem’s destruction (Zech 7:3; 8:19). (CC)

The real motive for fasting becomes apparent through the questions in this verse. When pious actions do not leverage more of God’s blessings, the apostates begin to resent him. This reveals that they are role-playing righteousness. Their faith is fake. (CC)

humbled ourselves. Cf. 2Ch 7:14; 1Ki 21:29. (CSB)

seek your own pleasure. Note the same attitude in Mal 3:14; cf. Lk 18:12. (CSB)

Regardless of what prompted the fast, shouldn’t it move Yahweh to take note? “You have said, ‘It is futile to serve God. What unjust gain [did we acquire] because we kept his keeping [requirements] and because we walked about in mourning before Yahweh of hosts?’ ” (Mal 3:14). The goal of our worship can easily become the attempt to get God to notice us and respond with more of his gifts. Worship may become instrumental, a means to a greater end: creaturely comfort. (CC)

Behold. In the second half of 58:3 Yahweh gives his assessment of the problem, which is signaled with “behold” (וַיַּבְהִי־עֵינַי). Personal pleasure is central, and oppressing people is routine. Yahweh will respond further to the complaint in 58:2–3a: (1) fasting is coupled with violence, so prayers are not heard (58:4); (2) fasting needs to manifest itself in care for the poor and needy (58:6–10). (CC)

Samuel declared to Saul, “To listen [to Yahweh’s voice] is better than sacrifice; to hearken [is better] than the fat of rams” (1 Sam 15:22). In the same S/spirit, Isaiah declares that religious observances cannot substitute for moral integrity (cf. Jeremiah 7; Amos 5:21–24; Micah 6:6–8; Psalm 15). If we refuse to let God create in us “a clean heart” and renew within us “a right spirit” (Ps 51:12 [ET 51:10]), our putative acts of worship and fasting actually harden our hearts toward our neighbor as they deaden us to the weightier matters of justice, mercy, and faith (cf. Mt 23:23). (CC)

in the day of your fast – Here you see hypocrisy and gross sins simultaneously joined together. Here He defines what a true fast is, and He appears so harsh as if He were condemning external fasting. But He rejects fasting because it wants to become a cover to blind our eyes so that we may not see our sins. (Luther)

your own pleasure. What was to be an occasion for self-denial became an opportunity for self-advancement at the expense of others. (TLSB)

It is easy for meaningful rituals to erode into empty acts. Consider the United States of America, a nation, in large part, founded upon belief in the God of the Bible. Yet, over time, many rituals have lost their significance. The president is sworn into office by placing his hand on the Bible, Congress opens sessions with prayer, money has stamped on it “In God We Trust,” and the Supreme Court comes to order after the call “God bless the United States and this honorable court” in a building whose South Wall Frieze depicts Moses holding the Ten Commandments. (CC)

It is easy to say all the right things and, at the same time, attempt to use God to achieve our own personal goals. Prayer, worship, and acts of service become devices, not to glorify God and serve our neighbor, but to serve our own ends. But manipulating God to supply what we want is a veiled form of idolatry. We are

in the center; God is not. In this configuration our “unanswered prayers are not evidence of God’s inattentiveness but of human sin.” (CC)

oppress all your workers. See 3:14–15; 10:2. (CSB)

When people claim to love God but disregard their neighbor, both tables of the Law fall. Neither the Word nor the Sacraments, or in Isaiah’s case, fasting, grant a right standing before God *ex opere operato* (merely by doing them), that is, going through the motions of attending church but without faith in Jesus Christ. God condemns those who only attend to external actions. “Although they fast, I am not listening to their cry; though they offer up burnt offering and grain offering, I am not favoring them. For with the sword, with famine, and with disease I am finishing them off” (Jer 14:12). (CC)

While they are publicly engaged in holy exercises, at home the laborer who is working for them is slaving under heavy burdens and is being oppressed. Heavy social wrong-doings are being tolerated. (Leupold)

58:4 *fast...quarrel...fight* – Fasting only put them in an ugly mood. (TLSB)

