

Yahweh, the Almighty God of Israel, is with us
"Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet,
and shew my people their transgression,
and the house of Jacob their sins." Isaiah 58:1

Prayer, Praise & Thanksgiving

Prayer & Fasting

Reading:
Isaiah Chapter 58

Introduction

The power of **Jehovah** is limitless. He can do anything He pleases. **Nothing is too hard for Him** and no one is able to prevent Him carrying out His will. **With God all things are possible - all things!** This fact is repeated several times in Scripture.

Genesis 18: 14: ***"Is any thing too hard for the LORD?"***

Jeremiah 32: 27: ***"Behold, I am the LORD, the God of all flesh: is there any thing too hard for me?"***

Jeremiah 32: 17: ***"Ah Lord GOD! behold, thou hast made the heaven and the earth by thy great power and stretched out arm, and there is nothing too hard for thee."***

Matthew 19: 26: ***"But Jesus beheld them, and said unto them, With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible."***

Mark 14: 36: ***"And he said, Abba, Father, all things are possible unto thee; take away this cup from me: nevertheless not what I will, but what thou wilt."***

Notice how, in this last text, though all things are possible, the Father didn't do what the Son asked of Him; simply because that was not the Father's will.

The Parameters of Prayer

Prayer is harmonising one's mind with the mind of God. Prayer is not simply speaking to God or even listening to Him. It is **'tuning to Him.'** Believers are at their most powerful when they are **'in tune with God;** that is, when they are **'praying.'** By prayer we harness the limitless power of the Almighty! To be sure most, if not all of us, believe that God can do anything, absolutely anything, even the seemingly impossible! But few of us believe that He

will do impossible things through us. And yet that is the high spiritual goal this sermon is about; Yahweh working in and through US; through YOU and through ME!

Mark 9: 23: ***“Jesus said unto him, If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth.”***

This Sabbath I am going to remind you (and myself) as I have done many times, of the ***‘formula of prayer;’*** a seven point formula which, if applied, will prove that ***God can do anything through US, yes through You and through Me!*** Millions of believers fail in their prayer lives simply because they do not believe that God will do the seemingly impossible for them or through them. *‘Oh yes,’* they’ll admit, *‘God can do the impossible through others; but not through me.’* And that, my friend, is the cause of their failure. They just do not believe that God can - and will if asked - do the impossible in their lives.

I will now list ***seven mandatory parameters*** (compulsory components) needed to help you achieve your spiritual goals. Remember that the more real these are in your life, the more successful will be your prayers.

1. Stop Sinning

First: we must stop sinning. That is, we must express our faith in **obedience**. We must keep God's commandments. The Bible says:

Psalm 66: 18: ***“If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me:”***

2. Ask / Seek / Knock

Second: we must ask, seek and knock. The Almighty will not allow anyone to stumble upon His treasures. You must ask for them, seek them and knock on the door of heaven. Only then will you receive. In His Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said:

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

3. Motives

Third: we must check our motives. The human heart is self-deceiving. So pray for wisdom and insight to check your own motives. Be ruthless with yourself. The Bible says:

- ***“The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?”*** (Jeremiah 17: 9)
- ***“Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.”*** (James 4: 3)

4. In Yeshua’s Name

Fourth: we must ask in Yeshua's (Jesus’) name.

- ***“And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it.”*** (John 14: 13-14)
- ***“Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you.”*** (John 15: 16)
- ***“And in that day ye shall ask me nothing. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you.”*** (John 16: 23)
- ***“Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full.”*** (John

NOTE: 'In my name' doesn't mean that we will receive everything we ask for if we tag the name of **Jesus** or **Yeshua** on to the end of a prayer. What it does mean, is we should ask in accordance with the **Saviour's will**; for something that will bring us into harmony with his **character** and which will **spiritually benefit** others and ourselves. The name **Yeshua** (Jesus) means '**He will save His people (that's us) from our sins.**' The main objective of our prayers should therefore be, to overcome sin; first in our own lives and then in the lives of others. Pray with this sacred objective in mind, **to overcome sin - within and without!**

5. Believe

Fifth: We must not doubt. The Almighty is more eager to give than we are to ask. But do not doubt Him; because doubt is secret sin.

Romans 14: 23: *"...for whatsoever is not of faith is sin."*

Unbelief (another name for **doubt**) acts like a contraceptive. It can neutralize even the most fervent prayer.

Matthew 21: 22: *"And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, **believing**, ye shall receive."*

Mark 11: 24: *"Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, **believe that ye receive them**, and ye shall have them."*

6. Abide in Him

Sixth: Soak up God's Word. Let it rule your life. Measure every action against its doctrine and live as you would in the very presence of the Almighty God.

John 15: 7: *"**If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.**"*

7. Forgive

Seventh: Forgive. After all we are preparing to enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Misunderstandings, petty grievances, insults, etc. are nothing against the backdrop of eternity.

John 15: 25: *"And when ye stand praying, **forgive**, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses."*

8. Fasting

In addition to the **seven essentials** listed above there is yet another, which in **exceptional circumstances**, calls for attention. It is **fasting**. Fasting demonstrates to the Almighty the earnestness of a believer; that he/she is willing to set appetite aside in order to achieve a spiritual goal.

Matthew 17: 14: *"And when they were come to the multitude, there came to him a certain man, kneeling down to him, and saying,*

15: Lord, have mercy on my son: for he is lunatick, and sore vexed: for oftentimes he falleth into the fire, and oft into the water.

16: And I brought him to thy disciples, and they could not cure him.

17: Then Jesus answered and said, O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you? bring him hither to me.

18: And Jesus rebuked the devil; and he departed out of him: and the child was cured from that very hour.

