



## The Privilege of Prayer and Fasting Pt.2

Sunday Sermon – 1/7/2024

Bishop Steven A. Norman, Pastor

**2 Chronicles 7:12-16 (NLT) "I have heard your prayer and have chosen this Temple as the place for making sacrifices. 13 At times I might shut up the heavens so that no rain falls, or command grasshoppers to devour your crops, or send plagues among you. 14 Then if my people who are called by my name will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sins and restore their land. 15 My eyes will be open and my ears attentive to every prayer made in this place. 16 For I have chosen this Temple and set it apart to be holy—a place where my name will be honored forever. I will always watch over it, for it is dear to my heart.**

Biblical Fasting is defined as voluntarily going without food in order to focus on prayer and fellowship with God. Prayer and fasting often go hand in hand, but this is not always the case. You can pray without fasting, but I don't recommend anyone to biblically fast without praying.

Four great acts of obedience, that should spring forth from the Love of God, that the Holy Spirit has saturated our hearts with is Praise, Prayer, Giving and Fasting. This is what I call "The Home Run of Worship".

Prayer and Fasting is not a way of manipulating God.

Prayer and Fasting is a privilege that is expected by our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! Jesus says in **Matthew 6:5 "when you Pray"**... and in **Matthew 6:16 "when you fast"**... denoting that it's not a option!

The privilege of these two, allows us to draw closer to God, so that His glory manifests greater in our lives.

Again, when we talk about glory, we are talking about God's manifested presence and the results (The Goodness) that comes from Him appearing in that way.

Through Prayer and Fasting we rely on God for the strength, provision, and wisdom, so we can fight off the needs and desires of the flesh to draw closer to Him.

The more we become acquainted with who He is to us, the easier it is for us to attain what He has for us because we can heighten our expectations.

We must be careful that we don't focus so much on what we can't have and what we can't do, we can lose sight of the intention of this time of consecration through prayer and fasting.

The purpose of biblical fasting should be to take our eyes off the things of this world and disciplining our focus on drawing closer to God to see a greater manifestation of His glory.

Fasting should be done in faith, setting our goals beyond what we feel we can do in our own strength.



### **The Reward of Fasting:**

**Matthew 6:17-18** But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that it will not be obvious to men that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you openly.

When done properly with the right motive, Prayer and Fasting will attain an open reward from God.

*Last week we started looking at this text of scripture through the eyes of a New Testament believer so we can make it relevant to us.*

**2 Chronicles 7:12-16** "I have heard your prayer and have chosen this Temple as the place for making sacrifices.

In The Old Testament God had instructed Solomon to build a temple so God could come down and dwell among His people and Sacrifices could be made there.

In the New Testament God dwells with his people, but in a different temple. That temple is the body of His chosen ones.

But because He dwells in our hearts, He still expects sacrifices to be made but of a different kind and they are mentioned in the bible. Many of these sacrifices will lead to opened doors.

In the Old Testament there were essentially two different kinds of sacrifices:

1. Sin Offerings, which were offered for moral offenses that went against the Laws of God.
2. Sacrificial Offerings of Thanksgiving, which were offered to express gratitude for God's goodness and blessing.

Jesus fulfilled the Old Testament sin offerings through shedding of His Blood and His voluntary sacrifice unto death. **Hebrews 9:14-15 (NLT) ...For by the power of the eternal Spirit, Christ offered himself to God as a perfect sacrifice for our sins. 15 That is why he is the one who mediates a new covenant between God and people, so that all who are called can receive the eternal inheritance God has promised them. For Christ died to set them free from the penalty of the sins they had committed under that first covenant.**

Because of the finished work of Jesus Christ, when we sin now, We, simply acknowledge our sin for the maturing of our souls. **1 John 1:9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.**

But as believers we have the privilege and command to express our gratitude to God for Christ's work in many sacrificial ways. Peter refers to this in **1 Peter 2:5 "offer up spiritual sacrifices to God."**

*There are several different "sacrifices" by which the believer may show worship to God.*

Showing worship through sacrifices is a major way to take advantage of the open door in this season.



