



BENEFITS AND BLESSINGS OF FASTING

Week Four

RELEASE OF POWER OR EQUIPPING:

1. The Book of Joel and his proclamation to declare a holy fast among the people of Judah could easily represent the release of repentance for forgiveness that I discussed last week. But Joel is also warning about the day of the Lord - GOD's judgement and its mighty destruction on the earth. Three times in the book's three chapters Joel speaks of fasting; two times the command is coming from the voice of the Lord. GOD's appeal and promise? To equip them with blessings of new wine and grain to overflowing, to repay them for what they had lost, and to pour out his Spirit of power on men and women, sons and daughters
2. In Matthew 17:21, Jesus' disciples were unable to cast out a demon from a boy with seizures. When they asked Jesus why they couldn't do it, he told them that kind of demon does not come out except by prayer and fasting.
3. Daniel, in his fast from the king's food, was rewarded by GOD and equipped with wisdom and understanding, able to understand visions and interpret all kinds of dreams.

RELEASE OF BREAKTHROUGH, BONDAGE OR DELIVERANCE:

1. Psalm 35 is David's desperate cry from being pursued by his enemies. Attacked and defamed he prays and fasts, crying out for GOD's deliverance. With trust in GOD's goodness, he ends his psalm with endless praise.
2. Isaiah 58 is GOD's declaration of the kind of fast he desires. GOD chastises his people for their shallow practices while remaining rebellious, unmoved by injustice and ignoring the oppressed. Essentially, when we fast and release others from their bondage, GOD will honor our faithfulness and deliver our own breakthroughs.
3. In 1 Kings 19:4-8, the prophet Elijah is on the run. He's been dealing with the wickedness of King Ahab, the prophets of Baal, and evil Queen Jezebel who is out for his life. He's wearied and asks GOD to take his life. Instead, 2 times an angel wakes Elijah and instructs him to eat the meals the angel supplied. Nourished by the heavenly food, Elijah was strengthened to travel 40 days and nights to Mt Horeb where GOD protected him.

RELEASE OF SPIRITUAL AWAKENING OR REVIVAL:

1. Coming back to Joel 2:28 from last week, GOD's response and promise to the people for humbling their hearts was to "pour out his Spirit of power." But the result was a spiritual awakening where all people – men, women, young, old would prophesy, dream, have visions, and receive salvation.
2. 1 Samuel 7:6 is a wonderful depiction of fasting for spiritual revival. Samuel called Israel to fast, remove their idols, and repent of serving foreign gods. The promise given by Samuel was that if they returned and served the Lord only, Israel would no longer be pursued by the Philistines.



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RELEASE OF MINISTRY:

1. In Acts 13:2, there were several people from the church at Antioch worshipping and fasting. The text tells us while this was happening, the Holy Spirit appeared and set Saul (later called the Apostle Paul) and Barnabas apart for the work GOD appointed for them. After the fast, the group laid hands on them and sent them off for the work of ministering the gospel of Jesus Christ.
2. Again in Acts, 14:21, Paul and Barnabas prayed and fasted to appoint elders for ministry in the church.
3. Luke 1:11-17 is the account of the angel appearing to Zechariah, foretelling the birth of his son John. In verse 15, the angel proclaims John's fast from wine or other fermented drink – a staple to the people of Israel. This was a consecration for ministry and a promise that John the Baptizer would be filled with the Holy Spirit from birth.
4. 2 Corinthians 6:4-5 and 11:23-27 are two occasions where the Apostle Paul is listing ways in which he was approved as a minister of GOD. Among the qualifications he cites is fasting.

RELEASE OF HEALING:

1. I mentioned Isaiah 58 as GOD's proclamation for what he considers a true fast, which included the promise of deliverance if his people, likewise, demonstrated a true concern for meeting the needs of the oppressed. GOD wasn't simply looking for the religious act of fasting, he wanted hearts hungry for mercy and righteousness. But in verse 8, GOD goes on to say, "Then your light will break forth like the dawn, and your healing will quickly appear."
2. Mark 9:29 and Matthew 17:21 are the accounts of Jesus healing the young boy with seizures. Jesus declares that some types of healing require more than just faith. They require the spiritual sensitivity that is heightened through fasting and prayer.
3. Acts 9:1-19 is the description of Saul's encounter with the risen Christ on the road to Damascus where he was heading to persecute followers of Jesus, who were known as the Way. Upon meeting the Lord, Saul is blinded, and he ate nothing for 3 days. He's given a vision that he'll be healed by a man in Damascus named Ananias. Ananias arrives, places his hands on Saul and immediately something like scales fell from his eyes, his sight was restored, and he was baptized in the Holy Spirit.