



**Sermon Series:** Unquenchable Hope Part 8

**Sermon Title:** People, NOT Religion

**Speaker/ Date:** Segun Aiyegbusi, June 21, 2020

## **Zechariah 7**

**Big Idea: BEWARE THE DRIFT FROM INWARD RELATIONSHIP (with God) TO OUTWARD RELIGION (toward people).**

In this message, there are (3) **WARNINGS** signs we're going to discuss that you have begun to drift

**Warning 1: You're More Focused On Rules Than A Relationship With God**

### **Zechariah 7:1-7**

In this passage the temple-rebuilding project is almost completed. The people had observed a fasting ritual to mourn the destruction of the temple; but when we get to chapter 7, inquire of God if they could stop with their rituals! From God's response we see that the things He deems important are radically different from what religious people consider to be important.

First of all, their fasting rituals were self-imposed. God had NOT commanded Israel to keep these fasts. Then God exposes what was really taking place behind the scenes during that time when they claimed they were fasting in **Zechariah 7:5-6**.

These questions reveal a lot because the act of fasting is about drawing closer in relationship with God; But when God reveals that your fasts have nothing to do with Him, you have seriously drifted from an inward relationship with Him to outward religion apart from Him.

**Warning 2: You're More Concerned With Comfort Than The Welfare Of Others**

### **Zechariah 7:5-10**

The sins that God criticizes them for committing here are the same sins God warned them about during an earlier period of Israel's history when their towns were at peace and prosperous.

Even their prescribed feasts, which were to be a celebration and remembrance of what God had accomplished on their behalf, had become self-centered. In order to protect and preserve their comforts, they neglected true justice for the oppressed. They continued to press down the widows, the fatherless, the foreigner, the poor and the oppressed.

God has a special love for widows, for orphans, for the underprivileged, and the foreigner in your backyard. You want to get to the heart of God? Insert yourself into the lives of those people groups, listen to the stories, empathize with them, and then respond to their needs accordingly!

When you do this, God says in **Isaiah 58:9**, “Then you will call, and the Lord will answer; you will cry for help, and he will say: Here am I.”

### **Warning 3: You're More Attentive To Your Plans Than God's Word** **Zechariah 7:11-12**

The Israelites were so set on pursuing their own agenda that the picture God paints for us here is that they their jaws in defiance. What is especially troubling about this defiance is that they were still showing up at the temple each week to sing and worship; but it was just an outward showing of religious piety with no real inward relationship with God.

Remember, God has a special place in His heart for the oppressed, the widows, the fatherless, the foreigner, and the poor in your backyards.

The Israelites did not heed these warning and as a result, **Zechariah 7:13-14** says, God DID NOT listen to their prayers, but “scattered them with a whirlwind among the nations” and He caused their fertile lands to become desolate.

When we steers our hearts from outward religion to an inward relationship with God where we begin to care for and pursue the things He's passionate about, then your prayers will begin to align with His will and you will experience His hand of favor on your life!

### **Discussion Questions:**

- **What about the sermon stuck with you this week? What part challenged your thinking?**
- **What did you start doing in the early stages of your faith to grow your relationship with God that has now morphed into meaningless routine (or religious rules you expect others to live by)? Why do you feel you need to keep those routines? Explain.**
- **How do you discern between people who attend church, post Bible passages on social media, or use the Bible itself as a prop to show others that they're a Christian, and people who are actually growing in a relationship with the God revealed in the Bible?**
- **God has a special place in His heart for the oppressed, the widows, the fatherless, the foreigner, and the poor in your backyard. In what ways do you personally help to take care of the people close to God's heart? Share ideas – and even better, commit to adding some new ideas to your practices!**
- **Zechariah 7:13-14 says, God DID NOT listen to the Israelites prayers because of the sin in their lives. Is there anything in your life that is causing God to not listen to your prayers? What steps do you need to take to change that?**