

Fasting Part 6

True fasting

“1 And it came to pass in the fourth year of king Darius, that the word of the LORD came unto Zechariah in the fourth day of the ninth month, even in Chisleu; 2 When they had sent unto the house of God Sherezer and Regemmelech, and their men, to pray before the LORD, 3 And to speak unto the priests which were in the house of the LORD of hosts, and to the prophets, saying, Should I weep in the fifth month, separating myself, as I have done these so many years? 4 Then came the word of the LORD of hosts unto me, saying, 5 Speak unto all the people of the land, and to the priests, saying, When ye fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh month, even those seventy years, did ye at all fast unto me, even to me? 6 And when ye did eat, and when ye did drink, did not ye eat for yourselves, and drink for yourselves? 7 Should ye not hear the words which the LORD hath cried by the former prophets, when Jerusalem was inhabited and in prosperity, and the cities thereof round about her, when men inhabited the south and the plain? 8 And the word of the LORD came unto Zechariah, saying, 9 Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, saying, Execute true judgment, and shew mercy and compassions every man to his brother: 10 And oppress not the widow, nor the fatherless, the stranger, nor the poor; and let none of you imagine evil against his brother in your heart. 11 But they refused to hearken, and pulled away the shoulder, and stopped their ears, that they should not hear. 12 Yea, they made their hearts as an adamant stone, lest they should hear the law, and the words which the LORD of hosts hath sent in his spirit by the former prophets: therefore came a great wrath from the LORD of hosts. 13 Therefore it is come to pass, that as he cried, and they would not hear; so they cried, and I would not hear, saith the LORD of hosts: 14 But I scattered them with a whirlwind among all the nations whom they knew not. Thus the land was desolate after them, that no man passed through nor returned: for they laid the pleasant land desolate.” (Zechariah 7:1-14 KJV)

It is not the ritual fasting that move God but the real repentance that would move God for our behalf. When fasting is an outcome of repentance and renouncing of sins accompanied by actions and deeds then that what God is waiting for to see in the life of His people.

The people of God when they sinned against the Lord by worshipping idols and honouring worldly things other than the Lord, He finally sent them the king of Babylonian with His army who destroyed the city of Jerusalem and the temple of God and took them captive to Babylon. The people in response to that they were having fasting and mourning on the fifth month for what had happened to them, and for what had happened to the Temple of God that was burned by the Babylonian on the seventh day of the fifth month, as we can read here: *“8 And in the fifth month, on the seventh day of the month, which is the nineteenth year of king Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, came Nebuzaradan, captain of the guard, a servant of the king of Babylon, unto Jerusalem: 9 And he burnt the house of the LORD, and the king's house, and all the houses of Jerusalem, and every great man's house burnt he with fire.” (2 Kings 25:8-9 KJV)* This happened in the month of Ab, which today for us is July. They kept a day of fasting and humiliation, in commemoration of what had happened, for seventy years they kept that fasting, but now after they were restored back to the city of Jerusalem and after the Temple of God was rebuilt they were asking if they still needed to keep this fasting as we read here: *“1 And it came to pass in the fourth year of*

king Darius, that the word of the LORD came unto Zechariah in the fourth day of the ninth month, even in Chisleu; 2 When they had sent unto the house of God Sherezer and Regemmelech, and their men, to pray before the LORD, 3 And to speak unto the priests which were in the house of the LORD of hosts, and to the prophets, saying, Should I weep in the fifth month, separating myself, as I have done these so many years?” (Zechariah 7:1-3 KJV)

The people they were not only fasting in the fifth month but as well as they were fasting in the seventh month, which today for us is the month of September, they were keeping fasting in memorial for the death of Gedaliah who was placed by the Babylonian King over Judah, but was killed by the Jewish who were rebelling against the King of Babylonian as we can read here: *“1 Now it came to pass in the seventh month, that Ishmael the son of Nethaniah the son of Elishama, of the seed royal, and the princes of the king, even ten men with him, came unto Gedaliah the son of Ahikam to Mizpah; and there they did eat bread together in Mizpah. 2 Then arose Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, and the ten men that were with him, and smote Gedaliah the son of Ahikam the son of Shaphan with the sword, and slew him, whom the king of Babylon had made governor over the land. 3 Ishmael also slew all the Jews that were with him, even with Gedaliah, at Mizpah, and the Chaldeans that were found there, and the men of war.” (Jeremiah 41:1-3 KJV)* Upon of what the Jewish did of rebellion in killing Gedaliah, the Babylonian came and destroyed the rest of the city wall of Jerusalem and took the remaining part of the temple contents and treasures. *When God discipline you because of a sin that you have done, and you rebel against God or His discipline, the Lord shall send you more discipline until you are subdued to His will.*

