

“Fasting is Hindered by Disobedience” Jeremiah 14:10-18

Fasting is designed to turn our hearts
from worldly things to the things of God.

Disobedience Removes Benefits
Sorrow Follows Disobedience

Disobedience Removes Benefits

Jeremiah 14:10-12, NKJV

¹⁰ *Thus says the Lord to this people:*

*“Thus they have loved to wander;
They have not restrained their feet.
Therefore, the Lord does not accept them;
He will remember their iniquity now,
And punish their sins.”*

¹¹ *Then the Lord said to me, “Do not pray for this people, for their good. ¹²
When they fast, I will not hear their cry; and when they offer burnt offering and
grain offering, I will not accept them. But I will consume them by the sword, by the
famine, and by the pestilence.”*

What holds people’s interests or causes something to be irresistible to someone? Whatever that thing is in a person’s life will often be considered a top priority for them. The musician who spends hours each day playing and honing their skills will forfeit all other activities in order to play their instrument. Those who want to be part of that person’s life needs to be willing to make adjustments in their time and schedule to accommodate the musician’s love for their music. The same can be said about any passion people hold in their life.

God’s people were supposed to be captivated by their enthusiasm and passion for God. Everyone who were friends with or dealt with God’s people should have had to make adjustments in their schedules and worked around their worship of God. Yet, this is not what had taken place. Instead of the other nations accommodating for the worship and celebration of God’s people, God’s people made changes in their lives to accommodate the lifestyles of the heathen nations around them in order to make them comfortable.

Therefore, God makes this proclamation about His people’s behavior, “¹⁰ *...they have loved to wander; They have not restrained their feet*” (Jeremiah 14:10, NKJV). God cannot accept their worship which makes it impossible to put away their sin. This leads to the harshest words Jeremiah could have heard from God, “¹¹ *...Do not pray for this people, for their good*” (Jeremiah 14:11, NKJV). Imagine God instructing His prophet to not pray for the people of God. Yet, that is exactly what Jeremiah is told to do. It is important that we first know what the Lord was hearing from the people prior to this decree to not pray for them in order to understand why God would say such a thing.

⁷ *O Lord, though our iniquities testify against us,
Do it for Your name’s sake;*

*For our backslidings are many,
We have sinned against You.
8 O the Hope of Israel, his Savior in time of trouble,
Why should You be like a stranger in the land,
And like a traveler who turns aside to tarry for a night?
9 Why should You be like a man astonished,
Like a mighty one who cannot save?
Yet You, O Lord, are in our midst,
And we are called by Your name;
Do not leave us!* (Jeremiah 14:7-9, NKJV)

This sounds like repentance, but the people refused to change anything in how they lived. They admitted their sin against God, but wanted Him to turn away from His wrath only because they were His people known by His name, not because they had changed their ways and started living according to His commandments. They question God, “*9 Why should You be like a man astonished, like a mighty one who cannot save?*” (Jeremiah 14:9, NKJV). The people imagined God would have to forgive their sins on the very merit that they were His people. They expected God had to forgive them regardless of how they lived, or no matter how adulterous they were in their worship.

This is not the first time God had questioned His people about their behavior. Earlier through the Prophet Isaiah God confronted this same issue,

*1 Now let me sing to my Well-beloved
A song of my Beloved regarding His vineyard:
My Well-beloved has a vineyard
On a very fruitful hill.
2 He dug it up and cleared out its stones,
And planted it with the choicest vine.
He built a tower in its midst,
And also made a winepress in it;
So He expected it to bring forth good grapes,
But it brought forth wild grapes.
3 “And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem and men of Judah,
Judge, please, between Me and My vineyard.
4 What more could have been done to My vineyard
That I have not done in it?
Why then, when I expected it to bring forth good grapes,
Did it bring forth wild grapes? ...
7 For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel,
And the men of Judah are His pleasant plant.
He looked for justice, but behold, oppression;
For righteousness, but behold, a cry for help.* (Isaiah 5:1-4, 7, NKJV)

The Lord is faithful in all that He does and says because He is righteous, holy, and just. The idea that God would even command Jeremiah not to pray for the people to experience His goodness or His blessings is unthinkable. Yet, God is actually protecting His people from harm by withholding His blessing in their rebellious state.

The blessings of God are dangerous when they are not received in submission to His will. The good things of God in the hands of the unrighteous would be defiled and used for purposes that would bring shame on the name of God. This is exactly what happened with the people of God. The Lord proclaimed through Ezekiel, ¹⁷ *“Son of man, when the house of Israel dwelt in their own land, they defiled it by their own ways and deeds; to Me their way was like the uncleanness of a woman in her customary impurity”* (Ezekiel 36:17, NKJV).

