

Introduction:

- Seeking God leads to breakthroughs in our lives. And fasting is one of the surest ways to get us there.
- Ezra 8:21-23 *Then I proclaimed a fast there at the river of Ahava, that we might humble ourselves before our God, to seek from Him the right way for us and our little ones and all our possessions. 22 For I was ashamed to request of the king an escort of soldiers and horsemen to help us against the enemy on the road, because we had spoken to the king, saying, "The hand of our God is upon all those for good who seek Him, but His power and His wrath are against all those who forsake Him." 23 So we fasted and entreated our God for this, and He answered our prayer.* Vs. 23 when we forsake the way of man we humble ourselves to find the way of God NKJV

I. Observations of Fasting in the Scriptures

- A. Fasting seems to always precede a breakthrough.
 1. Victory in war. 2 Chron 20:3 *And Jehoshaphat feared, and set himself to seek the LORD, and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah.* NKJV
 2. Victory in establishing the Kingdom. Ezra 8:21 *Then I proclaimed a fast there at the river of Ahava* NKJV Right before their return to Israel to rebuild the walls, city, temple.
 - a) Charles Finney an evangelist in the 1800's. 20 years after his meetings there were more people still committed to the faith than any other revivalist experienced. Why? His partner in ministry would go into a town weeks before Finney arrived and would fast and pray.
 - b) "Daniel Nash at age 48 he decided to give himself totally to prayer for Finney's meetings. Nash would come quietly into towns three or four weeks in advance of a meeting, gather three or four other like minded Christians with him and in a rented room start praying and bringing heaven near. It is reported that in one town all he could find was a dank, dark cellar, but that place was soon illumined with holy light as he made it the place of intercession. In another place as Finney relates: When I got to town to start a revival a lady contacted me who ran a boarding house. She said, "*Brother Finney, do you know a Father Nash? He and two other men have been at my boarding house for the last three days, but they haven't eaten a bite of food. I opened the door and peeped in at them because I could hear them groaning, and I saw them down on their faces. They have been this way for three days, lying prostrate on the floor and groaning. I thought something awful must have happened to them. I was afraid to go in and I didn't know what to do. Would you please come see about them?*" "No, it isn't necessary," I replied. "They just have a spirit of travail in prayer." <http://www.evanwigg.com/revival/portrait/nash.html> Finney left the evangelism field four months after Nash died and started pastoring a church.
- B. Fasting seems to always precede a move of God (Note: there will be some overlap in these)
 1. When we need something we fast in order to position ourselves before God. Our purpose.
 - a) A personal Holy Spirit filling.
 - b) Luke 12:32 to be realized in the body of Christ corporately, locally, and individually.

- c) For young families, young adults and youth & children to be added to our fellowship.
- 2. Repentance - Ezra, Nehemiah, Daniel, etc., all during times of fasting repented not only for their own sins but also for the sins of their nation.
- 3. Invitation from God to go to a new or deeper place.
 - a) God prophesies through the prophet Joel to Judah to consecrate a fast. It was an invitation to draw near to God. Joel 1:14; Joel 2:15—both say, consecrate a fast.

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- C. Fasting seems to almost always be done by people who are in a place of desperation.
 - 1. Often the word fasting is used with the following words: weeping, mourning, humility, etc.
 - 2. Desperation seems to be the thing that invites/pleads for God to show up. "The kingdom is for the desperate. The secret is to keep yourself in the place of desperation." Tim Franklin

