

RESTING IN GOD SERIES:
SABBATH PROMISES
Isaiah 58: 13-14
HOW TO SLOW DOWN
AND REST IN THE LORD

Jesus lived the perfect life, accomplished more than any human ever did, and yet Jesus was never in a HURRY! He was Purposed but never PUSHED. He was focused but never Frantic. He was Resolved but never rushed!

Did you notice this morning the pace of your life as you came here to worship God? Perhaps¹ we all need to slow down and reflect on the following...

The paradox of our time in history is that we have taller buildings, but shorter tempers; wider freeways, but narrower viewpoints; we spend more, but have less; we buy more, but enjoy it less.

We have bigger houses and smaller families;
more conveniences, but less time;
we have more degrees, but less sense;
more knowledge, but less judgment;
more experts, but more problems;
more medicine, but less wellness.

We drink too much, smoke too much, spend too recklessly,
laugh too little, drive too fast, get too angry too quickly,
stay up too late, get up too tired,
read too little of God's Word, watch TV too much,
Fast too rarely, give too little, and pray too seldom.

We have multiplied our possessions, but reduced our values.
We talk too much, love too seldom, and hate too often.
We've learned how to make a living, but not a life;

¹ Forwarded anonymous email Fall, 1999.

we've added years to life, not life to years.

We've been all the way to the moon and back, but have trouble crossing the street to meet the new neighbor.

We've conquered outer space, but not inner space;
we've done larger things, but not better things;

We've cleaned up the air, but polluted the soul; we've split the atom, but not our prejudice; we write more, but learn less; we plan more, but accomplish less.

We've learned to rush, but not to wait;
we have higher incomes, but lower morals;
we have more food, but less appeasement;
we build more computers to hold more information to produce more copies than ever, but have less communication;
we've become long on quantity, but short on quality.

These are the times of fast foods and slow digestion;
tall men, and short character;
steep profits, and shallow relationships.
These are the times of world peace (?), but domestic warfare;
more leisure, but less fun;
more kinds of food, but less nutrition.

These are days of two incomes, but more divorce;
of fancier houses, but broken homes.

These are days of quick trips, disposable diapers,
throw away morality, one-night stands, overweight bodies,
and pills that do everything from cheer, to quiet, to kill.

It is a time when there is much in the show window and nothing in the stockroom;

So it is time to look again at God's offer of REST!

Have you noticed that the world² all around us is going faster and faster each day? And yes, we in turn are also speeding up. But some important questions we need to ask are:

When does faster become too fast?

Is there a speed limit to life?

What happens when we exceed it?

Does God give us a ticket?

² Richard A. Swenson, M.D., *The Overload Syndrome*. Colorado Springs, Colorado: NAVPRESS, 1998, p 123-33.

This week this has been my target of study and meditation, as I have thought long and hard about the issue of our rushed society I conclude that hurrying is as much responsible for the problem of personal and societal breakdown as any other single factor. Here are some truths to ponder: Virtually all of our relationships are damaged by hurry. Many families are being starved to death by velocity. Our children lie wounded on the ground, run over by our high-speed good intentions.

That is why we need to turn again to God's Word. Remember where we ended our recent series on fasting in the Book of Isaiah, chapter 58? I would like to introduce our study this morning in the same chapter. As you turn to Isaiah 58, why would we in the New Testament Era, the Church Age of Grace start studying an important Biblical Topic in the Old Testament?

As you reflect on just the book of Isaiah I think you will be able to answer that question yourself!

- ✓ ISAIHAH is the **fifth longest book in the Bible**, with 66 chapters, 1,292 verses, and 37,044 words.
- ✓ ISAIHAH is **quoted from or alluded to 472 times by 23 New Testament books**.
- ✓ ISAIHAH **contains more references to salvation** than any other Old Testament book (The word salvation appears 33 times in the writing of the prophets, and of these, 26 instances occur in Isaiah.)
- ✓ ISAIHAH contains the **only Old Testament prophecy concerning the Virgin Birth of Christ** (cf. Isaiah. 7:14 with Matthew. 1:21-23).
- ✓ ISAIHAH is **a miniature model of the Bible**: the Bible has 66 books → Isaiah has 66 chapters; the Old Testament has 39 books → the first section of Isaiah has 39 chapters; the New Testament has 27 books → the last section of Isaiah has 27 chapters; the 39 Old Testament books records the history and sin of Israel → so do Isaiah 1-39; the New Testament introduces Christ and His ministry → so does Isaiah 40-66.
- ✓ ISAIHAH contains **the two furthest reaching events in all of history**: the most ancient event is the fall of Satan (14:12-17) and the most future event, the creation of the new heavens and earth (66:22).
- ✓ ISAIHAH has **more to say about** the GREATNESS OF GOD (40,43), the HORRORS OF THE TRIBULATION (24), the WONDERS OF THE MILLENNIUM (35), and the MINISTRY OF CHRIST (53) **than any other book in the Bible**.
- ✓ ISAIHAH also contains one of **the Old Testament's clearest statements on the Trinity** (48-16).

