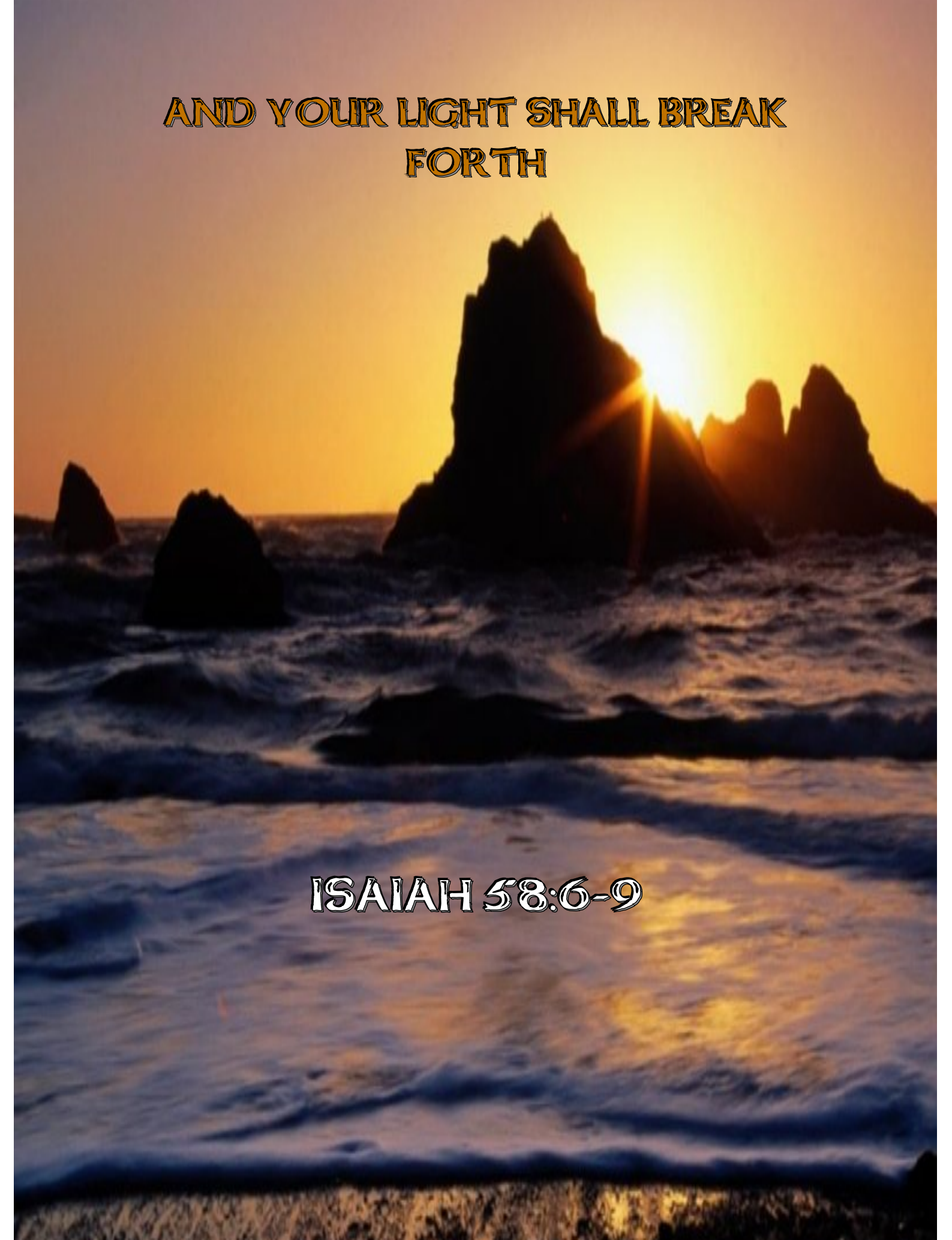


**AND YOUR LIGHT SHALL BREAK
FORTH**

ISAIAH 58:6-9



VERSE 6

Isaiah 58:6

"Is this not the fast that I have chosen: To loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, to let the oppressed go free, and that you break every yoke?"

