

LESSON 4 FASTING FOR SPIRITUAL BREAKTHROUGH

Isaiah 58: 5-8

5 Is it such a fast that I have chosen? a day for a man to afflict his soul? is it to bow down his head as a bulrush, and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him? wilt thou call this a fast, and an acceptable day to the LORD?

6 Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke?

7 Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh?

8 ¶ Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thine health shall spring forth speedily: and thy righteousness shall go before thee; the glory of the LORD shall be thy rereward.

1. To loose the bands of wickedness-freeing ourselves and others from addictions, or addictive sin.
2. To undo heavy burdens. To solve problems, inviting the Holy Spirits aide.
3. To let the oppress go free. Physically and spiritually For revival and soul winning. To be able to identify with people enslaved to sin.
4. Break every yoke. Conquering mental and emotional problems that would control our lives.
5. To give bread to the hungry and provide the poor with housing. To meet the humanitarian needs of others.
6. Allow the peoples light to break forth like the morning. Bringing clearer insight and perspective to make crucial decisions
7. Cause their health to spring forth speedily. For healing, healthier life.
8. Cause their righteousness to go before them. That our influence and testimonies will be enhanced before others
9. Cause the glory of the Lord to be their reward (or “rear guard”). Protection from the evil one.

Isaiah 58:6 Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke?

Purpose: “ To let the oppressed (physically and spiritually) go free” For revival and soul winning, to identify with people everywhere enslaved literally or by sin and to pray to be used of God to bring people out of the kingdom of darkness and into God’s marvelous light.

Key Verse: 1Samuel 7:6 And they gathered together to Mizpeh, and drew water, and poured it out before the LORD, and fasted on that day, and said there, We have sinned against the LORD. And Samuel judged the children of Israel in Mizpeh.

Background: Samuel led God’s people in a fast to celebrate the return of the Ark of the Covenant from its captivity by the Philistines, and to pray that Israel might be delivered from the sin that allowed the Ark to be captured in the first place.

Roots of Revival

Revival defined: “God pouring Himself out on his people”

There is corporate revival, sometimes called Atmospheric revival-when people feel the presence of God. Then there is Individual revival where seekers are filled with the Holy Ghost.

Revival is -Acts 3:19 Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord;

Three truths about revival-

1. Revival is not an automatic experience. It must be desired and prayed for.

Ex 15:2 The LORD is my strength and song, and he is become my salvation: he is my God, and I will prepare him an habitation; my father's God, and I will exalt him. Ps. 22:3

2. God is the source of revival. It comes from His presence.

3. Refreshing results are experienced when revival comes.

1Sam. 7:1-15

Fasting unveiled in a three-fold perspective for revival and evangelism

Pre –Fast preparation

Recognize your bondage-sinful habits, specific sins, memories and your personal past.

Verse 2: - And it came to pass, while the ark abode in Kirjath-jearim, that the time was long; for it was twenty years: and all the house of Israel lamented after the LORD.

It appears, in the subsequent history, that a much longer period (about 40 years) elapsed before its final removal from Kirjath-Jearim (2Sa 6:1-19; 1Ch 13:1-14).

Twenty years was the length of time that had passed when the Israelites began to revive from their sad state of religious decline. The capture of the ark had produced a general indifference either as to its loss or its recovery.

“...all the house of Israel lamented after the LORD.”- They were brought, by the influence of Samuel's ministry, to renounce idolatry, and to return to the national worship of the true God.

Samuels Message

Verse 3: And Samuel spake unto all the house of Israel, saying, If ye do return unto the LORD with all your hearts, then put away the strange gods and Ashtaroth from among you, and prepare your hearts unto the LORD, and serve him only: and he will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines.

Ashtaroth (ăsh'tărōth), Hebrew plural form of Ashtoreth, the name of the Canaanite fertility goddess and consort of Baal. Her name is vocalized in Greek as Astarte.

