

Living The Days of Lent
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The beginning of Lent is upon us. I realize that for many the Lenten season is not that special and possibly nothing more than a joke, to still others it is a historical part of the Christian experience and those that are in the “mainline” denominations it is something that they observe with some reverence and mystery.

I can still remember how before I came to Christ, I would joke about how I gave something up for Lent, not knowing one thing about what I was saying. Not having been raised in a “believing home”, mimicked what I heard other more “knowledgeable” friends say. It wasn’t until I was an adult and a “believer” that I finally began to grasp exactly what Lent was all about.

Yet often those of us that are not “mainline” Christians (Catholic, Lutheran, Episcopal, etc) give Lent very little, if any notice and maybe worst yet, we scoff at those that do partake in it ritual.

What I would like to do in the next few paragraphs is to look objectively at this season of self-denial with a new appreciation and challenge for both sides of the fence, as it were. Hopefully stripping away any bias or misconception that is shadowing and snaring the family of God.

First, the Lenten season is a time that needs to be used for self-evaluation of where we are in Christ Jesus. Now, let stop for a moment and say that I would agree with those of you that would say, “we need to do this evaluation daily”, but before one can come to the place of daily evaluation, often times it take a “fast”. This fast would be one of not focusing on what we want, but focusing on where are we in Christ. This forty day journey in which we can evaluate with more intensity, how our life measures against the One whom we are supposed to be representing on this earth. During this time studying with more focus on how we can strengthen our walk in Christ, to mirror Him with greater detail.

Second, during this “fast” we are putting aside things that at other times so easily got in our way of seeing Him and the work that He is doing in our lives. By eliminating things sacrificially from our lives we are caused to remember the sacrifice that was made by Christ on the Cross so that we could be able to enter into the Kingdom of God. Hopefully, the items that a person chooses are truly things that are sacrifices, not just some “tongue-in-cheek” empty gesture, that bring validity to this time and actually bring condemnation to the process itself. Let me finish this point by again stating that I would side with those that would say this is a process that should be done on a daily basis as we grow in the Word of God.

Finally, these forty days change us to a change of heart. So often we resist such an invitation. The Jews were known to suffer from a tendency called, “yetzer hara” or a “wayward heart”. Today Christians call it a divided heart. The Word tells us that God calls us to listen with a new heart and follow a new path. Isaiah 58:6&8 talks about a fast; ***“Is not this the fast I choose: to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free. 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.” Can you, can I, accept the challenge of this “fast”, this season of self-evaluation, this season of self-denial? It is a challenge and for some it can be a mountain. But if we are willing to give more to it than a mere glance, if we are really willing to commit to it, it will not be a mountain, but rather a mountain-top experience. With a “changed heart” we can see the power or the Holy Spirit begin to move effectively in our individual lives and as He works in our individual lives He will then be able to move in our corporate gatherings and He will demonstrate the power to change the lives of those that we know and love. The Lord beckons us to listen and to no longer suffer from a “yetzer hara”.

Finally, oops I already said that. But anyway, let me say just a few more things concerning this season. I don’t believe that we should wait until 40 days before Easter to start to “line ourselves up” with Christ, but rather we should be doing it daily, but putting an extra focus on things during this forty day period, doesn’t hurt us either. If we want to walk in the power and authority that Christ said that we had, then we have to live the days of Lent all year long. ***“The person who trusts me will not only do what I’m doing but even greater things, because I, on my way to the Father, am giving you the same work to do that I’ve been doing. You can count on it.”*** John 14:12 (Message Bible) The Lord has a plan for His people, but in order for that plan to be fulfilled we as His people need to be doing everything we can to get stronger in him.

So, to those that have been challenged, make this Lenten season one that is a beginning of a life of self-evaluation, self-denial and of a changed heart. Learn during this time that Christ desires us looking to Him the other 325 days of the year with the same focus as the forty days of Lent.