IS THIS NOT THE FAST THAT I HAVE CHOSEN?

The Israelites were comfortable in, and pleased with, their outward expression of religiosity, in fasting before God, yet their daily conduct was in opposition to how God called them to live. The Israelites cried to God, "^{3a}*Why have we fasted and you have not seen? Why have we afflicted our souls and you have not taken notice?*" God highlights their hypocrisy as they fast for justice; yet continue to exploit their own laborers, excusing it as being in accordance with the law. They live together in strife and debate, striking at each other in wickedness ^(58:3b-4a). God makes it clear that their fasting is half-hearted and hypocritical and could not result in genuine prayer. God was looking for an outward manifestation of their inward humility toward God and those around them; God will not hear a wicked and unrepentant heart ^(58:4b).

God expresses His distaste toward their vain fasting. He tells them that they are no longer to fast as they do, for He will not acknowledge it as fasting...God will not hear their cries ^(58:4b). He challenges them by saying, "⁵*Is it a fast that I have chosen, a day for a man to afflict his soul?*" Should the Almighty God owe merit to the inconvenience and pain experienced by abstinence of man from food? Surely not; God is looking inwardly for a contrite heart not at the outwardly proud and hypocritical fasting! He goes on to say that he requires a different type of fasting, one that does not vainly afflict the soul but rather sets captive souls free.

TO LOOSE THE BONDS OF WICKEDNESS,

A bond is something that restricts or restrains in anyway. In the literally sense, a 'fetter' refers to a shackle and chain around ones leg to prevent them from moving; yet figuratively it explains mental or spiritual impedance that wickedness places on ones life. Satan has people in such a place that they have virtually been cornered, without the ability to move. God is instructing us to free these people from their restraint...to give them freedom. Rather than stirring up wickedness amongst each other we are to do the opposite and break the bonds of wickedness, which gives hope. We are instructed to 'loose'...chip away at that surface of ones life; plough their spirit in preparation for sowing a seed; later to be sculptured by the Masters hand.

TO UNDO THE HEAVY BURDENS,

The term undo is not passive...in fact it is used quite specifically to indicate the exactness of what is required. To 'undo' is a nice way of saying to cancel out or annul something; reverting it back to it's original state as if to make the previous act of no effect. We are to deprive wickedness of it's characteristics in other peoples lives, allowing them to pass abruptly from the state of bondage 'back to' the state of freedom...they need to be so free, it's as if they were never bound in the first place.

When I think of heavy I think 'dense'...and someone carrying a 'heavy' burden would be slow and laborious...the longer they carry the heavy weight the heavier it feels. The use of the word heavy is significant as it describes not only the density of a person's burden but also allows insight into the individual's physical, spiritual and mental condition after carrying their burden for so long. The literal understanding of how light struggles to pass thorough dense matter helps us to understand, figuratively, how the ever increasing density of ones burden draws them further and further from the Light. They are in such a spiritual vice that they couldn't see a way out even if they wanted to.

TO LET THE OPPRESSED GO FREE,

When you understand what it means to be oppressed, then the meaning of freedom almost speaks for itself. You could spend all day asking random people on the street whether they feel that they are oppressed, and the most common answer would be no...But unfortunately they are, and they don't even know it. Satan is just so good at making his oppression seem like freedom. Satan has laden people with psychological and spiritual grief to disempower and then persecute them.

We are asked to 'let them go free'. We are to show them how to move from where they are to where they should be. We want to introduce them into a new environment where they can feel comfortable to open themselves out after a life of servitude and confinement to wickedness. I can't help but think of a man who has been locked up in a dungeon almost all his life, with a shackle and chain around his leg. One day a guard comes into the cell, unlocks the man's chains and tells him that he is being released and is allowed to go free. How do you think that man would react to that...would he get up and run out or would he sit there in the cell wondering where he would be better off? The outside world that he was born into is now a place of fear and uncertainty...and although he would be restrained and mistreated in jail, it's now the only place that he knows is safe. So in saying that, people can be released from Satan's oppression; but ultimately it becomes their choice to accept the offer of freedom or not.

