

"... 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

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

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About Fasting, part one

Joel 2:12-27; 1Cor. 9:24-27; Isaiah 58:3-6; Ezekiel 16:49

Jason Newman

It sometimes seems that all the Lord talks about and all we hear preached is repentance. We have talked about it in the last two issues. We stopped in particular with Jeremiah, talking about breaking up the fallow ground. Why is that so important? It is because we have so much fallow ground.

This may be the first time that some of you have heard or read about fasting. God calls men who repent to pray and fast. I want to share that this works. I am saved, and preaching the Gospel because my wife prayed and fasted for me. We had started going to church but I was not willing to get grounded in the faith and settle down the way the Lord wanted. My wife started praying and fasting every Wednesday for me. She did that for the whole summer. There was not a change in me, but God heard her prayer. He spoke to her and told her that He had it well in hand. It was not long after she quit the prayer and fasting, and at service God brought conviction of on my heart and the changes started taking place.

As we start, I want to hold out reason and the promise for fasting so that we will be motivated to do it. Notice in verses 26 and 27 that it says that we will no longer be ashamed. What a promise and hope for us. The church needs to understand that His will is for us to be triumphant! We are to be overcomers. There is no reason for the Body of Christ being ashamed or defeated. Fasting is a way that God has decreed for that shame to go away.

Now look at the reason we fast. Not for the removal of the shame. That is the result. The reason is in verse 18. To understand this lets us reflect on where we have studied already. In the first chapter, we made the picture of the locust and the cankerworm as that of sin. That just as they would devastate the land, so sin devastates our lives. Destruction and death always follow after sin. Then we looked that God wants a turning back to Him in deeds, not just word.

Remember that we talked about that they would have no grain offering or wine offering for their offering to the Lord. The promise is that He would give back the joy of their relationship with Him. Not only that, but look at the wording of verse 18 again. "I will remove from you the northern army . . ." Whatever that sin or destruction was, God is going to drive it away. Even to that point of turning the enemy's face away from us.

Notice that in verse 21 and 22 that even the effects of our sin are going to be dismissed and expelled. God has said and told all in hearing that He is going to bless because you have turned to me with all your heart. As you read on you see that there is coming an abundance of rain. There had been such a drought, but there will be a total reversal of that. God is promising that we will have not just enough for the moment, but will have enough for the times to come. The rain will not be light, it will not be all at once, but will be a steady continual rain that will satisfy and do the most good.

Look at 25, that what was stolen from us, or what we gave up to the enemy, is going to be restored to us. It is going to be restored to the point of overtaking us. He takes us back to the picture of sin, and says that now He has our attention, He will restore to the point of making us not ashamed. We will be satisfied. If that is the promise with the physical things, how much more will it be with the spiritual.

All of this is the motivating force for what we are going to now consider. We go to verse 12. The “you” that is in that verse would be both the individual you and the corporate you. Yes, the book was written for the nation of Israel, but individuals have to apply the things therein. The point is repeated in verse 15.

Blow the trumpet. The shofar would echo over the land for miles in every direction. Whether it was peace or war, the shofar was about getting attention and calling to a central location. The Holy Spirit has used men as His trumpet to call us to attention and gather us to place where we can hear the voice of God. Observe also, that this is a cry for the people of God. God loves the world. The first concern of His heart is the church, those that are called by His Name. We are the ones that have to show that love to the world. We are so good at pointing out the faults of the world, yet as we look in the same mirror, we forgot what sort of men that we are. That is dangerously close to the white washed sepulcher that Jesus spoke of in Matthew.

As we are now going to be looking at fasting, I want to share a quote with you from John Wesley. He says, “First, let it be done unto the Lord, with our eye singly fixed on Him.” This is the key to fasting. It is not about the problem that is before us. It is not even for the health benefits, though the Lord tells that there will be. It is about sanctifying ourselves, set apart to pray and seek Him. “Let our attention be in this and this alone, to glorify our Father which is heaven, to express our sorrow and shame for manifold transgression of His holy law, to wait for and increase of purifying grace, to draw in our affections to the things above. To add seriousness, to obtain all the great and precious promises which He has made for us in Jesus Christ. Let us beware of fancying that we merit anything of God by our fasting.” That last is a good word. Sometimes when we pray, we think that just because we have prayed, God has to answer us. He is Almighty God and you are going with a petition before Him. God has ordained that fasting is an avenue by which His grace can come, but it has nothing to do with the avenue itself.