Disobedience to God will hinder fasting and prevent them from knowing the perfect peace of fellowship in Him. The way to glorify the name of God only comes through obedience to His will over the will of His child. This is a spiritual battle more than a physical battle. Sins power is manifested in the flesh, but has its beginnings in the person’s spirit. Rebellion against God has tainted the once pure heart of mankind and caused it to be corrupt; desiring all that is opposed to God instead of what is pleasing to Him.

The good news is that the wrath of God can be avoided. God has provided His people with all that is needed to be successful then and now. Israel was given hope from God even in their failures, ¹ *“Now it shall come to pass, when all these things come upon you, the blessing and the curse which I have set before you, and you call them to mind among all the nations where the Lord your God drives you, ² and you return to the Lord your God and obey His voice, according to all that I command you today, you and your children, with all your heart and with all your soul, ³ that the Lord your God will bring you back from captivity, and have compassion on you, and gather you again from all the nations where the Lord your God has scattered you”* (Deuteronomy 30:1-3, NKJV).

Today, the Church has been given a hope that is far greater than peace and prosperity in this life but for all eternity. Apostle Paul was inspired to proclaim,

²⁴ O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? ²⁵ I thank God—through Jesus Christ our Lord!

So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin.

¹ There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. ² For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death. ³ For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, ⁴ that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit (Romans 7:24-8:4, NKJV).

Fasting is a necessity for the disciple of Christ. As the child of God spends time communing with God daily the acts of disobedience become undesirable, unfulfilling, and divisive. This is due to the fact that as people spend time in the presence of God they come to recognize the peace, joy, and overall harmony of living life in submission to the Creator.

The benefits of obedience to God do not remove suffering from the life of God’s people. In many cases, following God causes greater suffering. However, the benefits of obedience far outweigh any pain that will be experienced in this life by being submissive to God. Apostle Paul was inspired to declare, ¹⁸ *“For I consider that the sufferings of this*

present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us” (Romans 8:18, NKJV).

Fasting, spending time with the Lord, enhances obedience because it causes the things of God to reveal the depleted value of the enticements of the enemy in his temptation to choose earthly things over godly things. The desire to obey God increases with the more time spend with Him, and the desire for things that are disobedient to God increases with time apart from God.

Sorrow Follows Disobedience

Jeremiah 14:13-18, NKJV

13 Then I said, “Ah, Lord God! Behold, the prophets say to them, ‘You shall not see the sword, nor shall you have famine, but I will give you assured peace in this place.’”

14 And the Lord said to me, “The prophets prophesy lies in My name. I have not sent them, commanded them, nor spoken to them; they prophesy to you a false vision, divination, a worthless thing, and the deceit of their heart. 15 Therefore thus says the Lord concerning the prophets who prophesy in My name, whom I did not send, and who say, ‘Sword and famine shall not be in this land’— ‘By sword and famine those prophets shall be consumed! 16 And the people to whom they prophesy shall be cast out in the streets of Jerusalem because of the famine and the sword; they will have no one to bury them—them nor their wives, their sons nor their daughters—for I will pour their wickedness on them.’

17 “Therefore you shall say this word to them:

‘Let my eyes flow with tears night and day,

And let them not cease;

For the virgin daughter of my people

Has been broken with a mighty stroke, with a very severe blow.

18 If I go out to the field,

Then behold, those slain with the sword!

And if I enter the city,

Then behold, those sick from famine!

Yes, both prophet and priest go about in a land they do not know.”

Jeremiah knew what the majority of prophets were saying who claimed to be of God was not the same thing he was hearing from God now. Rather than questioning his colleagues who prophesied for the Lord, Jeremiah asked God for clarification.

There is a danger for all prophets and ministers of God. People do not always like nor will they receive truth. The large majority of people would rather believe a lie that is comforting instead of accepting the truth that will transform them from who they are to who God has created them to be in Him. This is how many good prophets and ministers get side tracked and ruin those who they are called to serve. Apostle Paul warned Timothy to share truth no matter how people receive it.

1 I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom: 2 Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering

and teaching. ³ For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; ⁴ and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables. ⁵ But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry. (2 Timothy 4:1-5, NKJV)

The encouragement of the false prophets was much easier to hear than the harsh judgment Jeremiah was speaking in direct contradiction of the majority of prophets, “¹⁴ ...*The prophets prophesy lies in My name. I have not sent them, commanded them, nor spoken to them; they prophesy to you a false vision, divination, a worthless thing, and the deceit of their heart*” (Jeremiah 14:14, NKJV). God makes it clear that the other prophets were lying, saying things of themselves and not delivering messages from Him. Jeremiah was mindful to speak what God told him to, and not what he thought God ought to be saying according to his logic.

Those listening to lies will find themselves refraining from spending time with God in exchange for doing other things. There are many who are far from the Lord, but do incredibly noble and honorable things in the world. This would be great if deeds enable a person entrance into heaven to be with the Father, but it is only through Christ Jesus that anyone accesses the Father. The consequences of stubborn disobedience against God are recorded clearly, especially in regards to leaders, ministers, and pastors here in this portion of Jeremiah’s inspired writings, “¹⁵ ...*By sword and famine those prophets shall be consumed!*” (Jeremiah 14:15, NKJV).