II. What is supposed to happen when we fast? Ezra 8:21-23

- A. Humble ourselves - Hebrew - anah - to afflict, to put down, to depress, to humble, to bow down, to weaken. Fasting is a form of afflicting oneself, weakening oneself, humbling oneself, in order to encounter God. It is intentionally bringing the flesh into submission to the will of God.
 - 1. Theological Wordbook of the OT (TWOT) -- to bring into submission, especially to another's will. IE. The Octagon - Tap Out!
 - 2. We must become less. This is what many call the crucifying of the flesh.
 - a) Gal 2:20 *I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.* NKJV
 - b) Mark 8:34-35 *"Whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. 35 For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's will save it.* NKJV
 - c) To humble ourselves means we are bringing our will into line with His will. "Not my will but your will be done."
- B. We Must Seek Him - Hebrew—baquas—seek, desire, require TWOT
 - 1. To seek to find
 - 2. To seek to secure
 - 3. To seek the face
 - a) *"If you look for me wholeheartedly, you will find me."* (Jeremiah 29:13, NLT)
 - b) Jer 29:13-14 *"When you come looking for me, you'll find me. "Yes, when you get serious about finding me and want it more than anything else, 14 I'll make sure you won't be disappointed." GOD's Decree.* THE MESSAGE
 - c) Dietrich Bonhoeffer "When Christ calls a man, He bids him **come and die.**" *Cost of Discipleship*
- C. Pray - entreat - Hebrew - athar - to pray, entreat, supplication.
 - 1. To make an earnest prayer, to plead for grace, to paga - to urge strongly.
- D. What is supposed to happen when we fast is that we are to become more Christ like.
 - 1. IS 58:4-9 It is much more than going hungry. This sounds like Luke 4:18-ff.

2. Matt 17:21 **However, this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting.**" NKJV
 - a) It is not the fasting that brings the power but the weeping and mourning and changing of the condition of our hearts.
 - b) When we are more like him we have more authority. This is the kind of fast we want to be doing. This is where breakthrough begins.
 - (1) Being empowered for the Harvest will come because we are bringing ourselves into submission to God. We are not despising His word to us.
 - (2) We know we have room to grow here!
3. The more we become like him the more influence we have. IE. Acts 19:15 **And the evil spirit answered and said, "Jesus I know, and Paul I know ; but who are you?"** NKJV
4. When I am done fasting I am supposed to look more like God.

III. The Breakthrough of the Fast - Empowerment

- A. Matt 17:21 **However, this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting.**" NKJV
 1. The disciples had not enough power because of the unbelief in their own hearts.
 2. Jesus exhortation was not a works mentality to get victory it was a character transformation victory that caused them to be more Christ like having authority over the adversary.
 3. Finny - *"Revival is nothing else than a new obedience to God."* Revival Lectures
- B. Opening the heavens through fasting
 1. **Spiritual influence** - leads to number #2 a spiritual atmosphere.
 - a) Fasting allows the influence of God to come into our lives.
 - b) It says, "God I need more of you in my life."
 - c) It says, "I must decrease and you must increase." Fasting and worship are two powerful tools with which to accomplish this.
 - (1) With David it began watching sheep.
 - (a) Ps. 23 - **the Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want.**
 - (b) This influence of God upon ones life leads to an atmosphere.
 - (c) 1 Sam 16:13 **Then Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the midst of his brothers; and the Spirit of the LORD came upon David from that day forward. Influence - anointed, David encouraged himself in the Lord** NKJV
 - (d) 1 Sam 30:6 **Now David was greatly distressed, for the people spoke of stoning him, because the soul of all the people was grieved, every man for his sons and his daughters. But David strengthened himself in the LORD his God.** NKJV
 - i) Hebrew – Chazaq - to be strong, to make strong; to grow stout, to be made firm. *Thayer's* Though fasting may weaken the body, it strengthens the spirit.
 - ii) What David is doing in this passage is creating a spiritual atmosphere in his life.
 2. **Spiritual atmosphere** - when conditions are right, you are able to produce something. And when the atmosphere is sustained you create a climate. IE. The conditions can be right for snow in Florida, but it is not our climate.

