

Now Concerning Spiritual Things
an historical account of one man's walk with God

6031 Steamboat Drive
Dallas, Texas 75230-1851

July 10, 2000
Jim Ash letter No. 32

(972) 458-2260 Fax (972) 458-0288
e-mail: jimash.min@worldnet.att.net

**HOW TO KNOW
THE WILL OF THE LORD FOR YOUR LIFE
PART FIVE**

Preparation

On September 20, 1996, while driving to the House of Prayer¹ to pray over prayer requests received by our church, I heard these words in that *still small voice*, "Purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean." When I got home, after finishing my prayer time, I went to a concordance and found the words I had been given were in Psalm 51. That complete Psalm is a prayer of King David after the Prophet Nathan had confronted and convicted him of his sins concerning his adulterous relationship with Bathsheba. As I looked at the words of the Psalm, my attention was focused especially on "Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Hide your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart – these, O God, you will not despise."² These words and others in Psalm 51 and Psalm 19:7-14 were then offered to the Lord as my prayer. The thought occurred to me that the Lord was purging me of something in my past, although I had no idea of what it might be, in preparation for a future assignment. In retrospect I realize now what He was preparing me for, but at the time I had no idea. I was reminded of Isaiah who said, "Woe is me, for I am undone! Because I am a man of unclean lips; and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts. Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a live coal which he had taken with the tongs from the altar. And he touched my mouth with it and said, 'Behold, this has touched your lips; your iniquity is taken away, and your sin is *purged*.' Also I heard the voice of the Lord saying, 'Whom shall I send, and who

will go for Us?' Then I said, 'Here am I! Send me.'"³ In a similar fashion, I believe the Lord gave me words to pray to *purge* and *cleanse* me in preparation for His work. Here is the point I wish to make again: If you desire from the heart to serve the Lord and let that desire be made known to Him, He will then begin to prepare, equip and anoint you to serve Him. I fully believe that there was something in my life that needed to be purged and cleansed (although I did not know what it was) before the Lord could use me as He had planned. Therefore He orchestrated my "clean up" in preparation for what I am presently engaged in. This makes the work that of the Lord and not of the flesh. Nothing good dwells in our flesh.⁴ God must be the author and finisher of our work for Him⁵ so that it may be effective in the kingdom. That way the work is His. And that – our works – nothing more – nothing less – will be the basis for our judgment as born-again believers when we stand before the judgment seat of Christ.⁶

Forgiveness Impartation

On September 27, 1996, I read from John's Gospel the following incident that occurred the day of Jesus' resurrection: "Then, the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in the midst of them, and said to them, 'Peace be with you.' When He had said this, He showed them His hands and His side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. So Jesus said to them again, 'Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you.' And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.'" After I read this passage, I began to ponder its meaning. How is it, I thought, that the *disciples* could actually forgive sins? Several days later, with this question still in mind, I did

³Isaiah 6:5-8. Young Jeremiah had a similar experience in preparation for his ministry. See Jeremiah 1:59.

⁴Read Romans 7:18.

⁵See Hebrews 12:2.

⁶See Revelation 22:12; 1 Corinthians 3:13-15.

¹A chapel in the building complex at Hillcrest Church set aside for and dedicated to prayer sixteen hours each day.

²Psalm 51:7, 9, 10 & 17.

something I had never done before – had never even thought of doing. And I know only in retrospect that I was led by the Holy Spirit. I laid my hands on the world (figuratively as though there was a world globe in front of me) and orally forgave the sins of everyone who had ever lived on the face of the earth, from Adam to the Cross, from the Cross to that present day and everyone then alive in every city, county, state and nation on every continent and every island all over the world. The moment I finished with my “confession” to the Lord, the Holy Spirit spoke very clearly to me and said, “That’s what Jesus did.” I will try and articulate what happened next. It was as though I was “elevated” or “lifted up” to a place or plateau where I had never been before – a new place of boldness and authority in prayer. This was not anything ethereal like a vision or a dream. It was just a real inner conviction within my spirit. It was so real, my first inclination was to look around and view my “new surroundings”-- to see who was there – to see what was there because I knew I had never been there before. I knew the Lord had done something in my life that was totally of Him and not of the flesh. I had no idea why this happened or what it meant, but this would be made clear over the next four years.

