

Wed Night



FRESH ENCOUNTER

# REALITY RATHER THAN RITUAL

JULY 26, 2023 | JACOB FLEMING

*"Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and shew my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins. 2 Yet they seek me daily, and delight to know my ways, as a nation that did righteousness, and forsook not the ordinance of their God: they ask of me the ordinances of justice; they take delight in approaching to God. 3 Wherefore have we fasted, say they, and thou seest not? wherefore have we afflicted our soul, and thou takest no knowledge? Behold, in the day of your fast ye find pleasure, and exact all your labours. 4 Behold, ye fast for strife and debate, and to smite with the fist of wickedness: ye shall not fast as ye do this day, to make your voice to be heard on high. 5 Is it such a fast that I have chosen? a day for a man to afflict his soul? is it to bow down his head as a bulrush, and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him? wilt thou call this a fast, and an acceptable day to the Lord? 6 Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke? 7 Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh? 8 Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thine health shall spring forth speedily: and thy righteousness shall go before thee; the glory of the Lord shall be thy reward. 9 Then shalt thou call, and the Lord shall answer; thou shalt cry, and he shall say, Here I am. If thou take away from the midst of thee the yoke, the putting forth of the finger, and speaking vanity; 10 And if thou draw out thy soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul; then shall thy light rise in obscurity, and thy darkness be as the noon day: 11 And the Lord shall guide thee continually, and satisfy thy soul in drought, and make fat thy bones: and thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not. 12 And they that shall be of thee shall build the old waste places: thou shalt raise up the foundations of many generations; and thou shalt be called, The repairer of the breach, The restorer of paths to dwell in." (Isaiah 58:1-12)*

- Christian actions & works important

## INTRODUCTION

- Overemphasis on ritual?
- Veneer of religious behavior?
- focus on commitment to Christ

## 1. THE Reality OF RITUAL

### A. The Religious identified

*"Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, 8 This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me." (Matthew 15:7-8)*

### B. God's Reasons for rejecting

fasting  
only known  
to God  
not fasting  
openly for  
people to  
see

*"Moreover when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. 17 But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face; 18 That thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly." (Matthew 6:16-18)*

#### PRIDE REVEALED

for self  
or for  
God?

*"Speak unto all the people of the land, and to the priests, saying, When ye fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh month, even those seventy years, did ye at all fast unto me, even to me? 6 And when ye did eat, and when ye did drink, did not ye eat for yourselves, and drink for yourselves? 7 Should ye not hear the words which the LORD hath cried by the former prophets, when Jerusalem was inhabited and in prosperity, and the cities thereof round about her, when men inhabited the south and the plain?" (Zechariah 7:5-7)*

**Quote:** "When we worship because it is the popular thing to do, not because it is the right thing to do, then our worship becomes hypocritical."

—Warren Weirsbé

#### CONTENTION REVEALED

#### FASTING AND FIGHTING DO NOT MIX

*"Only by pride cometh contention:" (Proverbs 13:10)*

#### SELF-PITY REVEALED

*"They profess that they know God; but in works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate." (Titus 1:6)*

Eph 2:10 For we are His workmanship  
created in Christ Jesus for good works...

## 2. THE Example OF REALITY

\* fasting removing  
barrier to  
focus on Christ

### A. God's instruction for a Clean Heart

fast of  
good  
works

"And the disciples of John and of the Pharisees used to fast: and they come and say unto him, Why do the disciples of John and of the Pharisees fast, but thy disciples fast not? 19 And Jesus said unto them, Can the children of the bridechamber fast, while the bridegroom is with them? as long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast. 20 But the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then shall they fast in those days." (Mark 2:18-20)

"Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, 2 Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God." (Hebrews 12:1-2)

THE GOAL IS NOT DISCIPLINE BUT RATHER DEVOTION

"Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world." (James 1:27)

### B. God's plan for Caring for Others

WHEN YOU HAVE A HEART FOR GOD, YOU WILL HAVE A HEART FOR OTHERS

## 3. THE Experience OF THE REWARD

### A. Your life will Shine

"Blessed is he that considereth the poor: the LORD will deliver him in time of trouble." (Psalm 41:1)

"There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty." (Proverbs 11:24)

### B. The Lord will be your Strength (Is 58:11)

"My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; 3 Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. 4 But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing." (James 1:2-4)

look at the commission of good works,  
instead of the omission of rituals

C. God will surround You with Protection

*"Fret not thyself because of evildoers, neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity. 2 For they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb. 3 Trust in the LORD, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed."  
(Psalm 37:1-3)*

D. You will rest in His presence (Is 58:9)  
- Heb 4:9 there remains a rest for God's people

E. God will guide your Life (Is 58:1)

F. The Lord will satisfy your Soul

no lack

*"O fear the LORD, ye his saints: for there is no want to them that fear him. 10 The young lions do lack, and suffer hunger: but they that seek the LORD shall not want any good thing."  
(Psalm 34:9-10)*

G. The Lord will multiply Abundantly

## CONCLUSION

*"It is a sign between me and the children of Israel for ever." (Exodus 31:17)*

*"Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it." (Hebrews 4:1)*

*"For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his." (Hebrews 4:10)*



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Lancaster Baptist Church • 4020 E. Lancaster Blvd. • Lancaster, CA 93535  
661.946.4663 • lancasterbaptist.org • Paul Chappell, Pastor