



"... healing for all the nations" Revelation 22:2

"... the planting of the Lord, that He may be glorified" Isaiah 61:3

The Tree of Life

Volume 1, Issue 4

"... for the testimony of Jesus"
Revelation 1:9

November - December, 2006

About Fasting , Part 2

Jason Newman

Joel 2: 12-14; 1 Cor. 9:24-27; Isaiah 58:3-10

As we press on into the subject of fasting, we find that the starting place has to be for ourselves. This is a most overlooked area. The little areas of sin, these require honesty on our part to identify, and to want them gone. Why is this so important? Christians talk about being free from sin and the liberty that comes from it, yet we are still bound up in sin.

The Apostle writes that we are to bring our body into subjection. He is not just talking about our physical bodies. He is also talking about our minds and spirits. We do this so that we are not castaways in the sight of the Lord. Is the Word of God having an effect in our life? Is church still exciting to you? Is there some sin in your life that is causing your joy to ebb and flow? That is the place that you must start or what is to come is of no use.

As we continue on we come to the great passage in Isaiah. As the prophet starts, the people are asking a series of questions. Why have fasted and God has not moved? Why have done as God has asked and nothing has happened? What was the answer of the Lord to these questions? You are fasting for the wrong reasons. You fast so that you can boast that you are fasting. You are not mourning and fasting, weeping for the sin and calamity that is coming for yourself or upon someone else.

The next thing is about strife and debate. What are the two big debates in the church today? First is the debate over the different translations of the Bible. I am not saying that there are not valid points on both sides. What I am saying is the moment that it becomes a matter of pride, to the point of name calling and division, it becomes a problem. The other is over what it is to be filled with the Spirit. What is sanctification? These are good things to talk about, perhaps even disagree about. At the moment it becomes a matter of pride and arrogance, those distinctive doctrines become as sin in the sight of God. Would Christians fast to change a another Christian, just because he has a different opinion?

As we read on, God asks the people some questions. It is not that sackcloth and ashes are bad in the sight of the Lord. What He is trying to get the people to see is that it is not ritual that moves Him, it is the condition of the heart that moves God.

To loose the bands of wickedness. The enemy has been putting bands on the church for centuries. Our prayer and witnessing may be stretching the bands, but fasting will break the bands off.

To free the captives. As we think about this phrase of Scripture I want to remind you of another. "We wrestle not against flesh and blood ..." The deceiver has gained ground and people. He has power and dominion, he is not going to give it up easy. Then there are the people who are sin because of their own choice. Yet we are to fast to free the captives. Isaiah writes in another place, "Shall the prey be taken from the mighty, or the lawful captive delivered? But thus saith the Lord, Even the captives of the mighty shall be taken away, and the prey of the terrible shall be delivered: for I will contend with him that contendeth with thee, and I will save thy children. And I will feed them that oppress thee with their own flesh; and they shall be drunken with their own blood, as with sweet wine: and all flesh shall know that I the Lord am thy Saviour and thy Redeemer, the mighty One of Jacob." (49:24-26) Joel says that we are to come weeping and fasting and mourning. For what and for whom? It is for the people in captivity around us! We are to go to God Almighty, strong and terrible, for the deliverance that they need! Shall the captive be released? The Lord says Yes!

The last fast that I want to look at is the fast for the revelation of the mind of God. Daniel experienced this in a mighty way. He wanted to know how God was going to move for His people. He was paying attention to the Word of God, and the things going on around him. Twice he fasted to seek the mind of God. Twice God answers in a mighty way. Elijah had a series of fasts that revealed the mind of God to him. First it was the brook Cherith. Then it was the widow's house. Then it was on the way to Mount Horeb. What was said of John the Baptist? Wild honey and locust was his diet. IT was a continual fast, a way of life. These men wanted the mind of God in all things that they were doing. This goes beyond being called. This moving into that calling, and moving with and for God.

As we come to the end of this part of Joel, I want to remind you of what is to come. "It shall come to pass afterward" We want to see people saved. We want to see the church alive and growing. This is the way.

Into the Mind of God

by T. Austin-Sparks

"Called According to His Purpose"

"But now, O Lord, thou art our father; we are the clay, and thou our potter; and we all are the work of thy hand" (Isaiah 64:8).

