

# END TIME MESSENGERS: REPOSITIONING HEARTS THROUGH FASTING

## ENCOUNTER

Gary De Pasquale

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### I. INTRODUCTION: UNDERSTANDING THE CALL OF FASTING

#### Joel 1:1-2:32

- A. The condition of our nation and the intense division that exists even among the redeemed of the Lord has shaken humanity with a sense of serious trouble and impending doom. The human race has never been so divided even to the deepest levels of its creation and existence. It's no longer just political division or racial divisions but we are facing humanity divisions.
  
- B. Although the church consists of people susceptible to the things of the world, we do not need to give in to the dictates of this division. The great need of the church is a re-positioning and strengthening of the heart like no other time in history. Fasting is one of the vehicles of revival that must return to the forefront of normalcy among believers.

*At that time John's disciples came to Jesus and asked, "Why is it that we and the Pharisees fast so often, but Your disciples do not fast?" 15 Jesus replied, "How can the guests of the bridegroom mourn while He is with them? But the time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them; then they will fast. (Matt. 9:14-15)*

*Then the disciples came to Jesus privately and said, "Why could we not cast it out?" 20 So Jesus said to them, "Because of your unbelief; for assuredly, I say to you, if you have faith as a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you. 21 However, this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting." (Matt. 17:19-21)*

- C. Jesus said, "When you fast," implying that fasting occurs regularly in a disciple's life.

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*“Moreover, when you fast, do not be like the hypocrites, with a sad countenance. For they disfigure their faces that they may appear to men to be fasting. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. [misthos: given as a wage equal to work performed] But you, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face [get yourself together; look and dress properly], so that you do not appear to men to be fasting, but [you will be noticed by...] your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward [apodidomi: given as a reward in recognition over and above compensation] you openly. (Mt. 6:16-18)*

- **Wages versus Reward:** Wages are expected agreed upon payments for work performed within a contractual agreement.
  - Employees are paid for the jobs they perform.
  - Many veterans receive promised benefits after service is completed
  - People will work an agreed upon number of years for the expectation of a certain retirement income or pension as part of the work agreement.
- A Reward is something given in excess of wages as recognition and appreciation of activity within the prevue of expectation but is considered over and above what is expected.
  - A person who finds a lost wallet and returns it might be given a reward by the owner.
  - A child who does exceptionally well in school might be given a reward by his/her parents in the form of a special toy or outing.
  - An employee who has been exceptional in their relations with customers might be given a reward of a bonus or greater position.

In effect wages are given to repay you for something agreed upon [1:1] while a reward is something given as an awareness of commitment, dedication and to encourage continued “over and above” expected behavior.

- D. Some of the rewards are external, as our circumstances are touched by God’s power properly released through our increased awareness of His presence towards obedience, trust and faith. Some of the rewards are internal, as our hearts encounter Him in new intensity and meaning as we are “surprised” at the depth of human commitment and

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response to Him. The “real time” powerful emotion connected to food changes us internally by tenderizing our hearts as we God gives grace to fast to any who ask.

- E. Changes are needed in the American church and regular fasting is an important part of this change. Fasting includes restraining our natural pleasures and/or strengths to position ourselves to receive from the Spirit. The discipline of fasting is not in the consistency of abstaining from food but in the consistency of the pursuit of God. The goal is positioning the heart not starving the body.

1. Daniel fasted and prayed from a place of mourning and repentance because of the positioning of his heart from the prophetic word he received. (Daniel 9-10).

*In those days I, Daniel, was mourning three full weeks. I ate no pleasant food, no meat or wine came into my mouth...(Dan 10:2-30)*

2. Anna served in the Temple in Jerusalem with prayer and fasting because of the positioning of the prophecies concerning Messiah. (Luke 2)

*There was also a prophet, Anna... She was very old; She never left the temple but worshiped night and day, fasting and praying. Coming up to them at that very moment, she gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who were looking forward to [shown in the prophetic scriptures] the redemption of Jerusalem. (Luke 2:36-38)*

3. It was during a period of fasting and prayer that God spoke to the Gentile Cornelius, the Roman centurion, about contacting Peter, which then led to a major shift in understanding regarding the Gospel and the Holy Spirit being offered to the Gentiles (Acts 10:30–31).