As we turn to the passage in Isaiah, we come to the most complete passage about the power of fasting in Scripture. As you look at the first three verses in the passage, you find the things that we have already talked about. In verse six we see God asking us a series of questions. What is God trying to do with asking these questions? He is trying to get us to see other peoples need, the oppression of the enemy.

The first thing is to loose the bands of wickedness. What do I mean by this? First, is there a sin or something that is continually causing you to fall? You have prayed, you have cried, you have repented, yet there it is. You have heard the preacher preach it. You have read it in the Bible. Perhaps you need to fast to seek God for the grace to overcome. We need to be honest about how these sins are wrecking our testimony, our work for God. The principle of God is that if we love God

with our whole heart, soul, mind, and body, He will come and meet the need. We need to bring all things in subjection, so that we are not castaways. Are you serious about the sin in your life? Are you serious about overcoming? Do you want the restoration that God has promised? We need to see this world and the things of this world as God sees them. They are passing away. If we do the things, or if we love this world, we will pass away also.

As we think about this, I want you to think about what happened to Sodom and Gomorrah. What was the sin of Sodom? Be careful here. The sexual sin that we think of was the outgrowth of something else. Pride, and fullness and idleness were the sins of Sodom. Brothers and Sisters, do not be like the men of Sodom. The presence of God was in their midst, yet they were too blind to see it. God is in our midst, are we hearing Him? Are we living like He is in the midst? Are we believing and acting like He is in the midst?

Christian Maturity 2

Psalm 40:1,2; 42:1-4

Myrna Marble

We again are going to be looking at the word salvation. The part of salvation that we are going to be looking at today is safety. This is such a timely topic. We are in such a day of turmoil, and trial on every hand. There is a place of rest in Him. There is a safe zone. One that we can know. One that we know is secure. He said, "Be still and know that I am God." That is the difficult thing in which we live. There is constant push for more and more busyness. No matter what storms may come. No matter how hard the wind blows, if I have built my faith upon the Lord Jesus Christ, I am upon the Rock. Through obedience to the Word, I have become established, and everything is OK.

Patience. Most of us may fail that test right there. Most of us could not wait patiently. Patience is a Godly virtue, He will make sure we have it. It comes from extreme circumstances that we have no control over. James said let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be entire, or wanting nothing. I believe that is why the Lord warned us that at the end time, the thing that would hinder the work of God most, and trouble the Christian most are the cares of this life.

He listens to me. He always hears the cry of His children. Remembered when the children of Israel were in Egypt, He went to Moses and spoke to Him. He said I have heard the cries of my people. That remains the same today. Whether it is just the cry of my heart, or if it is an audible prayer He hears it.

Here is the place of safety. He brought me out of Adamic nature, that thing that is in me that clings to the dust. He brought me to the place where I am obedient to the Word of God. He brought us into a covenant relationship with Jesus Christ so that my life is now one of victory in all things. It is full of joy, in fact joy unspeakable and full of glory.

Jesus asked His disciples one day, who do men say that I am? They answered, Jeremiah, Elijah, or another prophet. Then He asked them who do you say that I am? Peter said, you are the Christ! Jesus then said, upon this Rock I will build my church. When I made my confession of faith, He set me on the same Rock. He pulled me up out of the miry clay. I found a life worth living. I praise Him for what I see him doing in my life. I praise Him for what I see Him doing in the church.

Next, He established my goings. He brought me out of the miry clay. He saved me I was lost, but Jesus found me. Little by little He is changing my life. Even today He is changing me. It is through obedience that I am changed. Whether it is in the commands of the Word of God, or if He deals with

my heart as an individual, He just wants obedience. It is better than sacrifice. Then we get to place where we have more on the other side than we have here. I read at the end of my Bible, Even so come quickly Lord Jesus. I believe that there are people that are reaching that place. They are crying out for the Lord to come. Out of this world, into a place that He has prepared for us. That is when Thomas said, Lord we do not know whither you go. How can we the know the way? Jesus answered, I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life. So it is in my obedience that my way is established in God.

Psalms 42 says that my soul pants after the Lord. I want Him more than any food. I desire to know Him more than any person. I do not want to go back to a place where I do not know Him. There is nothing in the world that I want more than Him. When is my time going to come that I may come and appear before you? We are here dealing with someone who has sold out to God. Like Jesus, they are obedient. It is through suffering that we are growing in grace. Many in the church may not understand. They would say to us that if we only had faith, we would have that suffering or circumstance gone. They may be very critical and sharp in their talking and dealing with us. Many of us have learned as we grow in grace and truth that words are cheap. If we know that we know God, which is the key. If we are longing for God, to stand in His presence. How do we know that we are in this place? We have done all we know to do in obedience.

