

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus the Christ.
Amen.

The end of Isaiah 58 is about pleasure that is absolutely holy and good. God is the greatest source of pleasure. There are eternal pleasures that are only found in God. In Isaiah 59 we see our own failures and God's remedy. That in a soundbite is what this sermon is all about. Godly pleasure, our failures, and God's remedy.

Early in the book of Isaiah, Isaiah saw God and what he saw changed him for the rest of his life. God let Isaiah step into eternity and Isaiah felt within himself the very Presence of God. It was called an ecstatic experience. To be in God's Presence was sheer ecstasy. He was immersed in God's holiness which led him to a radical repentance and then he was completely cleansed. When God cleanses your soul, there are actual pleasures from heaven that you perceive, that you feel, that you know are given by God. And the closer you grow to God; God has pleasure upon pleasure to fill your soul. God's Presence, God's glory, and God's Word, yes God Himself impacts your emotions and you receive from God something that uplifts you, that picks you up, a sense of pleasure that only God can give. God puts into your soul a wonderful sense of enjoyment that makes all the tough times worth it.

There was a common phrase in the 60's that went like this, "If it feels good, do it." Today we live in a pleasure-seeking society and I am not speaking of godly pleasures. It is a pleasure that is completely materialistic. Today we have to have cell phones, I phones, I Pads, 3-D flat screen TV's, the latest of videos games, fashion when it comes to clothes, and much, much more. Each of these items becomes a source of pleasure but it is a fleeting pleasure. The new phones all become obsolete in a short time as do our computers. What brings pleasure today bores us tomorrow. So, we look for new things to please us, new toys to bring pleasure. Still with all of this, boredom is rampant. And all this stuff costs money we can ill afford to spend.

What I see happening is this. The more stuff that we have in our lives gives us less time for God. When one's primary source of pleasure comes from the things of this world, that which is temporary, one's soul becomes so very empty, barren, and unfulfilled because there is no room for God and godly pleasures. You can have all the latest of gadgets and still be so empty on the inside. Your soul was made by God. Your soul was given by God. And it is only the pleasures that one finds in God that can bring lasting satisfaction to you, to your very soul.

I took the time this week to listen to Dr Greggo's sermon, "Heart Walking." From the prophet Micah, **Micah 6:8 (ESV) "8 He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?"** Dr. Greggo explained those terms and made them understandable to us in a very clear way, crystal clear. In those explanations the Holy Spirit spoke to my soul and I felt God changing me on the inside in a way I need to be changed. Truth was spoken in love and yes. I felt chastised. Personal sin was uncovered. The light revealed a dark area of my soul; God's loving discipline is very real my friends. This is my point. Even when God's word chastises you in your sin, there is something so good about this because God from heaven is speaking to you and your soul is fed as God's Word changes you. And it is God's good pleasure to change you to be more like Jesus. It is God's good pleasure that leads us to repent. This opens up our souls to experience more of God's eternal pleasures and makes life worth living my friends. After a time we learn that this world's pleasures are dull, even worthless compared to the spiritual pleasures that come to us from God. Our sin is what we turn to where we are least satisfied with God. Sins of addiction are broken when one's soul is satisfied with God and the pleasure He gives. God has eternal pleasures just waiting for us. Please turn to the well of God's pleasure for it never runs dry.

Isaiah 58:13-14 “If you keep the Sabbath holy, not having your own pleasure and business on my holy day, but enjoying the Sabbath and speaking of it with delight and honoring the Lord in what you do, not going your own ways, or seeking your own pleasure, or talking idly; 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.”

God has given to us a day of rest, a Sabbath, a day to cease from one's work and to do those things that bring great pleasure to God. And what pleases God is for you and me to honor God on the day of rest with great delight and to speak of it with great gladness. It is a holy day that we honor our God, not by just doing whatever we want and wasting time on idle talk. We gather to worship wanting to please our Lord and when we do this, He honors us with eternal pleasures. Isaiah writes, “I will make you ride on the heights of the earth.” God is pleased when we meet to honor him and there are times when we will feel his actual pleasure giving us a high with no hangover. We hear the promises of God, and we learn of the great heritage we have going back to Abraham and further. This is something to be so enjoyed that we look forward to it all the weeklong. Experiencing pleasures from God is absolutely exhilarating. God-centered, glad hearted, regular worship redefines pleasure itself (Raymond C Ortlund Jr. Isaiah, pg. 391).

Worshipping together as a family does a wonderful thing for the family that nothing else will do nor can do. Worshipping together adds a quality to our lives that comes from God, a sense of the sacred. It adds a discipline to our lives that helps life make sense and gives meaning to all that we are going through. This is God's time that he set apart for us. He made the Sabbath for us.