*Cornelius said, "Four days ago I was fasting until this hour; and at the ninth hour I prayed in my house, and behold, a man stood before me in bright clothing, 31 and said, 'Cornelius, your prayer has been heard, and your alms are remembered in the sight of God. (acts 10:30-31)*

4. Jesus began His public ministry immediately following a 40-day fast in which He was severely tempted. Afterwards He was filled with the power of the Spirit.

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*Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. The tempter came to him...(Mat. 4:1-3)*

F. Many missionaries and evangelists who led the great revivals in more recent history practiced regular fasting. (John Wesley, George Whitefield, Jonathan Edwards, David Brainerd, Charles Finney.) It was not the fast that awakened and brought revival into the hearts of the region but fasting awakened the hearts of those that would steward the region into the place of revival.

1. *Whenever Charles Finney became aware that his anointing was weakening, he would immediately commence a three-day fast. Following the fast, the presence of God would radiate so powerfully through Finney that people would fall under overwhelming conviction upon his entrance into a room—some even spoke of an atmosphere change in the city. (Revival Fire, Geoff Waugh)*
2. *Most of the Church's reformers -including Martin Luther, John Calvin and John Knox (Scottish reformer), fasted and prayed so much that Queen Mary of Scotland said of Knox she feared his prayers more than all the armies of Scotland. (John Knox and the Reformation, 1905 David Praise)*
3. *John Wesley was so committed to fasting that he would not approve a candidate for ministry if he did not fast twice a week and even considered regular fasting as one of the evidences of salvation. (Good News Magazine, Steve Johnson)*

G. The desire of the Holy Spirit as the Helper is to bring about a readying of the Bride of Christ for the coming days of glory and opposition. Intercession and fasting has been relegated to so-called “Old Testament customs” in light of today’s Dominionistic, Kingdom Now and Christian Reconstructionism. The church is in great need of a drastic change to be prepared for the events leading to the Day of the Lord.

***“That terrible day of the LORD is near. Swiftly it comes— a day of bitter tears, a day when even strong men will cry out. 15 It will be a day when the LORD ’s anger is poured out— a day of terrible distress and anguish, a day of ruin and desolation, a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and blackness, 16 a day of trumpet calls and battle cries. Down go the walled cities and the strongest battlements! 17 “Because you have sinned against the LORD, I will make you grope around like the blind. Your blood will be poured into the***

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*dust, and your bodies will lie rotting on the ground.” 18 Your silver and gold will not save you on that day of the LORD ’s anger. For the whole land will be devoured by the fire of his jealousy. He will make a terrifying end of all the people on earth. (Zeph 1:14-18)*

## II. FASTING: A POSTURE OF THE HEART

- A. The word FAST (tsum) in Hebrew means “to cover the mouth.” In the Greek, FAST means “to abstain from food.” Fasting television, negative speech, etc, is not biblical fasting but are instead things we should avoid or minimize as a part of normal Christianity.
- B. Fasting is specifically abstaining from food. It is a physical discipline that brings about a spiritual result. The goal is for a new heart position not a health position although fasting does have health benefits. In our western culture of instant availability and immediate gratification we are seldom challenged in the areas of comfort and ease. The westernized Christian church especially is in great need of a physical reminder of the reality of our faith.
- C. Israel was given specific dietary, dress and governmental laws that directly created stigmas by which they would be deemed odd, peculiar, and would stand out among the nations. This was so to give them reminders that they are separated and consecrated unto the Lord and must maintain a separation from the other nations in its fellowship with one another.