About 11:00 A.M. the morning of October 22, 1996, I drove to the House of Prayer to grab a handful of prayer requests, lay hands on them and pray for the needs written on the forms. While praying I was aware of several people (four women and one man) who were praying in an adjoining room. I could tell by what I heard, that they were serious prayer warriors. Since I was still puzzled by the “That’s what Jesus did” prayer experience, I thought they might be able to enlighten me – or I thought perhaps the Lord might give them a word for me that might be helpful. With these thoughts in my mind, I asked if I might share my experience with them. They agreed and as I began to relate what had happened I began to weep. Tears of gratitude and joy are not unusual when I am sharing something the Lord has done in my life. However this was totally unexpected and initially somewhat embarrassing. When I finished sharing, the five laid hands on me and began to pray. Three of them prophesied over me and a fourth was given two scriptures. One lady who prophesied said, “I have previously prophesied in my private prayer time but have never prophesied publically before. But this is so strong, I believe I must give it.” The two scriptures were, “Those who sow in tears shall reap in joy. He who continually goes forth weeping, bearing seed for sowing, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves

with him.”⁷ “For thus says the High and Lofty One who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: ‘I dwell in the high and holy place, with him who has a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.’”⁸ I was so surprised and self-conscious at what happened, I don’t remember anything that was prophesied over me. However, someone was kind enough to give me a note on the two scriptures and I also got the names of the five people who prayed for me. Here is a good example of what I am trying to teach: when we unreservedly give ourselves to the Lord to be used as a servant, He then will minister words of encouragement to us through other servants. This way everyone in the circle is blessed. That’s the way of our Lord and this is an example of the body ministry about which the Apostle Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians, chapters 12, 13 and 14.

This teaching on forgiveness continued for a year or more – a thought here – a bit of enlightenment there – a word of encouragement when needed. Initially I had no idea what the Lord was doing in my life by this teaching. Almost four years later I now know that this would be the basis for understanding and writing on forgiveness.⁹ Unforgiveness is one of the many tools used by the enemy to thwart God’s blessings to His children. This teaching was also preparation for the healing and deliverance ministry Dale and I are now involved in at Hillcrest Church.

“Fast”

On October 15, 1996, the Holy Spirit spoke one word very clearly to me: “Fast.”¹⁰ Strange as it may seem, this one word opened up a new understanding of the Lord’s teaching on prayer. As a result of my subsequent study and enlightenment, I present this broad outline of His teaching on prayer as recorded in the sixth

⁷Psalm 126:5, 6.

⁸Isaiah 57:15.

⁹My letter dated June 1, 1998 written on *Forgiveness* and *The Power of Forgiveness* contains insight give to me by the Lord on how to be set free or to forgive from the heart in even the most extreme cases.

¹⁰I wrote about this incident concerning fasting in my letter dated January 10, 1998. It is repeated here as evidence of *how the Lord has led me to do His will* which is the subject of this series of letters. His initial word [Fast] to me was very clear. However it took me almost a year to understand what He meant by that one word and how it was to be applied as a practical matter in my daily walk with Him. This is evidence of the Lord’s patience and longsuffering in dealing with His servants.

chapter of Matthew: (1) The positive and negative aspects of prayer in verses 5-8; (2) the disciple's prayer in verses 9-13; (3) forgiveness as a condition of effectual prayer in verses 14 & 15 and (4) fasting to increase spiritual perception in prayer in verses 16-18. I had not previously considered forgiveness and fasting as a part of His teaching on prayer.

Notice that *forgiveness* is a major consideration in prayer. Within the context of these fourteen verses forgiveness is mentioned twice in verse twelve, four times in verses fifteen and sixteen, a total of six times. The reason why Jesus mentioned forgiveness six times is because *unforgiveness is a major obstacle used by Satan to rob God's children of blessings*.

I had previously viewed fasting in verses 16, 17 & 18 as a subject entirely separate from prayer, but I now understand more clearly that is a subject closely related to prayer. In one sense I had previously "hid behind" the fifty-eighth chapter of the book of Isaiah. In this chapter the Prophet points out that physical fasting from food as a religious ritual is of no value whatsoever unless accompanied by righteous living according to God's standard. He also points out that when we fast from wrongdoing while practicing rightdoing, the blessings of the Lord will overtake us.

Soon after I was told to fast, I did a three day fast (seventy-two hours) with nothing but water to drink. At the end of the three days I was not particularly hungry, and as far as I could tell, I got no benefit whatsoever. However one lesson learned here was that if the Lord tells you to fast, it is easier than it would be otherwise. I then began to experiment with short one-day or day and one-half fasts with the same results. Almost a year after I was told to fast, Dale and I sat at the same dinner table with Loretta Blasingame. As we were eating, I asked her if she knew anything about fasting. Her reply was, "I have done three (it may have been four – I'm not sure) forty-day fasts!" I then related to her that I had been told to fast but did not understand what I was supposed to do. Her reply was, "Why don't you ask the Lord?!!" Here was this guy who writes about a spiritual walk with God who has to have someone else tell him, "Ask the Lord." I got the message!

On September 20, 1997, I began asking the Lord how long I should fast. Then three days later on September 23, 1997, I was awakened about 7:30 A.M. in a Bed & Breakfast at Bryan, Texas¹¹ with these words,

¹¹Dale and I stayed overnight there while visiting with my sister, Cecille, who lives in a retirement complex in Bryan, Texas.