- ✓ ISAIAH 53 is probably **the most important chapter in the Old Testament**, as it is quoted from or alluded to 85 times in the New Testament. Jesus said that Isaiah saw His glory and spoke of Him (John 12:41).
- ✓ ISAIAH makes **the Old Testament's clearest prophecy about an individual**, the Persian King Cyrus and his decree are both mentioned by Isaiah 150 years before Cyrus was even born! (See Isaiah. 44:28; 45:1.)

Should New Testament saints know Isaiah? Certainly we should if we want to be grounded in Biblical Doctrine! So what does Isaiah 58 say? Delight in God through fasting (our previous study) and a cessation of endless activity for intimacy with God (our current study on the Sabbath) by setting aside my agenda on a regular basis → and God will fill your life with Delightful Spiritual Blessings!

God's Word describes salvation from front to back, cover to cover as a rest. When is the last time you characterized your life as simple, restful, tranquil, peaceful, and quiet?

Join me **as we stand and listen** to what God says in Isaiah 58:13-14. That is what Jesus meant when He said The Sabbath was made for man.

This morning we return to Mark 2:28 as we are look at the Biblical Teaching on the Sabbath. Jesus clearly sets the tone for the controversies of the day and speaks to us to this day on the Sabbath.

1. First, SABBATH PURPOSES: what did **Jesus say about the Sabbath?** As Lord of Sabbath He said one thing, the Sabbath was made for man to worship God. It was not a prison, a straight jacket, a death squad to hunt Sabbath breakers, no; it was a delightful offer of spiritual communion with God.
2. Secondly, SABBATH PROMISES: **do we need rest and to cease from our wearying schedules?** Yes, and that is what this Old Testament picture teaches us New Testament saints! God offers rest!
3. Thirdly, SABBATH LAWS: **should we really meet on Sunday** or on the Sabbath Day, which is Saturday? We study that tonight!
4. Fourthly, SABBATH BLESSINGS **how do we apply all this to our lives?** How do we cultivate a rest, a cessation from weariness in our lives? How do we make worship of the Lord special on our Day of Gathering, the Lord's Day? That is next week!
5. Fifthly, SABBATH THIEVES what **takes away the blessings** and promises of the rest God offers? This morning we start this examination of what robs us of the blessings of a personal Sabbath rest.

6. SABBATH PLANS what are **some simply wonderful plans** we can make to heighten our worship, our communion with God? Some real blessings can come with some small changes and some preparations.
7. SABBATH PICTURES what are **the illustrations** that Jesus, His apostles, and all the Old Testament saints used to show the plan of God? God's Holidays, the Feasts. And each is a wonderful picture and pathway to deepening our devotion to Jesus..
8. Finally, SABBATH REST what does God want more than anything? Our minds. What is the key to our spiritual success? A mind that rests upon, and is fixed upon the Lord God Almighty!

So this morning, **do we need rest and to cease from our wearying schedules?** Yes, and that is what this Old Testament picture teaches us New Testament saints! God offers rest! Not too long after Christ's teaching on the Sabbath rest He invited His disciples to enjoy the serenity, tranquility, and rest of solitude of rest. Look at Mark 6:31

And He said to them, "Come aside by yourselves to a deserted place and rest a while." For there were many coming and going, and they did not even have time to eat.

As Jesus and the disciples needed to cease from their labors and rest so should we regularly cease. Our spiritual lives also need a time of reflection, a time of rest, a time of renewal, and a time to refocus. As noted author Kent Hughes³ says, "the seven day pattern is best for the soul, for properly observed in worship it brings Heaven's cadence to all of life."

Where are we today in America? In Tulsa? Aren't we often far from rest? How far? Let me share a few insights that those who spend their lives watching our culture have noted.

