

Fasting

Steve Durham—September 12, 2015

Good afternoon, everyone! I want to talk about fasting, today. I want to use Atonement, because there are sort of like three phases of fasting, if you will, or elements, or degrees.

1. the physical fast
2. the spiritual fast, through the year
3. Atonement

All those fasts are very important, and God talks about those in His Word. They're full of meaning in the light of God's master plan for mankind.

In the Jewish world, Atonement is the most solemn day of the year. Some may pick Passover, Trumpets or Feast of Tabernacles. When you hear what I have to say today, I think you might agree that Atonement is probably one of the more solemn days in God's plan for us and for the world. Very important!

A fast is lost on the world today. You don't hear about fasting very much. If you do, you hear about it in the context of it being maybe a 'sit down' fast where someone is trying to get something for political purposes or maybe it's a starvation and they're trying to get attention on something and they're fasting. You might hear about a 'juice fast' where you cleanse your body. Those physical fasts are important, too, because they do help us quite a bit.

Atonement and the elements of Atonement—the fast—pictures God's redemption for mankind. God is our Redeemer, He says in Isa. redeeming us back. When you redeem something back, that item is lost, so you have to get it back. That's what this process pictures.

Without God man is lost. We're all made and once we understand *how* we're made, we can begin to assist in the process of being redeemed. We have to come to an understanding of how we're made. Paul talks about that, that we're made sinful. We are carnal, and carnal is vanity and we are sinful.

Isaiah 59:1: "Behold, the LORD'S hand is not shortened that it cannot save... [God can save anyone He wants] ...nor is His ear heavy that it cannot hear." When you pray, seek God and call out, He hears you. He's strong! He can do that; He's all powerful.

Verse 2: "But your iniquities... [your sins] ...have come between you and your God, and your sins have hid *His* face from you, that He will not hear." The world is in a situation where *their* sins have hidden God's face from them. We all understand in God's plan, it's not the time for them right now.

Christ said that the reason why is 'I put a veil over their minds and their eyes is so they won't hear.' It's not time for them. But we understand, and for whatever reason, we've been called. God has opened our minds and taken the veil off our eyes so that we can hear, but we still have sin. Our individual sins separate us from God. It is very important that we understand that.

There's an ever-growing need today, as well—as time goes on and as we get into these fall Holy Days—to turn to God and to repent. You can't repent unless you understand the state you're in and the sins that you, individually, have. That's a very, very important ingredient in fasting and the Day of Atonement.

This is not a sermon on the Day of Atonement. But I want to pick out of that, some elements that we should be doing throughout the year, as well. To be at one with God, Atonement pictures this time of being at one—'at-one-ment'—Atonement with God.

One of the most obvious observances of this day, of course, is fasting. You don't hear much in the world about it. The world has kind of lost its impact or its understanding. The churches, today in the world, have lost that, and in the Church of God sometimes Atonement comes upon us and we just go through the motions. We don't really think about what we're doing as far as fasting and 'afflicting' our souls. It can be lost on us.

What I want to do is to go back and take a look at that, revisit that and bring it back to the forefront. I think it's 'meat in due season.' This time of year it is very important.

We were talking today about health. A physical fast helps lower the blood pressure. There are Scriptures in the Bible that talk about what it does for us, for the heart and different things:

- it cuts down on heart disease
- it allows cleansing and detoxing of the body
- it rests the systems
 - ✓ the digestive system
 - ✓ liver
 - ✓ kidneys

It allows them to get a break, take a vacation.

- it increases the energy level in us

A fast, physically, is very important in that respect.

While fasting physically is important, and we get a lot of benefits from it, take that into the spirit realm and it just get notched up quite a bit, to the

importance in our lives as Christians, as begotten sons and daughters of God. It becomes a very important element and tool in our life throughout the year for us to put into practice.

I would be embarrassed if we talked about how many times in the year have I fasted. It's not the most enjoyable thing to do physically; we kind of stay away from that. It's very important the closer we become to God in a relationship with God—in a spirit realm we think in spirit, we live in spirit and we worship 'in Spirit and Truth'—that we apply that tool more and more in our lives, especially as the time draws near to the end. We need to almost force ourselves to do that. We need to start doing that. What will happen is that we will begin to see the benefits from it as we do it. It's one of those things you have to do to get the benefit. It's a 'catch 22.' You don't want to do it physically, but it's very important that we do.