The new birth takes place in our spirit. As the spirit grows stronger and stronger, then the soulish, fleshy part of me grows weaker and weaker. Indeed, we are to mortify the flesh. That is, we are to kill the works and deeds of this flesh. When any kind of temptation would rise up from the old nature, say anger, strife, envy. I am to immediately kill it. I have even found the weapon that He wants me to use. The Word of God is quick and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword. It divides even the soul from the spirit. That tells me that I can take the Word of God and mortify the soul and flesh. Let us stay in the safe zone of obedience and longing after God.

Where is thy God? Now it says that in the last days that there would be scoffers, mockers, walking after their own lusts. They do not have the Spirit of God. They say where is the promise of His coming? They say everything has remained the same from the beginning. The Bible said that is how it would be. It says that many that walked with Him would not as things get harder. There would be a great falling away. They would not pay the price. There is no need to become alarmed. Just because someone you had a lot of confidence in, had walked with the Lord many years, turned and started to do things differently. Do not let that bother you. How is it with your soul? Let us keep our eyes on Him. We are to look unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith. This one that endured the cross said to us that if any man, would be my disciple, then let him deny himself. That is rule number one. Self-denial. Number two, take up His cross. There may be some endurance there. He endured the cross representing humanity.

That is the way. We are to deny ourselves. Then pick up the cross. That is the load of humanity. Do not try to pick more than is your lot. Just carry what He has laid on your shoulders to carry. It is a daily walk with God. Do not be just a Sunday Christian. Do not be just a revival Christian. Do not be just a holiday Christian. He wants us to be Christ-like in our attitudes every day of the week. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever. I am to serve Him that way. It is a daily walk with the Lord.

The last part of that command is that I am to follow Him. I am always to follow the Lord. That is what keeps me established. Now when I am disobedient, I find things a little rocky. Every one of us has failed but this not the point. Unto whom much is given, much is required. It is about growing in grace and knowledge. There is much more required of someone who has served the Lord for many years than for a new convert. Why? They are in a different position with God. It is not that He is a respecter of persons. It is that they have taken a step of faith, an act of obedience, and that puts them in a place where they have to guard their lives more closely. They cannot be slack in any area.

A new convert is just learning how to crawl. The gravest mistake is for the mature Christian to demand that the new convert live like they do. That is not Bible. The mature Christian did not learn to get where they are overnight. Learning takes time.

All the Lord asks is that I pour out my soul unto Him. He just wants us to be honest. He does not want us to be hypocritical. If I am having a problem in some area, I need to be honest with God. Then He can help me. As one pastor said, just be plain vanilla. Do not try to be something you are not. Someone who pretends to be something they are not is a hypocrite. Let us be honest and upright in all things. We are in a place of safety if we have been washed in the Blood, He has set your feet upon that Rock. He wants you to become more and more obedient to His will, so that He can establish you. Steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord. That is His will for me. He does want me to be looking back on what could have been. It is too late for what could have been. We forget that things that are behind, pressing toward the mark of the high calling.

Into the mind of God

Part One - A Vessel ... Meet for the Mater's Use

T. Austin-Sparks

"These were the potters... there they dwelt with the king for his work" (1 Chronicles 4:23).

"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).

"The word which came to Jeremiah from the Lord, saying, Arise, and go down to the potter's house, and there I will cause thee to hear my words. Then I went down to the potter's house, and, behold, he wrought his work on the wheels. And when the vessel that he made of clay was marred in the hand of the potter, he made it again another vessel, as seemed good to the potter to make it. 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, O house of Israel" (Jeremiah 18:1-6).

"And (thou) shall say unto them, Thus saith the Lord of hosts: Even so will I break this people and this city, as one breaketh a potter's vessel, that cannot be made whole again" (Jeremiah 19:11).

"And they took counsel, and bought with them the potter's field, to bury strangers in" (Matthew 27:7).

"And they gave them for the potter's field, as the Lord appointed me" (Matthew 27:10).

"But the Lord said unto him (Ananias), Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles and kings, and the children of Israel" (Acts 9:15).

"Or hath not the potter a right over the clay, from the same lump to make one part a vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?" (Romans 9:21).