Listen again to a popular paraphrase of Isaiah 58:13-14 as we turn back to that original passage to close this morning:

13 If you keep the Sabbath holy, not having your own fun and business on that day, but enjoying the Sabbath, speaking of it with delight as the Lord's holy day, and honoring the Lord in what you do, not following your own desires and pleasure nor talking idly—14 then the Lord will be your delight, and I will see to it that you ride high and get your full share of

³ Hughes, *Disciplines of Grace*, p. 70.

the blessings I promised to Jacob, your father. The Lord has spoken. (TLB)

Isaiah 30:15 For thus says the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel: "In returning and rest you shall be saved; In quietness and confidence shall be your strength." But you would not, Isaiah 48:18 Oh, that you had heeded My commandments! Then your peace would have been like a river, And your righteousness like the waves of the sea.

Do you see rest, quietness, and confidence - or weariness, pandemonium, and upheaval in daily life? Societal commentators see us far from the quietness and deep in the pandemonium.

First, how are you dealing with the Change and Stress which derail us from seeking God's Promised Quietness?⁴ -

- ◆ The only trouble with success is that the formula for achieving it is the same as the formula for a nervous breakdown. – CHUCK SWINDOLL
- ◆ Although people will pay to fix their stress, they are not about to change the lifestyle that is causing it. – David C. Mc Casland
- ◆ Stress may be the spice of life or the kiss of death. – Robert Elliot, M.D., CARDIOLOGIST
- ◆ Things get worse under pressure – MURPHY'S LAW OF THERMODYNAMICS.
- ◆ "Ironically, the people of the future may suffer not from an absence of choice, but from a paralyzing surfeit of it," explained Alvin Toffler. "They may turn out to be victims of that peculiarly super-industrial dilemma: over choice...the point at which the advantages of diversity and individualization are canceled by the complexity of the buyer's decision-making process."⁵
- ◆ Writer Robert Kanigel understands change and stress.

"Here's the problem: While choices multiply, we stay pretty much the same. Our bodies and minds remain the bottleneck through which choice must pass. We still have the same brains our forebears did, still only twenty-four hours a day to use them. We still need time and energy to listen, look, absorb, distinguish, and decide. The opportunity to choose among many options is, of course, a good thing. But maybe you can have too much of a good thing? Even of choice itself? Each choice saps energy, takes time, makes a big deal out of what isn't."⁶
- ◆ So much of daily living is now involved with the making of trivial decisions based on this incredible profusion of choice. As Thoreau wrote in *Walden*, "Our life is frittered away by detail."

⁴ Richard A. Swenson, M.D., *The Overload Syndrome*. Colorado Springs, Colorado: NAVPRESS, 1998, p. 73.

⁵ Alvin Toffler, *Future Shock* (New York, NY: Bantam Books, 1971), pp. 264 and 269.

⁶ Robert Kanigel, "Too Much of a Good Thing?" *The Washington Post National Weekly Edition*, 12 January 1998, p. 25.

Isaiah 30:15 For thus says the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel: "In returning and rest you shall be saved; In quietness and confidence shall be your strength." But you would not,

Secondly, how are you dealing with the ceaseless pressures of Debt⁷ that rob our taking advantage of God's Promised Quietness or Tranquility?

Another reason we need to cease all and rest weekly is that it keeps us aware of the debt frenzy all around us.

- ✦ We will loan you enough money to get you completely out of debt. – SIGN IN A LOAN OFFICE
- ✦ More than a billion people around the world live on less than a dollar a day. – RON SIDER
- ✦ Interest works night and day, in fair weather and in foul. It gnaws at a man's substance with invisible teeth. – HENRY WARD BEECHER
- ✦ Today, our lives are addictively intertwined in the economic system, and the credit-debt mentality has been fully normalized. "Someone has described a modern American as a person: who drives a bank-financed car over a bond-financed highway on credit card gas to open a charge account at a department store so he can fill his Savings and Loan financed home with installment-purchased furniture."⁸

Isaiah 48:18 Oh, that you had heeded My commandments!
Then your peace would have been like a river, And your
righteousness like the waves of the sea.

Thirdly, how are you dealing with Hurry and Rush⁹ as they always displace God's time for us to rest?

