

“Sound Doctrine: Prayer and Fasting”

By Jesse Rairdon

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Please remain standing while Scott comes to lead us in prayer for the message.

Scott: Heavenly Father, we thank You for the opportunity to come together to worship You, to acknowledge who You are. We pray that, in the reading of Your Word, and the acknowledgement of Your revealed will, that we will submit our lives to it, that we will open our hearts to receive it, and that it will be a seed planted in our heart, that we would leave here to be doers of Your Word, and not hearers only. We pray that You would bless Jesse as he delivers it; give him the wisdom to teach us in a way that we will hear it and understand it. And, anything that is of him, let it be put away right now. Let only Your Word be true, and every man a liar. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

Amen. Please be seated. Sound Doctrine. How many are enjoying this series of Sound Doctrine this month? Amen, I tell you what, there's nothing like Sound Doctrine. Kind of keeps us on the right path. I came to this ministry because of Sound Doctrine. God drew me to it, but I came to it because I was hearing what I wasn't hearing everywhere else; I was hearing the Truth. I stayed because I'm hearing the Truth: Sound Doctrine. Our Scripture theme:

Titus 2:1 *But speak thou the things which become sound doctrine:*

The first week, Parish covered, his three points were: “Our Godly Heritage,” and he went to Psalms 33:12, “Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD; and the people whom he hath chosen for his own inheritance.” His second point was, “God's Word Is a More Sure Foundation.” And his third point was, “God Doesn't Change.”

Last week Chris talked about three points. He talked about “Holiness;” he said holiness without charity is just religiousness. He talked about “Gods Laws Are Not Man's Laws,” and, even though sometimes our laws in our country gives us certain rights and privileges, that doesn't mean that it rides off of God's laws, and we've got to heed to God's laws first and foremost, amen? His third pint was, “Without Holiness, No Man Shall See God.”

So, this week, we're going to talk a few things about prayer and fasting. Now, this is not the end-all for prayer and fasting. You could cover this topic, probably, for a whole month in itself. Probably for your whole life, and never learn everything you need to. Normally I cover three or four points, and kind of build up those points, but there was just so many as I was going through this, I'd probably have to give you about twelve points, but I didn't write them all down, so, we're just going to go, and take it as we go. Amen?

So, the two main thoughts are:

1. A few things about prayer
2. A few things about fasting

This is not an easy topic for me; in one area, I think I fall the shortest in; especially the fasting part. I like to eat. Some people live to eat, and some people eat to live. I think I live to eat. But, I've found through praying and studying and seeking God on this, and I've had more fasting time, my prayer life has

improved tremendously, tremendously. And God has shown me things about myself, about my own nature, and my own flesh, that I could do without in my life. Amen?

1. How Should We Pray?

This is Jesus speaking, so, it's important that we take note of that. If you have a Bible that has His words in red, these words will be in red:

Matthew 6: 5-6 *And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.*

Prayer, your personal prayer, is between you and God. You don't need anyone else's attention but God's. If you want to appear to be religious, then that's what you will be, to everybody else and that is your reward, is you will just be religious. But, if you do it in secret, God, who sees in secret, will reward you openly, and then you'll be fatter, Amen?

Matthew 6:7-8 *But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask Him.*

Keep it short and to the point with God. Don't use a bunch of filler. He knows He's God, He knows He's the father; you don't have to fill it with a bunch of Father Gods. He knows who He is. Sometimes people will spend five minutes praying, but only send one word in that prayer. Pray to the point with God. He knows what you need; make your list and pray, "God, these are my needs." Amen? When you went to your dad for something, did you always say, "Dad, dad, dad, dad," or, "Dad, I need the keys to the car." He knows who He is. A bunch of words doesn't impress God. Keep it simple. Amen?

Matthew 6:9 *After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.*

So here is that part about acknowledging God and who He is. Scott talked about it when he was talking about the God of the universe, the creator of Heaven and earth. He spoke light into existence; He breathed life into everything. That God. That's who we're acknowledging. When you come to God, remember who you're talking to. Amen? He is God; we are not. He is higher than us; we are on the earth, He is in Heaven. Reverence His name, honor His name, know His name. By using His name, Jesus, we understand who has that power. All power has come in the name of Jesus. Amen?

