

Come let us Grow Together: Declare unto yourself a Fast

Come let us Grow Together is a weekly series that deals with the many topical categories that exist within the Word of God. The purpose of this series is to grow in wisdom, knowledge, and understanding in things pertaining to God.

Wherefore have we fasted, say they, and thou seest not? wherefore have we afflicted our soul, and thou takest no knowledge? Behold, in the day of your fast ye find pleasure, and exact all your labours. Behold, ye fast for strife and debate, and to smite with the fist of wickedness: ye shall not fast as ye do this day, to make your voice to be heard on high. 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? (Isa 58:3-5)

The children of Israel expected that if they fasted the Lord was obligated to do what they were asking of him. However, what manner of spirit are you of when you fast? Fasting is more than just pushing the plate aside even as for the children of Israel it was more than just a time to spread sackcloth and ashes.

How and why does one fast?

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? 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? (Isa 58:6-7)

When we are fasting we are not only desiring a closer walk with God but we are also fasting to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that you break every yoke.

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. Then shalt thou call, and the LORD shall answer; thou shalt cry, and he shall say, Here I am. If thou take away from the midst of thee the yoke, the putting forth of the finger, and speaking vanity; And if thou draw out thy soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul; then shall thy light rise in obscurity, and thy darkness be as the noon day: And the LORD shall guide thee continually, and satisfy thy soul in drought, and make fat thy bones: and thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not. (Isa 58:8-11)

Let us look at an example from the Prophet Daniel.

In the first year of his reign I Daniel understood by books the number of the years, whereof the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah the prophet, that he would accomplish seventy years in the

desolations of Jerusalem. And I set my face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes: (Dan 9:2-3)

Notice that Daniel set his face unto the Lord God. He did this by prayer and supplications with fasting as well as with sackcloth and ashes.

And I prayed unto the LORD my God, and made my confession, and said, O Lord, the great and dreadful God, keeping the covenant and mercy to them that love him, and to them that keep his commandments; We have sinned, and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled, even by departing from thy precepts and from thy judgments: Neither have we hearkened unto thy servants the prophets, which spake in thy name to our kings, our princes, and our fathers, and to all the people of the land. (Dan 9:4-6)

Notice how Daniel carefully laid out his petition to the Lord God. He confessed the sins of his people and he exalted the Lord our God. In confessing the sins of his people he acknowledged their departing from the commandments and judgments of the Lord.

This is a perfect example of how one is to fast and why one comes to the Lord with a fast. Daniel continues his prayer...

O Lord, according to all thy righteousness, I beseech thee, let thine anger and thy fury be turned away from thy city Jerusalem, thy holy mountain: because for our sins, and for the iniquities of our fathers, Jerusalem and thy people are become a reproach to all that are about us. Now therefore, O our God, hear the prayer of thy servant, and his supplications, and cause thy face to shine upon thy sanctuary that is desolate, for the Lord's sake. O my God, incline thine ear, and hear; open thine eyes, and behold our desolations, and the city which is called by thy name: for we do not present our supplications before thee for our righteousnesses, but for thy great mercies. O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive; O Lord, hearken and do; defer not, for thine own sake, O my God: for thy city and thy people are called by thy name. (Dan 9:16-19)

And the Prophet Daniel was heard. Because when he fasted he prayed and sought the Lord with the right spirit and with the right heart.

And whiles I was speaking, and praying, and confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel, and presenting my supplication before the LORD my God for the holy mountain of my God; Yea, whiles I was speaking in prayer, even the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning, being caused to fly swiftly, touched me about the time of the evening oblation. (Dan 9:20-21)

Let us remember to follow the example the Lord gave to us when we fast as well as the example given to us by the Prophet Daniel and not be as the hypocrites.

Moreover when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face; That thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly. (Mt 6:16-18)