I want to talk about the benefits, purpose and the reason for fasting. I want to rehearse that. I guess the question would be: Are we commanded to fast? If you're a new individual in the Truth, you'd say: 'Why do I have to fast?' *God commands it!*

Lev. 23—we see where all the Feast days are laid out. We all have that memorized and we see several things about this day.

Leviticus 23:24: "Speak to the children of Israel saying, 'In the seventh month, in the first day of the month, you shall have a Sabbath...'"

Verse 27: "Also, on the tenth day of this seventh month, is the Day of Atonement. *It shall be a Holy convocation...* [it's a Holy Day, getting together] ...to you. And **you shall afflict your souls** and offer an offering made by fire to the LORD. And you shall do no work in that same day, for it is the Day of Atonement, in order to make an atonement for you before the LORD your God, for **whoever is not afflicted in that same day, he shall be cut off from among his people....** [pretty serious] ...And whoever does any work in that same day, the same one will I destroy from among his people.... [pretty serious] ...You shall do no manner of work.... [Once again, it states 'no manner of work.'] ...*It shall be* a statute forever throughout your generations in all your dwellings. *It shall be* to you a Sabbath of rest, and **you shall afflict yourselves.** In the ninth day of the month at sunset, from sunset to sunset, you shall keep your Sabbath" (vs 27-32).

There are some things to pull out of this. First of all, the three things that are mentioned here are:

1. afflicting your soul
2. offer an offering
3. do no manner of work

If we go back to Lev. 16, we see that it talks about the

ceremony of the two goats, the offering and all. We won't go into that, but there are two things:

1. you've got to know where the source of the sin is
2. there has to be a price paid for it
 - Christ paid the price
 - the sin is put on Satan's head

If you go back to Lev. 16, you will see these same four things that are enumerated here. Very important:

1. afflict your soul
2. an offering
3. do no manner of work
4. a statute forever throughout your generations

There are three pronouncements of death. So, this is serious—isn't it? God says, 'I want you to do this.' There's a reason why He wants to do this. It's not because He wants to see us be afflicted. He does, in a way, but He's not doing because He likes to see pain. He's doing it for our benefit. There are reasons why He does that. The pronouncement of death comes up three times—destroyed or cut off. Then, there is a statement: 'Do no work in that same day.'

Let's flip a page back and go to Lev. 23 and let's look at what He says about these days, v 7: "On the first day you shall have a Holy convocation. You shall not *do any servile work therein*"; *you shall do no manner of work.*

- v 7: "...not *do any servile work therein*."
- v 21, He says: "And you shall proclaim on the same day that it may be a Holy convocation to you. You shall do no **servile work therein....**"

The word *servile* or common—some call it *common*—is an occupational work. You're not going to go to work at the factory or whatever. That's not to be done on those days.

- v 25, for Trumpets: "You shall do no **servile work...**"
- v 35: "Holy convocation. You shall do no **service work therein.**"
- v 36, "...offer an offering made by fire.... And you shall do no **servile work therein.**"

But He says, '*do no manner of work,*' on Atonement. It's different. You're not to do anything! ***You're not to do any work on Atonement!*** He also says that about the Sabbath Day, which is interesting. We're going to focus on Atonement.

- Why would He say that?
- What is different about Atonement?
- What is He wanting us to get about fasting, afflicting our souls and doing no work?

- What is He trying to tell us?
- What lesson does He want us to learn?

It's very serious! He's impressing upon us the seriousness of fasting, doing no work and then, giving an offering. Before unity with God can happen, you have to understand:

- what the Day of Atonement is about
- what you're doing
- why you're fasting
- where sin belongs
- who it belongs on
- Who paid the price for that
- Why did He say, 'Do no work?'

On the Day of Atonement we have little or nothing to do with the work of atoning with God, or becoming *one* with God. We have very little to do. We have some to do, but we have very little in that, because Christ went through it. We can't be saved without Christ. We can't come to God the Father without Jesus Christ. Christ was integral in it. Christ gave His life for our atonement. We can't put Satan away. Christ does that; we do nothing in that respect.

We rehearse the fact that most of the work on Atonement is done for us by Christ. We rehearse this each year on the Day of Atonement. The unity of Atonement with God is done by God.

- What is *our* work?
- What do *we* do?