"And he that overcometh, and he that keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give authority over the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron, as the vessels of the potter are broken to shivers; as I also have received of my Father" (Revelation 2:26,27).

This is a small selection of the Scriptures which bear upon this one matter of the potter and his vessel, and the one thing which arises from them is that every vessel made by the potter is an expression of his mind. When you look at any vessel made by an intelligent potter you look through

the vessel and see the mind of the one who made it. There is a thought in the form of that vessel, and that, of course, is especially true of God.

You may know that pottery has a very long history, and we are now in possession of pottery that was made six thousand years ago. Men were making pottery before Abraham was born, and, as we have seen, it has a very large place in the Bible. I had a long list of other passages of Scriptures on this subject, but would not trouble you to look at them.

Let us first look at some of the general features of the passages which we have read.

Firstly, God is represented as a potter. Secondly, humanity is represented as the clay. Thirdly, Israel is represented as a vessel chosen by God for a purpose on the earth. Fourthly, the Church is represented as a vessel chosen by God from eternity for a heavenly purpose.

Fifthly, individuals are spoken of as vessels. Some individuals, like the Apostle Paul, are chosen for a special purpose. Sixthly, the pattern of God's vessel is His Son, Jesus Christ. The Scripture says that the Church is "foreordained to be conformed to the image of his Son" (Romans 8:29), so that His Son is the pattern to which God is working. Seventhly, the intelligent worker on the wheels of the potter is the Holy Spirit. He is the driving power of God's purpose. Eighthly, the wheels themselves are the wheels of circumstance and experience.

Well, those are some general things coming out of these Scriptures, but, as we are laying the foundation for our consideration, we will now come close to the Bible.

We read a verse in 1 Chronicles 4 which referred to the potter's field, in which there was the potter's house. The potters lived there, in that field and in that house, for one thing only - to make pottery for the king. The kings - David and Solomon - evidently kept a large band of potters, and the many vessels used in the king's house which were of clay were made in that field. It was to that field and to that house that the Lord sent Jeremiah. David and Solomon had gone long ago, but the potter was still busy in his house in the same field. There were evidently very many potters in the days of David and Solomon, but when we come to Jeremiah it seems that there was only one potter at work.

That potter's field had a very tragic history. Our passage in the Gospel by Matthew tells us a very sad story. The potter's field was still there, but the potter's house and the potters were all gone. Judas betrayed his Master for thirty pieces of silver, and when he discovered what he had done, he went back and threw the silver at the feet of the rulers, who said: 'This is the price of blood. We cannot give it any place in the sanctuary.' Then they had a meeting to consider what they should do with the money... "and they took counsel, and bought with them the potter's field". That same potter's field, which had come right down through history and had had a glorious day, was now bought with the price of the Blood of Jesus Christ. That had been prophesied by the prophet Zechariah. The price of a servant, of a bond-slave, was thirty pieces of silver, and that was the price that they put upon the Son of God. What a tragic end to the potter's field!

When we come to the prophecies of Isaiah there are quite a number of references to the potter and the clay, and we read the final one. Israel is saying: 'Thou art the Potter and we are the clay.' I expect you know what is the message of the prophecies of Isaiah - the message of Divine sovereignty over Israel and the nations. Those prophecies began with the great vision in chapter six, when Isaiah said: "In the year that king Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up." Uzziah was one of the great kings of Israel after David and Solomon, and when this greatness was dead the prophet saw another greatness - "the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up". When all earthly government fails, the government remains in the hands of the Lord. When the sovereignties of this world die, there is a sovereignty that never dies. The Lord still remains sovereign over all things.

When you go on to Jeremiah that sovereignty is concentrated upon this chosen people, Israel. Here it is a matter of God's rights in this particular people... "O house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter?" The Lord has absolute right to do as He wills with His own people. When the Lord says: 'I have chosen you', that is not only His initiative, but His absolute authority. When the Lord chooses a vessel, that choice carries with it His absolute authority. That sovereign authority will work for the vessel, or will work against it. It depends upon whether the clay will yield to the sovereignty of the Potter. If we yield to the mind of God, His sovereignty will work for us, but if we resist, that sovereignty will break us. We cannot get away from the sovereignty of God. That can be a very wonderful and blessed thing, but it can also be a very terrible thing.

When I have said that I have just given you the whole of the prophecies of Jeremiah. You may not like this book and if you had your choice you would perhaps select Isaiah before Jeremiah, but if you will read the book of Jeremiah with this one thought in mind it will be a great inspiration. Over the book is written: 'Cannot I do as I will? saith the Lord.' No one can argue with God. No one can challenge God's right or question the will of God. God says: 'I am the Lord. I will do as I want to do.' That will be a very good thing for all those who are on God's side, but it will be a very bad thing for those who are in opposition to Him.