The world, the flesh, and the devil are doing all they can to destroy our time of Sabbath rest in general and our worship time in particular. Sporting events, turnouts, concerts, and all

sorts of things are scheduled during this holy time including on Wednesday confirmation night. It ought not to be this way and just a decade or so ago it was not this way. But the world will do what it can to harm that which is holy, our time of worship and rest. If we fail to worship God regularly, we end up worshipping ourselves and our own achievements.

Chapter 59 tells us what keeps us from enjoying God. Chapter 59 tells us what happens when we no longer pursue God's pleasures but only pursue our own personal pleasures that have nothing to do with God. In this chapter we find failure with a remedy.

Isaiah 59:1-2, "Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save, or his ear dull, that it cannot hear; but your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden his face from you so that he does not hear."

Friends, God does not bless sin. When you deliberately do things that displease God, when you walk in constant willful sin against the Lord God, God will let you experience the full consequences of your sin. The Bible says, "Your sin will find you out." Don't be so surprised that you wake up one day more miserable than you have ever been. It is dangerous to seek pleasures in this life that God forbids. The Bible prohibits drunkenness. The Bible prohibits putting anything into your body that will harm it or be destructive to it. The Bible gives us God's safety guides that if we follow them we will experience pleasures that are out of this world, God's pleasures that are wonderful, spiritual blessings in abundance and they do not cost one dime.

Yes, the Lord's hand is all powerful and can save you. Yes, the Lord hears everything you say to Him. But God will not answer your prayers when you have walked away from God. This is what Isaiah is saying. Friends, there can be a closeness with God now that when you experience it, it makes everything worth it. You never thought you would experience such closeness this side of heaven. And then we compromise with sin. We fall back into some old

sinful habits or pick up some new ones that Isaiah calls iniquities. And as close as you were to God on one day is now how far you have fallen from God on the next day. Then we have the audacity to blame God for our misery when we have brought it all on ourselves. Sin is costly. We forfeit our fellowship, our intimacy with God. We sought the pleasures of this world at the expense of heavenly pleasures promised to us by God. We turn to empty wells that bring sorrow instead of to the well that never runs dry God's pleasures forevermore.

Isaiah 59:3, "For your hands are defiled with blood and your fingers with iniquity; your lips have spoken lies; your tongue mutters wickedness."

God is offended by their sin. Friends, your sin offends God and so does mine. In this passage what offends God is the way we hurt one another in what we do and in what we say. For the next 5 verses Isaiah expounds on this and Paul uses this in Romans 3:15-17 where he describes how badly we all need a Savior. God takes so seriously the way we treat each other that one day we will give an account to God of every word spoken. Friends all of us have the ability to be mean, cruel, and vicious. The tongue can be so destructive. We know well how to hurt people. We ourselves are so easily hurt. God's Spirit grieves when God sees us being hostile one to another, unfriendly, hardened, and cruel. It stops the flow of blessing and pleasures that come from God are no more.

Verse 9-13 gives us the next step, the remedy to the failure. **Isaiah 59:9 Therefore justice is far from us, and righteousness does not overtake us; we hope for light, and behold, darkness, and for brightness, but we walk in gloom.** The most important word in this verse is "therefore." The person has quit asking God, "Why?" "God why am I suffering so much?" The person has realized he or she is suffering because the person has turned away from God. The person sees his plight and melts into genuine repentance. The remedy is to repent. Stop pouting and start repenting. Genuine repentance means you go to God and pour

out your soul, begging his forgiveness. Genuine repentance is also going to the people you have hurt by your words and actions asking for their forgiveness.

Isaiah 59:12-13, “For our transgressions are multiplied before you, and our sins testify against us; for our transgressions are with us, and we know our iniquities: transgressing, and denying the Lord, and turning back from following our God, speaking oppression and revolt, conceiving and uttering from the heart lying words.”

The remedy of getting your life right with God includes making it right where you have wronged others. And when you do this your soul is revived. You experience revival. God is pleased and your soul senses God's pleasure even if the person does not forgive you for you have done what God wanted you to do. The Bible says, If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone” (Rom 12:18). Revival always includes confession of sin to God and also confessing one's hurtful words and actions to those you have sinned against. In revival one is reconciled both to God and to man. Please go to the person or persons you have offended and ask for their forgiveness. Jesus asks this of you.

I am in the midst of the Old Testament book of Job. I must say this. There are times of great difficulty in our Christian lives that occur to no fault of our own, that do not occur because of personal sin, such as in the case of Job. Yes, the innocent suffer. Job did not know the mind of God, as to why the suffering. The truth is God is always good and will bring good out of all of your difficulties. Clinging to that promise takes faith on our part. And after a time you will experience God's pleasures that out does and heals the pain of what you endured. Amen and Amen.