

A PRESIDENT AGREES WITH KINGS ---  
THERE IS A CONNECTION BETWEEN

**FASTING & PRAYER**

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We all have a great heritage for respecting and fearing God. Let me read for you a portion of a proclamation written over a century ago to help us appreciate our national history.

One of our most famous presidents wrote: "We have been the recipients of the choicest bounties of heaven. We have been preserved for many years in peace and prosperity. We have grown in numbers, wealth and power as no other nation has ever grown.

"But we have forgotten God. We have forgotten the gracious hand which preserved us in peace and multiplied and enriched and strengthened us. We have vainly imagined, in the deceitfulness of our hearts, that all these blessings were produced by some superior wisdom and virtue of our own. Intoxicated with unbroken success, we have become too self-sufficient to feel the necessity of redeeming grace, too proud to pray to the God that made us!

"It behooves us, then, to humble ourselves before the offended Power, to confess our national sins, and to pray for clemency and forgiveness.

"Now, therefore, in compliance with the request and fully concurring in the views of the Senate, I do, by this my proclamation set aside March 30, 1863, as a day of national humiliation, **FASTING and PRAYER.**"

He goes on to say "...this is authorized by divine teachings, that he believes God will hear our prayers and will pardon the sins of the nation and bring restoration, with unity and peace as the final outcome."

And who wrote this proclamation? It was President Abraham Lincoln – one of the most respected presidents of the United States.

Let me say, humbly, that I believe there would be great merit in our day – even now, today and tomorrow, until He comes again – for us to regularly declare times of individual and collective fasting.

If I were to tell you that we, as the body of Christ, **RULE BY PRAYER**, none would argue with me. But if I were to tell you that **FASTING greatly intensifies prayer**, I might provoke some controversy. Let me explain why I believe I'm right.

But first, let me make one observation about the prayers of the Christians I've been exposed to for the past 60 years.

The people I know pray for:

The sick	Pastors	Missionaries
Shut-ins	Evangelists	The unsaved
Family members	Local church problems	
Armed forces		

I have hardly ever heard Christians pray for our government. Let me exhort all of us to spend more time praying for the president and all our government leaders rather than criticizing and maligning them. Our words, you know, either curse or bless. So let's begin to bless them.

We know God wants us to do this. The Apostle Paul told Timothy to pray:

1<sup>st</sup> "...that supplications, prayers and intercessions and the giving of thanks be made for all men," and

2<sup>nd</sup> "...for kings and all that are in authority." Why? "That we may lead a quiet and peaceable life." Why is that? "That the gospel may be preached in peace, that people might be saved and the community and nation become strong."

So to what divine teachings was President Lincoln referring? I'm not sure. But I am sure that he had 35 examples in the Old and New Testaments to choose from. In studying these examples, I found that the length of the **fast** could not be identified in the majority of the **fasts** but 3 days was most often mentioned in the records. We know that a few saints **fasted** for 40 days – Moses and Elisha **fasted** without food or water and Jesus Christ **fasted** without food.

Let's look at a few examples, telling very briefly who was involved, what the situation was and what they did and, then, what happened:

I. Let's begin with King David as recorded in

2 Samuel, Chapter 1. His little child was ill. He **fasted** for 7 days, telling his servants, "While my child is alive, I will **fast** and weep. Who can tell whether God will be gracious to me that my child will live."

This shows me that David had probably had prior experience with **fasting**. He knew that **fasting** and **praying**, with weeping, in other words – humiliation before God – was the most powerful thing he could do.

We all know the child was not spared. But I would be willing to say that David did not regret his efforts to seek Divine intervention for his little boy.

II. Let's look at another situation:

In 2 Chronicles, Chapter 20, we read about Jehoshaphat. He was expecting to be attacked by the Moabites and the Ammonites and **he was afraid**. So he proclaimed a **fast** throughout all Judah. People came out of the cities of Judah – even wives and children to do what:

- a. To seek the Lord;
- b. Unite in declaring God to be their God;
- c. To **fast and pray**.

What happened? God told them: "Don't be afraid. The battle is not yours, but God's." What encouragement! God spoke and said:

- aa. "You won't need to fight;"
- bb. "Just stand still and watch God work;"
- cc. "I'll tell you what to do and how to do it."
- dd. He appointed singers, not soldiers. When they began to sing and praise God, they won!

III. Corporate **fasting** is found in Ezra, Chapters 7 & 8.

Ezra was a great spiritual leader. He asked permission of the King to take a copy of God's laws to Judah and Jerusalem. He also wanted to take some gold and silver as an offering to the God of Israel. He gathered about 200 priests and other countrymen to travel with him. The he asked the men to **fast and pray** for 3 things:

- i. For a safe trip;
- ii. That they would be protected from bandits;
- iii. That their children would be safe during their absence.

What happened? They were protected and kept safe from bandits!