- ✦ "America. The land of the rushed," complains small town journalist Peg Zaemisch. "We have proudly defined our American lifestyle as 'life in the fast lane.' Now, we rush to construct passing lanes, so we can get around those pokie-schmokies in the fast lane...do they think we've got all day? We've become a country of out-of-breath-red-faced folks, racing around with our hair permanently blowing back." Zaemisch vows to tame her "catch-a-bullet-in-my-teeth schedule –just as soon as I get off this deadline."¹⁰
- ✦ Even our sentences are peppered with such words as *time crunch, fast food, rush hour, frequent flyer, expressway, overnight delivery, and rapid transit*. The products and services we use further attest to our

⁷ Richard A. Swenson, M.D., *The Overload Syndrome*. Colorado Springs, Colorado: NAVPRESS, 1998, p. 97-98.

⁸ Paul E. Billheimer, *Destined for the Throne: A New Look at the Bride of Christ* (Fort Washington, PA: Christian Literature Crusade, 1975), p. 53.

⁹ Richard A. Swenson, M.D., *The Overload Syndrome*. Colorado Springs, Colorado: NAVPRESS, 1998, p 123-33.

¹⁰ Peg Zaemisch, "Relating Life Is Harder on the Run," *Dunn County News*, 26 November 1995, p. 4A.

hurry: We send packages by Federal Express, use a long distance company called **Sprint**, manage our personal finances on **Quicken**, schedule our appointments on a **DayRunner**, diet with **SlimFast**, and swim in trunks made by **Speedo**.

- ◆ "The society in which we live today would have us believe, or at least hope, that life will be okay if we can just get it packaged right and served to us on the run," observes publisher Bob Benson.¹¹
- ◆ Speed. Hurry. We pay a price for the pace at which we live. The late French historian Jacques Ellul commented, "No one knows where we are going, the aim of life has been forgotten, the end has been left behind. Man has set out at tremendous speed – to go *nowhere*."¹²
- ◆ These days, speed is of the essence," observes David Sharp of *USA Today*. "Anything that can't keep up becomes the cultural equivalent of road kill."¹³
- ◆ "Yes, the world¹⁴ is going faster. And yes, we in turn are also going faster. But the important question n one asks is this: When does faster become too fast? Is there a speed limit to life? What happens when we exceed it? Does God give us a ticket? I have thought long and hard about the issue of speed and have come to believe that it is as much responsible for the problem of personal and societal dysfunction as any other single factor. Virtually all of our relationships are damaged by hurry. Many families are being starved to death by velocity. Our children lie wounded on the ground, run over by our high-speed good intentions."
- ◆ Seminary president and author Chuck Swindoll claims our era is "the age of the half-read page, the quick hash and the mad dash, the bright night with the nerves tight, the plane hop with the brief stop, the lamp tan in a short span, the brain strain and the heart pain, the catnaps until the spring snaps..the land where the fun's gone."¹⁵

Isaiah 30: 15 For thus says the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel: "In returning and rest you shall be saved; In quietness and confidence shall be your strength." But you would not, Isaiah 48: 18 Oh, that you had heeded My commandments! Then your peace would have been like a river, And your righteousness like the waves of the sea.

Isaiah 58: 13-14

"If you turn away your foot from the Sabbath,

¹¹ Bob Benson, "See You at the House." *The Very Best of the Stories He Used to Tell* (Nashville, TN: Generoux Nelson, 1989), pp. 147-148.

¹² Jacques Ellul, *The Presence of the Kingdom* (Colorado Springs, CO: Helmers & Howard, 1989), p.56.

¹³ David Sharp, "So Many Lists, So Little Time," *USA Weekend*, 15-17 March 1996, p.4.

¹⁴ Richard A. Swenson, M.D., *The Overload Syndrome*. Colorado Springs, Colorado: NAVPRESS, 1998, p 123-33.

¹⁵ Chuck Swindoll quoted in David Kraft, "Isaiah Versus Tums," *Closer Walk-The Navigators*, July 1992, p. 37.

From doing your pleasure on My holy day,
And call the Sabbath a delight,
The holy day of the Lord honorable,
And shall honor Him, not doing your own ways,
Nor finding your own pleasure,
Nor speaking your own words,
14 Then you shall delight yourself in the Lord;
And I will cause you to ride on the high hills of the earth,
And feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father.
The mouth of the Lord has spoken."

Next Sunday:

PRESCRIPTIONS¹⁶ FOR HEALING THE HURRY SICKNESS

As the world around us accelerates, our energies wane. But we are not defenseless victims. The following suggestions will help replace frenzy with peace and rest.