Matthew 6:10 *Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.*

This is commonly misspoken as "on earth," but this is, "in earth." It's "in earth" for a reason; we are earthen vessels (2 Corinthians 4:7); "God, let Your will be done *in me*, as it is in Heaven. I want Your spirit in me, in my life, as it is in Heaven." So, this is where you seek ye first the kingdom of God in your prayer. "God, what is Your will? What would You have me to do in my life today? Where would You have me to go? Who would You have me to talk to? How would You have me to pray?" A big part of this

requires listening, too. Stop and listen to the still, small voice of God. He wants to be heard. As a young Christian, we might not understand that that's God, at first. You might be like, "What was that? Was that just a thought? Hmmm." God's trying to speak to you. And the longer you walk along, and walk with God, the more you understand and hear His voice. He said, "My sheep follow me, and they hear My voice, and they know My voice, and a stranger they will not follow." (John 10:1-5) God, I want Your will to be done in my life, not mine. Jesus prayed, even in the Garden, He said, "Lord, I'd like this cup to pass, nevertheless, not My will, but Thy will be done." (Matthew 26:39)

Matthew 6:11 *Give us this day our daily bread.*

Give me today Lord, what I need to sustain me spiritually this day. Notice he didn't say, "Lord, Give me today, so it will last the rest of the week." If all you're getting from God is what you're getting today--Sunday's—you're cheating yourself. Just like when the children of Israel were in the wilderness, God gave them manna every day, just enough for that day. Not for the next day; just enough for that day. Your personal prayer and study time should be every day. There are things you will face that day, that you will need the strength to get through, that day. Remember when you were first saved, how you couldn't pull yourself from the Scriptures? TV wasn't even a factor. I think for the first few years, I didn't watch hardly any TV at all. I didn't go see any movies; I had nothing but just, "Get into the Word." Every minute, I was into the Word. Anytime you'd see me, I had a little pocket Bible, I was into that I can hardly read the words of that, they're so little, but I was into the Word. That's the foundation that's lasted until this day.

Greg texted this morning about a child that had asked him this week, that he may as well read the Bible, because it's the only thing in this world that really makes it accurate?10:12?. I really appreciate that, Greg. I was thinking about that because, if you read the Bible every day—and I hope our youth don't leave that; I hope they take that and see that true happiness comes from God. It's not a bunch of do's and don'ts just so we can make us unhappy, this is what Scott was sharing about, it's about how God can give us true happiness and joy. That's real happiness. Real fruits of the spirit. Amen?

Matthew 6:12 *And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.*

This is not always the easy one, right? But it's in there for importance. Forgiveness is necessary; not only do I need to be forgiven I need to forgive others. Jesus said, "Forgive me, as I forgive others." Sometimes we leave that second part out. Try not to forget what the day-to-day say the wrong thing voice is for. When we didn't return a phone call or a text as timely as we thought. So, now, that seed of bitterness is starting to creep up. We've got to take care of that before God's going to accept anything from you. And me. I'm in this boat, too. Trust me, I've found that a grudge was a heavy thing to carry. A heavy thing to carry. Amen? That's how it works with God. We are not going to be forgiven, unless we forgive. You can do all the things right, and get up to Heaven, and not forgive one person, and we can be totally wrong, miss the boat. Amen?

Matthew 6:13 *And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.*

Lead us not into temptation. Lead us not into temptation. Temptation is already out there, it's your choice whether to pray not to be led into it, and to be delivered from it. If I keep falling into the same temptation, the devil will continue to use it against me. And, have I truly been delivered from it, if I keep falling into it? Can I honestly say that? We'll let God be the judge.