AND THAT YOU BREAK EVERY YOKE?

A yoke is the same word which was used previously for 'heavy'. It is used figuratively to describe the state of affairs of an individual who is bound by Satan. Satan has locked them in, next to him, and where he goes they are forced to go. We are told to 'break' those yokes...render them inoperative and ruin them completely. But along with the 'break' comes the 'breaking in' of the individual as they learn to be submissive and obedient to God. It is essential to break the yoke if we hope to prevent the completion of Satan's plan for their life. The word break isn't passive though unfortunately...I guess a good analogy would be to pluck a hair from your head. You don't grab a bunch of hair and slowly yank it from the head...you pull one hair at a time lightly but sharply, removing the hair by the root with the least amount of pain possible. When that one is done you pull the next one. There may be times where the plucking feels more like a dam bursting, but the yolk must be broken. The picture wouldn't be complete if you didn't highlight the word 'every'...there will always be more than one yoke that binds a person...they ALL need to be broken and shattered like empty jars before God, without exception. God wants a rendered heart.

VERSE 7

Isaiah 58:7

Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and that you bring to your house the poor who are cast out; When you see the naked, that you cover him, And not hide yourself from your own flesh?

IS IT NOT TO SHARE YOUR BREAD WITH THE HUNGRY,

When I think of bread I think of food for sustenance. Figuratively, we are being instructed here to share the 'bread of life' that sustains us spiritually. But how do we share that...do we have to give some of our sustenance away? The way I see it is, it's not about dividing up a block of chocolate and each having half but rather a sharing by way of 'joint use' or 'share in common'. We are asked to tell these broken people about what we have in Jesus...share with them the understanding and love that they too can have...then you will share a common ground. I guess literally the word 'hungry' means to be craving for food...but figuratively 'hungry' is speaking of the person's soul. They may not recognize it but they are spiritually starving...and God is the only one that can fulfill that hunger.

AND THAT YOU BRING TO YOUR HOUSE THE POOR WHO ARE CAST OUT;

The literal interpretation of this passage is fairly self explanatory...don't turn a blind eye to the poor, and marginalized; but rather bring them into your home and provide for their need. Sounds like a very 'moral' type thing to do.

I wonder how it would look in the figurative sense.

The Hebrew translation for 'bring' seems to involve a lot more than simply opening the door when you hear a knock...word's like besiege; abide; fetch; lead etc are all quite active. I like this definition for 'bring'; '*To beset or surround with armed forces for the purpose of compelling to surrender*'. Ok, so we're not about to physically force someone into our home...but it aims to demonstrate the spiritual motivation that should influence our outward actions. In addition to that; 'to bring' implies that you take someone or something 'with you'...you walk their journey 'with' them and help to ease their load.

So a 'house' then, in the figurative sense, would represent the 'house of God'...or if you want to get even more specific 'the presence of God'. This really starts to open up the idea of bringing them into your house. In the spiritual sense,

depending on circumstance, the 'house' could represent church, small group fellowship, or something as simple as exposing them to the life that you have in Jesus as you look intently for an opportunity to share. 'Your house' is in God's house, so anytime that you share a part of your life with someone else, you are exposing them to the spiritual realm of God...thus, you are bringing them into 'the house'! Wow, that is so cool.

Let's look at what it means to be 'poor and cast out'.

I think the word 'need' is fairly encompassing in reference to 'the poor'...this could include a range of circumstances from those in a lowly condition; needing attention; destitute; empty; or my favourite 'afflicted in either mind or circumstance'. And I guess 'cast out' refers to rejection or seclusion from society or the like. So what do these people look like spiritually? Well I guess they look just like we do (or perhaps as we did, at some stage)...we are all destitute whether we realise it or not...without God we are in an extreme state of poverty, completely lacking in resources or support. We are not told to invite our neighbours into our house who already have shelter (either figuratively or literally)...we are told to go out and bring into our house those that are not sheltered from the elements! These are people who are being attacked and destroyed by Satan through the lusts of this world, and without spiritual shelter and support they will not survive. I guess secondary to that is the obvious fact that we don't just invite them into our home expecting to soon leave them alone again, to endure the elements. Once we invite them in, they're there for good, unless of course they don't want to stay. If you find a stray dog, you don't simply feed it, and shelter it for a couple of days and then leave him to wander the streets alone again...if you can't keep him, you find someone who can! It's the same with people...we bring them in and if we don't have the ability to disciple them then we need to pass them on or get support.