That is why He is saying, '**You do nothing**, because I want you to know that you can't do anything to make this happen. I'll do it! I'll take care of it! You just stay in there. There are some things I want you to do later.' He's going to tell us:

- afflict you soul
- fast
- be humble
- contrite
- get into a proper frame of mind
- a proper attitude

Not a negative, evil or wicked attitude, but a humble, loving, kind, with God's love attitude, so that we have a proper relationship. That's how we have a proper relationship with God. That what He wants to see on this day, to do no work and that's what it tells us. It's *we rely on God!*

What did He say in Matt. 5? *The very first thing He said was, 'Blessed are the poor in spirit...'* When you're poor in spirit, you come to understand that you can do nothing without God in your life. You need God for everything. He gives you everything that you have:

- your breath
- your food

- the water that your not partaking of that day
- every opportunity that you have
- every job
- every income
- every sustenance

You name it, God gave it to you; there's nothing that you have that you gave yourself. That's the point! When we get to that point. and the world gets to that point, which will come—we have to get there first—then, we can begin to have that relationship with God that He wants. We'll see what He does once we do that. The blessings that flow to us once we get into that frame of mind, we do that and we understand why we're doing what we're doing on Atonement. That's the major day that we fast. That's the *commanded* day.

This is one of the things we are to do, Micah 6:8: "He has shown you, O man, what *is* good. And **what does the LORD require of you but to do justice and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God?**" In everything you do:

- be just
- be fair
- use God's Holy Spirit
- love your neighbor
- love mercy

That is part of God! He sits on the throne of mercy and comfort. If you have His Holy Spirit in you, you're going to *show mercy* to other people. "...walk humbly with your God" a very important key. This is a way that we live, a path, a highway that we walk down with God.

Amos 3:3: "Can two walk together unless they be agreed?" If you're agreed with someone you're going to walk with them and that's what He wants. He wants you to be agreed with Him and do the things He says. Obey, submit, yield and do the things that He says, then He's 'dine and wine' to bless you.

Fasting helps us do this, to get in the frame of mind and proper attitude. How long could you go without food and water? *Not very long!* You have to have water. You can't go as long without water as you can without food. I've heard three day, which is not true and seven days, which is probably not true. We've got people who have gone 21, 40 days, I don't know how Christ and Moses did that, but they did.

How long can you go without life-sustaining food and water? ***The fasting helps us remember that we need God to sustain our life!*** We need Him in order to have physical life, but also spiritual life. Everything that comes from God—let's say the physical—*your life, your sustenance, your*

possessions, your opportunities—has a spiritual counterpart, too. All the things that come from God: your *forgiveness, mercy, grace, kindness, etc.*, those fruits of the Spirit, those heavenly gifts that come from God, we couldn't last very long without them. We'd be right back in the world. We would not stay on track. We would not stay on that path unless we had those. We need God that way, spiritually, as well. All God wants from us is for us to:

- submit
- yield
- be humble
- be contrite
- have an attitude of humility
- look to Him for everything

So, we see that we're to fast. It's commanded on the Day of Atonement.

What about through the rest of the year? We see that physically it's a good thing to do, but we're talking spiritually, now. We're into a spiritual life and death situation. When you're called you die in Christ and your life that you live is through Christ and the faith that you have in Christ. He lives His life in you.

Matthew 6:2: "Therefore, when you give *your* alms... [when you pray or at the temple you put money in] ...do not sound the trumpet before you, **as the hypocrites** do in the synagogues and in the streets, so that they may have glory from men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward."

He's talking about an attitude of mind, here. Hypocrites—sanctimonious pretenders is what hypocrite means. Someone who makes a show, but doesn't have the love of God written on their heart. They have it on a veneer. It's all show to them. He repeats this:

Verse 5: "“And when you pray, **you shall not be as the hypocrites**, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the streets, in order *that* they may be seen by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward.”"

Verse 16: "And **when you fast...**" Okay, *when*. He didn't say *if*, or 'you don't have to do it this year. Let's skip a couple of years and on the fifth year, *when you fast...*' *No!* He says, "**...when you fast...**" He was expecting that they would be fasting.

"...do not be as the hypocrites..." (v 16). Don't be like these people over here in previous verses. They put on a sad look, a sad countenance.

"...dejected in countenance; for they disfigure their faces in order **that they may appear to men to fast**. Truly I say to you, they have their reward" (v 16).