When I used to smoke, that used to be a strong grip on me. When I came to the church, I remember it well, it was February first, 1996. It was the little church in Norfolk—a store-front church. Not much bigger than the size of this congregation at the time. Pastor Thomas was preaching, and people were worshipping, and this was new to me; there was a lot of joy and happiness. Next morning, I woke up; I'm in my barracks room. I haven't been saved, or asked God to save me, I walked over to my friend's room—back then you could smoke in the barracks—and I lit up a cigarette. And a voice said, "You don't need that anymore." I heeded that, so I put that out. I was leaving my friend's room, and my friend said, "Where are you going?" I said, "I don't need this anymore," and I walked out. That was God speaking to me, telling me I did not need cigarettes anymore. Whatever temptation it is, or whatever yielding you're dealing with, you do not need it anymore. If you really want deliverance, you can get deliverance, but you've got to seek God to get deliverance from it. Amen? Maybe yours is laziness. Maybe it's lust. Maybe it's arrogance. Maybe it's pride. Maybe it's jealousy. Whatever it is you need deliverance from, get deliverance from it. I don't need that any more. I don't need that sin any more. Paul said, "I will not be brought under the power of anything." (1 Corinthians 6:12) Whatever it is that's holding you, and keeping you from doing what, truly, God wants you to do, you can be delivered, by seeking God for it. You have to have that in your prayer.

Sometimes a baby may like that certain toy or that certain blanket. Like our daughter, she has these certain things that she just needs to fall asleep with. Call it little lovie, or whatever. If I'm watching the baby, if I'm putting the baby to sleep that night, if I don't have that thing, I'm in trouble. That baby's going to scream, get mad at me, look around for that thing. Sometimes we treat sin like that; we've got to have that. Whatever that little part is, "This makes me comfortable; this makes me happy," you know? You've got to get rid of that. You can't have that. Amen? Whatever it is that you keep allowing yourself to be tempted with, allow God to deliver you. And then remind the devil that you don't need that anymore.

Verse number fourteen... Now, He already said, "Amen," but He goes on to make a point about forgiveness.

Matthew 6:14-15 *For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.*

So, you have to forgive. And just in case you didn't get that point earlier, Jesus breaks it down again. Forgiveness is important; it's essential.

Ask, Seek And Knock.

Matthew 7: 7-8 *Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.*

Many times, we simply don't get answers or results we want, is because we simply don't ask. "God won't help me with that. God won't take care of that; that's just too small. That's too unimportant." I am reminded that, in the Old Testament, one of the prophet's servants had lost an ax head. You think it would be a small thing, and an ax head, but, they prayed, and it floated up to the top of the river (2 Kings 6:1-7). There's nothing too small for God. Sometimes we say there's nothing too big for God; there's also nothing too small for God.

Now, Parrish didn't know that I was going to do this; I'm going to ask him to come up and share the testimony that he shared Friday night, about asking. Sorry to put you on the spot, brother, but I felt it was important to share this point about when we ask. Give the Lord a praise.

Parrish: It was a few weeks ago, God was dealing with me about listening to him, and, finally—I never told Andy the whole story. Finally—you know how, when you don't listen, God has to get your attention another way? So, finally, it was a really big dream, that God woke me up, and told me, "You don't ask for enough. You're not asking for enough." All I could see was responsibility and everything, and I was like... But, if God is telling me that I'm not asking for enough, then I'm not asking for enough. Then, a little while later, I just mentioned I to Andy as we were having one of our meetings, and Andy told me that God had woke him up, and told him, not just that *he* isn't asking for enough, but that *we*, as Christians, don't ask God for enough.

Amen. Give the Lord a praise. That is so true. Sometimes we think we don't deserve it. We don't ask, because we don't see God giving us deliverance. We've had it so long. "What's the point? I've asked for it for years, and He hasn't taken it." Don't give up. If you really believe that it's something that God has for you, whether it be a healing, whether it be a job, whether it be a victory, whether it be anything, ask God for it. Amen? Or, "Maybe it's just God's will for me to suffer." Maybe it's not; did you ask? Sometimes it is right for us to suffer; we must suffer for righteousness sake. It's better to suffer for the right things than the wrong things.