- a) 1 Sam 16:22-23 **Please let David stand before me, for he has found favor in my sight." 23 And so it was, whenever the spirit from God was upon Saul, that David would take a harp and play it with his hand. Then Saul would become refreshed and well, and the distressing spirit would depart from him. NKJV**
 - b) The influence of God upon David's life allowed him to create atmospheres.
 - c) People have atmospheres. Ie. Pig-Pen of Charlie Brown; Eeyore of Winnie the Pooh. Families have atmospheres. Churches can have an atmosphere: 1. Worship service that we do not breakthrough. 2. Worship service where we do breakthrough. Your office can have an atmosphere. It simply means the conditions are right to produce something—positive or negative.
 - d) An atmosphere sustained over time leads to a climate.
 - (1) David was known as the sweet psalmist. 2 Sam 23:1 **Now these are the last words of David. Thus says David the son of Jesse; thus says the man raised up on high, the anointed of the God of Jacob, And the sweet psalmist of Israel: NKJV**
- 3. Spiritual climate** - so a climate is nothing more than a sustained atmosphere. IE. Alaska=cold, Caribbean=hot, The south=depends upon the season.
- a) 1 Sam 22:2 **And everyone who was in distress, everyone who was in debt , and everyone who was discontented gathered to him. So he became captain over them. And there were about four hundred men with him. NKJV** This was the climate/belief system of those who came to David.
 - b) The beauty is that these people did not stay this way for the influence of God upon David created his atmosphere, his atmosphere created in him a belief system. This belief system was them imparted to those who were distressed, discontent, and discourage and they became men of honor.
- 4. Spiritual belief system** - when a climate is sustained it leads to a belief system.
- a) Whether positive or negative what you believe about something will eventually be a stronghold for you.
 - b) Reflection of David's belief system: 1 Sam 17:29-32 **Belief system** - He trusted God 29 **And David said, "What have I done now? Is there not a cause?" 30 Then he turned from him toward another and said the same thing; and these people answered him as the first ones did. 31 Now when the words which David spoke were heard, they reported them to Saul; and he sent for him. 32 Then David said to Saul, "Let no man's heart fail because of him; your servant will go and fight with this Philistine." NKJV**
 - (1) Killed a bear, killed a lion
 - (2) What is a giant in the eyes to God?
 - c) You must understand what you believe affects the stronghold that you build for yourself.
 - (1) A belief system that has God at the center, and is Word driven will become for you a stronghold of the Lord.
 - (2) Belief systems get built by what you pour into your mind or you allow to become lodged in your mind.
 - (a) Education

- (b) Life experiences
- (c) Religious teaching

5. Spiritual stronghold - a sustained belief system leads to a strong hold.

- a) 2 Cor 10:4-5 **For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, 5 casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, NKJV**
- (1) Stronghold - NT:3794 ochurooma, ochuroomatos, to (ochurooo (to make strong, to fortify)) anything on which one relies: Thayer's Greek Lexicon
- (2) Reasoning - logismos - reasonings
- (a) education
 - (b) experience
 - (c) religion
 - (d) Pride - hupsooma - to elevate a thing.
- (3) 2 Sam 23:13 **Then three of the thirty chief men went down at harvest time and came to David at the cave of Adullam. NKJV**
- (a) They started out distressed but learned as David did, you can create your atmosphere.
 - (b) They took on David's belief system and as they did they too became victorious in life.
 - (c) God is no respecter of persons and what worked for David also worked for his mighty men and will work for you.
 - i) 2 Chron 11:11-12 Rehoboam: **And he fortified the strongholds, and put captains in them, and stores of food, oil, and wine. 12 Also in every city he put shields and spears, and made them very strong, having Judah and Benjamin on his side. NKJV**
 - ii) What did he put in the stronghold? He put a man with the same belief system. A captain who was like David.
 - iii) A man with a proven capacity to let God be his influence, create his own atmosphere and dwell in a like minded belief system because the King wants cities that reflect his own culture.

6. Spiritual culture - a stronghold maintained will create a culture.

- a) 2 Sam 5:1 **Then all the tribes of Israel came to David at Hebron and spoke, saying, "Indeed we are your bone and your flesh. NKJV**
- (1) We are your expression in the earth.
- (2) Amos 9:11-12 **"On that day I will raise up the tabernacle of David, which has fallen down, and repair its damages; I will raise up its ruins, and rebuild it as in the days of old; 12 That they may possess the remnant of Edom, and all the Gentiles who are called by My name," says the LORD who does this thing. NKJV**
- (a) This is the culture that Christ will again rebuild at the end of the age.
 - (b) A world consumed with David's belief system, which will create a huge stronghold all over the earth.

- (3) When will we come to Jesus and say to Him we are bone of your bone and flesh of your flesh. We are your expression in the earth!
- b) Our job in this fast is to let God do a work in us, sustain that work until it becomes a culture in our lives, home, church!
 - (1) We have not allowed ourselves to fully enter into the impartation of the Lord and because of that we have not developed a stronghold for Him in our lives, homes, work, and communities.
 - (2) Viera is a new city and we sit at a golden opportunity to establish a spiritual atmosphere here.