WHEN YOU SEE THE NAKED, THAT YOU COVER HIM,

Who the heck are 'the naked'...apart from the obvious of course?

Ok, ok so if you're a little slow here's the obvious...

Literally, a naked person is someone without clothes on, and in this sense they not only have *no clothes on* but they most likely have *no clothes to put on* either...thus why he is naked! So to clothe him would mean to cover his nakedness and give him clothes to wear.

I'm going to have to think about the figurative for a minute...hold on.

Ok, so the way I see it is that being naked means exposed and unprotected. Just as armour covers and protects the vulnerabilities of a soldier's flesh against the enemy; so Jesus hides and protects our vulnerable spirits from the attack of Satan. Without the armour, the soldier becomes naked to his enemies...they not only see the weakness of his flesh, but they are able to target them more specifically and ultimately cause fatal wounds. So it is with our spiritual armour...without the clothing of ourselves with Jesus, we are open and vulnerable to attack from Satan; he can see all our weaknesses and has an open shot at our spirit. We were created with the covering of our God within our lives...we have become unsheathed from our original protective clothing, and no matter how we try other 'generic' suits of armour, only one is *guaranteed* to save our soul over and over again.

So how then are we expected to 'cover them' if only Jesus can provide our spiritual clothing?

I guess it encompasses 4 things

1. bring them to Jesus to clothe them
2. clothe them through prayer and intercession
3. bring them into the protection of the body of Christ
4. love them – 'love covers a multitude of sins'

At first glance, the very first word of this line, '*when*', may not mean much...but it actually says a lot more than it's given credit for. This word, known in linguistic circles as a 'particle', has the ability to change or create the relationship between different parts of the sentence. Although this is a good thing because it brings relevance to the sentence; that one little word has just put the pressure on us to act! That word has just created a 'cause and effect'... when this happens, then this should happen. Let me clarify...the verse says *When you see the naked...cover him*. The *cause* (the agent that produces an action on something) is '*you see*' and the *effect* (what the *cause* produces) is '*cover him*'. Without the word '*when*' the link between seeing and covering is not defined. The word '*when*' makes it quite clear...seeing someone naked means that we *must* clothe him. This means that after seeing someone naked (figuratively) we are not allowed to quickly turn away and pretend that we didn't see them, or conclude that the circumstances weren't right. It like saying to a kid...'When you wet your pants I will smack you'...the kid knows that wet pants and a smack go together...there is no such thing as wet pants without a smack!

AND NOT HIDE YOURSELF FROM YOUR OWN FLESH?

The term 'Own Flesh' is interesting. I don't think that you could escape from the fact that it means 'belonging to'. I see 3 connotations here:

1. we are all born of the flesh by Adam and Eve
2. we are all created in the image of God
3. we are all sinners who have fallen short of God's glory and need His grace to save us

So here's a little brain storm on what it could mean when it says 'not to hide yourself from your own flesh'

1. Do not be embarrassed of you fellow man and turn away from his poor, naked and afflicted state at the expense of his eternal soul
2. Do not think that you are any better than the spiritually afflicted...it is only by God's grace that you are saved and lifted out of the pit
3. Do not think that you can hide your own flaws by passing-by the lowly that are in need. Do not be so proud as to conceal your imperfections from others...it is those that God will use to reach *others just like you!*
4. Remember that every soul is precious to God and he desires them as much as he desired you. What if the crucial link in your reunion with Christ just passed you by because of your lowly state?
5. Remember that none of their short-falls are uncommon to man...which means you've experienced it too! Do not judge lest you be judged.

SUMMARY

I figured that it would be good to do a brief summary before moving onto the next 2 verses.

