



# CELEBRATING HOLINESS



## SERMON OUTLINES

CHURCH OF THE NAZARENE-AFRICA REGION  
[www.africanazarene.org](http://www.africanazarene.org)



## **Prayer and Fasting - The Precursor of Holiness Revivalism**

**Scripture:** Joel 2: 12-17

This sermon demonstrates that holiness revival comes from the Lord in response to genuine prayer and fasting by God's people. It should motivate Nazarenes across Africa to take seriously our responsibility to enter into a significant prayer and fasting commitment.

Note: The preacher should develop the context for this passage as an introduction to the text.

### **Introduction:**

A massive locust plague and severe drought has destroyed Jerusalem and Judah. The prophet Joel sees this national calamity as a sign of "the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord" (Joel 2:31). In the midst of this crisis he calls on everyone to repent: old and young (1:2-3), drunkards (1:5), farmers (1:11) and priests (1:13). The locusts are spoken of as the Lord's army, foreshadowing the day where unfaithful Israel will be judged for their sin. God promises through His prophet that restoration and blessing will follow this judgment if Israel sincerely repents.

### **1. Sin Always Brings Judgment**

- a. The People of Judah had forsaken their God:
  - 1) The Lord calls for their return (2:12, 13).
  - 2) They had fallen asleep and had not been guarding their spiritual lives (1:3).
  - 3) They had put their physical appetites ahead of their spiritual well-being.
    - a) They were called "drunkards" and "drinkers of wine" (1:3).
    - b) Pleasure came before devotion to their God.
- b. God brought judgment upon Judah and Jerusalem because of their unfaithfulness:
  - 1) The Lord sends an army of locusts to devour the land (2:11).
  - 2) Their food supply has been completely cut off (1:16, 17).
  - 3) Joy and gladness from the House of the Lord have been taken away (1:16).
  - 4) Water supply has dwindled (1:20.)
- c. Judgment always follows sin:
  - 1) Old Testament Law of Blessing and Curse (Deuteronomy 11:26-28).
  - 2) New Testament Law of Sin and Death (Romans 6:23).
- d. Contemporary Illustrations of Sin and Judgment:
  - 1) Examples of signs of divine judgment in the church's community.
  - 2) Examples of sins prevalent in the church and community.

(The pastor should expose sin without specific reference to individual people or circumstances).
  - 3) The Absence of God's glory in the Church.
- e. Warning of impending danger if sin is not dealt with properly.

### **2. A Call to Repentance through Prayer and Fasting (2:12-17)**

- a. Repentance by the Community:
  - 1) Return to me with all of your heart (2:12, 13).

- 2) Repentance must be sincere and inward, not outward. "Rend your heart and not your garments (2:13).
  - a) The preacher should provide some contextualized examples of outward repentance and show how the passage condemns this kind of repentance.
- b. Prayer by the Community
  - 1) Cry out to the Lord (1:14).
  - 2) Return to the Lord with all your heart (1:12).
  - 3) Call for deliverance - "...spare your people, o Lord." (2:17).
  - 4) Uniting the people in passionate prayer for God's favor and presence
    - a) Call a sacred assembly (1:14;2:15,16)
    - b) Summon the elders and all who live in the land (1:14).
    - c) Include the children and even the newly weds (2:16).
  - 5) Prayer should be God-seeking and not reputation-seeking (Matthew 6:1-14).
- c. Fasting by the Community
  - 1) Blow the trumpet in Zion and declare a holy fast (1:14;2:15).
  - 2) Note that the biblical instruction in this text is for a corporate fasting and prayer commitment. Point out that the Scriptures given in B4 above call for the whole religious community to fast as well as pray.
  - 3) Fasting (which is accompanied by a rendered heart) is a sign of penitence and humility, and demonstrates a complete dependence upon God. (Matthew 6:16-18).

### 3. God's Response to True Repentant Prayer and Fasting

- a. God turns from Curse to Blessing (2:13 and 2 Chronicles 7).
- b. God becomes jealous and protective of His people (2:18,25).
- c. God supplies the every need for his people that turn to Him (2:19,26).
- d. God provides His presence for and in His people (2:28-32;3:21).
- e. Note the way that verses 2:12 and 3:28 begin.
  - 1) 2:12 - "Even now" (repent and fast and pray NOW)
  - 2) 3:28 - "And afterwards" (AFTERWARDS I will pour out my Spirit)
  - 3) God has promised that if we seek Him with all of our heart, He will be found (Matthew 5:6, 7; Luke 11:5-13).
- f. Also, note that Peter quotes this passage at the day of Pentecost, saying that what happened at Pentecost was what Joel prophesied about in Joel 2:28-32 (see Acts 2:16-21).
  - 1) The prophet Joel talked about the Lord pouring out His Spirit in response to our passionate and sincere prayer and fasting.
  - 2) The Apostle Peter ties this promise of Joel to the New Testament experience of Pentecost.

