

21 DAYS OF PRAYER AND FASTING

Weakness And God's Grace Through Fasting / 1.7.23

I. INTRODUCTION (Revelation 22:1-21)

- A. Life today, and the foreseeable future is changing rapidly. What works today and allows for us to get by, won't serve us in the same way moving forward. It's true that good things in Christianity, can become the enemy of God things.
- B. The subject of weekly/regular fasting is something I believe the Holy Spirit is and has been emphasizing among the Church.
- C. Tonight, I want to share with you how fasting requires us to embrace voluntary weakness, 5 Biblical ways we can fast and some practical issues related to fasting.

II. EMBRACING VOLUNTARY WEAKNESS

- A. I think that the reasons people don't fast are endless, but one of the major ones for me is a fear about losing out on legitimate pleasures. But what I've come to find out is that my fear of going without something is greater than the experience of going without it.
- B. Some people see fasting as archaic, or even optional, but Jesus expected that His disciples would fast regularly, and not just because they were in a pinch. History records that the early Church fasted twice a week and lasted for 100's of years.
 - 1. 1st Clement (99AD) spoke of Moses as a great leader because he fasted on behalf of the people—Polycarp (120 AD) fasted to return to God's word and stay away from heresy—Barnabas (200 AD) called others to remember the poor according to **Isaiah 58:4-10** when they fasted—The Shepherd of Hermas (HER-MESS) (230 AD) Believed that fasting was a means of continuing our sanctification, and he would also encourage others to take the money they would've spent on food and give it to others
 - 2. John Wesley (1700's) Fasted twice a week and encouraged all the preachers he was training to do the same—John G Lake (1870-1935) Fasted regularly and in just five short years in South Africa saw over 5000,000 documented healings along with thousands of people becoming disciples of Jesus.
- C. **Matthew 6:17** "But when you fast, anoint your head and your face, so that you don't appear to men to be fasting, but to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly."
- D. John the Baptist was an example of someone who prepared people for the coming of the Lord by living a lifestyle of prayer and fasting. John wore simple clothing, ate simple foods, lived in a simple place and refrained from eating and drinking with the crowd (**Matt. 3:1,4; 11:18; Mk. 1:3-4, 6**).
- E. But John's life shows us that fasting isn't reserved for the spiritually elite, but anyone who is hungry for God and is willing to embrace voluntary weakness.
- F. Voluntary weakness means that are purposefully removing the crutches that we lean on for strength forcing us to lean hard on Jesus our Beloved. Fasting causes us to lean upon Jesus in a place of weakness, confessing that we aren't as strong as we often portray.
 - 1. **2nd Corinthians 12:9-10** "And He said to me, My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness...For when I am weak, then I am strong."
 - 2. **Matthew 5:3** "Blessed (happy) are the poor in spirit, for there is the kingdom of God."

III. FIVE BIBLICAL WAYS WE CAN FAST

1. Fasting To Experience The Power of God Externally
 - a. **Matthew 17:21** “This kind (demons) does not go out except by prayer and fasting.”
2. Fasting To Stop A Crisis
 - a. **Joel 2:12-14** “Turn to Me with all your heart, with fasting and weeping...who knows if He will turn and relent and leave a blessing behind Him...”
 - b. This could be a personal, or national, or even a global crisis.
3. Fasting For Prophetic Revelation About God’s Future Plans
 - a. Receiving revelation from God about His future purposes isn’t something that’s optional for God’s prophetic Church.
 - b. **John 16:13** “However, when He, the Spirit of Truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth, for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will tell you things to come.”
 - c. **Revelation 19:10** “...For the testimony of Jesus is the Spirit of Prophecy.”
4. Fasting For Direction
 - a. The early Church fasted often when they needed to make serious decisions regarding leadership, and ministry endeavors (**Acts 13:1-2; 14:21, 23**).
 - b. **Jeremiah 33:3** “Call unto Me and I will answer you, and I will show you great and mighty things that you do not know.”
5. Fasting To Grow In Intimacy With Jesus
 - a. This type of fasting is about the internal reward of encountering Christ in our hearts. This type of fasting is motivated more to encounter Jesus personally, then just having His power flow through our lives towards others.
 - b. The first time Jesus described Himself as a Bridegroom was in the context of fasting. This Bridegroom fast is about longing, reaching, desiring and mourning for more of Jesus.
 - c. **Matthew 9:14-15** “Then the disciples of John came to Him saying, why do we and the Pharisees fast often, but Your disciples do not fast? And Jesus said to them, can the friends of the Bridegroom mourn as long as the Bridegroom is with them? But the days will come when the Bridegroom will be taken away from them, and then they will fast.”

IV. PRACTICAL ISSUES RELATED TO FASTING

- A. Fasting doesn’t earn us anything from God, it only positions us before Him to receive more, faster. Fasting is a means to an end, but never an end in itself. We fast to encounter Jesus, not just simply to fast.
 - B. The five primary ways to fast are; 1) The Regular Fast—No food, just water. 2) The Liquid Fast—This is only liquid, like smoothies, vegetable or low sugar fruit juice/cold pressed juice 3) The Partial Fast—This is what many call a Daniel Fast, which is primarily no sweets or meats 4) The Benedict Fast—This was created by St. Benedict and it’s eating just one meal a day 5) The Media Fast—This is a fast where we abstain from all types of media such as music, movies, the internet for pleasure or any other forms of digital entertainment.
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