Fasting should be a continuous state of humility and reverence before God. Our sincerity of heart should flow outwardly to others. Afflicting the soul (or flesh) is not simply about denying the body of food; it's about denying the fleshly nature and continuously bringing it into submission before God. This doesn't mean that we can't or shouldn't fast from food, but unless our heart is right before God the affliction of our physical body will profit us nothing.

We are told in the literal sense to 'loose the bonds of wickedness'; 'undo heavy burdens'; and 'let the oppressed go free'. To me, this says; *Undo all things that wickedness has created in your life.* Then, once you have removed the plank from you own you can see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye.

We are then urged not to stop at rectifying the past wrongs of wickedness, but to continue in righteousness by demonstrating towards others the love that was first shown to us through Christ Jesus.

VERSE 8

Isaiah 58:8

Then your light shall break forth like the morning, your healing shall spring forth speedily, and your righteousness shall go before you; the glory of the LORD shall be your rear guard.

OBSERVATION

Here God describes the reward that we will receive if we fast in the manner described...which is with a self-sacrificial love and humble heart before God. The Israelites were bitter to God because they were 'afflicting their souls' through fasting but were not seeing any fruits from their *labour*. I guess that was the problem...it was not done out of a sincere and humble heart in unconditional love toward God. So God now shows us that if we live in righteousness as he has instructed then He will hear us and answer us...and here is the promise of our reward...

INTERPRETATION**Our Light**

What is our light? How does it break forth? And in which way does it resemble the morning?

When I think of light in the spiritual sense, I think of Jesus shining out of me...because it says in Matt 4:16 that Jesus is *The Light* and in John 12:36-46 we are told that by believing in *The Light* we too can become son of light... further to this Isaiah 42:6 tells us that we have been called to be as light unto the world. So it's quite clear that God is the source of light.

Darkness and light are opposites...so if God is Light then anything that is not of Him is in darkness. It says that 'your light shall break forth like the morning'...the light of the morning comes from the sun which rises, and in doing so; the darkness of the night slowly disappears. The breaking of the morning light signifies a new day...it is a welcome sight after a long and dark night. The darkness of the night brings with it the fear of things which can't be seen, and remain unexposed. The breaking of the morning light shines on those things which are hidden in the darkness...then they either become exposed or they hide until darkness reappears. It says in Genesis 1:18 that the light was separated from the darkness...Darkness and Light can not coexist, so if darkness is the absence of light, then, when the light shines the darkness must disappear.

I guess when it says that 'your light will break forth like the morning' it is implied that we are in the state where light is breaking out of us...we are *being light*. The Hebrew word used here for light means luminary in every sense...even to the extent of happiness.

The Hebrew translation for 'break forth' is quite dramatic...such as, to cut out, burst, tear, divide etc. To me it seems that when the light is ready to shine it can not be contained...it just bursts out! Once released, the light tears through the darkness allowing everything to be seen.

The descriptor used here is '*as the morning*'...literally meaning the light of the early morning. However it comes from the Hebrew word *shachar* (OT 7836) which bares the figurative implication of earnestness.

So what does all this mean?

We are told in Ephesians 5:8-11 that 'the light of the Lord' is goodness, righteousness and truth which is given by God and is acceptable to the Lord. In Psalm 37:6 we are told that God will bring forth our righteousness as the light and our justice as the noonday. It seems here, in the context of the passage, that God is telling the Israelites that if they abandon their religiosities and begin to live godly, law-abiding lives with compassion towards others, that their righteous behaviour, which is the fruit of saving faith, will ensure their deliverance. God will allow their righteousness (light) to be seen as the morning sun...their state of distress will be replaced by the light of God's favor.

Our Healing

What will be healed? How will it be healed?

