

Zechariah 7 What God Requires

Jesus

What is the one thing God requires of men?

Matthew 22:36 [Greatest Command] ... 'You shall **love the Lord** your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.' 38 This is the first and great commandment. 39 And the second is like it: 'You shall **love your neighbor** as yourself.' 40 On these two commandments hang all the **Law and the Prophets.**"

Galatians 5:14 [Paul reduced 2 to 1] ... all the law is fulfilled in **one word**, even in this: **"You shall love your neighbor as yourself."**

Q. What does God want from us?

A. Love Him demonstrated by proactively **loving** others **as we love ourselves**

- **IOWs** Treat **every person** the way you would want to be treated
 1. How you want to be **greeted**
 2. How you want to be **served**
 3. How you want to be **listened to**
 4. How you want to be **respected**...do that

We know what God requires...Judah knew what God required

Leviticus 19:18 [OT 1500 BC] You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the children of your people, but **you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the Lord.**

- Prophets warned the people to be just/merciful/compassionate

Refused to heed/Shrugged their shoulders/Stopped their ears
Instead of obeying God...they **got religious instead**

I. Obedience Better Sacrifice

1 Now in the fourth year of King **Darius** it came to pass *that* the **word of the Lord** came to Zechariah, on the fourth *day* of the ninth month, Chislev, ² when *the people* sent Sherezer, with Regem-Melech and his men, *to* the house of God, to **pray** before the Lord, ³ *and* to **ask** the priests who *were* in the house of the Lord of hosts, and the prophets, saying, **"Should I** weep in the fifth month and fast as I have done for so many years?"

- **Scene:** Winter of 518 BC
 1. People of Judah back from captivity after 70 Years
 2. Men are sent from Shiloh to Jerusalem w/**question for Zech**

We fasted certain days in Babylon to observe the destruction of the Temple

Q. Should we continue to fast since we are back in the land?

4 Then the **word of the Lord** of hosts came to me, saying, 5 "Say to all the people of the land, and to the priests: 'When you fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh months during those **seventy years, did you really fast for Me—for Me?** 6 When you eat and when you drink, do you not eat and drink for yourselves?"

- **Word of the Lord:** God answers question w/question...

What was your motive for fasting in Babylon?

[God only called for one fast, i.e. Day of Atonement]

- **Two God ordained rituals today:** Baptism/Communion
- Lent? Ash Wednesday? No-meat Friday. Counting beads? Dietary? Prayer rugs?

Are you really doing these things for Me? What are your motives?

1. Ease conscience/continue living for self?
2. Seek to make God a debtor to you?

Q. Why are you doing what I never asked/Not doing what I said to do?

A. Because it's **easier to be religious** on our terms than to **obey God on His**

- **His Terms?** Die to self/Live to God by proactively loving others. We'd rather fast

Q. Should we keep doing what You never told us to do in the first place?

7 Should you not have obeyed the words which the LORD proclaimed through the **former prophets** when Jerusalem and the cities around it were inhabited and prosperous, and the South and the Lowland were inhabited?' "

- **I warned you** but you didn't listen/Don't really want to hear now..

You grieved over the destruction of the temple/Not over the reason it was destroyed
You fast to hear My voice...But you don't listen when I speak

Matthew 15:7 Hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy about you, saying: 8 'These people draw near to Me with their mouth, And **honor Me with their lips**, But their **heart is far from Me**. 9 And in vain they worship Me, Teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.' "

Isaiah 58:1b [God sends Isaiah] ...Tell My people their transgression, And the house of Jacob their sins. 2 Yet [they will say] **they seek Me daily**, And delight to **know My ways**, **As a nation that did righteousness**, And did not forsake the ordinance of their God. They ask of Me the ordinances of justice; They take delight in approaching God [to complain]. 3 'Why have we fasted,' they say, 'and You have not seen? Why have we afflicted our souls, and You take no notice?' [seeking to make God a debtor] **4b... Would you call this a fast**, And an acceptable day to the Lord?

Your self-imposed sacrifices do not please Me

You don't get to substitute religious activity in place of obeying Me

- **King Saul:** Called to destroy Amalekites/Instead sacrificed burnt offerings

1 Samuel 15:22 So [the Prophet] Samuel said: "Has the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, As in **obeying the voice of the Lord?** Behold, **to obey is better than** [self-initiated] **sacrifice**, And to heed than the fat of rams. 23 For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, And stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the Lord, He also has rejected you from being king."

Religion is rebellion against God. Why?

God never asked us to be religious but to **lay down our lives for others**

- Is a parent pleased when after asking a child to be kind they *clean their room instead?*
- Is God pleased when after asking us to repent of bitterness... *read our Bibles instead?*

Even a good thing is a bad thing when God said do the other thing. [NJC]

- **It's not like God has not told man what to do...**like a zillion times

Get your relationship with people right and you will be right with Me

Micah 6:7 Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, Ten thousand rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, The fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? **8 He has shown you, O man, what is good; And what does the Lord require of you But to do justly, To love mercy, And to walk humbly with your God?**

- **I'd rather** _____ instead of dying to self for others?

1 Corinthians 13: 1 Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become **sounding brass or a clanging cymbal**. 2 And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, **I am nothing**. 3 And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it **profits me nothing**. [Vanishes as if it never happened]

God sees our motives. **Q.** Is what we are doing out of love for Him?

How do we know? **Does it hurt?**

- **David:** Offered land where the Temple would be built for free...

2 Samuel 24:24 Then the king said... "No, but I will surely buy it from you for a price; nor will I offer burnt offerings to the Lord my God **with that which costs me nothing.**"

Obeying God has a price. **Death to self**. Death to self has a reward. **Life to God**.