Three times He talks about a reward with fasting. John wrote about Christ coming, bringing your reward with Him to give to you. That's another sermon to talk about rewards that we have through living our life and trying to have a relationship with God and loving our brothers. He says, 'don't let any man take your crown.' So, fasting is a way to stay close to God and to make sure all these things happen. He says to anoint your face. In other words, when you get up:

- take a bath
- wash your hair
- freshen up
- go out
- nobody knows that you're fasting

Maybe your wife or your husband knows, but nobody else needs to know.

Verse 4: "So that your alms may be in secret; and your Father Who sees in secret shall Himself reward you openly." He says that again in vs 6 and 18, that He *sees in secret and He rewards openly*. This is between you and God. You do it in secret. You do it privately.

On Atonement it's different—isn't it? Everybody's doing it so everyone knows, but this is through the year. We have two different types of fasting here. We have Atonement:

- solemn
- there's a purpose
- there's a reason
- it's part of a Holy Day
- it's part of the plan of God

Then, throughout the year, as we approach that—we live our life—we also fast. We grow in grace and knowledge and through fasting we stay close to God. It's our personal fast. *Very important!*

Why do we fast? We talked about Atonement and we've seen it throughout the rest of the year. So, spiritually, one of the things we want to do is draw close to God. *Fasting* helps us do that! I think we would all agree, if we were all honest with our own selves, we don't do it enough. We probably don't think about it through the year. It's probably not a tool that we pull out to use in our Christian character development. It's in your growth of 'coming to the fullness of the stature of the measure of Christ.' It's one of those things that is done 'down the road.' To get down the road, we have to do it. It's 'catch 22' again.

James talks about an attitude that's not a humble attitude; James 4:1: "*What is the cause of quarrels and fightings among you?... [none of us have gone through any of that] ...Is it not mainly from your own lusts that are warring within your members? You lust, and have not; you kill, and are*

jealous, and are not able to obtain; you fight and quarrel, but still you do not have, because you do not ask” (vs 1-2).

You’re not in the right attitude. You’re not doing it for the proper reason. So, you’re not going to receive because *God turns His face from us when we’re living in our sins*, when we haven’t come to understand that we have sinned, identify that sin and then begin working on that, repenting and asking God to help us change.

Verse 3: “Then you ask, and you do not receive, because you ask with evil motives, that you may consume it on your own lusts.... [self-centered, all coming inward] ...*You adulterers and adulteresses, don’t you know that the friendship of the world is enmity... [an enemy] ...with God? Therefore, whoever desires to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God*” (vs 3-4). It’s either black or white. You’re either in or out. You’re either with the world or with God.

Verse 6: “But He gives greater grace. This is the reason it says, ‘God sets Himself against the proud, but He gives grace to the humble.’” You have a magnet. You have two ends that are the same. You push them together and they resist one another. You flip it around and they draw, they attract. Pride is pushed away and a humble attitude is drawn to God. He loves a humble attitude. He resists the proud. That’s what fasting is all about. Then He gives what you can do to get to this point.

Verse 7: “Therefore, submit yourselves to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw near to God... [How do we do that?] ...and He will draw near to you. Cleanse *your* hands, you sinners, and purify *your* hearts, you double-minded!” (vs 7-8).

James 1:8: “*He is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.*” Somebody that isn’t single-minded, *focused*, like Jeremiah who had a ‘forehead of flint.’ He was *focused* on God’s Word. Christ was *focused* on what the Father gave Him.

- What would the double-minded man look like?
- Somebody that has one foot in the world and one foot out?
- One that looks like he’s trying to do what’s right, fasting but, yet, it’s an outward show?
- Would that be a double-minded man?
- Would it be a hypocrite?
- Yes!

We all have some hypocrisy in us. So, we have to identify that and have a really good examination of ourselves and think about:

- How does this apply to me?

- Where is it that I can do this, change this?

Have a real heart-to-heart with our selves.

James 4:9: “Be grieved...”—or afflicted, realize one’s own misery. *Afflicted* and *fasting* are two different words. What we’ve done in our culture is, we’ve taken ‘afflicted’ and made it synonymous with ‘fasting.’ It’s not!

- afflicted means *to be grieved or realize ones own misery, be punished or go through pain*
- fasting means *to put your hand or cover your mouth so that you don’t have food coming into it*

The word actually means *cover your mouth*. Fasting refers to not eating and drinking. Afflicting refers to the result or the pain of that, the grief that we go through because we’re fasting, also spiritual intent.