"Then the word of the Lord came to me, saying, O house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter? saith the Lord. Behold, as the clay in the potter's hand, so are ye in mine hand" (Jeremiah 18:5,6).

Our governing thought is that the vessel made by the potter is an expression of the mind of the potter. It is not just something in itself, but it expresses a thought. So we resume with God represented as a Potter.

God took this conception Himself: it is not an idea given to Him by man. It is God who has the clay in His hands and who is working it according to His own mind. He is therefore occupied with a definite purpose: He is working to have a vessel for Himself, and the vessel is something which He chose before ever He put His hand to the work. The principle which the Apostle Paul embodied is a principle which governs all the work of God. The Lord said to Ananias (of Paul): "He is a chosen vessel unto me" (Acts 9:15), and Paul himself said later: "It was the good pleasure of God, who separated me, even from my mother's womb" (Galatians 1:15). And that Apostle makes it clear to us that all who are called in Christ Jesus are foreknown and chosen by God. It is the Apostle Peter who says that he is

writing to "the elect... according to the foreknowledge of God the Father" (1 Peter 1:1), and that elect was scattered abroad throughout "Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia".

Now this subject of 'election' is a very difficult one, so let us say something that will have the object of getting rid of some of the difficulty.

Every truly saved soul ought to have at their salvation a sense of divine destiny. A consciousness of vocation comes with the consciousness of life, and everyone at new birth ought to feel: 'Now there is something to live for! Now I feel that there is a purpose in life.' Everyone who professes to be a child of God but does not have that consciousness is not a truly born-again child of God.

This is true of every part of the creation naturally when it is right. How busy are all the living creatures on this earth! They have a sense that there is something they have got to do with their life. Look at the little ants on the ground! They are very busy! It is as though their very life depended upon their getting something done. And when life is right it is always like that. If you like to go outside of this building today you will meet a number of wasps and you will prove that what I have said is true. They are going to get something done and are not going to be easily discouraged.

Purpose is a characteristic of life, and if that is true in the natural creation, it is much more true in the spiritual. It is possible to be dead while we live; and that simply means that we have lost the sense of a purpose in living. Have you noticed that when faith declines the consciousness of purpose also fades? Faith and purpose always go together. Little faith means little purpose and large faith means large purpose.

Now we are not given any option in this matter, for it is just a matter of life or death. If we have life we have purpose, and if we have no life we have no purpose. That is because of the divine sovereignty in this matter, and it is all bound up with this matter of election, because God has chosen us for a purpose. The vessels which this Potter makes are not just for ornaments. They are not intended to be put on a shelf for people just to notice, or not to notice. God makes His vessels with an object.

You cannot explain the divine sovereignty in this matter, so you had better give up trying! When God says: "I have chosen thee", He does not invite us to explore the reasons why, nor does He invest the elect with omniscience. Indeed, He does not allow us to investigate His reasons for what He does. As a matter of fact, He makes it more difficult for the elect to understand His acts than anyone else. The clay is not allowed to ask the potter: 'Why did you choose me, and why did you make me like this?' The vessel is not permitted to say to the potter: 'Why did you choose me for this purpose?' God just does it, and He does not allow us to ask any questions as to why.

Hard-and-fast systems of doctrine in this matter often lead to spiritual death, because they put the unsearchable, infinite wisdom of God into a little man-made box. It is very true to experience that hard-and-fast doctrines about election and predestination often lead to death. Those countries where a rigid doctrine of predestination rules are usually the most spiritually dead. You can have Protestantism without life, and you can have 'reformed theology' without life. The reason is that men have put this infinite, unsearchable wisdom of God into a box of fixed doctrine.

The chosen vessel becomes the instrument of a divine wisdom which surprises the vessel itself. Sooner or later that chosen vessel is full of one question: 'Why did God choose me? Why did He call me to this work? He ought to have chosen anyone but me! I am the most unsuited for this kind of life and this kind of work.' That was true of Moses. When God would send him to Egypt, he said: 'Oh, if you can send by anybody, do so, but not by me.' When God chose Jeremiah, the latter said: "I cannot speak: for I am a child" (Jeremiah 1:6). A prophet, whose one business it was to speak, felt that it was the one thing he could not do. Divine choice is a very extraordinary thing, and it is not always the

thing that we would like or would choose that God calls us to. When we are young we have perhaps a great idea of being in the Lord's work, and we leap to it very eagerly as though we can do it, but when we get older we feel more acutely our dependence. It is then that we discover that naturally we are not fit for it, and many of God's chosen vessels have had to be kept in the work by the very power of God itself.