*“When you come to the land which the Lord your God is giving you, and possess it and dwell in it, and say, ‘I will set a king over me like all the nations that are around me,’ 15you shall surely set a king over you whom the Lord your God chooses; one from among your brethren you shall set as king over you; you may not set a foreigner over you, who is not your brother. 16But he shall not multiply horses for himself, nor cause the people to return to Egypt to multiply horses, for the Lord has said to you, ‘You shall not return that way again.’ 17Neither shall he multiply wives for himself, lest his heart turn away; nor shall he greatly multiply silver and gold for himself.18“Also it shall be, when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write for himself a copy of this law in a*

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*book, from the one before the priests, the Levites. 19And it shall be with him, and he shall read it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the Lord his God and be careful to observe all the words of this law and these statutes, 20that his heart may not be lifted above his brethren, that he may not turn aside from the commandment to the right hand or to the left, and that he may prolong his days in his kingdom, he and his children in the midst of Israel. (Deut. 17:14-20)*

*Then all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah, 5and said to him, "Look, you are old, and your sons do not walk in your ways. Now make us a king to judge us like all the nations." 6But the thing displeased Samuel when they said, "Give us a king to judge us." So Samuel prayed to the Lord. 7And the Lord said to Samuel, "Heed the voice of the people in all that they say to you; for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected Me, that I should not reign over them...Now therefore, heed their voice. However, you shall solemnly forewarn them, and show them the behavior of the king who will reign over them." 10So Samuel told all the words of the Lord to the people who asked him for a king. 11And he said, "This will be the behavior of the king who will reign over you...And you will be his servants. 18And you will cry out in that day because of your king whom you have chosen for yourselves, and the Lord will not hear you in that day." 19Nevertheless the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel; and they said, "No, but we will have a king over us, hat we also may be like all the nations, and that our king may judge us and go out before us and fight our battles." 21And Samuel heard all the words of the people, and he repeated them in the hearing of the Lord. 22So the Lord said to Samuel, "Heed their voice, and make them a king."(1 Sam. 8:4-22)*

*For you are a holy people unto the LORD your God, and the LORD has chosen you to be a peculiar people unto himself, above (different then) all the nations that are upon the earth. (Deut. 14:2, cf 1 Pet. 2:9)*

*But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; 10 who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy. 11 Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul, 12 having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by your good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation. (1 Peter 2:9-12)*

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*“Even now,” declares the LORD, “return to me with all your heart, WITH FASTING...”  
(Joel 2:12)*

*Then they said to him, “John’s disciples frequently fast and pray, and so do the disciples of the Pharisees...So Jesus said to them...the days are coming when the bridegroom will be taken from them, and then they will fast.” (Matt. 9:15)*

*“WHEN YOU FAST, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show others they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. 17 But WHEN YOU FAST, put oil on your head (oil used at meal time) and wash your face, 18 so that it will not be obvious to others (false humility) that you are fasting...(Matt. 6:16-18)*

*Whoever has my commands and keeps them (pursues them as a heart discipline) is the one who loves me. The one who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love them and show myself to them.”(John 14:21)*

D. Fasting is not something you begin to blend in with the world but is what you do to show your separation from the world. Biblical fasting begins upon your own determination in pure obedience to the Lord but it cannot be journeyed in the same way. The journey of fasting is done through a grace that is inherent within the command to fast so that while we are being weakened we are growing stronger in receptivity to the Lords voice and His word.

*“My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.” Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. 10Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak,(through fasting) then I am strong. (2 Cor. 12:9-10)*

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- E. Paul had a divine revelation that weakness was the entrance into God's power and must therefore not be avoided. Many desire to walk in the perfected power of the Lord but do not want to embrace the weakness that is necessary to enter into it. This is one of the paradoxes of the ways of His leadership. Physical weakness is despised in our culture however it is mandatory for those who desire spiritual strength.
  
- F. Fasting is not paying the price; the price has been paid by Jesus at the cross and His resurrection. Fasting is a time of intense re-focus so that one's heart can be positioned to pursue all that has been purchased by the death and resurrection of Jesus.