“...and mourn and weep; let your laughter be turned into grieving, and *your* joy into mourning.... [get serious about this] ...Humble yourselves before the Lord, and He will exalt you” (vs 9-10). Lift you up out of your depression; lift you up in a lot of different ways. He can do it physically, spiritually or emotionally. “Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord...”—a key to fasting, key to drawing close, key to having a relationship with Him. Very, very important!

If we want to please God, what do we have to be in? Everyone here wants to please God. We want God to be proud of us, pleased with us and say about us like He did David and different men in the Bible that: Abraham’s a friend of God’s, and David’s a man after His own heart. What does He say about you? Is He pleased with you?

Romans 8:5: “For those who walk according to the flesh mind... [think on] ...the things of the flesh; but those who walk according to the Spirit mind the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded *is* death, but to be spiritually minded *is* life and peace, because **the carnal mind is enmity against God**, for it is not subject to the Law of God; neither indeed can it *be*. But those who are in *the* flesh cannot please God” (vs 5-8).

It doesn’t mean that as a physical person you can’t please God. He’s talking about the mind. If you’re living your life in a way of wickedness or a way of sin, that’s where you are—that’s what you think and do, that’s what motivates you—*then, you can’t please God*. But if you think in the spirit, ‘worship in Spirit and Truth,’ then you’re on the path of pleasing God in a good relationship with Him. *Very important!*

1-Peter 5:5: “In the same manner, *you* younger men be subject to *the* older men...” Earlier,

he's talking about the ministry, but he's also talking about younger and older individuals in the Body of Christ.

"...and all *of you* be subject to one another..." (v 5). That takes a lot:

- forbearance
- patience
- love
- mercy

It takes a lot to submit yourself to one another and to let someone kind of get the 'upper hand.' We never want anybody to get the upper hand on us. You know, 'They're not going to do that to me.' So, to submit to one another takes an attitude of humility, an attitude of a contrite spirit, poor in spirit and knowing where the things that you need come from; not from this other person, but from God. He takes care of you.

"...being clothed with humility... [put on humility] ...because God sets Himself against *the* proud, but He gives grace to *the* humble. Be humbled, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that He may exalt you in *due* time; casting all your cares upon Him, because He cares for you" (vs 5-7). Be serious, again. Thinking in your mind. Be serious.

Verse 8: "Be sober! Be vigilant!.... [in watching] ...For your adversary *the* devil is prowling about as a roaring lion, seeking anyone he may devour.... [another reason why we need fasting] ...Whom resist, steadfast in the faith, knowing *that* the same afflictions are being fulfilled among your brethren who *are* in... [other parts of] ...*the* world" (vs 8-9).

Then, he goes on and talks about putting on humility. It's not just a show, but it's into the heart, submitting not only to God, but to our brothers. Again, humility is very important, drawing close to God and having a humble attitude. We think about the basics:

- prayer
- study
- meditation
- fasting

We hear about them when we first come into the Church and God calls us and draws us. Over the years those are the basics. Those are the simple things. They really are more the advanced things. The simplicity in Christ is these things to do that advance you on into a deep relationship with God. You can't put them on the shelf and say that those are elementary. They are not! They're very, very important. Fasting is extremely important.

Matthew 23:9: "Also, do not call *anyone* on the earth your Father; for one is your Father, Who is in heaven. Neither be called Master; for one is your Master, the Christ" (vs 9-10). Again, this attitude of maybe a hierarchical attitude—one better than the other.

Verse 11: "But the greatest among you... [Remember the disciples said, 'Whose going to be greatest in the Kingdom?'] ...shall be your servant. And whoever will exalt himself shall be humbled; and whoever will humble himself shall be exalted" (vs 11-12).

Then He says, 'Woe unto the Pharisees' and He goes on that it's going to be difficult for them to get into the Kingdom. He goes on through the whole chapter talking about woe to them, *woe to them, woe to them*. He talks about the attitudes that are opposite of humility.

Verse 28: "Likewise, you also outwardly appear to men *to be* righteous, but within you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness." He's talking about the Pharisees and the scribes. He's not talking about those who have God's Holy Spirit that are trying to put on humility and trying to have a relationship.

So, the *appearance* of righteousness, Christ nails it. He says this is not the way to be. In the scheme of Holy Days, He gives us a Day of Atonement that focuses on:

- the seriousness of putting out sin
- identifying sin
- drawing close to God
- putting on humility
- not doing any work
- knowing that God is your Source of everything that you have

Then, He gives it to you through the year to do on a regular basis. God sees fasting as very important and very serious. It is a weapon in fighting against Satan. Something we can use to help us draw close to God and *flee Satan*.