Religious fasting that ends up with people fighting? What brought this about? The community was disintegrating because some were fasting rather than facing the sticky issues of their own selfishness and oppression. What do manipulative fasting and malevolent fighting have in common? Both are the result of worship that is anthropocentric. If worship converges on me, then relationships will follow the same strategy. “I am only in this relationship for what I can get out of it, not what I can give.” When devotion to Yahweh is driven by this attitude, it distorts our fellowship with others as well. (CC)

Here He says that sins and external morals call for no love and mercy; they only tyrannize. Thus every hypocrite, most zealous for his own works, is the worst kind of tyrant and the most poisonous snake, and so they can hide their poison under an appearance of godliness, but meanwhile they are burning with zeal for revenge and for doing evil. There is nothing but to pass judgment, to disparage, and to do injury even in the best things. Meanwhile they say, “I am not fighting with the brothers, since I am not doing this in the abstract and in an ungodly manner, but I desire to offer obedience to God, and I do this for the sake of righteousness and with a proper zeal and concern for peace.” Thus in all estates, in business, government, or religion, they can cover up their sins either by a show of fasting or at least by counterfeit words. (Luther)

to be heard on high. Hypocritical religious activity is a hindrance to prayer (see 1:15; 59:2). (CSB)

Whereas the fast in Nineveh resulted from repentant belief in the preached Word and brought about Yahweh’s gracious intervention (Jonah 3), this fast in Isaiah 58 only accomplished more community fragmentation and pain. The only thing that matters is economic profit. (CC)

Their voice was not heard on high (58:4). Yahweh refuses to listen to hypocritical prayers (cf. 59:2). All attempts to circumvent the way of justice and righteousness, no matter what rituals (divine or human) are used, are doomed to fail. They cannot masquerade for true faith. God intends his ordained liturgical rites to manifest themselves in personal righteousness, social justice, and spiritual joy, all to his own glory. (CC)

58:5 A new section begins here and continues through 58:12. Since the people’s voice cannot be heard in heaven (58:4), Yahweh comes down, breaking the barrier to pose five questions (58:5–7). Each question begins with an interrogative (⌈-), and each confronts the sin of privatization, where faith is disconnected from public responsibilities. “Those people aren’t my problem!” (CC)

bow down. Cf Mt 6:1, 16–18. (TLSB)

like a reed. A sign of weakness and humility. (CSB)

Bent by wind and weight, not sincerity. (TLSB)

sackcloth and ashes. Cf. 1Ki 21:27; Jnh 3:5–8. (CSB)

Sackcloth denotes worthless clothing, while *ashes* refers to vile places and a reclining in an inferior place which is not furnished with carpets. (Luther)

acceptable. A term often applied to sacrifices (see 56:7; 60:7; Lev 1:3). (CSB)

The “day of Yahweh’s favor” (Is 58:5) is like his “year of favor,” which is announced by his Anointed Servant (61:2), who in the book of Isaiah is also called the Suffering Servant and the Righteous One. These texts foreshadow Christ’s ministry. He performs the perfect fast (Mt 4:1–11; Lk 4:1–13). His obedience to the point of death (Is 53:8–9; Phil 2:8) brings perfect freedom from all oppression (Lk 4:16–21; Jn 8:36). (CC)

58:6 The Lord calls for acts of justice and righteousness, rather than lip service. Religious observances cannot substitute for moral integrity (cf Ps 15; Mi 6:6–8). Apart from a love toward neighbor, worship and fasting deadens people to the weightier matters of justice (cf Mt 23:23). (TLSB)

“ ‘Because of the destruction of the afflicted ones and the groaning of the needy ones, now I will arise,’ says Yahweh” (Ps 12:6 [ET 12:5]). In Is 58:1–5 Yahweh points out the people’s hypocrisy; in 58:6–7 he arises to define a godly fast. It includes a community marked by fair play, that meets individual needs, and that fosters domestic harmony. It breaks *every* yoke. This is the opposite of a system that grants access to food and lodging based upon qualifications like pedigree, education, or more blatantly, race. Such a structure is arranged to exclude those who don’t “fit,” and it therefore denies Yahweh’s plan of hospitality and hope for *all*. Preuss observes that in texts that are critical of fasting, like Isaiah 58, “the basic criticism is that one’s demeanor toward God (“fasting”) should be commensurate with one’s demeanor toward one’s fellow human beings, and that social action constitutes an expression of true fasting.” Outward religious activity is to go hand in hand with love for our neighbor (cf. James 1:27). (CC)

wickedness. During the siege of Jerusalem, Hebrew slaves were rightly released—only to be reclaimed by their masters (see Jer 34:8–11). (CSB)

