

“Was it for Me that you fasted?”

“Say to all the people of the land and the priests, when you fasted and mourned in the fifth month and in the seventh, for these seventy years, was it for me that you fasted?” (Zechariah 7:5)

The Lord through Zechariah, as He did through many of the prophets of old, was speaking to the people about the sincerity of their hearts in their religious observances. The people of God had been commanded to fast and pray on certain days of the year, and there was good, spiritual reasoning for this. But unfortunately, these fasts and high days in the Jewish calendar turned into more of a stale religious habit than a true spiritual and relational observance from the heart. The prophet Malachi went as far as saying: *“Oh that there were one among you who would shut the doors”* (Malachi 1:10). In other words, just shut down the temple for good, if you are going to come worship God with a heart that is far from God (Isaiah 29:13).

And so, as we look at God’s people of old from a distance, may we be careful not to fall into the same sinful state... *“Was it for Me that you fasted?”* This raises plenty of heart-searching questions for us as God’s people. Are you really doing this for God’s glory? Or are you serving God to be seen by others? Are you following Jesus with the motive that “I have to,” or is it truly a joy filled “I get to!” Are you doing God’s work with a heart for the Master Builder? Or are you just concerned about building your own kingdom? Are you approaching worship with a true heart of worship? We must remind ourselves that the Lord looks at the heart (1 Samuel 16:7). David realized this truth when he prayed: *“For you will not delight in sacrifice or I would give it; you will not be pleased with a burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise”* (Psalm 51:16-17).

And so, to bring home Zechariah’s question to your own heart... Is it for God that you preach? Is it for God that you teach that Bible Study? Is it for God that you sing? Is it for God that you serve on that committee? Is it for God that you come to corporate worship on Sundays? Is it for God and His Glory that you serve? These questions are all heart-searching, and they are imperative for us to use as litmus tests for our own hearts... Because we all can easily lose the focus of what real God honoring worship really is about.

What the church of Jesus Christ needs most is not preachy preachers, not talented musicians, not wise businessmen, not ladies who are good cooks (although we might have to think this one through...) But above all, the church needs WORSHIPERS! Because the key to our Christian service can be simplified to that: a heart of worship.

May you keep the focus of the Christian life. May Christ and His glory be the central focus of all your good works in the faith. May the stale religious routines of a heart far from God never be true of you. May you never live out your Christianity with the wrong motives. May you, in the words of the Apostle Paul, truly: *“Work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men”* (Colossians 3:23).

Respect the Blood,
Dalton Mathis