The KJV uses the term 'thine health' as opposed to 'your healing' but either way the word is used to describe the restoring something to wholeness. Most of us probably don't think that there is much wrong with our spiritual health but the Bible shows quite the opposite...here are some of the descriptors that are used to describe those who are trapped in darkness...blind, unfruitful, asleep, dead, hard-pressed, hungry, troubled, anguished etc. They all sound kinda unhealthy

too me...if I was blind I would want to be healed; if I was hungry I would want to be fed; and if I was suffering in anguish over the consequences of my sinful life, I would want to be freed from that! These are exactly the types of things that God will bring health and healing for. But as we know, wickedness will not release those that practice it...so for us to receive the gift of healing and wholeness, we are required to change how we live. We are told not to be hypocrites, by praying for justice when we do not live justly! Live just lives and God's mercy and grace will be upon you. In this passage Isaiah is telling them that God can heal-over their adversaries as if they never existed, if only they would live righteously. They cried to God asking why He wasn't hearing them, yet they were asking for freedom from something that they themselves were instigators of...How absurd!

Our Righteousness

This seems to be an extension of the morning light...as we live in righteousness, our lives will exude God's light. God promises the house of Judah that if they live in righteousness then He will go before them and uphold them before their enemies. Their righteousness will shine amidst a dark world...and God will lift them up.

Our Rear Guard

Most commentaries describe the rear guard as a protective feature...and although this is most likely true, the Hebrew meaning of the word seems to delve more into the idea of recovering or gathering together. I liken this verse to the Pillar of Fire and Cloud that went before and behind the Israelites when they fled from Egypt. It was as if God's righteousness went before them to lead the way and prepare a way and He also followed behind them to place a barrier between them and the Egyptian army. He will walk behind us and surround us to protect us from our enemies attack...and the way I see it is, He also comes along behind us and gather up the loose ends so that our lives may leave a path that serves to glorify His name.

This entire verse is pointing strongly toward God's gracious protection, healing and guidance to the righteous.

Application

I guess the most important thing for us to understand is that the light only rises, the healing only comes, righteousness only goes before us and glory only follows us as we walk in righteousness that stems from a sincere heart. By walking each day transparently before God; by keeping our thought life and flesh life in line with the example given to us by Jesus; then we can expect that God will be open to hear us, speak to us and walk with us. God doesn't want our ritualistic and intermittent devotional time, nor does He care for our self seeking and circumstantial prayer life; He wants us a living sacrifice...where every inch of our being is tuned in to Him. The cry of a sincere and righteous life is one that He is willing to hear...and one that He is proud to defend before and against man. If we up-hold Jesus in our lives so will He up-hold us before His Father in Heaven and before man on earth. His favor on our life will bring about a new hope, a new passion and new life in Him.

Isaiah 58:9

Then you shall call, and the LORD will answer; you shall cry, and He will say, 'Here I am.'

COMPARISON OF LIGHT AND DARKNESS

	Light	Darkness
Genesis 1:18	Light was separated from darkness	
Psalms 37:6	Righteousness	Unrighteousness
Isaiah 8:20	The Law	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Apart from the Law ▪ Hard-pressed & hungry ▪ Enraged & curse God ▪ Trouble, gloom, anguish
Isaiah 42:6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ We have been called in righteousness to be as a light to the world ▪ Being a light will cause the blind to see and set the prisoners free from darkness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Blind ▪ Prisoners
Job 11:17-20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Our life ▪ Provides safety, security, hope and life 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Fear ▪ Wickedness leading to death
Matthew 4:16	Jesus is 'the light'	
Matthew 6:22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Fixed on heavenly things 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Neither hot nor cold
John 1:5		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Does not comprehend the Light
John 3:19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Does the truth ▪ Deeds are clearly seen and done in God 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Evil Deeds ▪ Hates the Light, flees from it ▪ Exposed by the Light
John 12:36-46	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ By believing in 'the light' we too may become sons of light ▪ Being in the light allows us to see where we are going ▪ While we have the light we should walk in it lest darkness overtakes us ▪ Believing in 'the' light' takes us out of darkness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Those in darkness do not believe in Jesus ▪ Those that do not walk in the light will be overtaken by darkness ▪ He who walks in darkness does not know where he is going
Acts 26:18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Opened eyes ▪ Power of God 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Closed eyes ▪ Power of Satan
Romans 13:12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Day 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Night
Ephesians 5:8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Goodness, righteousness and truth ▪ Acceptable to the Lord ▪ Exposes ▪ Given by Christ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Unfruitful works ▪ Things done in secret ▪ Asleep, dead