Yet it is easier to abstain from food than provide labor-intensive assistance for the needy. Like many employers, these Israelites assumed that the relationship with their workers gave them the right to treat them like animals. People had become a commodity; they were bought and sold, owned and used and abused, then thrown away. “So what if we step on a few folks? They are, after all, expendable. We always expect some collateral damage.” (CC)

Yahweh will not sit idly by while his faithful remnant suffers. He judges the apostates who give lip service to those who are resourceless and without advocates. Yahweh freely gives gifts (e.g., Mt 5:45) and empowers his people to do the same. Luther comments: “If you want to fast, put on mercy and love for the neighbor, so that you may do good to him.” (CC)

“Loosen the chains of wickedness” (Is 58:6). The rules for the manumission of enslaved fellow Hebrews are laid out by Moses (Ex 21:2–11; Lev 25:39–55; Deut 15:12–18). However, God’s laws of liberation were often ignored in order to retain slaves and land. (CC)

yoke. See v. 9; 9:4; 10:27, where the yoke imposed by Assyria is mentioned. (CSB)

oppressed. The rules of enslavement of fellow Israelites and their lands (Ex 21:2–11; Lv 25:39–55; Dt 15:12–18) were often abused in order to retain people as slaves and hold their lands. (TLSB)

Are the “chains,” “ropes,” and “yoke” in this verse literal or figurative? The ancient practice of slavery and the taking of captives often utilized these cruel physical restraints. Yet Yahweh does not only call for the abolition of literally binding people with these implements. In light of the concrete acts of mercy discussed in 58:6, the command is also to free others from evil entrapments and systems that enslave. This includes addiction; social, racial, sexual, and economic repression; human trafficking; tyrannical dehumanization; and any degrading treatment of people. The fast that is pleasing to Yahweh, then, consists of emancipating those shackled by wickedness and redeeming the captives. “Yahweh desires a fast which not only consists in an abstinence (from unrighteous deeds) but is also expressed in positive actions.” People are called to mimic this God who gives bread to the hungry (Ps 146:7). Yahweh “works justice for the orphan and the widow, and loves the sojourner, giving him food and clothing” (Deut 10:18). We can do no less. (CC)

58:7 *share your bread...cover*.† The outward evidence of genuine faith. See Job 31:17–20; Eze 18:7, 16 and Jesus’ identification with the hungry and naked in Mt 25:35–36. (CSB)

Good works of a sincere heart. (TLSB)

flesh. Probably refers to close relatives (Ge 37:27), but see 2Sa 5:1. (CSB)

People having the same parents or ancestors (cf Gn 29:14; 37:27; 2Sm 5:1). (TLSB)

Fasting and indeed all outward acts of piety are intended to be signs that God is moving his people out into their communities to share food, open their homes, and clothe the naked. This magnanimity should begin with one’s own family. To “hide yourself” “from your flesh” is to neglect your own flesh-and-blood kin (see בָּשָׂר, “flesh,” in Gen 37:27; and עֶצֶם and בָּשָׂר, “bone” and “flesh,” in Gen 29:14; 2 Sam 5:1). Supporting our own family is to be our first priority (1 Tim 5:4, 8; see also Gal 6:10; 1 Tim 3:4–5). Jesus condemns sacrificial donations and other religious rituals that, at the same time, deprive family members of sustenance (Mk 7:11–13) and fail to show the love of God to those closest to us. Both goals are worthy of our pursuit (cf. Lk 11:42; Acts 10:2). (CC)

58:8-14 “The preaching of rewards and punishments is necessary. God’s wrath is set forth in the preaching of punishments. This applies to the preaching of repentance. Grace is set forth in the preaching of rewards. Just as Scripture, in the mention of good works, often embraces faith—for it wishes righteousness of the heart to be included with the fruit—so sometimes it offers grace together with other rewards” (Ap V 244). (TLSB)

