

Fanning it into Flame

Sunday, July 18, 2010

When You Fast

I am calling the church to fast and pray because we need wisdom, direction, and a fresh wind of the Spirit of God to move into the next phase of our church development. For quite some time now I've been sharing that we want to get a new facility. While we're truly grateful for what we have, our present facility cannot house what I believe God wants to do in us and through us. The problem that came to bear on me was that I have spent so much time lifting up the saints with messages that encourage us in our walk with the Lord, I have neglected to keep the vision before us allowing too much time to pass by. I am trusting that we did not miss the window and that God is using this to help awaken us to the task at hand.

In Scripture we see fasting as a means of seeking the Lord when important issues arose. 2Chronicles 20 tells the great story of King Jehoshaphat and his call to fast and pray when a vast army was coming to attack. A prophetic word came to him in the midst of the fast that the battle was not his but the Lord's and they just needed to take up their positions and stand. What an awesome victory they experienced. Although there are a number of stories like this someone might say that fasting was a means that a works oriented people used to get closer to God. We in the new covenant are not under anything like that. We are saved by grace, kept by grace, and heard by grace. While those statements are true, we cannot ignore what the Lord himself taught in Matthew 6. There are three things that Jesus tells us are part of our Christian experience. They begin with "**When you.**" He did not say, "If you..." They are: 1. when you give; 2. when you pray. 3. when you fast. He taught us to do all three with this in mind. Don't get wrapped up in yourself looking for the praise of men. Rather, let it be done with God in mind knowing that he will reward proper behavior. Last week we touched on giving. This week we're keying in on fasting.

Jesus acknowledged that his disciples would fast when he would be taken from them and not before. Then he taught that new wine was to be put in new wineskins. In other words, the system that they would operate in would not be the same as was custom. Something different was about to take place. Jesus was revealing that life was in him. Salvation was by grace. A works oriented system was not the order of the day any longer. However, he did not throw out fasting. It's just that our fasting must be seen in a different light and out of a different spirit.

Fasting is not a hunger strike. Fasting does not make God do what you want him to do for you. God does not hear you better when you fast. Rather, you hear him better. Fasting is a discipline that subordinates our flesh to the spirit. It is self-denial in order to focus our attention on what God is saying. Although there have been times when I fasted that I felt anything but spiritual. Yet after I broke through the objections my flesh was making I was able to focus more on why I was doing what I was doing. I don't know why it works. I only know Jesus said, "When you fast..." We want to hear from God and be a people of purpose. We want our church to grow and experience all he has for us. Fasting is one of the disciplines that can help us fervently seek his face. We must keep at the forefront of our hearts and minds that our acceptance by God is totally through the finished work of Christ. He gives the grace to fast and the humility to receive what he has in store for us. God bless you as you give, pray, and fast.