

Isaiah 58:1-14

A. Imagine the church like a fortress whose walls are in disrepair. As **v12** says, there is a “breach” or gap in the wall which allows enemies to come in.

1. Such a gap in the wall could be theological liberalism, unrepentant sin, or a faith that has grown cold as in the church in Ephesus (**Rev 2:1-7**).
2. As we just read in **vv6-7**, God speaking through Isaiah gave us some very practical ways to repair those breaches in the wall. If you want to devote yourselves to God, look at **v6**. → **v6**
 - a. This is primarily what the gospel does for sinners. Every Christian ought to be zealous to tell others the good news while praying for the conversion of the lost.
 - b. God calls us to worship Him in a way pleasing in His sight through His appointed Mediator Jesus Christ (**1 Tim 2:5**); that is the only way we can throw-off the “bands of the yoke” of sin which separate us from God.
 - c. After this foundation of the gospel is laid, **v7** speaks about ministries to those in dire need. → **v7**
3. The children of God so let their light shine before men, **vv8-12** tell of how God blesses His church, His holy bride. → **vv8-12**

B. Focusing on **v12**, it is best to examine **Isa 58:13-14** as a continuation of God’s prescription on how the church is to: **“rebuild the ancient ruins... raise up the age-old foundations;... be called the repairer of the breach, the restorer of the streets in which to dwell.”**

1. The blessing of nearness to God, satisfied desires, & strength to your bones comes when do all that was mentioned prior, yet also when we are faithful in keeping the sabbath day holy.
2. This should be our mindset when we study **WCF 21, sec 8**

C. **Sec 8** opens with a calling for preparation for the day. **“This Sabbath is then kept holy unto the Lord, when men, after a due preparing of their hearts, and ordering of their common [worldly] affairs beforehand,...”**

1. Some Reformed Christian circles like to practice keeping the Sabbath from sunset on Saturday to sunset on Sunday which is about the time our evening worship service is over, depending on the time of year.
 - a. This is how many Jews have kept the sabbath.
 - b. One could also set a time on the clock such as 7 PM on Saturday to 7 PM on Sunday.
 - c. This allows Christians more opportunity for **“a due preparing of their hearts.”**
 - 1) This gives more time for devotional reading or family devotions on Saturday in preparation for worship the following morning.
 - 2) This is a better practice than working until midnight with little preparation for corporate worship.
2. One great nemesis for enjoying the Sabbath is work that must be done or turned-in early on Monday mornings.
 - a. In Seminary, the professors made it a point never to have work to turn-in or exams on Mondays. Christian employers and schools ought to endeavor to follow this example whenever possible.

b. It takes great sacrifice & a diligent effort to flee procrastination to set aside time on Saturday to study or do the work necessary to free you up to enjoy & participate in Sabbath worship on Sunday. Consider that Saturday labor or “grind” as an act of devotion in preparation for His blessed day of rest & worship.

D. sec 8 goes on to say that you are to prepare your hearts & worldly affairs so that you “...do not only observe an holy rest, all the day, from their own works, words, and thoughts about their worldly employments and recreations, but also are taken up, the whole time, in the public and private exercises of his worship, and in the duties of necessity and mercy.”

1. Much of this language is taken from **Isa 58:13**. → **vv13**

a. This is a rather strict position on the Sabbath. It follows after the Scottish Presbyterian & English Puritan tradition or interpretation of Scripture, especially **Isa 58:13**.

1) The language in **v13** is rather straight-forward. There is not much room for interpretation.

2) Honoring the Sabbath, God calls “**you [to] turn your foot from doing your own pleasure... desisting from your own ways, from seeking your own pleasure & speaking your own word.**”

a) “**Desisting**” isn’t a common word used today.

b) The ESV gives us a clear & faithful translation, “**not going your own ways, or seeking your own pleasure, or talking idly;**

b. Another view in some Reformed, Protestant circles is called the “continental view of the Sabbath” which permits recreation as long as it does not interfere with worship.

1) This is more common than one thinks. Even church officers who vow to uphold the Westminster Standards follow the continental view in practice.

2) I believe many forms of recreation can only be permissible if one throws out **Isa 58:13**.

2. Speaking of God’s allowing “the duties of necessity and mercy,” this allows for a whole lot of things that are pleasant. One might even say they have a recreational value. Here is a list:

a. Eating is a necessity; having a meal & even inviting friends, family, & fellow Christians over is an excellent, pleasant way to spend some of your Sabbath.

1) That is something you might enjoy doing on other days of the week.

2) On a chilly night, you could even light a fire to keep warm as you enjoy fellowship together.

3) Our youth need more times of fellowship anyway.

4) This is a means of evangelism. There can be witnessing & discipleship going-on across a table.

b. There is a distinction between deeds of necessity vs deeds of mercy

c. As with the prior portion of **Isa 58**, obedience to the call to repair the breaches or gaps in the wall of the church leads to God’s rich blessings. → **v14**