

## The Call to Complete Ministry

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I cannot too strongly urge all our church members, all who are true missionaries, all who believe the third angel's message, all who turn their feet away from the Sabbath, to consider the message of the fifty-eighth chapter of Isaiah. --*Testimonies*, vol. 6, p. 265.

It you will take heed to the words of warning found in the chapters that I am directed to present before you, you will change your attitude, and become children of God. Thus you may save your souls through faith in Jesus Christ. You will receive the counsel given in the fifty-eighth chapter of Isaiah. --*Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 126.

The fifty-eighth' chapter of Isaiah contains present truth for the people of God. Here we see how medical missionary work and the gospel ministry are to be bound together as the message is given to the world. --*Evangelism*, p. 516.

In view of this urgent counsel it seems essential to inquire as to why this portion of God's Word is marked out so clearly for consideration at this time. Through the years constant reference has been made to Isaiah 58:13 and 14. Generally the thought has been expressed that because we keep the seventh-day Sabbath we are truly God's people. But if we refer to all of Isaiah 58 and not just the last two verses, would we with assurance say that this is a correct conclusion? If the conclusion is right:

Why has inspired counsel found it necessary to write so strongly about this one chapter?

Why are we constantly directed to give it close study?

Why do we not hold that position of prominence we should in communities where Adventists live and where Adventist churches are established, with perhaps a few isolated exceptions?

Why are we not a better under stood people for the truths we profess to uphold?

Why are we still a comparatively obscure people despite the varied activities of the church?

Could the reason be that some how the church has fallen short of God's purpose? If we were to read inspired counsel aright we would find that our attention is constantly directed to study the whole chapter of Isaiah 58, not merely the last two verses.

In order to carefully examine the message contained in this chapter, we present it here diagrammatically. Notice that first of all here is a message of extreme urgency to the

church. God's plan of last-day evangelism begins with the church itself rather than with the secular world:

Isa. 58:1:

1. Cry aloud
2. Spare not
3. Lift up thy voice

Shew My people:

1. Their transgression
2. Their sins

This passage goes on to point out that the church is guilty of formalism and selfishness:

Isa. 58:2-5:

1. Worship without dedication
2. Prayer without action
3. Knowledge without practice

Sin of formalism and selfishness = Sin of neglect

Here is brought to view a class who think themselves righteous and appear to manifest great interest in the service of God; but the stern and solemn rebuke of the Searcher of hearts proves them to be trampling upon the divine precepts. --*The Great Controversy*, p. 452.

*The reason why God's people are not more spiritually minded and have not more faith, I have been shown, is because they are narrowed up with selfishness. The prophet is addressing Sabbathkeepers, not sinners, not unbelievers, but those who make great pretensions to godliness. --Testimonies, vol. 2, p. 36. (Italics supplied.)*

God's prescription for solving this problem of neglect, formalism, and selfishness is spelled out clearly in eight lines of person-to-person ministry:

Isa. 58:6, 7:

1. To loose the bands of wickedness
2. To undo the heavy burdens
3. To let the oppressed go free
4. That ye break every yoke

5. To deal thy bread to the hungry
6. That thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house
7. When thou seest the naked, that thou cover him
8. That thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh

The remedy for formalism and selfishness is that the church and its members are to *go, give, and gain*. They are to become actively engaged in personal ministry with heartfelt concern for fellow humans in every walk of life. Not only to care, but to share the precious knowledge of eternal riches.

The true fast is no mere formal service. The Scripture describes that fast that God has chosen . . . (Isa. 58:6, 10). *Here is set forth the very spirit and character of the work of Christ*. His whole life was a sacrifice of Himself for the saving of the world. --*The Desire of Ages*, p. 278. (Italics supplied.)

He *designs that the medical missionary work shall prepare the way for the presentation of the saving truth for this time, the proclamation of the third angel's message*. If this design is met, the message will not be eclipsed nor its progress hindered. --*Testimonies*, vol. 6, p. 293. (Italics supplied.)

Do *medical missionary work*. Thus *you will gain access to the hearts of the people*. The way will be prepared for more decided proclamation of the truth. --*Evangelism*, p. 514. (Italics supplied.)

A close look at Isaiah 58 makes it clear that this chapter is the out standing authority for medical missionary work. In this chapter is found a message of special urgency for the spiritual benefit of God's people, and it contains practical instruction on personal ministry to meet the needs of the world. "The *whole of the fifty-eighth chapter of Isaiah is to be regarded as a mes sage for this time*."--*Welfare Ministry*, p. 29. (Italics supplied.)

In this setting medical missionary work:

- \* Is of divine origin. Combined with the gospel it is person-to-person ministry and makes possible complete ministry for the complete restoration of man.
- \* Is complete in every detail to meet human need in any emergency and is God's chosen method Of approach for church members to minister personally in the neighborhood of their home or church.
- \* Is a ministry of kindness, sympathy, understanding, and love.
- \* Overcomes prejudice as nothing else can. Creates a favorable climate for better relationships with those for whom we are to labor.
- \* Is basic to all phases of evangelistic endeavor; it is the right arm of the gospel. "God desires His people to bind medical missionary work up with the work of the third angel's message. This is the work that will restore the moral image of God in man." --*Medical Ministry*, p. 160.