Now the Jewish seeing the temple again rebuilt and they are now in pleasure, the question for them was the following: whether they should continue mourning and fasting on that account on the fifth and seventh months, for the things that had happened in the past, by forbidding themselves from eating and drinking, and not taking the pleasures and recreations of life or they will stop that fasting and enjoy life? God answer their questions as we read here: *“4 Then came the word of the LORD of hosts unto me, saying, 5 Speak unto all the people of the land, and to the priests, saying, When ye fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh month, even those seventy years, did ye at all fast unto me, even to me?” (Zechariah 7:4-5 KJV)*

The answer of God to them was with another question He asked them: *did ye at all fast unto me, even to me?* To tell you the truth the fast that they kept was not according to the command of God, but it was their own decision and it was not directed by God and it was not for his glory. Therefore it was nothing for God whether they fast or not.

The people who survived the seventy years of exile outside the Promised Land they were asking if they need to fast on the fifth and seventh months as they were doing before. As we explained they were doing that fasting as a ritual and a routine not as God ordains for fasting to take place. The same at this time we found many nominal Christians they will fast in seasons with many reasons but with no repentance. They fast the forty days before Easter, and seven days before Christmas, etc. But no repentance and without knowing God, *“4 Then came the word of the LORD of hosts unto me, saying, 5 Speak unto all the people of the land, and to the priests, saying, When ye fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh month, even those seventy years, did ye at all fast unto me, even to me?” (Zechariah 7:4-5 KJV)* The answer of the Lord for the people is that when you are fasting you are not doing that to me, but as ritual and practice to deceive yourself that you have done your part. The Lord spoke with them in this way because

there was no repentance in their lives and there was no visible fruit and deeds that go with repentance. Even today many born again Christians they go into prayer and fasting but still they are keeping sins, and the same idols and immoralities and feasts for idols in their lives and in the life of the church.

“6 And when ye did eat, and when ye did drink, did not ye eat for yourselves, and drink for yourselves?” (Zechariah 7:6 KJV) The Lord also told them even when you were feasting you were feasting for yourself and not for me. Many born again Christians they go into many activities and meetings to enjoy the food and the socialization with one another spending much money and resources, and they say about what they are doing fellowship and ministry in the name of the Lord but they don't do that for God but for themselves and for their pleasure alone.

Now is the time for you to wake up and realize that God is weighing the motive behind all what you are doing. Time for you to wake up and heed the teaching and the Word of God. **“7 Should ye not hear the words which the LORD hath cried by the former prophets, when Jerusalem was inhabited and in prosperity, and the cities thereof round about her, when men inhabited the south and the plain? (Zechariah 7:7 KJV)** They were not having consideration for the Lord their God and to His Word, for they were not listening to the teaching and to the prophets that God was sending to preach His Word to them. So whatever they were doing, fasting or feasting they were not doing it for God but for themselves.

As an answer and clarification to the people question to God about fasting, the Lord again sent His word and explain to them what He really wanting from them and from us today to do when we fast: **“8 And the word of the LORD came unto Zechariah, saying, 9 Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, saying, Execute true judgment, and shew mercy and compassions every man to his brother: 10 And oppress not the widow, nor the fatherless, the stranger, nor the poor; and let none of you imagine evil against his brother in your heart.” (Zechariah 7:8-10 KJV)**

1. Execute true judgment: Give to everyone his rights and don't practice favouritism. Be fair with your judgment. Follow and apply the Word of God in your life; reward those who do right and discipline those who do evil.

2. Shew mercy and compassions every man to his brother: **“12 Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering;” (Colossians 3:12 KJV)** Shew mercy and compassions toward the people and have mercy on those who are poor and needy. Help them and support them so the Lord will bless you and answer your prayer and your requests unto Him.

3. Oppress not the widow, nor the fatherless, the stranger, nor the poor: Treat good the widows, the fatherless and the stranger and those who are poor. Even they are weak and have no power, God wants you to help them and He is watching to see whether you are going to relieve them or not. **“27 Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.” (James 1:27 KJV)** God shall reward you if you obey Him in that matter. Don't take advantage of those categories because they don't have voice. The Lord shall not

be happy with you if you care and pamper those who are rich and powerful, but those who are weak and poor you abuse and take advantage of them. **“1 My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons. 2 For if there come unto your assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment; 3 And ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing, and say unto him, Sit thou here in a good place; and say to the poor, Stand thou there, or sit here under my footstool: 4 Are ye not then partial in yourselves, and are become judges of evil thoughts?” (James 2:1-4 KJV)** God shall not answer your prayer and fasting if you are oppressing the poor, the widows, the orphans and the strangers.