These are old Scriptures that you know and you all have heard these about fasting. Think about that. It's good to be refreshed from time to time, especially around this time of year.

Ephesians 6:10: "Finally, my brethren, be strong in *the* Lord, and in the might of His strength." Sometimes do you feel like you just don't have the strength?

I was talking to one of the brethren about this. It's liking having a computer up and your running on battery and the light behind it seems like it's okay. You think, 'I should plug this in.' You plug it in and all of a sudden the light gets very

bright and there's a lot of power there. It's direct to the plug. The electricity is coming right straight to the computer. That's what fasting does! We're running on batteries and when we fast, we're plugged right into God the Father. It gives us that charge; it gives us that power.

Verse 11: "Put on the whole armor of God so that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil... [that's the tool, the weapon we use against Satan] ...because we are not wrestling against flesh and blood, but against principalities *and* against powers, against the world rulers of the darkness of this age, against the spiritual *power* of wickedness in high *places*. Therefore, take up the whole armor of God so that you may be able to resist in the evil day, and having worked out all things, to stand. Stand, therefore, having your loins girded about with truth, and wearing your breastplate of righteousness, And having your feet shod with *the* preparation of the Gospel of peace. Besides all *these*, take up the shield of the faith, with which you will have the power to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one; and put on the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God; praying at all times with all prayer and supplication in *the* Spirit, and in this very thing being watchful with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints" (vs 11-18). That's a sermon in itself.

Putting that on; using that as a weapon, as a tool to fight against Satan, to stay away, as Christ did in His example in Matt. 4, Deut. 8 and Luke 4:4. He confronted Satan. He went into the wilderness. He fasted for 40 days and 40 nights. In Esther 4, it talks about what a fast is, about fasting for 24 hours without food or water.

In His example, Christ was getting ready to face probably the most important battle in the history of mankind. It wasn't with guns, rockets and that sort of thing. ***It was all in the mind! He was warring against principalities and powers!*** It was a spiritual warfare and He won that fight through fasting. He finally told Satan to get behind Him. Our example, a great example for us.

- that's what we use
- that's why we fast
- that's how we stay close to God

Some of the things I wrote down here are reasons why we might fast:

- interceding on behalf of someone else—intercessory prayer
- repentance and confession of sin
- seeking God's way
 - ✓ knowing His way
 - ✓ knowing His thoughts
 - ✓

What His mind is on a certain subject or situation that comes up like:

- David—when the child died
 - Saul was three days and three nights praying and fasting when he lost his eye sight
 - petitioning God
 - asking God to hold back a judgment from yourself or for others
 - spiritual deliverance
 - concern for other people's safety
 - protection
 - healing
- it's *not* to be seen of men
 - it's *not* to be seen as righteous
 - it's *not* for pleasure or entertainment or because we enjoy it

It's because

- we want to dwell with God forever
- we want a relationship with Him
- we want to draw close to Him
- we want to be like Him and like our big Brother, Jesus Christ.

Isaiah 58 is very important, talking about healing, and it starts out with fasting. We talked about the *highway* and *a way that we walk*.

Isaiah 57:14: "And He shall say, 'Cast up! Cast up! Prepare **the way!** Take the stumbling block out of the way of My people.'" God wants to remove the things that cause you to sin. He wants to remove the sin from you when you identify it and understand it and you go to Him. Those are the stumbling blocks. He wants to get those out of your way.

What He's doing, here, He's preparing *a way* for His people, not only to physical Israel but His spiritual Church so that we can walk with Him, be with Him and be agreed with Him (Amos 3:3)

Verse 15: "For thus says the high and lofty One Who inhabits eternity..." That's God! That's God the Father! He is the "...high and the lofty One Who inhabits eternity."

"...Whose name *is* Holy; 'I dwell in the high and Holy place...' (v 15). Here's the opposite of that. This is who we are. This is how we are, how we see ourselves and how we really are compared to God.

"...even with the one who is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble..." (vs 15). Would you, if you knew if there was a checklist, is that what you would do?