### 4. Application of Message to Today's Church in Africa

- a. Our Foundational Objective and Vision for the Church of the Nazarene in Africa is to experience personal and corporate holiness revival (the pouring out of His Spirit upon us).
- b. Our current Regional Initiative is focused on holiness revival
- c. Our Core Objectives are meant to flow out of holiness revival.
- d. Our greatest need in Africa is to experience an outpouring of God's Spirit upon the Church.

**Conclusion:**

In our churches across the Africa Region today, God's people are being challenged, young and old, male and female; every member and every attendee, to join together in a time of fasting and praying for forgiveness of sins on behalf of ourselves, the church, and our communities, and to a time of seeking God with all of our heart.

During the entire Lenten Period from Ash Wednesday, 22 February 2012 to Easter Sunday, 08 April 2012, Nazarene Churches will commit to this time of prayer and fasting.

We will have specific times for teaching on prayer and on fasting and have set up specific fasting days, times, and meals so that all members of the Church of the Nazarene will be praying and fasting together for God to bring holiness revival to all of our churches and Nazarenes across the Africa Region. (Use the Prayer and Fasting Guide along with the Prayer Calendar to identify specific places, people and needs for which to pray during this emphasis on fasting and prayer).

Ask the congregation, are you prepared to pray and fast on behalf of yourself, your family, our country, our continent, and our people?

Both the Old Testament Prophet Joel and the New Testament Apostle Peter cry out to us today with one voice: "Seek the Lord with a repentant heart through prayer and fasting, and He will pour out His Spirit on us today, here in Africa and throughout the world!"

NOTE TO PASTOR: Challenge the whole church to fast for a minimum of three days. Establish the days for this fast in advance and announce today with this sermon.

- Those who are able and do not have health issues to give up all food and drink (except for water) for a three day period.
- Those with health restrictions to identify alternate but significant ways to fast, e.g. fast one meal or two meals a day during the three days, or as able.

*By Rev Howie Shute*

## If My People

**Scripture:** 2 Chronicles 7:11-16

**Text:** 2 Chronicles 7:14

### Introduction:

This sermon demonstrates that we sacrifice much for the things that we are passionate about in our lives. We will do almost anything to obtain the things that we love. Should we not be even more willing to make the sacrifices necessary to obtain God's spiritual blessings and anointing in our lives and in the Church? This sermon will show that we are in great need of revival, and challenge us to meet the conditions set by God for revival to take place in our lives and in our church today. It will be established that Prayer and Fasting are conditions that will cause God to move upon our lives, in our church, in our community, and throughout Africa.

### 1. Opening Illustration

- a. Use an illustration from your secular life that demonstrates a passion you have. The following illustration is only an example to communicate the kind of illustration that will accomplish the purpose of this sermon.

*Example:*

When I was in high school, I loved lacrosse, a sport originally played in the United States by the American Indians. It was the biggest thing in my life. I wanted to be the best lacrosse player on my team and the best player of anyone on any team that our high school played against in competition. I practiced harder than anyone on my team. I even setting up a goal at home and practiced shooting the ball to hit a specific target well into the night until I became very good. My friends would ask me to do things with them in the evenings and on weekends, but I would often refuse and spend the time instead practicing my shooting. I was striving for perfection. I would even skip classes on game day to practice while my team mates attended classes at our high school. I was ready to make any sacrifice in order to achieve my goal of being the best lacrosse player on my team or any team. This was my life while I was in high school. I had a real passion for lacrosse.

The Lord has reminded me of the passion I had for lacrosse in those earlier years of my life from time to time, and has challenged me to have that same level of passion for the things of God. Specifically, He has challenged me to seek revival in my life and for the Church with that same kind of passion I had for sports. I would have done almost anything to be the best at lacrosse. The Lord has asked me: "What would you be willing to do to see revival sweep throughout the Church and put a fire into your heart and Christian walk?"

- b. Challenge the congregation:
  - 1) Think about their greatest passion in life and reflect on the sacrifices they are willing to make for that passion;
  - 2) Ask the question: "What are you willing to do to see revival in your life and in the Church?"
  - 3) In 2 Chronicles 7:14 God has given us a formula for revival. Let's examine the context of the Scripture that communicates God's conditions for revival.

### 2. Background for the Text:

- a. King Solomon had just finished construction of the Temple.
  - 1) He had the Temple furnishings brought into this earthly sanctuary for God.

- 2) Finally, the Ark of the Covenant was brought into the Temple.
- 3) The Glory of the Lord filled the Temple.
  - a) The priests could not even go into the Temple because the presence of the Lord was so intense (2 Chronicles 5:13-14).
  - b) This is the great need of the Church today, that the presence of the Lord would fill our Temple (both the church and our individual lives).
- b. Solomon prays a prayer of dedication for the Temple in 2 Chronicles 6.
  - 1) Solomon acknowledges that the people of Israel would inevitably sin.
  - 2) Solomon prays that God would forgive their sin when they prayed toward the Temple with sincere repentance for their sin.
  - 3) When Solomon finished praying, fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices, and the Glory of the Lord filled the temple.
  - 4) Early Nazarenes prayed for the Glory of God to come down on their lives and on their worship time together. The Church is in great need for the fire to fall once again - to see the Glory of the Lord manifested in our presence.