You see, it is God's own sovereignty in His choice, and the point is this: It is not the vessel, but the purpose for which the vessel has been chosen.

What is it that unites us as Christians? Now listen to this: It is not salvation, nor redemption, but it is God's power in salvation and redemption that unites us. It is the common consciousness of all believers that they exist for a purpose and that God has saved them with a great purpose in view. This is a very important thing to remember. We may all be saved, and yet we may all be divided. We may all be redeemed by the precious Blood of Jesus and yet remain just individual units. But see what a uniting power there is in everybody feeling that they are called to a purpose! They are united by one common vision. There were plenty of things to divide the people in the days of Nehemiah, for they all had their natural and personal interests, and the enemy was doing everything he could to divide them, but they were all mastered by one purpose - the building of that wall - and that common vision and purpose defeated the enemy at every turn.

To return to the words of Peter: We do not have to be always all together in one place to be so united. Peter said: 'To the elect who are scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia.' It is one elect in many places, united because of one consciousness of divine purpose in life.

Well, that has to do with God as the Potter. Whether we understand it or not, God acts in sovereignty when He calls us to Himself.

I believe most strongly that this is the point where the mistake has been made. Election has been made a matter of salvation when it ought to have been made a matter of purpose. We are not predestined to be saved, but are predestined, through salvation, to come to God's purpose. Election has more to do with purpose than with salvation - salvation is only on the way to purpose.

Israel was God's chosen nation, elect among the nations, and was brought out of Egypt by the virtue of precious blood. When Israel failed of the purpose of God in their existence, they defeated all that had gone before. It was the purpose of their redemption that justified their continuation as God's vessel, and when they lost their purpose they lost their place.

Dear friends, we are "called according to his purpose" (Romans 8:28).

Now much of what I have said is perhaps difficult for you to understand, but it is very important, and it leads to the other things which are not quite so difficult.

Let us walk back to the potter's house with Jeremiah, when the Lord says to him, and to Israel: 'Am I not able to do as I will with My people?'

The first thing that arises, then, is God's ability to do what He decides to do. Supposing we now put ourselves in the place of the clay and are told that God has called us into a great eternal purpose: We are to become an expression of the very mind of God. What is your reaction to that? I think the best thing we could say would be: 'Well, I don't want to disbelieve God, but I don't think He will be able to do that with me. Forgive me, Lord, if I seem to be without faith in You, but I don't think You will be able to make a success of me.' The Lord just answers: 'Am I not able to do what I decide to do? Do you mean that My power is so limited that I cannot do what I make up My mind to do?' God's

choosing carries with it God's power to do that for which He chooses. 'Yes, but Lord, I don't doubt Your power to do what You want to do, but how are You going to do it? I just do not see, Lord, how You can do it with me!' Or it may be: 'Lord, I just don't see how You are going to be able to do it with that person. He is a perfectly hopeless man, and she is a perfectly hopeless woman.' And the Lord answers: 'Do you mean that I have not got the wisdom to do what I have decided to do?' God's power and wisdom accompany His choice.... 'Very well Lord, I don't see how You can do it, but go on.'

Then the Lord begins to work, and He comes on some difficulty in the clay. There is something that is just not yielding to Him, that is not suitable to His purpose, and a crisis arises. It seems as though things come to a standstill, and then we say to the Lord: 'I told You so, Lord! You have got the wrong man. You see, You have got hold of the wrong piece of clay. I tried to tell You that You had made a mistake.' And that does not happen only once - it happens again and again through our lives.

But look at the potter in the potter's house! Look at his patience with the clay, and his persistence, and then look at the people to whom he was speaking. Think of Israel! Apart from ourselves, Israel is the greatest example and demonstration of the patience of God through history. I know what you are thinking! When the vessel that the potter was making was marred, he made another vessel. But I will ask you a question: Was his new vessel made with new clay or was it made with the old clay? The answer to that is given to us in Paul's letter to the Romans, chapters nine, ten and eleven. There Paul says: 'Yes, it is true that the original Israel was marred in the hands of the Potter, but out of the original clay He takes a remnant' - and this is the impressive thing - 'and that remnant is according to the election' (Romans 11:5).

