



VICTORIOUS CHRISTIAN MINISTRY

Weekly Bible Study - 13:06:2012

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Study 32: ESSENTIAL INGREDIENTS TO EFFECTIVE FASTING - 1

Nehemiah 9:1-38

Not long after the completion of the walls, and barely two weeks after the feast of Sabbaths, the Jews were assembled again for a period of prayer and fasting. Often in the Bible fasting is associated with times of emergencies. But at this time there was no sign of imminent danger yet they fasted and prayed. They must have recognized that the best solution to a problem is to prevent it from occurring. PREVENTION IS BETTER THAN CURE! It is the days of preparation that precede the victory. We do not have to wait until we are in trouble before we fast and pray. The best way to defeat the devil is to keep him out of the ranges. They did not use prayer and fasting as a 'spare tyre' out of trouble, but as a 'steering wheel' for a trouble free future.

Fasting and prayer is an important part of everyday Christian living (Matthew 6:17,18). Jesus made it clear that some breakthroughs cannot take place without prayer and fasting (Matthew 17:21), and yet many believers do not take prayer and fasting seriously. The consecration of the Pharisee (Luke 18:9-14) should be a challenge to everyone. The persistence and intensity of satanic onslaught demands such clarity of vision and the sharpening of our spiritual weapons of warfare that is only possible through prayer and fasting. However, to fast effectively with results, the basic components of true spiritual fast – humility, separation, confession, scriptural input, repentance, prayer, worship and covenant must be diligently adhered to.

1. HUMILITY: Nehemiah 9:1; 1 Peter 4:5,6; Philippians 2:5-9;

The time of fasting is a period of humbling oneself before the Lord. The use of sackcloth, ashes and earth were Old Testament physical symbols of humility that should have already taken place in the heart. The basic ingredient to spiritual victory is humility. Humility is a scarce commodity among many believers today. Majority of people in the world are proud. God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble. Pharaoh, Nebuchadnezzar and Lucifer are handy examples of the proud that lost their positions (Exodus 14:24-28; Daniel 4:29-33; Ezekiel 28:11-19). The evidences of pride in a person's life are numerous and include self exaltation, self praise, self importance, competition, self justification, rebellion, disobedience, and stubbornness. On the other hand, humble people are teachable. They take God at His word and receive with meekness the engrafted words of wisdom. God attends to the prayers of such people.

2. SEPARATION: Nehemiah 9:2; Amos 3:3; 1 Corinthians 15:33; 2 Corinthians 6:14-18; Hosea 8:8,9; 1 John 1:6; 2:15; Isaiah 51:1,2; Luke 12:49-53

Your Spiritual Welfare Is Our Concern

“And the seed of Israel separated themselves from all strangers.” Separation from evil and evil association is a pre-requisite to fellowship with God. ***We cannot walk with God and at the same time sport with the devil.*** The beginning of a serious walk with the Lord is marked by a decision and determination to part company with the world. Close association with strangers to the commonwealth of Israel is generally the gateway to compromise and backsliding. Men that God could count worthy to entrust the keys of the kingdom like Abraham, Elijah, Daniel, Paul, Jesus, etc were separated from strangers. No individual ever lived strongly and victoriously for the Lord who was too close to the wrong company. He that keeps company with a thief will himself become a thief (Proverbs 13:20).

3. CONFESSION: Nehemiah 9:2,3; Romans 10:9,10; 1 John 1:8-10; James 5:16; Matthew 5:21-24; Acts 24:16

Sins, transgressions and other shortcomings are hindrances to answered prayers (Isaiah 59:1,2; 1 Peter 3:7). They have to be repented of and confessed before God can ever take one serious. The person who is asking God “What sins have I committed?” is not interested in acknowledging and confessing his sins. The Psalmist prayed for God to search him, with a view to unraveling his weaknesses and leading him in the right path (Psalms 139:23,24). It takes sincerity, honesty and integrity to admit one's sins and to confess them. A self-righteous person who never acknowledges his sins will never see the need of confession and will always be missing God's mercy. A dishonest schemer who tries to turn black into white so as to exonerate himself will never confess his sins and God's mercy will constantly elude him (Jonah 2:8). It takes childlike faith and simplicity to believe that “Whosoever covereth his sins shall not prosper but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy” (Proverbs 28:13). It takes commonsense also to figure out that most sins committed are against God and man. Genuine repentance will therefore move an individual to confess his sins to God and to the human beings he offended so as to have a conscience void of offence towards God and man (Acts 24:16).
HYPOCRITES WILL NOT CONFESS AS THEY CANNOT BEAR TO ACKNOWLEDGE THAT THEY WERE WRONG!

4. SCRIPTURE: Nehemiah 9:3; Galatians 6:3,4; James 1:22-25; Isaiah 48:18; 50:5

The possibility of the success of any venture in life can be assessed from the degree of its compatibility or deviation from scriptural principles. Man may exonerate wisdom, money, method, strategy, people and things above scripture but God only watches at His word to perform it. Central to the fasting programme was the reading of the Word of God. They did not just read to fulfill religious ritual but they examined their lives by the words and made further confessions of sins discovered. The Word of God is the foundation to our relationship with God. It must have its rightful place in our lives before we can expect the blessing of heaven. We cannot claim to have the LIVING WORD in us if we are living in disobedience to the WRITTEN WORD.