

Isaiah 58:2

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Yet they seek me daily, and delight to know my ways, as a nation that did righteousness, and forsook not the ordinance of their God: they ask of me the ordinances of justice; they take delight in approaching to God.

Analysis

God commands Isaiah to expose religious hypocrisy with the intensity of a shofar blast: "Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet." The threefold command emphasizes urgency and boldness. The message targets "my people" and "the house of Jacob"—not pagans but God's covenant community. The irony is sharp: "They seek me daily, and delight to know my ways, as a nation that did righteousness." They maintain external religious observance—regular worship attendance, desire for biblical teaching, questions about God's ordinances. They "ask of me the ordinances of justice" and "take delight in approaching to God." All appears well—they're religiously active, doctrinally interested, and outwardly devoted. Yet God sees through the facade to expose their hearts. This illustrates the Reformed understanding that external conformity without heart transformation is worthless (1 Samuel 16:7). The Pharisees of Jesus' day embodied this same hypocrisy (Matthew 23:25-28). Mere religious activity, even doctrinally informed activity, cannot substitute for genuine heart devotion and obedience.

Historical Context

This prophecy addressed the post-exilic community who had rebuilt the temple and resumed sacrificial worship, yet their hearts remained far from God. Similar issues arose in Malachi's ministry when the returned exiles maintained religious forms

while harboring corrupt hearts (Malachi 1:6-14, 2:17). The pattern of external religiosity masking internal rebellion characterized much of Israel's history, from the days of Samuel (1 Samuel 15:22) through the prophetic era.

Related Passages

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. How can we maintain external religious activity while harboring hearts far from God?
2. What distinguishes genuine delight in God from mere delight in religious observance?
3. In what ways might doctrinal knowledge become a substitute for heart transformation?

Interlinear Text

וְאֹתֵי י	יּוֹם	יּוֹם	וְדִרְשׁוּן	וְדַעַת	דְּרָכַי	וְחִפְצֵי:
H853	me daily	me daily	Yet they seek	to know	my ways	and delight
	H3117	H3117	H1875	H1847	H1870	H2654
כְּגוֹי	אֲשֶׁר	צִדִּיקָהּ	עָשָׂה	מִשְׁפָּטִי	אֱלֹהֵי יִם	לֹא
as a nation	H834	righteousness	that did	not the ordinance	of their God	H3808
H1471		H6666	H6213	H4941	H430	
עַזָּב	וַיִּשְׁאַל וְנִי	מִשְׁפָּטִי	צִדִּיק	קִרְבָּת		
and forsook	they ask	not the ordinance	of justice	in approaching		
H5800	H7592	H4941	H6664	H7132		
אֱלֹהֵי יִם	וְחִפְצֵי:					
of their God	and delight					
H430	H2654					

Additional Cross-References

Isaiah 29:13 (Parallel theme): Wherefore the Lord said, Forasmuch as this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men:

Titus 1:16 (References God): They profess that they know God; but in works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate.

From KJV Study • kjevstudy.org