Rx 1 *Consciously Slow the Pace of Life* - I recently saw a T-shirt that read: "It's not the pace of life that worries me. It's the sudden stop at the end." After contemplation, I decided the exact opposite is true. "The sudden stop at the end" means a home going that, quite frankly, I look forward to. But *the pace of life is deadly!* Is it possible to consciously slow our pace? Of course it is. We just have to say *no* more often. It is not easy, but it is necessary –and it is right. Every year the world spins faster. So put on the brakes and obey the speed limit of your soul. The green pastures and still waters yet await us—but not in the direction the treadmill is spinning.¹⁷

Rx 2 – *Make Technology Work For You and Not Against You* - Remember: Timesaving technologies don't save time. Instead, they compress and consume time. Recognizing that technology is responsible for much of our time urgency problem, it is appropriate to be skeptical. Clocks, watches, alarms, computers, answering machines, cell phones, pagers, and fax machines often create more time problems than they solve. Use them judiciously. Always make technology work for you and not against you. If you can't control it, don't trust it. "The high-tech world of clocks and schedules, computers and programs, was supposed to free us from a life of toil and deprivation," explains technology critic Jeremy Rifkin in *Time Wars*, "yet with each passing day the human race becomes more...exploited and victimized."¹⁸ Leaving a workshop where I had just spoken, a dentist took off his watch and flipped it into the swimming pool. You might not wish to be quite this dramatic. But, then again...

¹⁶ Richard A. Swenson, M.D., *The Overload Syndrome*. Colorado Springs, Colorado: NAVPRESS, 1998, p 123-33.

¹⁷ Psalm 23:2

¹⁸ Jeremy Rifkin, *Time Wars: The primary Conflict in Human History* (New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, 1987), pp. 223-224.

Rx 3 *Throw Away the Alarm Clock* – Psychiatrist Paul Meier provocatively asserts, “If you wake up to an alarm every morning, there is a good chance that you are out of the will of God.” Radical thinking! But he is simply trying to shock us into rethinking the will of God in light of the original equipment provided at Creation. An alarm clock was not a part of the package. Instead, God caused our bodies to generally wake up when we had enough sleep. Now, however, that natural process never gets a chance to complete itself.

Rx 4 *Repent of the pride of Busyness* - The busier we appear, the greater the respect afforded us. While the person sitting on a lawn swing is scorned, the speed-of-light jet jockey is venerated. “The clock dictates the tempo of our lives,” explains Mayo Gilson, M.D. “We all hurry, involving others in our hurry. Paradoxically, we point at our lack of time with a certain pride, as if that lack has something to do with or importance as a person.”¹⁹ There is a trap here, and pride is its name. Before we can slow down and allow God to set things right in our hearts, we have some confessing to do. It is not busyness that we should honor in our midst, but love. Busyness and love are not the same. One is speed; the other is God.

Rx 5 *“Ruthlessly Eliminate Hurry”* When John Ortberg moved from California to Illinois to assume a position at the rapidly growing Willow Creek Community Church, he first asked a wise mentor for advice. “You must ruthlessly eliminate hurry from your life,” said his friend. Ortberg wrote down the advice and then waited for the next suggestion. “There is nothing else,” explained the sage.²⁰ Three aspects of this truth strike me: how *simple* it is, how *difficult* it is, and how *ruthless* it is. *Ruthless* is indeed the best word to use in this context, because no other degree of intention is sufficient to accomplish such a goal.

The Sabbath:

- They had the temple
- They had the sacrifices
- They had the Priesthood
- They had the Feasts and Holy Months
- They had the Scriptures
- They had the Sabbath

For the 1st century Pharisee, God was lost in the ceremony. Could it be for us in the 21st Century He is obscured by the dust our hurried lives kick up?

Back to Mark 2:23

¹⁹ Mayo D. Gilson, “Redeeming the Time,” *News and Reports-CMS*, March/April 1988, p. 81.

²⁰ John Ortberg, *The Life You've Always Wanted: Spiritual Disciplines for Ordinary people* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1997), p.81.

So, Christ confronts a tradition that had grown into a monster head on and again vividly demonstrates He is God. What about those who say Saturday is the day or you can't do anything on Sunday like sell things or play games etc? Just briefly let me sketch the Christian and Sunday!

Why sabbath? daily routine can crowd out God and worship! also symbols can help us. Problems solved by: careful thought, rearranging priorities, discussion and good counsel; others only by prayer! p.129;