#### **4 Ways, New Testament Believers have the Privilege to show Worship through Sacrifices.**

##### ***1. Offering ourselves unto God as a living sacrifice***

**Romans 12:1 "I urge you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, well-pleasing to God, which is your spiritual service of worship."**

*When an Israelite had received a blessing from God, he could have a priest offer up an animal as a "whole burnt offering" to show God his gratitude. God was pleased by this costly sacrifice and expressed this by calling it a "soothing aroma." (see Lev. 3:5,16)*

Paul says that as Believers, we can by the mercies of God say, "Thank you!" to God's fantastic gift and the work of Jesus Christ. We can do this by presenting to God something much more precious and valuable than an animal, our souls, and bodies.

*We may think that this sacrifice is not very great because we have so many problems and faults, but God says that it is "holy" and "well-pleasing" to him! Notice that according to Paul, this sacrifice is our "spiritual service of worship and well pleasing to Him."*

**Romans 12-2** tells us that we become better at doing this by allowing our minds to be renewed.

##### ***2. Offer God Your Praise***

**Heb. 13:15 "Through Christ then, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of the lips that give thanks to his name."**

The spiritual sacrifice of praising God pleases Him. We are commanded to praise Him for all that He is and thank Him for all He does for us.

*The privilege to offer worship through thanksgiving and praise, is the one thing we can give to God that He doesn't give to us.*

God accept our worship in this manner so He can reward us for it.

**Psalms 50:23 (Amplified Version) 23 He who brings an offering of praise and thanksgiving honors and glorifies Me; and he who orders his way aright [who prepares the way that I may show him], to him I will demonstrate the salvation of God.**

The sacrifice of thankfulness to God is stressed over and over again in the New Testament.

**Colossians 3:17 (NLT) Sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs to God with thankful hearts.**

**1 Thessalonians 5:18 Be thankful in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you who belong to Christ Jesus.**



This sacrifice is a choice and should be made often, no matter how we feel or what our current circumstances are. As we recall God's blessings and as we thank him for these, we are keeping ourselves properly aligned with the real reality and to receive from that reality.

**1 Corinthians 2:9 "No eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no mind has imagined what God has prepared for those who love him."**

### **3. Offer God Your Material Resources**

**Hebrews 13:16 "And let us not neglect doing good and sharing, for with such sacrifices God is pleased."**

The author of the book of Hebrews, touches on two more ways in which we can worship God: doing good and sharing. "Sharing" probably refers to the generous giving of our material resources to God's work (the local church) and His people. This type of sacrifice is explicitly identified by Paul as a sacrifice which pleases God:

**Philippians 4:18-19 (NLT) At the moment I have all I need—and more! I am generously supplied with the gifts you sent me with Epaphroditus. They are a sweet-smelling sacrifice that is acceptable and pleasing to God. 19 And this same God who takes care of me will supply all your needs from his glorious riches, which have been given to us in Christ Jesus.**

Many Christians regard giving financially to God in the same way that they pay their taxes to the I.R.S. - they have to do it, and they look for ways to give as little as possible. Paul's view is very different from this.

- A. Giving is a privilege: **2 Corinthians 8:4-5 They (the church at Macedonia) begged us again and again for the privilege of sharing in the gift for the believers in Jerusalem.**

Until we understand that giving is a privilege blessing from the Lord, It will be hard for us to give from the proper perspective. **Acts 20:35 ...It is more blessed to give than to receive."**

- B. Something that we should do generously: **2 Corinthians 9:6-7 But this I say: He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.** Our giving to the work of the Lord is a great indicator of how much we can expect to receive from the Lord.
- C. As an expression of our commitment to God: **2 Cor. 8:5 They even did more than we had hoped, for their first action was to give themselves to the Lord and to us, just as God wanted them to do.** These believers counted giving their material wealth to the work of God just as important as giving themselves to the Lord.

*When we give our money to God in these ways, by supporting our local church, other Christian workers and ministries, and helping the needy, God regards these types of sacrifice as an expression of worship, fully as spiritual as praising him.*

*The giving of our money represents a giving of ourselves since money represents the time and effort and creativity that we have invested in order to gain it. Such giving is also an expression of our trust in God's faithfulness to continue to meet our material needs--which Paul tells us God will fully supply (Phil. 4:19).*