1 Peter 5:7 *Casting all your care upon Him; for He careth for you.*

He cares for you. He cares about the little things. He cares about everything going on your life. Cast your care upon Him. Those feelings of fear, doubt, inadequacy, maybe even depression, maybe loneliness; God cares. God does care; He made you. He made you. He's still concerned about those things. Cast your cares on Him. Amen?

Philippians 4:6 *Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.*

Bring everything to God, bring everything and thank Him.

Seeking

Seeking is a little different than just asking. When you're asking, you're just asking. "Dad, can I have the keys?" "Mom, may I have the keys?" That's just asking. Seeking's a little different. The definition of seeking, in this context, that Jesus was talking about—going to the Strong's concordance on you, today. Seeking is:

1. to seek in order to find
 1. to seek a thing
 2. to seek [in order to find out] by thinking, meditating, reasoning, to enquire into
 3. to seek after, seek for, aim at, strive after
2. to seek i.e. require, demand
 1. to crave, demand something from someone

So, that's a little different than just asking. You're going a little bit further; you're putting a little more effort into your prayers. You're seeking. If I lose my keys, I'm not just going to ask for them; I'm going to diligently look around for them, because I've got to get to work on time. If I'm late, I'm going to be docked some pay. Amen? So, what does it mean to truly seek? Seeking is different than asking.

Hebrews 11:6 *But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.*

Seeking requires diligence.

Knocking

Once you see God's promise in clear view, you no longer have to ask or seek. Then comes the knocking part. "Hello?" Keep knocking until the door opens. If you already know that God has it for you, if you know He has that particular job for you, if you know He has that thing for you in your life, keep knocking. "I'm back, God; I'm back." If you're seeking a new job and you know in your Spirit that it's a perfect match. Knock and knock again, and God will open the door. Revelation 3:8 says that He opens doors that no man can close. He'll let you know if it's for you.

Jesus wants to open the door. Scripture even reminds us that Jesus is the Door. He said, "I am the door. If you try to come up some other way, you're a thief and a robber." (John 10:1-9) You've got to go through Jesus, if you call yourself a Christian.

Luke chapter eighteen, verses one through eight. This is another parable that Jesus spoke.

Luke 18:1 *And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint;*

That's a good point, there. Always pray, and not faint.

Luke 18:2 *Saying, There was in a city a judge, which feared not God, neither regarded man:*

So, this person didn't care what God thought, and he didn't care what anybody else thought, this judge.

Luke 18:3-8 *And there was a widow in that city; and she came unto him, saying, Avenge me of mine adversary. And he would not for a while: but afterward he said within himself, Though I fear not God, nor regard man; Yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me. And the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge saith. And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them? I tell you that he will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?*

So, knocking requires faith. You don't know what's on the other side of that door. You know God's got something for you, but you don't know exactly, so you've got to knock. Amen?

2. A Few Things about Fasting.

Not everybody's favorite subject, but this is the quick stop, you can read more, as well. Amen?

Isaiah 58: 3 *Wherefore have we fasted, say they, and thou seest not? ...*

So, these people are fasting, and they say, "God, You don't see us."

Isaiah 58: 3 *...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.*

You take a break; you go up on a mountaintop. You meditate. Fasts aren't like that. You've got to get up and go to work; live your life in front of everybody, and appear not to fast. Amen?

Isaiah 58: 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.*

Fasting is not to prove whether you're right or wrong, or whether somebody else is right or wrong. It's not for debating; it's not for hitting the Bible on somebody's head. Fasting is not for this. God's not going to hear you.

Isaiah 58:5 *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?*

In verse number six, He brings it into what is acceptable.

Isaiah 58:6-7 *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? 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?*

Through this process, there's going to be a lot of revealing about yourself. Those things that you're praying about; those certain things that you haven't gotten deliverance from... Fasting will bring these things to light better, highlight them, and God will deliver you from your sins. Deal thy bread to the hungry.

Now, let's talk about the results.