God's work is not all in vain, for in the remnant He sees His full thought realized and expressed. There may be a lot about us that tries the patience of God, but He will never give us up - until we say that we absolutely refuse to go on with Him. But who shall ever say that God's patience is exhausted?

No, dear friends. If God has really called us, He knows what He has called. He knows all that has to be done. His wisdom and His power are very great; His patience and His persistence are just wonderful, and the potter's house tells us that God is triumphant at last.

I think I had better leave it there for the moment. There is very much more to come later on, and there are some things of very great importance in this connection. If you are really the Lord's you can settle this question that you have been chosen. Has God drawn our hearts out to Himself? That settles the whole question of election. Have you really some desire toward the Lord? Where did that desire come from? The one thing that we sometimes have to fall back on is this: 'Lord, I did not create my desire for You. With all my weaknesses and all my failures, You have done something in me so that I cannot do without You.'

Let us just settle, therefore, that God has chosen us according to His purpose and that sense of divine purpose must really govern our lives. Let us have faith in God that He has the power and the wisdom and the patience to realize what He has chosen us for.

A Chosen Generation, part 1

John Myers

(Text is taken from a spoken sermon at a youth service. Some of the mannerisms of speaking have been retained.)

I count it a real privilege to be able to share the word of the Lord with you tonight. You are a generation that is like no other. You are living in a day and time that God has called and ordained you

to be in. It did not just happen to be. I see you with your ipods, your computers and I just marvel at the technological skill that you have. You are so brilliant in so many areas, so skilled.

Yet there is something that we need to understand. With all the knowledge that we have, that comes from technology, there is still the Word of God. It declares that if any man lacketh wisdom, then let him ask of God. I guarantee you, that no matter what kind of degrees that you have, or how smart you are, or how good you are on that computer, there will come a time when you have to call on the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords. You are going to have to call on Him, because He is the One who will have the answer for you.

I think about our theme for the convention about vision. It says there in Joel that your old men will dream dreams and your young men will have visions. Is there any young people that have vision here tonight? I am talking about looking past today, looking down the road to see what God has for your life. Not what you have, not what you desire. If you have accepted the call of God on your life, you have been born again, then know something. God has called you for this particular time. I still believe in visions, I still believe in dreams. I still believe that God is calling young men and women in to the ministry for the work of the Lord. Just as it says in Acts 26:19, "Whereupon King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision." That vision that God has got in store for you, we have to follow it.

As I was praying for this message and seeking God and thinking we are so blessed. That this is a tremendous generation. This is a great group of young people and to see you here worshipping the Lord tonight is outstanding. It says in Psalm 24:6, "This is the **generation** of those that seek Him, that seek thy face, O Jacob. Selah" How many of you know that we are not seeking after things? We hear it preached, "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God, and His righteousness, and all these other things will be added to you." Young people, it is so easy to get caught up in things. It is so easy to get caught up in this world that says that more is better. To have the best of all the things that the world has to offer. But I have got news for you young person, it is in seeking the face of the Lord! We do not seek after things, we seek after God! We do not seek after the Kingdom, we seek after Him!

I want to talk about a generation that is going to seek God. A generation that has vision outside of their local youth group. A generation of young people called of God, who are here by choice. Maybe someone talked you in to coming here, but I have news for you. God ordained that you are here tonight.

1 Peter 2:9 tells us that you are a chosen generation. Turn to your neighbor and tell them that you are a chosen generation. A Chosen Generation, a Royal Priesthood, a Holy Nation, a Peculiar People, that you should show forth the praises of Him that called you out of darkness into His marvelous light. I have news for you tonight: you are a chosen generation. The Word of the Lord says that I am seeking those that would seek me. I am looking for that young person who is willing to pay the price. I am looking for that young person who will say that the world can have their parties, you can do whatever you want. Looking for the young person who will say that there is nothing that will bring you satisfaction except the satisfaction that I have in the Lord Jesus Christ!

He says that you are a royal priesthood. In other words, a generation that offers up praises unto God. In Romans he says, "I beseech ye therefore by the mercies of God that you present yourselves a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God which is your reasonable service, and be not conformed unto this world, but be ye transformed ..." Not like everybody else. You are chosen. God accepts your praise. God accepts your worship. Most of all, God wants you to be a sacrifice unto Him. In other words, you say that Lord I am willing to follow you! I choose to follow you in whatever direction that you want me to go.