IV. In the book of Esther there is another record of the power of **fasting**. You know the story well but allow me to remind you of the facts:

There was a plot to kill all the Jews. The king had issued a proclamation to kill ALL Jews. That included men, women and children in all the provinces. The date was set for February 28 of the following year. In all the provinces there was great mourning, **fasting**, weeping and despair at the king's decree.

Then Esther, the queen, became involved. She heard the whole story from her cousin, Mordecai. So she asked Mordecai to gather all the Jews and **fast** for her – to not eat or drink for 3 days. Esther and her maids also **fasted**.

"Then," she said, "though it is strictly forbidden, I will go into the king to make my request." She did and the king gave her favor. He spared Mordecai from being hung on a gallows at the hand of Haman.

In addition, the king reversed Haman's decree to destroy the Jews throughout all the king's provinces. The Jews chose the very same day, February 28<sup>th</sup>, to celebrate their victory.

**Would it have happened this way without the fasting and prayer?**

There are 31 more illustrations to draw from but let me remind you of a sad situation:

In Jeremiah 14, God told Jeremiah:

1. "Don't pray for these people anymore";
2. "Don't ask me to bless them";
3. "They have not tried to follow my ways."

Then the people told God:

1. "Yes, we've sinned";
2. "But help us for the sake of your reputation";
3. "We're known as your people, we carry your name";
4. "You are passing through our land";
5. "Are you helpless to save us?"

But the Lord replied to Jeremiah:

1. "Don't ask me anymore to bless them";
2. "Don't pray for them anymore";
3. "When they **fast** I will not pay any attention";
4. "When they bring their offerings and sacrifices, I will not accept them."
5. "What I will give them in return is war, famine and disease."

**So it is a sober thought! We can wander away from God so far that He will refuse to bless us, even if we fast and pray.**

Let us look at Isaiah 58 – this chapter contrasts God's and man's ideas about **fasting**.

Man said to God: "We have **fasted** before you. Why aren't you impressed? Why don't you hear our prayers. We've done **MUCH** penance and you don't even notice!"

God quickly answered them. "Because you are living in evil pleasure, fighting and quarreling while you are **fasting this kind of fasting will get you NOWHERE with me.**"

Then He tells them the kind of **fast** He wants:

1. "Stop oppressing those who work for you";
2. "Share your food with the hungry";
3. "Bring those who need food right into your home";
4. "Feed the helpless, poor and destitute";
5. "Clothe those who are cold";
6. "Don't hide from your relatives who need help."

Now, listen to this – God said, "If you do these things":

1. "I will shed my own glorious light upon you";
2. "Your godliness will lead you forward";
3. "Goodness will be a shield before you";
4. "The glory of the Lord will protect you";
5. "When you call, the Lord will answer you quickly";
6. "Stop oppressing the weak";
7. "Stop making false accusations";
8. "Stop spreading vicious rumors";
9. "Feed the hungry";
10. "Help those in trouble"—

Then –

1. "Your light will shine out from the darkness";
2. "The darkness around you shall become as bright as day";
3. "The Lord will guide you continually and satisfy you with good things and keep you healthy";
4. "You will be like a well-watered garden, like an everlasting spring";

5. "Your sons will rebuild the long deserted ruins of your cities";
6. "You will be known as "The people who rebuild their walls and cities."

To me, this is another illustration of how great God's generosity is in relation to the little He requires of us!

Do you recognize the depth of this teaching? God is really showing them their own hypocrisy and weaknesses. The people had a form of religion. They appeared to be godly. But they used their **fast** days to work on their business, pay bills, and generally neglected the very purpose of the **fast**.

God gave them a very similar message I also heard from Dr. D. James Kennedy. He was describing the hypocrisy of Christians in our day. He said God told him to tell the people: "Change your behavior or change your name."

That's harsh, eh!

Now, let's focus on ourselves.

Can you believe, as I do, that America has fallen to its lowest level of morality in this century? Do you see our leaders in need of character reform? Reform is needed in church politics, in medicine, in law and justice, in finances, in education, in technology, in the arts and sciences – everywhere – we need to repent and seek God's forgiveness!

Do we need to intensify our prayers by adding **FASTING** to our lifestyle? I believe we do. On the basis of scripture, I believe we do.

Jesus knew all the spiritual atomic weapons and I believe He shared them with his disciples. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus told them to do three things:

1. Give alms,
2. Pray,
3. Fast.

He assumes that those who follow Him will do all three things. I say that because He said – **WHEN you fast, WHEN you pray** and **WHEN you give alms**.

They had been doing these things since the time of Moses.

**It's only in our generation that FASTING has been dropped from the arsenal of God's tools.**

**Fasting** is especially ordained for our day. Jesus said, "...that in those days in which He would not be with us in person then shall they (the disciples) **fast** in those days. Those days, my friends, are these days.

It is time that we learned, individually and corporately, **to learn to fast and pray.**

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