Isaiah 58:8 *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.*

You will now see things clearly. You will have a clear picture of God's purpose in your life, like Scott was talking about. Everybody has a purpose of God in their life. God will show you, clearly; bring that light in and show you, "This is what I have for you to do." He will prepare the way ahead of you. His righteousness will go ahead of you in those situations, those temptations. Those things that you've got to deal with that day, He's going to be there ahead of you. And, after you leave, He's always going to remain there. "There's something about that person. There's something about that lady that was just here." Something that you shared. "She had to have been with God. She had to have been a Christian. She had to have been praying. I got just what I need; now I know that God is with her." That's when the glory is left behind for them to feed off of. Amen?

Isaiah 58:9 *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;*

God will answer you. Got to get good at pressing others. God doesn't give us this Word to kind of beat people up with. It's something to be able to share, and encourage, and minister to others with, amen? Not to point fingers at each other, and say, "You're wrong!" "You're wrong! You're not going to Heaven because you did that." I've done that before, and been in judgment myself; it's not a good place to be, amen?

Verse number ten; this is key:

Isaiah 58:10 *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 noonday:*

When you're fasting, you're denying yourself, and you're taking those things that God has given you, and you're drawing it out, and you're giving it to those who are hungry. It's a whole different level of prayer. It's a whole different level of feeding people. You're denying yourself. Jesus said, "Take up your cross, daily, and follow Me." Am I saying you should fast every day? if that's what you need to do, then do it. My uncle's fasted every day for over twenty years; he goes from midnight to noon—not a single bit of food touches his mouth. He goes and studies the Scriptures, rather than have breakfast. Now, that's not for everybody. I'll tell you what, he has a great understanding of the Scriptures, and when I need some information, some wisdom from God, he's one of the people I can go to, because God has given him that, because he can deal that to the hungry, because he set aside a part of his life for that. That's a level of fasting I hope to attain someday. I haven't quite got there yet. Sometimes we say, "Well, I can't fast for this reason or that reason." If your doctor told you to fast, because you've got to get some blood drawn, you'd do that more readily than fast for me. We've got to fast for each other. Parrish mentioned that there's a couple of brothers from the base ministry that are going to go before important people on the base, and minister, so take out a meal, take out a time to pray and fast. How many remember that? Now, I'm not going to ask how many did that. But let's try to do better. If it comes from our leaders, there's a reason why God is saying that. We need to take heed to that, and fast and pray more.

There's a lot of examples of fasting and praying in the Bible. Take some time to go over that on your own. Esther's a good one; where the Children of Israel needed deliverance, and they were all going to be wiped out. Esther said, "Fast. Proclaim a fast. I and my maids will fast also." And God delivered them.

Isaiah 58:11 *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.*

Do you always feel like you're running out of the spiritual things? Fast, and it will get you on track, and keep you there.

I wasn't going to go to this; I was going to ask you to read this, but I think it's important that we kind of go over what Jesus said. This doesn't mention fasting, but it talks about what's in Isaiah fifty-eight, too. This is in Matthew twenty-five—Parrish did mention this when we were praying for our sister, visiting the sick.

Matthew 25:31-46 *When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand,*

Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me. Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: For I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not. Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee? Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me. And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.

God desires to use you, fully, all the time. We allow God to use us. A big part of that is our sacrifice of our fasting, our time spent with God, our time when we're in fellowship with one another, but, to really, truly feed the hungry, to clothe the naked, to do the things that God wants us to do when we turn our backs on sin... See, most of the time, the righteous didn't even know they were doing it, when they did all this. It's like it was all just done naturally; it was part of what they were always just doing. They were always visiting the sick, they were always calling, and praying with their brothers and sisters, and sharing the Scriptures, and encouraging each other; they were always doing those things. The same answer for those who were not; "When did we...?" When you did it not to the least of these, My brethren. So, let prayer and fasting take it to the next level in your life. Be encouraged to do this daily. Seek God for how it fits in your life, and how He can move in your life and allow you to be the minister, the son or daughter that He's called you to be. Amen? Give the Lord a praise.

