

Joshua Part 10: Boldly Going Where No One Has Gone Before – “Hearing God’s Plans”

1. Last week I spoke about the need to cultivate the awareness of the presence of God. We observed Joshua and the Israelite army losing a battle to an insignificant enemy because their courage melted in the midst of battle. And we discovered why their courage melted...because the Presence of God was not “with” them.
 - a. We learned how important it is to foster the awareness of the presence of God – that **without the awareness of the Presence of God, believers will lack the courage to face down the impossible with faith.** We will turn instead to our own ability, knowledge, experience and strengths to attempt to do what only God can do.
 - b. The principle of the “impossible” is simple. There is nothing impossible for God. In fact, in heaven, the word impossible doesn’t exist. Why? Because there is no place in heaven where we will not be fully aware of the presence of God.
 - i. The key for you and I is to understand that we bring all of the possibilities of heaven to earth by faith when we foster our awareness of the presence of God.
 - ii. It is why miracles and healings and salvations so often occur in worship services...not because of good preaching, but because the entire hour has been spent focusing and nurturing the corporate awareness of the presence of God to worship.
 - c. It is why we are calling the church to participate in 21 days of fasting and prayer, beginning last Sunday. If you didn’t get started on it yet, you can make it 14, or 13 days if you choose. The key is that you join your brothers and sisters in fasting from one meal a day each day until March 22nd, spend an hour a day in prayer, and record/journal what you hear God speaking to you. And that you pray for personal revival and a deeper awareness of God’s presence in your life. The goal? That we might experience a great breakthrough in the realm of God’s Presence and Power during our Spiritual Awakening Weekend that would transform not only our church but our community! Don’t forget to invite friends, family and neighbors for this fantastic weekend of encountering God.
2. IN light of the 19-22, I have changed my sermon from what I planned this week. Maybe you’ll get it next week. But God spoke powerfully to me during my time of fasting and prayer and I believe He would have me take you to Daniel chapter 10, starting in verse 2:
 - a. ² *At that time I, Daniel, mourned for three weeks. ³ I ate no choice food; no meat or wine touched my lips; and I used no lotions at all until the three weeks were over.* (Daniel was having a modified, 21 day fast...it wasn’t a total fast, likely it was bread and water). ⁴ *On the twenty-fourth day of the first month, as I was standing on the bank of the great river, the Tigris, ⁵ I looked up and there before me was a man dressed in linen, with a belt of the finest gold around his waist. ⁶ His body was like chrysolite, his face like lightning, his eyes like flaming torches, his arms and legs like the gleam of burnished bronze, and his voice like the sound of a multitude. ⁷ I, Daniel, was the only one who saw the vision; the men with me did not see it, but such terror overwhelmed them that they fled and hid themselves.* (Daniel was privileged to witness a vision, that the others, likely also prophets, did not see but experienced the presence of God, thereby causing them to flee). ⁸ *So I was left alone, gazing at this great vision; I had no strength left, my face turned deathly pale and I was helpless. ⁹ Then I heard him speaking,* (Daniel’s spiritual eyes and ears were open and he saw and heard God’s message) *and as I listened to him, I fell into a deep sleep, my face to the ground. ¹⁰ A hand touched me and set me trembling on my hands and knees. ¹¹ He said, "Daniel, you who are highly esteemed, consider carefully the words I am about to speak to you, and stand up, for I have now been sent to you." And when he said this to me, I stood up trembling. ¹² Then he continued, "Do not be afraid, Daniel. Since the first day that you set your mind to gain understanding (revelation) and to humble yourself before your God (fasting), your words were heard, and I have come in response to them. ¹³*(just the act of deciding to do the fasting and prayer led to God opening up the heavens for an angelic visitation and an answer to Daniels’ request) *But the prince of the Persian kingdom resisted me twenty-one days. Then Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, because I was detained there with the*

king of Persia. ¹⁴ Now I have come to explain to you what will happen to your people in the future, for the vision concerns a time yet to come."