Well, that is the book of Jeremiah in a word.

You pass through the sovereignty of God in Matthew 27 - the sovereignty of fulfilled prophecy in the potter's field - and you come to the ninth chapter of the Book of the Acts. There the Lord is saying to Ananias about Saul of Tarsus: "He is a chosen vessel unto me." Here, then, we have the principle that God does choose certain people for certain special purposes. Such vessels may have to go through many sufferings and afflictions, but if ever the sovereignty of God was seen in the life of a single man, it was in the life of the Apostle Paul. We said that God's choosing means God's authority, and sooner or later our attitude toward chosen vessels will prove to have been our attitude toward God.

We pass from Paul as a chosen individual vessel, and we come on to more common ground which brings us all in. We would not put ourselves in the same category as the Apostle Paul, and would hesitate to think that we are chosen vessels to fulfil some special purpose in history. Of course, that may be true of some of you - the end will tell whether it is true - but whether it be true or not, when you come to the second letter to the Corinthians, you are on right ground. Remember: it is to Corinthians that the Apostle is writing. Thank God, then, for the message to Corinthians! To all the Corinthians, and to all like them, the Apostle says: "We have this treasure in earthen vessels" (2 Corinthians 4:7) - and what earthen vessels we are! We are very poor clay indeed, but the Word is: 'In this poor clay, these earthen vessels, we have a treasure, and the excellency is not our excellency - it is the excellency of God.'

"We have this treasure" - as one version puts it - "in vessels of fragile clay." I wonder what was in Paul's mind when he wrote that! You may get some idea of what he was thinking about if you look at the context. He gives a list of all the things that the vessel has to endure, the many persecutions and the trials that the vessel has to go through, but although it is a vessel of fragile clay and has to go through everything that would be calculated to destroy it, it is not destroyed. It just goes on burning because of that treasure within it.

You know, Paul only had the Old Testament as his Bible. Has your memory lighted upon what may have been in his mind? There are a lot of references to the Old Testament in this letter to the Corinthians, but in this case I think perhaps he was thinking about Moses and the bush which never burned. Any small match put to it might have consumed it and if you had passed by the next day you would have seen nothing but charred ashes. But this fire went on and on and on and the bush was

never consumed. The earthen vessel had a treasure in it: it was the Lord. Come what may, if the Lord is in the vessel, it will not be destroyed. The testimony will go on. So Paul says: "We are... pursued, yet not forsaken."

We pass from that to Paul's letter to Timothy, and there he says: "In a great house there are... vessels... some unto honour, and some unto dishonour"... 'If a man will separate himself from those vessels unto dishonour, he shall be a vessel unto honour' (2 Timothy 2:20,21).

Here, then, the Apostle introduces the great law of separation from everything that God cannot accept, and says: 'If you do that, you shall be a "vessel... meet for the master's use, prepared unto every good work"'.

Therefore we are called to be vessels suitable for the use of the Lord, and our suitability depends upon our separation from all that which is not honourable to the Lord.

We have only one remaining reference: that in the Book of the Revelation. "And he that overcometh... to him will I give authority over the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron, as the vessels of the potter are broken to shivers." I do not pretend to understand what that means, but it does seem to say this: That there will be a people who will be like a rod of iron, by which the rebellious nations shall be broken to pieces like a potter's vessel. I say that we cannot understand that, but there it is in the Bible, and what it says is just this: That in the end the nations which have continued to reject God, who have resisted all the patience and love of God, who have known of Him and have refused to have Him as their God, will be broken to pieces like a potter's vessel, and the instrument that God will use will be those who are here called 'the overcomers'.

That is a very broad survey of something of what the Bible says about the potter, the clay and the vessels. It is only a beginning, the laying down of a foundation, but do not allow your anticipation of what is yet to come to rob you of the value of what has been said. You have a lot of empty pages in your notebooks yet, but do not be so anxious to get them filled up that you do not go over what you already have. We are not giving just Bible teaching, but are working our way into the mind of God. There is a lot of instruction in what has been said, a lot of comfort and encouragement, and a lot of strength to be taken from it, but there is also much warning. We are not only occupied with teaching in the Bible. We are in the presence of the revealed mind of God and to come into that is a great responsibility.

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