
Fasting: Article No. 3 - Sincere Fasting

By Prayer and Fasting (Part Three — Sincere Fasting) (1559 Words - submitted 8/24/06)

You've heard the statistic and I'm sure it has baffled you — 76% of Americans identify themselves as “born again.” But we continue to countenance the murder of over one million babies a year; judges who want to post the Ten Commandments are fired, while liberal jurists debate whether “In God We Trust” is legal for legal tender, and many want to make it a crime to call sodomy sin. However, when you learn that only 41% of Americans believe the Bible is “totally accurate in all that it teaches”; and that divorce is as common among Christians as it is in the world, and that, “more born-again Christians believe in channeling, astrology and reincarnation than non born-again Christians” — it all begins to make sense. Most of these who claim to be “born again” are not [Matthew 7:22-23]. How has this happened? Clever but carnal men learned how to manufacture revival-like results. Depending on psychological manipulation, and Madison Street marketing, false prophets have separated the Gospel from its biblical context, and repackaged it to be more palatable to the world. Repentance has been discarded, or redefined until it's meaningless; and hell is rarely mentioned. And when it is, it has been so air conditioned that no sinner smells its brimstone or feels its heat any more. The Holy Ghost does not attend such preaching as that — and this is disastrous because it is the Holy Ghost alone Who is sent into the world to reprove the heart of sinners, and draw them to the Saviour. All who come to Jesus apart from this Holy influence have no more hope of finding repentance than did Judas, or Esau. And how, you may ask, does this relate to the subject of fasting? If sinners will be genuinely converted, they must repent under the influence of the Holy Ghost, Who was sent into the world to reprove it of sin, righteousness and judgment. Jesus said His Spirit would flow through the belly of believers into the world around us. We need a movement of the Holy Ghost, and He moves through our belly. Until we humble ourselves by serious fasting and prayers, and surrender our “belly” to the control of the Holy Ghost, we will have no revival. And the pretenders will continue to get away with dancing in their own fire — but it is not the Lord's fire. And so we need the Holy Spirit's instruction for a fast that God will honor with the blessing promised in Isaiah 58:8-14.

Sincere Fasting The Israelites complained because God rejected their fast [Isaiah 58:3]. But their fasting was insincere [Isaiah 58:3-7].

Sincere fasting requires that we set ourselves apart from our own pleasures and our own labor while we fast and pray [Isaiah 58:3]. No TV, no movies, no golf, no comics, no sports page, no sports activities, no radio — you may not indulge yourself in any of the activities that you normally enjoy for pleasure's sake [1Corinthians 7:5]. Nor may you, “exact all your labours” [Isaiah 58:3]. On this I must add some clarification.

God's complaint is specific, “... and ye exact *all* your labours.” Ideally, we ought to seek to separate ourselves entirely from our labors during a fast. But this is not always possible or necessary. I am relieved that the Spirit allows for the performance of those tasks which are essential or else many of us, mothers in particular, could rarely fast. Of course, some occupations may not allow for fasting while performing any of the tasks they demand; for example, when the health or safety, of themselves or others, will be in jeopardy [Matthew 15:32], or when an employer will likely be cheated by the reduced production of a fasting employee [1Timothy 6:1-2].

Sincere fasting requires a pure motive and purpose. We must not fast, “... for strife and debate, and to smite with the fist of wickedness ...” The Spirit commands, “... ye shall not fast as ye do this day, to make your voice to be heard on high” [Isaiah 58:4]. Imagine someone fasting to win an argument. Imagine God's children supposing they will manipulate God sides with them against another, by fasting. Imagine someone attempting to use fasting to get revenge. Imagine someone so evil they would use fasting to advance some wicked purpose. Fasting is not to be used in a fashion similar to how witches use magic, or hexes, or spells, summoning some “Force” to manipulate the will of others to serve their interests. Like witches, some Christians think prayer and

fasting is a weapon they can use to control others and further their own ambitions. The Spirit through Isaiah condemns fasting for selfish, sinful purposes in a manner similar to how the Spirit through James warned us our prayers will be ineffective if we seek to satisfy the lust of our flesh [James 4:3].

Sincere fasting opens our heart to God's heart — to loose the bands of wickedness and to undo the heavy burdens so that the oppressed may go free [Isaiah 58:6]. There are bands of righteousness and then there are bands of wickedness [Psalm 2:3; Isaiah 58:6]. The *bands* of righteousness are the restraints against the wicked that are to be enforced by divinely appointed authorities [Romans 13:1-6]. When the wicked rise in power and influence, these *bands* are broken, and the people are brought under the oppression of the bands of wickedness forged in hell. And the sword (civil authority) given to punish evil doers and reward the righteous is turned against the good, and in support of the evil. There are burdens heavy to be born, strapped to our backs by cords of sin; and then there is that burden which is light — duties bound to us by the cords of the Gospel [Isaiah 58:6; Matthew 11:30]. When the wicked prevail over the righteous, they break the cords that bind upon the people those duties that contribute to their felicity and prosperity [Proverbs 14:34]. And in their place, they bind grievous burdens upon their backs with cords of sin. Who has not lately heard the cry of the heathen in our own land, “let us break their bands asunder and cast away their cords from us”? We must cry out to God as did Israel in Egypt or we will be thrown into that furnace ourselves [Exodus 3:9]. A fast that mourns the growing strength of the bands of wickedness in our land — a cry to God for the marvelous power of the Holy Ghost to break those bands of wickedness that bind upon you and your loved ones the evil burdens of sin — a fast that cries out to God on behalf of the oppressed in our own, and in every land — a fast that opens our heart to God's heart, that empties it of selfish desires so that He may fill it with His own — this is the fast the Lord seeks from us.

Sincere fasting involves sincere repenting. The Prophet Isaiah instructed us that God seeks a fast that is accompanied by genuine repentance — we must break every yoke, deal our bread to the hungry, attend to the needs of the poor, and fulfill our obligations to our own families [1Timothy 5:8]. Indeed, we must fast and pray and act in concert. The rest of Isaiah 58 through 59:19 all speak to the importance of genuine repentance accompanying our fasting and prayers. But our hearts are hard, and they are cold, and our confession of sin must offend Him. Indeed! The Corinthians were rebuked by the Spirit through the Apostle Paul, and they were made sorry — and that sorrow worked genuine repentance in their heart. 2Corinthians 7:11: “For ... ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves, yea, what indignation, yea, what fear, yea, what vehement desire, yea, what zeal, yea, what revenge! In all things ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter.” Here is repentance — passionate, serious, sincere. Compare you own cold confession of sins to this and see that we desperately need fasting and praying to humble our lifted up soul, to soften our hardened hearts. O my friend. The failure of believers to obtain the promise of 2Chronicles 7:14 is here — a failure to truly repent. Fasting will help you.

These phony revivals that sweep through town and make no difference, these evangelistic campaigns that sow naught but tares, these ministries overrun by dogs and goats, where genuine sheep are slaughtered, or starved, this nonsense that 76% of Americans are “born again” when it's obviously not true — it must stop. We must return to the formula of the early church, to “preach the Gospel with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven” [1Peter 1:12]. Strong demons have deluded many otherwise good men, but there is a stirring, an awakening. These demons that have dulled the spiritual senses of so many by sleep are being challenged — challenged by men and women of God who are fasting and praying for revival. But we need more. We need you to join us. Fast and pray for revival. And when you fast, do it seriously and sincerely.

End Article Three: Fasting - Instruction: Sincere Fast