A. That you must renounce and abandon your idols, put away the strange gods, for your God will admit no rival; put them away from you, each one from himself, nay, and put them from among you. Ashtaroth is particularly named because it was the best-beloved idol, and that which they were most wedded to. True repentance strikes at the especially loved sin, and will with a peculiar zeal and resolution put away, the sin which most easily besets us. Ge 35:2

B. That you must make an urgent business of returning to God, and do it with a serious consideration and a stedfast resolve, for both are included in preparing the heart, directing, and establishing, the heart unto the Lord. 2Ch 30:19; Job 11:13-14; Isa 55:7

C. That you must be completely for God, for him and no other, serve him only, else you do not serve him at all. Mt 4:10-11; Lu 4:8

D. This is the only way and a sure way to prosperity and deliverance. Take this course, and he will deliver you “out of the hand of the Philistines; for it was because you forsook Him and served other gods that he delivered you into their hands.”

Conducting the Samuel Fast

1. **UNITY.** Individual fasting makes a person individually responsible to God. Corporate fasting makes a person responsible for what God does to the corporate body. Fasting as a church body leads us to recognize our obligation one to another, and to fulfill our responsibility one to another. To have revival there must be a oneness of mind, heart, and vision.

2. Demonstrate True Repentance. Sometimes when a mother punishes her son for disobedience, sometimes she is not sure if the son is sorry because of the punishment or because he violated her standard. Nevertheless most mothers feel a sorrowful spirit can build character. Whether the son is sorry for the primary reason or a secondary reason, he learns not to do it again. The evidence of your sincerity is seen when you stop sinning.

God gives conditions of revival in 2 Chronicles 7:14. This verse is introduced with a conditional “if”. *If* God’s people meet the conditions, He will send revival.

Abstaining from food is an outward demonstration of inward sincerity. For this reason fasting is also called “affliction” in Scripture (Ps 35:13). People feel weak and sometimes light headed without food. Often the appetite begs for food. But the demonstration of sorrow for the sins committed is evidenced by continuing the fast to its end.

3. Separate from Secret Sin. God’s people must search for hidden sin within themselves and separate from it. Temporary denial of the flesh in favor of the spirit can bring these sins to light. Confession of “sins of remembrance” did not bring revival- therefore we must pray “Search me O God and know my heart...And see if there is any wicked way in me.” (Psalm 139:23, 24)

a. *Backsliders are blinded to sin in their lives.* The very presence of sin in our lives blinds us to that sin. Because sin is choosing to turn from God, or ignoring God that we turn from God, we are willfully ignorant of our obligation to Him. Paul prayed for the saints at Ephesus that there ‘eyes of understanding be enlightened.’ (Eph 1:18)

b. *Backsliders are careless about sins in their lives.* Backsliders ignore the warning to the Hebrews, “We must pay more careful attention, therefore, to what we have heard...” (Heb. 2:1, NIV) when a person has willfully sinned, that person becomes a backslider, whether taking 1 or 100 steps away from God. The fact that a person has apparently gotten away with a first step away from God, and “escaped” punishment, gives the person false confidence to take more steps away from God.

c. *During fasting God can show hidden sin to the believer- the sin that is prohibiting God’s blessing.* The prodigal son demanded his inheritance, and then went out to spend all his money in riotous living. He is the classic backslider who left the riches of his father’s house. “When he came to his senses, he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired men have food to spare and here I am starving to death!’” (Luke 15:17, NIV). When he was hungry he remembered the good things he received in his father’s house. So when we fast, bringing our physical bodies to a place of hunger, we then can feel the hunger of our spiritual souls. “You have set... our secret sins in the light of Your countenance.”(Psalm 90:8).

d. *More sin is gradually revealed as we continue to fast.* Fasting must be an ongoing process, meaning that we have to fast for more than one day. Sometimes we may fast for two or more separate days; whereas a two day fast may produce a more intensive examination of sin. The time we spend between our fast provides opportunity to think through ramifications of our needs, and our sins may become clearer to us. However it happens fasting must be more than a one-time event.