The topic of 58:8–12 is Yahweh’s pledge to those who enact the right kind of fast. When people keep the fast the way Yahweh intends, the results come under two result clauses, signaled by “then” (אָז) at the start of 58:8 and again at the beginning of 58:9. Four effects are stated in 58:8: our witness will be brighter, healing will happen quickly, righteousness will go before us, and Yahweh’s glory will encircle us. (CC)

58:8 *Then*. Repeated in vv 9–10. Let them show the sincerity of their allegiance to God by not mistreating their fellowmen. Then He will lead and protect them. (TLSB)

light.† The joy and glory of the salvation brought by the Lord (see 9:2; 60:1–3). (CSB)

Light comes from doing the work of the Lord, rather than darkness of one’s own works (cf 5:20; 8:20; 47:5; 60:2). (TLSB)

healing. *Healing* means progress, increase, and your growth in this life and the next. A generous hand never suffered want. God’s mercy is wider than ours. If we have given ourselves, it will be given us a hundredfold, as Matt. 19:29 tells us. “You may cheerfully give to your neighbor; I will give you much more in all material things, and you shall quickly grow rich.” (Luther)

go before you. The Lord will protect them and guide them. (CSB)

Cf Is 52:11–12. Luther: “These are excellent and golden consolations for the conscience [2Pt 1:10; 2Co 1:12].... Although we must not rely on this [evidence of good works], yet, since we are justified, it puts my conscience at peace, that I do evil to no one, and thus I walk safely in God. This is what it means for righteousness to go before, when we boast before the world and against Satan that because the fruits of faith are there, I have not lived in vain” (AE 17:288). (TLSB)

glory of the LORD. Probably a reference to the pillar of cloud and fire in the desert. (CSB)

“Then your light will break forth like the dawn” (58:8). Yahweh’s desire is that his servant people become “a light for the nations” (42:6). Following this plan through the narrative of Isaiah 40–55, we see how idolatry disqualifies Israel to be a light. How can the blind lead the blind (cf. 42:19)? Yahweh therefore appoints another Servant, who will faithfully serve as the “light for the nations” (49:6). When we are in fellowship with this Servant, Christ Jesus our Lord, our light breaks forth; thus St. Paul too is “a light for the nations/Gentiles” (Acts 13:47). Ps 37:5–6 expresses a similar idea: “Roll your way onto Yahweh; trust upon him, and he himself will act. He will bring forth your righteousness like the light and your justice like the noonday.” Light is always in conflict with the darkness of our world (e.g., Is 5:20; 8:20; 47:5; 60:2) and comes in a limited and hidden way now (cf. Jn 1:9–10; 2 Cor 4:4, 6), for the Lord’s mission is carried out by imperfect ministers (cf. Phil 2:15; 1 Pet 2:9; 1 Jn 2:8–10). Perfect light, though, is promised in the new Jerusalem (Is 60:1–3), for then Yahweh will fully be our light (Is 60:19–20; Rev 21:10–11, 23–25; 22:5). (CC)

58:9 *Here am I*. See 65:1. (CSB)

Indicating that the Lord is “a very present help in trouble” (Ps 46:1). Isaiah answers the Lord’s call with the same eagerness (Is 6:8). (TLSB)

yoke. On their enslavement, (TLSB)

In 58:3 the people lament that Yahweh does not see or know how much they “afflict” (אָפַד II) themselves through fasting. In 58:9 the prophet employs a Hebrew homograph as he announces that Yahweh will “answer” (אָפַד I) when the apostates abolish the yoke, the pointing finger, and malicious talk. Answers to prayer come when we become God’s answer to someone else’s prayer. “It is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:35). “The neighbor is not a detraction or an inconvenience but is the currency through which community with Yahweh is on offer.” (CC)

“Remove from your midst the yoke” (Is 58:9) refers to relieving the communal economic and spiritual oppression alluded to in 58:3 and made explicit in 58:6–7. The financial movers and shakers are called to share economic prosperity with the poor (Deut 15:7–11). Apart from this kind of love, religious life, with all of its business and activity, is a farce and sham (1 Cor 13:1–3). And so we reach out to one leper at a time, one blind person at a time, one poor person at a time, and on and on it goes, until the end of the age. (CC)

pointing finger. A gesture of either contempt (see Pr 6:13) or accusation. (CSB)