The people who prefer to listen to lies and ignore truth will suffer as those telling them what they desire to hear. The destruction and sorrow that results from disobedience make even the familiar unrecognizable, “¹⁸ ...*Yes, both prophet and priest go about in a land they do not know*” (Jeremiah 14:18, NKJV). This sorrow and destruction can and should be avoided through fasting so that the things of God are made higher priorities than the things of this world.

God’s instruction to the people is to experience repentance which would be shown by letting their, “¹⁷ ...*eyes flow with tears night and day, and let them not cease; For the virgin daughter of my people Has been broken with a mighty stroke, with a very severe blow*” (Jeremiah 14:17, NKJV). Disobedience should be breaking the hearts of those who belong to God. They should be repulsed by the things the world accepts as pleasure and that God identifies as disgusting and abominable.

It is easy to distinguish between what pleases and does not please God when a person knows the character of God intimately through fasting. Centuries later Jesus challenged the religious leaders, “³⁷ *If I do not do the works of My Father, do not believe Me; ³⁸ but if I do, though you do not believe Me, believe the works, that you may know and believe that the Father is in Me, and I in Him*” (John 10:37-38, NKJV). Things that please God reflect His character and are things that He does and says Himself. Things that displease Him are contrary to His character and contradict what He does and says. It really is just that simple.

Sorrow always follows disobedience. The devastation might be delayed, but when people disobey God and refuse to repent sorrow is the guaranteed outcome in the end; it is inescapable. The true joy that can be found in this guarantee of sorrow connected to disobedience is that it is something people can avoid.

Those who desire to experience genuine transformation in their lives in Christ Jesus must first know what it means to practically obey the first and greatest commandment Jesus proclaimed as, “³⁷ ... *You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.*”³⁸ *This is the first and great commandment*” (Matthew 22:37-38, NKJV). In order to obey this commandment, it is crucial to understand first how God loves so the child of God will know how to love God as they are commanded to love Him.

Apostle Paul explains God’s definition of love as, “⁴ *Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; ⁵ does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; ⁶ does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; ⁷ bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things*” (1 Corinthians 13:4-7, NKJV). These things all can be seen as being fulfilled in the life of Christ Jesus who demonstrated perfect love for the Father and love for mankind in all that He had said and done.

Jesus showed love to the Father in full surrender to His timing and direction for His life, even when others counseled Him to do things differently. Jesus was zealous for the Father and His house to be open for all to come into the Father’s presence in the Temple (Matthew 21:12-14; John 2:13-22). The disciples thought they knew best when they tried to encourage Him to return where He had been the day before, because everyone was looking to see Him again (Mark 1:35-38). Jesus chose to free people from the bondage of the devil without consideration of mankind’s traditions (Luke 13:10-16). Jesus modeled for people everywhere the character of God and instructs people how to live and love in a manner that is accepted by the Father.

The second thing that must be done to avoid the sorrow that comes with disobedience is to strive to love others as themselves which Jesus identified as the second greatest commandment, “³⁹ ...*the second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself*” (Matthew 22:39, NKJV). This is practically expressed in the last six of the Ten Commandments given by God to His people at Mt. Sinai, and summarized by Jesus centuries later in what has come to be known as the Sermon on the Mount.

¹² *“Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the Lord your God is giving you.*

¹³ *“You shall not murder.*

¹⁴ *“You shall not commit adultery.*

¹⁵ *“You shall not steal.*

¹⁶ *“You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.*

¹⁷ *“You shall not covet your neighbor’s house; you shall not covet your neighbor’s wife, nor his male servant, nor his female servant, nor his ox, nor his donkey, nor anything that is your neighbor’s.”* (Exodus 20:12-17, NKJV)

¹² *Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.* (Matthew 7:12, NKJV)

The best way to avoid disobedience to God is to spend time with Him daily in prayer and worship. Make sure that time is also spent in accountability relationships with others who are in Christ to spur each other on to grow in Christ’s likeness. The greatest sign of spiritual trouble in the life of God’s people is when the desire to spend time with God and

other believers is of a lower priority than doing other things. Things which take attention off of God and the need to spend time with Him are not necessarily sinful; they can be noble things and beneficial to others. Yet, if it interferes with time spent with God it must be refrained from having a higher priority than God.

The best thing a person can do for themselves and everyone else around them is to make God their highest priority instead of trying to find time to spend with Him in an already packed schedule. Disobedience will cause people to refrain from fasting in order to be with the Lord.

Fasting in order to spend time with God will increase the desire to obey and submit to the Lord, and cause those things which are displeasing to God be repulsive to His child. Therefore, if being obedient to God is a struggle, then spending time with Him in prayer, fellowship with other believers, and worship of Him needs to be increased.