3. Why fast?

- a. Some of you are probably just like me about 14 years ago, when Dr. Purvis, who is speaking at our SAW in two weeks, called the Baptist church I belonged to in Texas to a fast. I thought to myself, "what good will that do, except make me hungry. And if they want to fast, that's their business. God hears me just fine." I won't condemn you because you are resisting the idea of fasting. I sympathize with you. I wasted over 10 years in spiritual pride by refusing to humble myself in fasting and prayer. I wasted over 10 years of the blessings and power of God. I wasted 10 years of the experience of the presence of God. If you want to waste your life that's your business. I only know that I wish someone had what a fool I was being by digging my heels in and refusing to fast and pray faithfully.
- b. **The first thing Daniel did was to fast.** Fasting, for Daniel, was the act of humbling himself before God, and it led to an instantaneous release in the heavenly realm of God's action. God loves the humbled heart. **God honors the humbled heart.** When you say to food...you will not be my god...God says, "YEAH, now you are getting it!"
 - i. Jennifer and I made the decision to go grocery shopping on Friday. We have been fasting from dinner, so after about 4pm, the stomach begins to protest. By 7pm, it starts getting loud. As we walked the aisles of the grocery store that are laden with fresh foods, great smelling deli items, and every kind of food you could imagine (and forget how readily available they are) – I recognized the hold that food had on me. From the simple quenching of the simplest hunger pang...to the feed the snacking desires...to the even more idolatrous "eat to silence the emotional pain I feel sometimes" – God let me see what food does to me. He let me see that when I choose to forgo it, and choose to let Him meet my need, I become more whole.
 - ii. Speaking of eating to silence the pain...On Thursday, I came home discouraged. I had gotten word that some folks were upset with me about how long the services had been running, and with the kinds of music we were singing. I began to feel alone, isolated, and as if the direction I had heard God tell me to go was in question.
 1. If I hadn't been in the middle of a fast...I would have done what I always do when I experience emotional and spiritual pain. I would have pacified my pain with something...television or food. But because the fast I was on precluded self indulgence, I got my bible out and began reading the Psalms. And then God opened up the Psalms and allowed me to see the heart of David in the middle of his own personal pain of leadership calling out to God. So I turned up the music in the room real loud and began literally shouting out and praying the words of David as my prayer for deliverance and help.
 2. And the peace of God that surpasses understanding began to surround my heart and my mind in Christ Jesus. God had shown me the power of a fast to break the strongholds of the ways I dealt with pain.
- c. **The second thing Daniel did was to seek understanding**...or Revelation. He wanted to hear God speak concerning the time he was living in and the future of His people. Fasting and prayer enables us to seek understanding...revelation, of our Father's plan for our lives, our church and our city. We get the opportunity to see life from His perspective...that is **revelation – seeing life from the Father's perspective!**
 - i. You and I can do so by opening the bible and reading it...not for theology, but for a "word from God." The popularity of the One Year Bible has got a downside. It is far too much to read to let any of it soak in and touch our hearts in a practical way. I believe if we would read just a single chapter from a Psalm, Gospel or Epistle, and journal what we hear God saying "to us" we would hear much more clearly from God.
- d. **The third thing Daniel did was to pray.** He spent time talking and listening to God. I have found that it takes about 30 minutes of prayer time to actually get the clutter out of my head to

connect with God in a powerful way. That first ½ hour seems to crawl by. But then the breakthrough occurs. I will find myself still praying when the phone rings an hour or two later, lost in the presence of God.

- e. **The fourth thing, found in the previous chapter, is to Confess the sins of his people** (and himself). Daniel, like Nehemiah, saw fit to acknowledge the way that the people had lived in opposition to God's plan and will, and to confess it and turn from these ways.
 - i. **I would like us to join together for a time of corporate prayer. I will open with a prayer of confession. I got a list. Maybe you do too. When I am done, I encourage you to either add to the confession or to ask God to break through and send revival.**
 - ii. **Confession is agreeing with God.**
 - f. **We confess our...**
 - i. Sin of unbelief, sought to do in our own strength that which should be done only by your power and strength.
 - ii. Made You in our image, and limited You to our own ideas and comfort.
 - iii. We have settle for the form of religion and denied its power. We have preferred our own ways instead of Your presence. We have worshipped the form of religion instead of You.
 - iv. We have broken and ignored the first commandment to love You with all our heart, mind, soul and strength.
 - v. We have failed to make your House a House of Prayer.
 - vi. We acknowledge our sin of idolatry and repent of it today. We have worshipped the creation and such things as food, clothing, cars, jobs, possessions, and homes. We have made them our gods because we have relied upon them instead of You. We have worshipped our credit cards, our abilities and our income instead of You. **BURN AWAY EVERYTHING THAT KEEPS US FROM YOU!**
 - g. **We pray...**
 - i. You desire your church to look and act like a glorious bride. Be we have failed to prepare ourselves for your return, and have fallen asleep while our neighbors are perishing in their sin.
 - ii. Lord God, we cry out for Your presence and Power. We cry out for the souls of our city, we ask that you would rend the heavens, shift the very spiritual atmosphere over our community, so that your very LIFE, THE LIFE OF JESUS CHRIST, would flood our lives, our church and city and our nation.
4. God is in this place. He wants to live in your life. He loves you too much to let you live your life without Him, so He invites you to let Him in. Will you let Him in?