We make a lot of plans. When I grow up I want to do this, I want to do that. I have news for you young people, God has chosen you. John 15:16 says that You have not chosen me but I have 6

chosen you. See God chose you. You think that I just decided to be a Christian. No, God chose you. He goes on to say that I have chosen you and ordained you. I have set you apart. God has ordained you, that you should bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain. God has chosen you.

Has anybody in here ever played pick up ball? That is where you all get together and two of you decide. I am captain, and I am a captain. The good guys always get picked first. When I was growing up, I was a little, bitty scrawny guy. How many of you know that little scrawny guys are the last to get picked. I was so scrawny that my freshman year in High School I weighed 99 pounds with my uniform on. Sometimes when you are playing ball they look at the size. But God does not look at the size. He does not look at age. He does not differentiate with what color you are, or what creed you are. He chooses you because of your heart. This young man or woman, this one I can use. They have a heart that is after me. They have something in them that I can use. I was the last to be picked. I know how it was to be rejected. God says the first shall be last, the last shall be first. God is no respecter of persons.

God has chosen you. I have thought about that many times. That God would choose me to be a minister of the Gospel. I was not raised in a Christian home. You are sitting here tonight, and it is a tremendous opportunity for you. You are sitting here in the presence of the Lord of Lords and the King of Kings, the Bright and Morning Star, the Lily of the Valley, our Rock, our Fortress, our High Tower. Everything that you need in life is wrapped up in the Lord Jesus Christ. Everything that you need is found in Him.

That Bible that you hold in your hands will lead you to success. In Joshua He says, that the Word of the Lord shall not depart out of your mouth, thou shalt meditate on it day and night, that thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and thou shalt have good success. To be successful some would say that I need to go to the best college, the best job. You need to get in with God.

In 1 Samuel, we read about Hannah. How she cried out to the Lord for a child because she was barren in her womb. Finally she went up, she laid before the Lord at the altar. She got down on her face, but there was no sound coming out. She was crying in her heart. The High Priest, he accused her of being drunk in the house of the Lord. She said She was crying out to the Lord. The Lord granted her request. You know what her request was? It was for a son that would serve the Lord. Some of you young people were dedicated to God before you were born. Your Momma was praying for you in the womb, declared that you were going to be something for God. When they carried up, maybe with Grandma and Grandpa, and they dedicated you to the Lord, they put you in the hand of God. I have news for you, you are still there! Samuel knew how to minister to the Lord, knew how to worship God, but did not know how to hear from God. He did not know how to hear from God for himself.

Sometimes we take you into a camp, or a youth service, and we tell you raise your hands. People will do what they are told. But there will come the time when you are going to seek the Lord and find Him for yourself. We think that when we come to the altar we have to fall on the floor, roll around on the floor. We think that we have to scream, we have to cry. Sometimes that is all just emotion. Sometimes God just wants us to sit still, and know that He is God. The prophet had to get there. He ran from the queen. He ended up in a cave. It wasn't in the earthquake, it wasn't in the storm, it wasn't in the things. It was in the still small voice.

Samuel was laying in his bed one night. He hears his name called. He arises and goes to the priest. Did you call me? No, go back to bed. He goes and lays down on his bed, and hears his name again. He gets up and goes back the second time. He goes to the priest and says what do you need? The priest says I did not call you, go back to bed. He hears the third time, and then the priest realizes that God is speaking to you. Let me ask you a question. Has the Lord ever spoken unto you. Has He ever

spoken unto you, in your spirit? When you were at camp and God spoke to you about your Life? We stand and say God spoke, but the next day we are right back out there. We never realized the importance of that Voice. When we accepted that calling, God is going to begin to groom you. He chose you.

We know Samuel ministered unto the Lord. It says that he girded himself with a linen ephod. Samuel knew how to worship, he knew how to minister, but he did not know the voice of the Lord. I encourage young people to be filled with the Holy Ghost. Those that worship Him must worship in Spirit and Truth. You need to be filled with the Spirit of the Lord. It is not about lifting up hands, it is not about crying, it is about seeking Him. Do you know how to hear His voice? Do you know what it is to hear the Lord?

Now may the saving grace of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, the Love of God the father, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, rest remain and abide with us all, now and forevermore. Amen

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