

Fasting

Part 3

Fasting carried out for different purposes as the Scripture inform us. Therefore as we read and study the Scripture we will be able to grasp the various purposes of fasting and apply that all in our lives. We will pass through the Scripture that speaks about fasting and we will study these Scriptures and pick up from them the reason the people of God fasted and we will apply that in our lives.

²It was a long time, twenty years in all, that the ark remained at Kiriath Jearim, and all the people of Israel mourned and sought after the LORD. ³And Samuel said to the whole house of Israel, “If you are returning to the LORD with all your hearts, then rid yourselves of the foreign gods and the Ashtoreths and commit yourselves to the LORD and serve him only, and he will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines.” ⁴So the Israelites put away their Baals and Ashtoreths, and served the LORD only. ⁵Then Samuel said, “Assemble all Israel at Mizpah and I will intercede with the LORD for you.” ⁶When they had assembled at Mizpah, they drew water and poured it out before the LORD. On that day they fasted and there they confessed, “We have sinned against the LORD.” And Samuel was leader of Israel at Mizpah. ⁷When the Philistines heard that Israel had assembled at Mizpah, the rulers of the Philistines came up to attack them. And when the Israelites heard of it, they were afraid because of the Philistines. ⁸They said to Samuel, “Do not stop crying out to the LORD our God for us, that he may rescue us from the hand of the Philistines.” ⁹Then Samuel took a suckling lamb and offered it up as a whole burnt offering to the LORD. He cried out to the LORD on Israel’s behalf, and the LORD answered him. ¹⁰While Samuel was sacrificing the burnt offering, the Philistines drew near to engage Israel in battle. But that day the LORD thundered with loud thunder against the Philistines and threw them into such a panic that they were routed before the Israelites. ¹¹The men of Israel rushed out of Mizpah and pursued the Philistines, slaughtering them along the way to a point below Beth Car. ¹²Then Samuel took a stone and set it up between Mizpah and Shen. He named it Ebenezer, saying, “Thus far has the LORD helped us.” ¹³So the Philistines were subdued and did not invade Israelite territory again. Throughout Samuel’s lifetime, the hand of the LORD was against the Philistines. ¹⁴The towns from Ekron to Gath that the Philistines had captured from Israel were restored to her, and Israel delivered the neighboring territory from

the power of the Philistines. And there was peace between Israel and the Amorites.” (1Samuel 7:2-14)

At the time of judges the people of God they were in bondage because of their sins and that what made them slaves to the Philistines. As they repented and throw away all their idols and commit themselves to serve the Lord and surrender all their lives and will to God then deliverance started. They came in prayer and fasting and commit their lives fully to God and to serve Him. Their fasting was in accord to their repentance and in renouncing their sins and turn back to God. As truly the people of God repented then fasting is the sorrowful intense bad feeling of all their sins that they had done against God and a real decision to return back to God and serve Him wholeheartedly. It was not the fasting who moved God but their real repentance that what move God to act on their behalf. They came to God with sorrowful repented heart manifested externally with fasting. Real repentance will really move God to deliver and save His people.

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 then that what God is waiting for to see in the life of His people.

In the fourth year of King Darius, the word of the LORD came to Zechariah on the fourth day of the ninth month, the month of Kislev. ²The people of Bethel had sent Sharezer and Regem-Melech, together with their men, to entreat the LORD ³by asking the priests of the house of the LORD Almighty and the prophets, “Should I mourn and fast in the fifth month, as I have done for so many years?” (Zechariah 7:1-3) The people who survived the seventy years exile outside the Promised Land they were asking if they need to fast on the fifth month as they were doing before. It seems that they were doing that fasting as a ritual and a routine thing that they need to do it again and again. 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 not knowing God, “⁴Then the word of the LORD Almighty came to me: ⁵“Ask all the people of the land and the priests, ‘When you fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh months for the past seventy years, was it really for me that you fasted? ⁶And when you were eating and drinking, were you not just feasting for yourselves? ⁷Are these not the words the LORD proclaimed through the earlier prophets when Jerusalem and its

surrounding towns were at rest and prosperous, and the Negev and the western foothills were settled?” The answer of the Lord for the people is that even you are fasting but 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 were no visible fruit and deeds that go with repentance. The Lord told them even when you were feasting you were feasting for yourself and not for me. They were not having consideration for the Lord their God and to His word. So whatever they were doing, fasting or feasting they were not doing it for God but for themselves.

As an answer to the people question God again sent His word and explain to them what he really wanted from them, ⁸*“And the word of the LORD came again to Zechariah: ⁹“This is what the LORD Almighty says: ‘Administer true justice; show mercy and compassion to one another. ¹⁰Do not oppress the widow or the fatherless, the alien or the poor. In your hearts do not think evil of each other.” (Zechariah 7:8-10)*

1- Administer true Justice: Give to everyone his rights and don't practice favouritism.

2- Show mercy and compassion to one another: Soften your heart 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 requests.

3- Do not oppress the widow or the fatherless, the alien or the poor: Don't take advantage of those categories because they don't have voice. 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 brothers, as believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ, don't show favoritism. ²Suppose a man comes into your meeting wearing a gold ring and fine clothes, and a poor man in shabby clothes also comes in. ³If you show special attention to the man wearing fine clothes and say, “Here's a good seat for you,” but say to the poor man, “You stand there” or “Sit on the floor by my feet,”⁴ have you not discriminated among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts?” (James 2:1-4)*

4- In your hearts do not think evil of each other: Don't plan evil or wish evil to happen to one another. God can see and read your thoughts.

What God was telling them that if they want God to listen to them and consider their fasting as a true fast then they needs to consider all His word to them. ¹¹*“But they refused to pay attention; stubbornly they turned their backs and stopped up their ears. ¹²They made their hearts as hard as flint and would not listen to the law or to the words that the LORD Almighty had sent by his Spirit through the earlier prophets. So the LORD Almighty was very angry.” (Zechariah 7:11-12)* 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. Then this is His word to you ¹³*“When I called, they did not listen; so when they called, I would not listen,” says the LORD Almighty. (Zechariah 7:13)* The Lord also declared the following: ¹⁴*“I scattered them with a whirlwind among all the nations, where they were strangers. The land was left so desolate behind them that no one could come or go. This is how they made the pleasant land desolate.” (Zechariah 7:14)* 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.

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.

My dear and Beloved: 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. Turn from your own wrong ways, and repent of your sins and start to live your life to please the Lord. From this day on God called you to obey Him and walk in His ways so your prayer and fasting with 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 my sins _____. Lord I repent from them all and from this day on I commit myself to obey your words and walk in your ways so that my prayer and fasting will be acceptable to you. Lord give me one more chance to obey you, this is my prayer in Jesus name Amen.