David says, Psalm 15:1: "LORD, who shall dwell in Your tabernacle? Who shall dwell upon Your

Holy hill? He who walks uprightly, and works righteousness, and speaks the truth in his heart; He does not slander with his tongue, nor does evil to his neighbor, nor takes up a reproach against his neighbor; in whose eyes a vile person is despised, but he honors those who fear the LORD; he who swears to his own hurt and does not change it; he who has not put out his money at usury, nor has he taken a bribe against the innocent. He who does these things shall never be moved” (vs 1-5). That’s who is going to dwell with God in His Holy hill.

In Isa. 57 He says that the person who is going to dwell with Me has a ‘contrite and a humble spirit’ and I’m going to revive them, the ‘spirit of the humble. I’m going to give them eternal life and they’re going to dwell with Me.’ There won’t be the cocky and the proud. They’re not going to be there. It’s this person who’s going to be there.

- He removes the stumbling block
- He builds a highway for us
- He wants us to be successful
- He wants us to dwell with Him

We need to understand the difference between God and us. He wants to revive us and—through His Holy Spirit and a resurrection—be ‘born again’ into His Family to be eternal. God is everything. We can do nothing. Once we see that and identify the sin in us and want to repent, then, the process begins. It’s so very important.

You might want to take Isa. 57 and 58 and read through it. He identifies the wicked. It’s the healing process that comes through:

- seeing that process
- identifying it
- putting sin out
- coming over to God
- becoming humble and contrite

Isaiah 58:1: “Cry aloud, do not spare, lift up your voice like a ram’s horn, and show My people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins.” It’s really speaking to the Church. It’s speaking to us.

Verse 2: “Yet, they seek Me daily...” Here’s an attitude of the world today, the religion today and maybe some of us.

“...and seem eager to know My ways, as a nation that did righteousness... [a Christian nation that does righteousness] ...and one that did not forget the ordinance of their God. They ask of Me the ordinances of justice; they seem eager to draw near to God” (v 2).

What they’re saying is: ‘You’re telling me my sins? I’m not doing anything wrong.’ What did

they say to Christ? ‘We’re Abraham’s seed. We’re not under any man. We’re not slaves to anybody. What are you talking about?’ They were slaves to the own sin. That’s what He’s talking about here. ‘I’m not sinning. It’s not for me. Your message is not for me.’ They don’t identify. They don’t understand it. So, coming to understanding, that is a gift from God. It’s something that He opens your mind to that. He’s blinded the rest of the world. That’s blessing in itself.

Verse 3: “*They say, ‘Why have we fasted...’*” Why have we fasted? You’re not doing anything. You’re not helping us. I fast for this and God, You didn’t do anything.’

“...and You do not see? **Why have we afflicted our soul and You take no knowledge?**” Behold, in the day of your fast you pursue your business and exploit all your workers” (v 3). What they were doing was, that weren’t doing what Lev. 23 said. They were doing their own work, their own pleasure. They were going on with life as normal, but they were putting on a front that they were fasting.

The whole nation was fasting. ‘We still got this business going over here. I got these employees, my laborers and I need them to still keep working while I go out here and, ‘Hey look, everybody, look at my face I’m so humble.’ But in their heart, they weren’t doing what God had asked them to do. They weren’t seeking Him. They weren’t in with the game plan. They sought their own pleasure.

Verse 4: “Behold, you fast for strife and debate, and to strike with the fist of wickedness...” You ever try to get God to do something for you? Go fast, maybe you can twist His arm. That’s what they were saying, ‘If I go fast and I fast three days this time, He’s got to do what I’m asking Him to do, because I’m fasting.’ That’s what they were saying. Maybe, somebody over there is going to get a contract or they’re going to get something and get ahead. I’m fasting that you’ll give it to me and that won’t happen—all these things. They were fasting for the wrong reason.

“...you cannot fast as *you do* this day, and expect to make your voice to be heard on high... [so that God would hear you] ...Is this such a fast that I have chosen?...” (vs 4-5). Remember Matt. 6:16: *hypocrisy*? Christ pointed out the hypocrites.

“...A day for a man to afflict his soul? *Is it* to bow down his head like a bulrush, and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him? Will you call this a fast and a day pleasing to the LORD?” (v 5).

Here is the acceptable fast that Christ wants, v 6: “*Is not this, rather, the fast that I have chosen—to loose the bands of wickedness...*” That’s what happens when we fast for the right

reason. Sin: we identify it. We go to God and He grants us repentance, forgiveness and we move on.