- \* Ministered with Christlike love, will reach human need on all levels of society.
- \* Provides a cure for selfishness. Overcomes cold formalism and superficial religion in the church.
- \* Will give prominence to God's message of salvation and speed the advancement of the work.
- \* Will be the only work done along ministerial lines in the closing days. And, if carried out in harmony with Scripture and the Spirit of Prophecy instruction, will broaden and deepen at every point of its progress.

What will happen to church members when the church really begins to put God's plan to work? The next verses unfold the personal benefits of caring and sharing:

Isa. 58:8 Thine health shall spring forth speedily

Isa. 58:9 Thou shall call and the Lord will answer

Isa. 55:77 The Lord shall guide thee continually

The pleasure of doing good to others imparts a glow to the feelings which flashes through the nerves, quickens the circulation of the blood, and induces mental and physical health. - *Testimonies*, vol. 4, p. 56.

Good deeds are twice a blessing, benefiting both the giver and the receiver of the kindness. The consciousness of right-doing is one of the best medicines for diseased bodies and minds. When the mind is free and happy from a sense of duty well done and the satisfaction of giving happiness to others, the cheering, uplifting influence brings new life to the whole being. -- *The Ministry of Healing*, p. 257.

All who consecrate body, soul, and spirit to Cod's service will be constantly receiving a new endowment of physical, mental, and spiritual power. The inexhaustible supplies of heaven are at their command. Christ gives them the breath of His own spirit, the life of His own life. The Holy Spirit puts forth its highest energies to work in heart and mind. -- *Testimonies*, vol. 6, 306.

What will be the effect in regard to the impact of the church on the world when God's plan is carried out? Note how truth becomes prominent through caring and sharing:

Isa. 58:8 Thy light shall break forth as the morning Thy righteousness shall go before thee; the glory of the Lord shall be thy reward

Isa. 58:10: Then shall thy light rise in obscurity, thy darkness be as noon day

It is said that there are more references in the Spirit of Prophecy to Isaiah 58 than to any other complete chapter in the Bible. A glance at the Index shows 23 for Isaiah 58 compared to two for Exodus 20, one for Psalms 23, seven for Mat thew 5, and three for Revelation 14. At any rate, it is clear that this chapter is of special urgency and importance to God's people today as it contains practical instruction on how to meet the world's needs in the finishing of God's work.

What are the lessons of the closing verses of Isaiah 58? The seventh-day Sabbath is a memorial of Creation. It is a sign between God and His people. It is a sign of sanctification. By the Sabbath God's people are distinguished from all other people. Because like Him they have one common purpose. They are concerned with human need to the degree that the whole life is dedicated to the service of God and humanity. Their professions, their business, their occupations, their trades, whatever it may be, is secondary to the one great purpose of seeking and saving the lost. Their training is but a means to serve more purposefully and efficiently in the cause of God.

True Sabbathkeeping is not merely the cessation from the pursuit of business and physical labor every seventh day of the week. True Sabbathkeeping is synonymous with a Christlike character and is revealed every day of the week in thought and word and deed---this is the teaching of Isaiah 58.

This medical missionary chapter highlights the hollowness of formal religious and Sabbath worship the spiritual emptiness that results from a life fully absorbed in the daily pursuit of satisfying self with the consequent lack of vital contact with the living God. This according to Isaiah is sin soul-destroying sin.

The proposition then is simple where does the professed Seventh-day Adventist Christian stand in the light of Isaiah 58 as it brings sharply into focus the true condition of God's people? A formal Sabbathkeeping Christian, serving self in a way that ultimately will lead to destruction--or a Christian at one with God, sealed with His seal and serving Him with meaningful purpose. True Sabbathkeeping cares and shares. The two are inseparable.

Upon those who keep the Sabbath of the Lord is laid the responsibility of doing a work of mercy and benevolence. Medical missionary work is to be bound up with the message, and sealed with the seal of God.--Evangelism, p. 517.

What is medical missionary work? According to *Counsels on Health*, page 533, it is "the gospel of healing and blessing and strengthening." This is what Isaiah 58 is all about. But often this chapter has been misunderstood. The concept that Sabbathkeeping alone gives us the right to be called "repairers of the breach," and "restorers of paths to dwell in" is completely exploded when the whole of the teaching of Isaiah is explored and particularly when the extensive counsels on this chapter are studied in the Spirit of Prophecy teachings. We can only be genuine repairers and restorers when we apply the whole of the teachings of this scripture, and follow in the steps of the Christ--the true Medical Missionary--and bring to needy humanity ministry to the whole man--to reform, heal, and restore.