

The Tool of Fasting **Dr. John Carmichael**

[Ezr 8:21-23 NASB] 21 Then I proclaimed a fast there at the river of Ahava, that we might humble ourselves before our God to seek from Him a safe journey for us, our little ones, and all our possessions. 22 For I was ashamed to request from the king troops and horsemen to protect us from the enemy on the way, because we had said to the king, "The hand of our God is favorably disposed to all those who seek Him, but His power and His anger are against all those who forsake Him." 23 So we fasted and sought our God concerning this [matter,] and He listened to our entreaty.

[Ezr 8:31 NASB95] 31 Then we journeyed from the river Ahava on the twelfth of the first month to go to Jerusalem; and the hand of our God was over us, and He delivered us from the hand of the enemy and the ambushes by the way.

- This world is a dangerous and unpredictable place. There is lawlessness and sickness running rampant. The curse and Satan are still present and active.
- Fasting is one of the tools that God has given to us for us to tap into His promises.
- We can use the Ezra model of fasting for protection:
 - Ezra sought God with intention
 - Ezra sought God specifically
 - Ezra sought God with awareness of danger
 - Ezra sought God matching his dependency with his rhetoric
 - Ezra sought God with fasting and He heard him.

What can we learn from Ezra about how fasting is a tool to tap into God's help?

There are five aspects of Ezra's fasting model that help us understand the tool of fasting.

I. God wants us to seek Him with intention.

- a. V. 21... There I proclaimed a fast...
- b. [Mat 6:2, 5-6, 16 NASB] 2 "So when you give to the poor, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, so that they may be honored by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full. ... 5 "When you pray, you are not to be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on the street corners so that they may be seen by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full. 6 "But you, when you pray, go into your inner room, close your door and pray to your Father who is in secret, and your Father who sees [what is done] in secret will reward you. ... 16 "Whenever you fast, do not put on a gloomy face as the hypocrites [do,] for they neglect their appearance so that they will be noticed by men when they are fasting. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full.
- c. Intentionally obeying the expectation of fasting will help us receive a reward from God.

II. God wants us to specifically ask what we need/want from Him.

- a. V. 21... before our God to seek from Him a safe journey for us, our little ones, and all our possessions.
- b. [Mar 10:51-52 NASB] 51 And answering him, Jesus said, "What do you want Me to do for you?" And the blind man said to Him, "Rabboni, [I want] to regain my sight!" 52 And Jesus said to him, "Go; your faith has made you well." Immediately he regained his sight and [began] following Him on the road.
- c. Ask God to be "unimpeded by obstacles or danger" (Yomauchi)

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III. God wants us to understand our dangerous situation.

- a. V. 21&22 ... safe journey ... protect us from the enemy on the way ...
- b. [1Pe 5:8 NASB] 8 Be of sober [spirit,] be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.
- c. Jesus does not want us devoured by the devil. He taught us to pray to be delivered from the evil one. [Mat 6:13 LSB] 13 'And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. [For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.]

IV. God wants us to live lives where our dependency matches our rhetoric.

- a. V. 22... For I was ashamed to request from the king troops and horsemen to protect us from the enemy on the way, because we had said to the king, "The hand of our God is favorably disposed to all those who seek Him, but His power and His anger are against all those who forsake Him."
- b. Ezra was concerned what others might say about God if he looked to humans for his deliverance.
- c. [Eph 3:20-21 NASB] 20 Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us, 21 to Him [be] the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen.
- d. Clark – Ezra had more anxiety for the glory of God than for his personal safety.
- e. His practice matched his preaching.

V. God wants to hear and answer us.

- a. V. 23... So we fasted and sought our God concerning this [matter,] and He listened to our entreaty.
- b. Textual criticism suggests there are problems with whether this verse is original text, It 1st showed up in the 4th Century. However, Ezra seemed to believe that prayer alone was not sufficient. [Mat 17:21 NASB95] 21 ["But this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting."]
- c. Jesus taught us that there is an open reward for fasting. It is not a stretch to believe that the open reward is answered prayer.
- d. [Ezr 8:31 NASB95] 31 Then we journeyed from the river Ahava on the twelfth of the first month to go to Jerusalem; and the hand of our God was over us, and He delivered us from the hand of the enemy and the ambushes by the way.
- e. God responded to Ezra as he fasted and prayed. He will do the same for you.

- **God wants us to intentionally and specifically seek Him through fasting with the understanding that we need Him so He can be the God we claim we believe that He is.**
- As we seek God through many disciplines, including through fasting, we will experience healing past trauma, protection from current dangers, and empowerment to overcome future challenges.