Note: Spend considerable time here communicating to the people the great need for revival today. Challenge them to seek God's face for revival throughout Africa.

- c. The Lord appeared to Solomon and responded to his request to forgive the sin of the people and bring restoration to their land. Since we have such great need for this today, let's examine carefully the Lord's response.

### 3. The Promise of Revival:

- a. Formula for Revival: When the Lord appeared to Solomon at night, He gave him the formula for revival, saying: **"If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land."**
  - 1) This promise was made to Israel, God's people. However, today in a very real way, God's people are the Church. Those called by His name are called Christians. This promise is as much for us today as it was for Israel years ago.
  - 2) **"IF"** is looming at the beginning of the promise.
    - a) IF we eat in moderation and exercise our bodies well, we will lose weight. BUT IF we fail to eat well and exercise regularly, our bodies will grow fat and soft.
    - b) IF we plant our crops on time and IF it rains, we will have a great harvest. BUT IF we do not plant our seed at the right time and the rains do not come, we will not have a good harvest.
    - c) The same is true here. IF we do our part, God will do His part, BUT IF we do not do our part, God will not do His part.

"If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, **then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and will heal their land.**"
- b. God's Part - THE PROMISE OF REVIVAL.
  - 1) He will hear our prayers.
  - 2) He will forgive our sin.

- 3) He will heal our land (community, country, Church).
- 4) This is the promise of God - He will restore our lives and the Church, if we meet the conditions that He has set.
- 5) We are waiting for revival, but revival is waiting for us. Revival will come when we meet the conditions the Lord has given us.

"If my people, who are called by my name, **will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways**, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land."

c. Our Part - THE CONDITIONS OF REVIVAL:

- 1) Humble themselves and pray and seek my face
  - a) Humble means: To become dependent upon; to lower ourselves or degrade ourselves.
  - b) Primarily this is a condition of the heart that considers ourselves as nothing before the Lord; an attitude of complete dependence upon Him. Seeking the face of God requires absolute dependence upon Him.
  - c) The Old Testament people of God practiced prayer and fasting as a way to humble themselves before God and to seek His favor (See Psalm 35:13 and Daniel 9:3).
  - d) The New Testament Church practiced prayer and fasting to seek God's will and blessing in their lives (See Acts 14:23).
  - e) When we go without food for a time, we are communicating to the Lord that we want Him more than the comforts and pleasures in our lives; but fasting without repentance is meaningless.
- 2) Repent: We must turn from our wicked ways (those things that displease God).
  - a) Talk about some of the things that do not please God that are either practiced or ignored in your community and church, and challenge the people to turn away from these things and be obedient to God.
  - b) A True Fast that pleases God and moves His hand is from a people who turn away from their sin and act in obedience to His commands and ways (see Isaiah 58). Explain the meaning of this chapter.

4. Illustration - Charles Finney - American Evangelist in the 19th Century used of God during the Second Great Awakening in America.

- a. Finney would preach with a great anointing of the Holy Spirit.
  - 1) In the revival meetings where he would preach people would fall under such tremendous conviction of the Holy Spirit that they would run to the altar believing they would die right then if they did not repent and seek God for forgiveness.
  - 2) Once when conducting a series of revival meetings during the evenings, he decided to visit a factory during the day to see some equipment manufactured. When the factory superintendent took him to the production line where the employees were busy at work on the assembly line, a woman employee fell off her bench onto the floor crying out loudly, like she was in pain. Then another employee went down to the floor and then another until the whole factory had stopped work with each employee laying on the floor, crying out loudly under tremendous conviction of their sins. Finney had not said one word. But the anointing of the Holy Spirit was so strong in his life that people sensed the

presence of God when he walked into a room. The factory superintendent pleaded with Finney to speak to his employees and set them free from their obvious pain. Finney shared Christ with them and encouraged them to repent from their sins and accept Christ as their Savior. All of the workers in this factory were saved that day.

b. The Secret of Finney's Success.

- 1) Charles Finney says in his autobiography that an old man named Father Nash would usually go to the town where he would be holding a revival service about two weeks before the scheduled meetings. He would then find one or two serious Christians from that town and they would prevail in prayer before the Lord. Nash and his local prayer warriors would go without food and sleep, begging the Lord to anoint Finney when he would preach in that town and for the Lord to bring revival to the people in that area. It was not until Nash had sought the Lord's anointing on the coming services that Finney would show up for the preaching. Finney said that whenever Father Nash went before him and prayed for God's anointing and for a real spirit of conviction upon the people who would attend the services, the Holy Spirit did a powerful work. But if Nash had not gone before him then the preaching was without power and little was accomplished in the spiritual lives of the people.
- 2) God was moved by the praying and fasting of Nash more than the preaching of Finney.

**Conclusion: A Call for Commitment**

The pastor should remind the congregation how much they need the Glory of God today. Challenge the congregation to enter into a period of fasting and prayer for a holiness revival:

- in their lives
- in their family
- in their local church
- in their community
- in the Church of the Nazarene across Africa
- Use the Prayer Calendar during this time to pray for specific areas of Africa and the needs across the Africa Region

*By Rev Howie Shute*