4. Corporate confession of sin. Some don't believe in corporate sin, maintaining that only individuals' sin, the Bible does give illustrations of individuals who confess sin for the group as a whole. Daniel privately confessed Israel's corporate sin: "We have sinned and done wrong' (Dan. 9:5, NIV). Each person must privately confess individual sin (1 John 1:8-10), each person can also confess the group's sin. (1 Sam. 7:6).

When you confess "We have sinned" in private you obviously include yourself in that sin. When the group prays corporately, "We have sinned," each individual must include himself or herself and his or her sin in the prayer.

For illustration...perhaps the Sunday school at a church is dead. No matter how informative the Bible teaching, nothing seems to happen. Leadership is apathetic and students seem to care less that the word is being taught. Somewhere in the history or process, leadership made bad decisions that brought the lethargy. The bad decisions influenced the attitudes of the students. To bring revival to a Sunday School in this condition, the leadership must pray, "We have sinned." Although these leaders did not make the decisions, they now represent the institution where the bad decisions were made. The present leadership can't pray, "They sinned." That's a cop-out. The current leadership represents the institution where God is not working and they must pray, "We have sinned."

Before Nehemiah could rebuild the walls of the city of Jerusalem, he also had to enter into corporate confession. Notice how his prayer began: "Lord God of Heaven, you are great and fearsome" (Neh. 1:5, CEV). Then he begins to intercede-

"I am your servant, so please have mercy on me and answer the prayer that I make day and night for these people of Israel who serve you. I, my family, and the rest of your people have sinned" (Neh. 1:6-7, CEV)

If you have been guilty of criticizing your church, or the spiritual life of the people where you fellowship, you are in bondage to their sin. When you sow corrupt seed, you reap corrupt fruit.

5. Acknowledge the Power of the Word. Revival does not occur without the involvement of the Word of God. (Rom 1:16).

During the days of Samuel the prophet “the word of God was precious in those days” (1 Sam 3:1). The word “precious” in the KJV meant “rare”. When Samuel came to minister to Israel he brought the word of God to them. He was both judge and prophet, and one of the duties of the prophet was to interpret God’s will to the people and to give them God’s word. Samuel was a faithful prophet to his calling as a result God sent revival. As one fast they should study the great revivals of scripture. Some Examples...

Under Jacob. On the return to Bethel, Jacob ordered his entire household to put away their false gods and to wash and change their garments. They did this as Jacob built an altar to the true God. The false gods were then buried under an oak in Shechem. (Gen. 35:1-4)

Under Moses. Revival occurred when complaining Israel saw the mighty hand of God in the parting of the Red Sea. On the safe (eastern) side of the sea, Moses led the people in a song of praise, while Miriam and the women furnished the special music (Exod. 14:31-15:21).

Under Asa. King Asa removed the Sodomites and all false idols out of the land. He even deposed his own grandmother because of her idolatry (1 Kings 15:11-15).

Under Jesus. The conversion of a sinful Samaritan woman instigated this revival in Samaria (John 4:28-42).

Under Paul. One of the greatest revivals in Ephesus during Paul’s third missionary journey (Acts 19:11-20).

6. Sacrifice. From the first time man offended God through sin, he was required to bring a sacrifice to God to demonstrate his sorrow for sin and his request for forgiveness.

Gen. 4: 3 In the course of time Cain brought some of the fruits of the soil as an offering to the Lord. 4 And Abel also brought an offering—fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flock. The Lord looked with favor on Abel and his offering, 5 but on Cain and his offering he did not look with favor. NIV

Abel’s sacrifice was accepted because the blood of an animal substituted for his sin. Abel should have died, but the animal died in his place. The substitutionary blood sacrifice of Abel made him acceptable to God. Because there was no blood in the fruit sacrifice of Cain, it was rejected.

In first Samuel seventh chapter, two offerings were made by him and Israel. The important one was the blood sacrifice (1 Sam 7:9).

The next sacrifice- “They drew water from the well and poured it out as an offering to the Lord”. Water was often scarce in the area of Palestine. Pouring water out to God was a symbol of the people’s devotion to Him. There are other times when pouring out water symbolized cleansing, satisfaction and life itself.