4. Let none of you imagine evil against his brother in your heart: Don't plan evil or wish evil to happen to one another. God can see and read your thoughts. Put in your mind that your thoughts are spoken Words toward God. Instead God wants you to reflect all these following attitudes in your life towards one to another, **“13 Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. 14 And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness. 15 And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful. 16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. 17 And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.” (Colossians 3:13-17 KJV)**

What God was telling them that if they want God to listen to them and consider their fasting as a true fasting then they need to consider all His Word to them and change their ways. **“11 But they refused to hearken, and pulled away the shoulder, and stopped their ears, that they should not hear. 12 Yea, they made their hearts as an adamant stone, lest they should hear the law, and the words which the LORD of hosts hath sent in his spirit by the former prophets: therefore came a great wrath from the LORD of hosts.” (Zechariah 7:11-12 KJV)** The same Word is for you today when you don't soften your heart and don't listen to God and obey His instructions then He is angry with you and will not listen to you and will not consider your prayer and your fasting.

When you do not listen to the Word of God and be willing to change your ways the Lord shall continue to send you His wrath in order for you to wake up, to humblr down, and repent and come back to Him.

Then this was His Word to them **“13 Therefore it is come to pass, that as he cried, and they would not hear; so they cried, and I would not hear, saith the LORD of hosts:” (Zechariah 7:13 KJV)** When you refuse to listen to God and obey His instruction and His calling to you then the time will come when you will be facing troubles and trials and you will cry to God but He will not listen to you because you are just using God but you are not fearing Him or willing to live your life to honor Him.

The Lord also declared the following: **“14 But I scattered them with a whirlwind among all the nations whom they knew not. Thus the land was desolate after them, that no man passed through nor returned: for they laid the pleasant land desolate.” (Zechariah 7:14 KJV)** That is why you found yourself alone and there is no one to help you. That is why also you find that all the blessings of God had been taken away from you and you are living in desolation and

scarcity. It is the high time for you to repent and to come back to God and to consider and renounce all your sinful ways and start to live your life to God.

My dear and Beloved: Your fasting should not be a ritual thing. It is not about keeping yourself without food and drink for one or two days, but you are not observing and obeying the rest of the commands of God. The essence of fasting is true repentance and drawing near to God and to please Him by doing what is good and right in the eyes of God.

Sit with the Lord and allow the Holy Spirit to search your heart, mind and thoughts. Look carefully to what are the things in your life that contradict the Word of God that you received in this day. Turn from your own wrong ways, and repent of your sins and start to live your life to please the Lord.

Commit yourself to the Lord and to His word that you receive today and start to obey Him. From this day on God called you to obey Him and walk in His ways so your prayer and fasting will be pleasant to the Lord.

My Prayer: Father God I come before you in the name of Jesus who died on the cross for my sins to give me eternal life.

Lord I thank you for your Word that showed me clearly your ways and how you want me to live my life for you.

Now, renounce all your sins, the injustice against the weak and the poor, the lack of love and compassion, the evil thoughts against one another, the idol worship, the feast for idols and the rest of the traditional and cultural sinful practices.

Lord I confess and renounce the following sins and idols and human traditions and all the feasts of idols in my life _____.

Lord as I pray and fast in repentance of my sins, Lord cleanse me, purify me, bring me back to you, restore me to you, hear my cry and answer my prayer and use me once again to serve you.

Lord I pray for my brethren who repented and renounce their sins, Lord cleanse them, purify them, bring them back to you, fill them with the Holy Spirit and restore them back to you, and use them to serve you,

Lord I pray for them to give them good health and the strength to go on and serve you. Lord give them all their needs. Lord give them your Word. Lord fill them and lead them with your Holy Spirit to go on and do your work. Lord protect them from the evil one, spare them temptations, and provide all their needs.

Lord I pray for us as a church to be doers of your Word and to accomplish the tasks that you had called us to do for you. Lord answer our prayer and fasting. Lord protect us and deliver us from the evil one and go before us and fight our battles. Lord refill us again with the Holy Spirit and give us the spiritual gifts that we need in our lives. Lord enable us to evangelize and reach new people with the Gospel and the message of Jesus Christ. Lord

enable us to plant more Bible studies and new congregations for the church. Lord bless us, enlarge our territory, let your hand be with us, and free us from harm so we will not feel pain. May the grace of the Lord Jesus and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all in Jesus name, Amen.

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