*19: Then came the disciples to Jesus apart, and said, **Why could not we cast him out?***

*20: **And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief:** for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you.*

*21: **Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting.**"*

9. Examples of Fasting

The Bible gives many examples of when Yahweh's people were in grave danger their prayers were answered when accompanied by **fasting**.

- Esther 4: 3: “And in every province, whithersoever the king's commandment and his decree came, there was great mourning among the Jews, and **fasting**, and weeping, and wailing; and many lay in sackcloth and ashes.”
- Esther 4: 15: “Then Esther bade them return Mordecai this answer,
16: Go, gather together all the Jews that are present in Shushan, and **fast ye for me, and neither eat nor drink three days, night or day: I also and my maidens will fast likewise**; and so will I go in unto the king, which is not according to the law: and if I perish, I perish.”
- Daniel 9: 3: “And I set my face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplication, with **fasting**, and sackcloth, and ashes:”
- Ezra 8: 21: “Then I **proclaimed a fast** there, at the river of Ahava, that we might afflict ourselves before our God, to seek of him a right way for us, and for our little ones, and for all our substance.
22: For I was ashamed to require of the king a band of soldiers and horsemen to help us against the enemy in the way: because we had spoken unto the king, saying, The hand of our God is upon all them for good that seek him; but his power and his wrath is against all them that forsake him.
23: **So we fasted and besought our God for this: and he was intreated of us.**”
- Nehemiah 1: 3: “And they said unto me, The remnant that are left of the captivity there in the province are in great affliction and reproach: the wall of Jerusalem also is broken down, and the gates thereof are burned with fire.
4: And it came to pass, when I heard these words, that I sat down and wept, and mourned certain days, **and fasted, and prayed** before the God of heaven,”
- Acts 14: 23: “And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had **prayed with fasting**, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed.”

In every one of the above instances, prayer and fasting triggered a Divine response and Yahweh's people were rescued and abundantly blessed.

10. Fruitless Fasting

Of course, fasting is not something only Israelites and Christians do. Many, if not most, pagan religions teach their devotees to fast. No doubt you have heard of even **political prisoners** fasting in an effort to gain some objective or the other. **Hunger strikes** are a common occurrence these days. Never a month passes but someone somewhere is fasting to gain attention to some cause or the other. There are examples in Scripture when fasting, important as it is, proved fruitless simply because it was not accompanied by the requirements mentioned previously. Examples of futile, self-righteous fasting, (when sins are not forsaken) are as follows:

Jeremiah 14: 11: “Then said the LORD unto me, Pray not for this people for their good.

12: **When they fast, I will not hear their cry**; and when they offer burnt offering and an oblation, I will not accept them: but I will consume them by the sword, and by the famine, and by the pestilence.”

Luke 18: 10: “Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican.

11: The Pharisee stood and prayed thus **with himself**, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican.

12: **I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess.**

13: And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner.

14: I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.”

Isaiah 58: 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?**”

11. Spiritual Fasting

Isaiah 58: 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 rereward.
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 noonday:”*

12. Fasting for Victory

As we can see from the foregoing, **acceptable fasting** goes far beyond the matter of abstaining from food and drink. True and acceptable fasting is first the **self-denying attitude of mind** and second, denial of the **body**. Fasting is a spiritual process which has as its goal the **will of God** and the **welfare of others**. True fasting is putting self last. **Like faith, true fasting is a mental activity, a divine frame of mind.** True fasting is self-sacrifice. The combination of **true fasting** and **prayer** will succeed when everything else fails.

Joel 1: 14: *“**Sanctify ye a fast, call a solemn assembly, gather the elders and all the inhabitants of the land into the house of the LORD your God, and cry unto the LORD.**
15: **Alas for the day!** for the day of the LORD is at hand, and as a destruction from the Almighty shall it come.”*

Joel 2: 15: *“**Blow the trumpet in Zion, sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly:**
16: **Gather the people, sanctify the congregation, assemble the elders, gather the children, and those that suck the breasts: let the bridegroom go forth of his chamber, and the bride out of her closet.**
17: **Let the priests, the ministers of the LORD, weep between the porch and the altar, and let them say, Spare thy people, O LORD, and give not thine heritage to reproach, that the heathen should rule over them: wherefore should they say among the people, Where is their God?**
18: **Then will the LORD be jealous for his land, and pity his people.”***

Summary

Nothing is too difficult for the Almighty God. All things are possible with Him.

In view of this fact, every prayer which meets the conditions listed above and which is in line with His will - will be granted - every prayer! That is the truth, the **hardly conceivable reality** which this sermon is all about. The more I think about it the more ashamed I become at the smallness of my own faith. But I have decided to take God at His Word by asking Him:

1. To completely annihilate sin from my mind and body.
2. To teach me to know **what** to ask for, **where** to look and **how often** to knock.
3. To teach me to recognise my own motives for what they really are; because I dare not trust my own judgement of myself.
4. To cause me live the reality of what **'In Yeshua's Name'** means.
5. To strengthen me to believe that what I ask for will in fact be granted.
6. To lead me to abide in Him and to open my mind to His Holy Word.
7. To enable me to forgive others as I myself have been forgiven.

This **spiritual specification** I make a matter of prayer; not forgetting the need to **fast** when my prayers are not answered. I trust that **ALL** who listen to or read this sermon will join with me in this holy enterprise in order to

take the Everlasting Gospel to the WHOLE WORLD!

An impossible task? Not really, because “**WITH GOD ALL THINGS ARE POSSIBLE --- ALL THINGS!**”

AMEN!

In the Son's Name - For the Father's glory.

Elder: *Max W. Mader*

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