



RED ZONES IN PRAYER AND FASTING

Matthew 6:16 "When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show men they are fasting. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. ¹⁷ But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, ¹⁸ so that it will not be obvious to men that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

There are three things that I would like to comment on this passage.

A. Do not draw attention to yourself. Do not let anyone know that you are praying and fasting.

Matthew 6:16 "When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show men they are fasting. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full.

B. Do not let your prayer and fasting interrupt with your regular daily schedule

Matthew 6:17 But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, ¹⁸ so that it will not be obvious to men that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

C. The Red zones of Prayer and Fasting. The passage gave a clear warning what should not be done and what should be done when you are praying and fasting. This made me think of the possibility of Red Zones of prayer and fasting.

When we were in the Philippines the sports I love watching is Basketball, especially the NBA. When we move to the US I got interested in watching Football. When I started watching Football I have no clue what is going on with the game but somehow the physical nature of the game as well as the wit I see in the game somewhat attracted me to it. Every time I watch the game, there is one aspect in the game where the game commentators keep on mentioning and that is the red zone. It seems like the red zone is very crucial in the outcome of the game, and that any team who performs better in the red zone seems to have the advantage to win the game.

At first, I have no idea what the red zone is all about, but I soon discovered that the red zone is the area of a football field inside an opponent's 20-yard line. (next to the touch down zone)

I notice that the moment an offensive team reaches the red zone, the defensive team will give everything come injury or death just to stop the offensive team from scoring a touchdown. I also notice that a fumble and an interception at the red zone can turn the momentum to the other team who would most likely will win the game unless the momentum swings back.

As I was working on the last topic of the message on prayer and fasting this thought of Red Zone keep on rolling on my mind. So I started thinking along this line and try to see if there is a red zone in prayer and fasting and to my surprise, I discovered two red zones and they are the Spiritual Red Zone and the Physical Red Zone.

I. SPIRITUAL RED ZONE.

When you are praying and fasting, you are in the devil's red zone. This is a spiritual area where you fully exposed your self to the devil who is a lying spirit.

Matthew 4:1-11 tells us that when Jesus was fasting for forty days and forty nights, the Holy Spirit is there because it is Him who led Jesus to the desert. On the other hand the devil is also there waiting for an opportunity to attack Him with temptation, which he did at the end of forty days and forty nights.

When you pray and fast remember the fasting of Jesus and be reminded that the devil's presence is there lurking and waiting for his opportunity to bring you down because he does not want you to score a victory against him and his kingdom that is why he is going to do everything within his influence and power to stop you from scoring a touchdown.

Your performance in the devil's red zone is determined by what is in your heart and this is your motive. When you are praying and fasting, your **MOTIVE MUST BE PURE.**

Jesus said that when you are fasting do not make it obvious to men but only to your Father in heaven who is unseen, and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you.

Jeremiah 23:24 *Can anyone hide in secret places so that I cannot see him?" declares the LORD. "Do not I fill heaven and earth?" declares the LORD.*

Nothing is hidden before the eyes of God. And we cannot afford to lose the favor of God when we are praying and fasting that is why it is important that we are to keep our motives pure. To ensure that our

motives is pure before God when we pray and fast, let the following be our motives.

A. Do Everything in Love

1 Corinthians 16:14 Do everything in love.

B. Do All Things in the Name of Jesus Christ

Colossians 3:17 And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. ²³ Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, ²⁴ since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.

C. Do All Things to Please God Not Men

1 Thessalonians 2:3 For the appeal we make does not spring from error or impure motives, nor are we trying to trick you. ⁴ On the contrary, we speak as men approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel. We are not trying to please men but God, who tests our hearts. ⁵ You know we never used flattery, nor did we put on a mask to cover up greed--God is our witness. ⁶ We were not looking for praise from men, not from you or anyone else.

D. Do it All for the Glory of God

1 Corinthians 10:31 So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.

II. THE PHYSICAL RED ZONE.

This red zone is the area in our prayer and fasting where we are about to break our fast. Here are some tips so that we will be successful in this area.

- A. When you are doing the partial fast, breaking is not a problem.
- B. When you are doing the normal fast and you go beyond three days, break the fast by starting with an ounce of fresh juice every two hours on the first day. As the stomach is able to process food, add small amount of fruits and vegetables, then take some Carbohydrates and if your stomach could tolerate it then start taking small amount of protein do this until you are back on your regular diet.
- C. When you are doing the absolute fast, use the same procedure as in the normal fast.
- D. Don't stuff your stomach on the first three days. Go back to your regular diet on the 4th day with moderation.
- E. Beware of your appetite. Usually, the surge of appetite comes rushing like a tsunami right after you break your fast. If you cannot control your appetite, remember that after a long absence of food in your stomach, your stomach is not ready to handle large amounts of food and the food will hurt and injure your stomach. People, who go for long fast, died not because of fasting but because they could not control their appetite once they break the fast. Therefore, it is essential, if you go for long fast, make sure you have somebody with you to help you especially when the time comes that you have to break your fast.

After a long fast, you will be physically weak, mentally and emotionally exhausted but spiritually energized.

III. CONCLUSION

March of 2006, my wife underwent a critical surgery (the removal of a football size from her abdomen). When we met with the surgeon who will perform the surgery, his words were very comforting and because of his expertise and experience he assured us that it will just be an easy surgery. But his assurances did not settle well in my spirit because I can sense a dark shadow hovering over the situation.

Three days before the surgery, the Holy Spirit led me to pray and fast for three days and three nights.

After the surgery, my suspicion is right. The surgery is not as easy as the doctor said, and the recovery is extremely fragile. But through it all, I am fully convince without doubt in my heart, that my prayer and fasting before the surgery, made a big difference in the outcome of that ordeal. The greatest miracle of this incident is the biopsy result telling us that there is no trace of cancer from the tumor removed from my wife. This is real news of miracle to us considering the fact that both her father and mother died of cancer.

Fasting brings results but we have to pay close attention of the Red Zones of Fasting so that we will not be outwitted by the Devil.