“...to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed ones go free, and that you break every yoke?” (v 6). Read Isa. 61 later on with this.

Verse 7: “*Is it not to give of your bread to the hungry, and that you should bring home the wandering poor? When will you see the naked and cover him; and not hide yourself from your own flesh?*”

This is something that happens once you’ve gotten into the proper attitude—while you’re fasting and after your fast—that you’re able then, to go and help others. While you’re in your sins you’re not in an attitude of helping others. You can do it to be seen of people, but your heart is not really there. When your heart is right, the love of God works through you and you go out and you help, do and bring people in, you’re hospitable, you help, you give them food. It’s interesting that ‘the naked’—you’ll see that in Rev.—talking about the Laodiceans. You can be naked in other ways other than just physically. They can have other things that are going on. They’re not necessarily fasting the right fast that He talks about here.

Verse 8: “Then shall your light break out as the dawn, and your health shall spring out quickly; and your righteousness shall go before you...” Stanley found Livingston and he said, ‘He never preached to me. If I’d have stayed there any longer with him, I would have become a Christian, by the way he lived his life. It was what he did that spoke loudly.’ He never said a word about what he believed, but what he did, his actions, convicted Stanley. So, ‘your righteousness goes forth before you.’

“...the glory of the LORD shall be your rear guard.” (v 8). What it means is that righteousness is your vanguard, God is got your back. He’s got you covered on both sides in the attitude of humility.

You want an answer? *God is going to do what He wants to do, what’s best for you in your life, in His will and His time!* That’s why we always ask, ‘Your will be done.’

Verse 9: “Then you shall call, and the LORD shall answer; you shall cry, and He shall say, ‘Here I am.’ If you take the yoke away from among you, the pointing of the finger, and speaking malice... [vainly, maliciously or you point the finger] ...And *if* you draw out your soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul; then shall your light rise in darkness, and your gloom *shall be* as the noonday. And the LORD shall always guide you and satisfy your soul in dry places, and make your bones

fat; and you shall be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water whose waters fail not. And *those who* come of you shall build the old ruins; you shall raise up the foundations of many generations; and you shall be called, The Repairer of the Breach, The Restorer of Paths to Dwell in” (vs 9-12).

- Isn’t that what the Feast of Tabernacles pictures?
- Who is dwelling with God in His Holy mountain?
- What are we going to do when Israel and the world comes back to God, when He comes to this earth, puts His feet on the earth and we get to be on the ground floor to help usher in that?

We’re the “Repairer of the Breach, The Restorer of Paths to Dwell in,” the highways of the Lord.”

Pretty interesting, important and integral! Something that we forget about sometimes! There’s much more that I could talk about, but that’s something with the Day of Atonement coming that we need to focus on. The major reasons for fasting:

- to seek forgiveness
- to recognize that we have the sin
- that we identify it
- we ask for forgiveness and repentance
- we learn the lessons
- that we don’t repeat them and continually repeat them
- that we walk with God

John 14:6—Christ said: “...the Way, the Truth and the Life...”

- accept the sacrifice of Christ in our lives.

A proper fast helps free us from the sins that we have and puts us in a proper frame of mind for that repentance:

- yielding
- humble
- submissive
- contrite
- dependant on God

Fasting is an integral part of Atonement. It’s a tool for character growth year round. ***Let’s see fasting throughout the year as an important part of our lives, put the principle of fasting to work in our lives this coming year and draw closer to God.***

All Scriptures from *The Holy Bible in Its Original Order, A Faithful Version* by Fred R. Coulter

Scriptural References:

- 1) Isaiah 59:1-2
- 2) Leviticus 23:27-32, 7, 21, 25, 35, 36

- 3) Micah 6:8
- 4) Amos 3:3
- 5) Matthew 6:2, 5, 16, 4
- 6) James 4:1-4. 6-8
- 7) James 1:8
- 8) James 4:9-10
- 9) Romans 8:5-8
- 10) 1-Peter 5:5-9
- 11) Matthew 23:9-12, 28
- 12) Ephesians 6:10-18
- 13) Isaiah 57:14-15
- 14) Psalm 15:1-5
- 15) Isaiah 58:1-12
- 16) John 14:6

Scriptures referenced, not quoted:

- Leviticus 16
- Matthew 5:
- Matthew 6:6, 18
- Matthew 4
- Deuteronomy 8
- Luke 4:4
- Esther 4
- Isaiah 61

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