Accusing others to protect one’s self. (TLSB)

“The pointing with a finger” (Is 58:9; cf. Prov 6:13) and “the speaking of wickedness” (Is 58:9; cf. Ps 12:3 [ET 12:2]) denote disdain and mockery (cf. Is 57:4). Those guilty of abusing the powerless refuse to take responsibility for it (cf. Jer 31:29–30). Their first order of business is to make light of it or blame someone, *anyone*, else. When we point our finger at others standing in the circle, we become part of a circular firing squad where everyone is wounded. The Redeemer comes only for those “turning from transgression” (59:20). (CC)

speaking wickedness. See Pr 6:12–14. (CSB)

Slander rather than curses and wicked charms appear to be under consideration. (Leupold)

58:10 *pour yourself out.* Just as God provides breath for every living being, so His people are to pour themselves out to sustain others. (TLSB)

light. The apparent, temporary eclipse of God’s favor will be over, and His blessings will become evident as the sun. (TLSB)

58:11 *guide you.* The Lord will always be your leader and shepherd and guide you. (Luther)

scorched places. See 35:7; 49:10. (CSB)

make your bones strong. God’s renewal brings both inspiring breath and renewed bones. (TLSB)

That is, He will make them strong or equip them. “He will strengthen your bones.” He is referring to trials in which the bones are disturbed so that their fluid is sucked out and the appearance is changed because of too much sadness, and the bones dry up. This is a Hebraism. For the bones to become fat or to be dried up means to be made joyful or sad, as we observe that men filled with these emotions perish or grow fat. For that reason He says here *your bones*, that is, “I will make you happy.” (Luther)

a watered garden. In 1:30 Jerusalem was a garden without water. (CSB)

The image of waters that never fail is repeated in 32:15; 35:5–7; 41:17–18; 43:20; 44:3–4; 48:21; 49:10 and used by Jesus of Himself (Jn 4:10, 14). (TLSB)

spring ... never fail. Cf. the “living water” Jesus gives in Jn 4:10, 14. (CSB)

58:12 *ancient ruins ... foundations.*† Jerusalem would be rebuilt as a part of God’s plan of universal salvation, carried out through a penitent remnant of his chosen people. (CSB)

The city of Jerusalem was to lie in ruins for many generations. It would be rebuilt because God would be moved to resume His plan of salvation through a penitent remnant of the chosen people. (TLSB)

Repairer of breaches. Cf. the work of Nehemiah in Ne 2:17. (CSB)

58:13 Sabbath. Luther: “The duties of the Sabbath are to sanctify God, by hearing the Word, by means of praises and thanksgiving, etc. Then it is to be celebrated by us as a holiday. Among the godly all days are equal, but for the sake of the Word and prayer certain days are chosen for the sake of those who cannot sanctify every day, although we ought to sanctify every day” (AE 17:293). (TLSB)

my holy day. A day set apart to God . (CSB)

delight. They were also to delight themselves in the Lord (Ps 37:4) and in his law (Ps 1:2). (CSB)

They will find the fruit of the blessing that God has promised His people. (TLSB)

holy day. The Sabbath or another feast. (TLSB)

58:14 delight in the LORD. See 61:10. (CSB)

ride on the heights. Thus controlling the land. (CSB)

Rather than the high places being the site of idolatrous worship (57:7), the heights will host God’s holy people. (TLSB)

feed you with the inheritance. † Enjoying the blessings of the promised land (see Dt 32:13–14). (CSB)

Ch 58 The Lord condemns all who draw near to Him only with words, those who seek their own pleasure above all else. But for those who share with their neighbors in need, the Lord promises healing. We cannot draw near to the Lord in faith while oppressing and quarreling with our neighbors. Jesus perfectly fulfilled the law of love and would lead us to repentance. His cross is the guarantee that the Lord will answer when we call upon Him in faith. • Help us, dear Lord, to express our love for You by serving and sharing with our neighbors in need. Amen. (TLSB)