Kingdom of self **vs** Kingdom of God. **We can't have both**

- **Judah: We want to hear from God. God:** You already did/didn't listen/bad stuff happened
- **I'll tell you again.** It's about people...

⁸ Then the **word of the LORD came to Zechariah**, saying, ⁹ "Thus says the LORD of hosts: '**Execute true justice, Show mercy and compassion** Everyone to his brother. ¹⁰ **Do not oppress the widow or the fatherless, The alien or the poor.** Let **none of you plan evil** in his heart Against his brother.'

Zechariah 1:3 ...say to them, 'Thus says the Lord of hosts: "**Return to Me,**" says the Lord of hosts, "**and I will return to you,**" says the Lord of hosts. ⁴ "Do not be like your fathers, to whom the former prophets preached, saying, 'Thus says the Lord of hosts: "Turn now from your evil ways and your evil deeds.'" ' But they **did not hear nor heed Me,**" says the Lord.

- Return to me and show it by your actions: **Proactive love**

1. **Justice** Do what is fair in dealing w/others
2. **Mercy** Do what is compassionate, i.e. Err on the side of compassion
3. **Compassion** Love/Care for another from the gut
4. **Comfort** Widow/orphan/stranger/poor/lonely/forgotten/marginal
5. **Do Good** Plan to do what is best for others

I desire Obedience not Sacrifice...Love Relationship not Religion
Your fathers claimed to desire My will...I told them what to do

¹¹ "But they **refused to heed, shrugged their shoulders,** and stopped their ears so that they could not hear.

- Shrugged Shoulders:** God touched shoulder to correct/They violently pulled away

¹² Yes, **they made their hearts like flint,** refusing to hear the law and the words which the LORD of hosts had sent **by His Spirit** through the former prophets. Thus great wrath came from the LORD of hosts. ¹³ Therefore **it happened, that** just as He proclaimed and they would not hear, so they called out and I would not listen," says the LORD of hosts. ¹⁴ "**But I scattered them with a whirlwind** among all the nations which they had not known. Thus the **land became desolate after them,** so that no one passed through or returned; for they made the pleasant land desolate."

**They made the pleasant land desolate be failing to love
God called. They did not listen...They called. God did not listen**

- God sent Jeremiah, Isaiah, and others:** Continue in sin become slaves to sin

Isaiah 58:6 [100+ years before captivity] "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?** 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?"

- Q.** What does the LORD desire? Don't have to guess. **A. Love in Action**

1. Free people w/Gospel/Truth
 2. Feed people
 3. House people
 4. Clothe people
 5. Care for people. Common denominator? **People.** Yah I know
- **Is there a reward for Selfless loving/Going out of our way? Extra mile?**
 - **Get to come out of our dark little box...**

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. 9 Then you shall call, and the Lord will answer; You shall cry, and He will say, 'Here I am.' "If you **take away the yoke** from your midst, The **pointing of the finger**, and **speaking wickedness**, 10 If you extend your soul to the hungry And satisfy the afflicted soul, Then your light shall dawn in the darkness, And your darkness shall be as the noonday.

Cure for depression? Others First Living

Treating every person we meet [deserving or not] the way we want to be treated

1. **Stop Oppressing** Controlling others. Even passively
 2. **Stop Judging** Pointing finger at others
 3. **Stop Talking Smack** Demeaning others. Slander/Gossip
 4. **Start Proactively Loving** Begin Abundantly Living
- **If** You have God's priorities for your life: **Jesus/Others/You...**
 - **Then** Your light shall dawn. Darkness/Depression will disperse

Your life will be lit up...

Psalms 112:4 Unto the **upright** [those who do right] there **arises light** in the darkness...

Experiencing Darkness/Fear? **Do what's right and be lit up**

- **Promise for Selfless Love?** Life of Light

1 John 4:17 Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness in the day of judgment; **because as He is, so are we in this world.** 18 There is no fear in love; but **perfect love casts out fear...**

- **Perfect Love?** God loving us/Us loving Him by proactively loving others
- **Jesus is Light.** When we do what He did we will experience His Light

Promises for treating others we want to be treated continues...

Isaiah 58:11 The Lord will **guide you** continually, And **satisfy your soul** in drought, And **strengthen your bones**; You shall be like a watered garden, And like a **spring of water**, whose waters do not fail.

- Life of Light. Life with no Fear
 1. **God's** continual Guidance

2. **Soul's** complete Satisfaction
3. **Frame** Established/Immovable
4. **Spirit** Refreshed by continual Living Water

Purpose for breathing...Build others up in the Name/Power of Jesus

Isaiah 58:12 [To those who put others first] ... you Shall **build the old waste places**; You shall **raise up the foundations** of many generations; And you shall be called the **Repairer of the Breach, The Restorer of Streets to Dwell In.**

You can't build anything for God's kingdom on the foundation of a superficial walk with God.
[Guzik]

- **What will be our legacy?** One who Builds, Raises up, Repairs, Restores?

Matthew 12:20 A bruised reed He will not break, And smoking flax He will not quench...

Acts 10:38 ...God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, **who went about doing good...**

- **We are called to do the same:** Heal the broken/Encourage the fainthearted

Am I building up others or am I only concerned about my own personal development?

Call to Judah to Repent of Selfishness/Religious Pride?

Commit to treating every person we meet as we would want to be treated

1. How you want to be **greeted**
2. How you want to be **served**
3. How you want to be **listened to**
4. How you want to be **respected**
5. How you want to be **loved**...and our Light will break forth like the morning

Acts 3:19 Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that **times of refreshing may come** from the presence of the Lord...

When we question what God desires from us **...loving others is our default**

We will be known in His Kingdom as those who Repair/Restore others

Zechariah 8: Repair/Restoration of God's People/His City: Just the way it's supposed to be