"We take the twelfth, thirteenth and fourteenth of each thirty-day month and give it to the Lord." I immediately scribbled these words on a note pad at our bedside. After thinking about these words a few minutes the "message" was clear. Three days out of thirty is one-tenth. I was to fast one-tenth of my time just as I was to tithe one-tenth of our income. Anything over one-tenth is a gift. Since then I have followed these instructions. Often I simply fast one day in the week. This makes it more routine and easier to keep up with. Eleven months and eight days after I was told to fast, the instructions were clear. Here are some things I have learned about fasting:

Physical Benefits

Over a period of time I have realized that my mind is sharper and that my body is refreshed, and functions better, after just a one-day (twenty-four hour) fast. And this thought has occurred to me: man was formed (not created) from the dust of the ground.¹² The Jews were instructed to let their land (from which man was formed) lie fallow (or rest) one year out of seven to restore its productiveness. This was done as "a Sabbath to the Lord"¹³ giving God's divine approval and blessing to both the land owner and the land. Since man was formed from the same substance, I have wondered if there is not a connection between increased productiveness of the land after lying fallow one year in seven and the improved functioning of my mind and body when I fast as a *Sabbath to the Lord* for one day out of seven.

Spiritual Benefits

It is unusual how many of the prophecies the Lord has given to me the morning I begin a fast or the morning I am concluding a day of fasting. Here is one such "message"¹⁴ given to me the morning of October 5, 1998, after my prayer time and at the beginning of a fasting day:

As Jesus said, "However, this kind does not go out

¹²See Genesis 2:7.

¹³God's word to Moses was, "In the seventh year there shall be a *Sabbath of solemn rest for the land, a Sabbath to the Lord*. You shall neither sow your field nor prune your vineyard. What grows of its own accord of your harvest you shall not reap, nor gather the grapes of your untended vine, for *it is a year of rest for the land*." (Leviticus 25:4, 5).

¹⁴It has been pointed out to me that there is a change from the "first person" to the "third person" beginning with the fourth paragraph of this prophesy. Nevertheless, it was given to me in the present form and I choose to leave it as it was originally given.

except by prayer and fasting,"¹⁵ so indeed as you pray and fast for a specific purpose, the efficacy of your prayers is intensified. It is a law in the spiritual realm, that to the degree you deny self, your prayers become more effective. There are several reasons.

As you deny self, you draw near to and are drawn closer to Me. As you are drawn closer to Me, I can become to you the desire of your heart. As you deny self, I can become more intimate with you. As you deny self, I can reveal more of My self to you. As you deny self, your heart grows closer to Mine. When our hearts are knit together, My desire becomes your desire and your desire becomes My desire. I can then grant the desire of your heart and the work has begun.

Fasting diminishes the resistance to the flow of My Spirit. An electric switch is a resistor to the electric current. That is, it stops and starts the flow of current. A dimmer switch is a variable resistor to control the intensity of the flow of current. Fasting and prayer is like a variable resistor switch which reduces resistance to My Spirit to flow more freely in your life. Hence as you bring a request before Me with prayer and fasting, the work may be more quickly done as you deny self.

One reason you are a more effectual vessel of the Lord is that you begin to depend more on Him than upon self to do the work. This is why denial of self is so important. This amounts to a denial of power from self to God and a transfer of power from God to you as a worker in the vineyard.

As self is denied, the realization of the ineffectiveness of self becomes more pronounced. This amounts to a transfer of authority and power from you to God and from God to you. When self is completely denied, God is completely in control. To the degree self is not denied, God's power is denied or diminished in your life.

The more self is denied, the more the Lord is available. When self is totally denied, with God in mind, God is totally available. To the degree self is not denied, God is denied entry in your life. To the degree self is denied, God is allowed entry. It is a kingdom principle that the entry point of God is at the denial point of self. The more of self is denied, the more of God is available.

Here is a diagram of the "variable resistor" concept in the prophecy.

On November 25, 1996, the word of the Lord to me was "Come boldly to the throne of grace." This is the first part of Hebrews 4:16. The rest of that verse is, "that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need." As I thought about these words, my mind began to explore the possibilities involved, especially since God

¹⁵Mat t 17:21.

Himself had given me the admonition to *be bold in prayer*. It's one thing for someone else to point out to me God's word in Hebrews 4:16. It is another thing however (to me at least) for God Himself to instruct me to *be bold in prayer*. Of course, on second thought, this may indicate a lack of faith on my part since God's word was spoken before it was written, and one should rely on the written word as though it was first spoken to him. Nevertheless, in view of God's admonition to me, I began to consider boldly praying for certain spiritual gifts that had not yet been manifested in the ministries God had given me. And then I had the thought that if God responded with the spiritual gifts I had in mind asking for and I misused them, it would be better that I not have them in the first place. As I was thinking on these things the Lord spoke to me and said, "I will not allow you to misuse spiritual gifts given to glorify My Name." And those words pulled out all the stops! You can imagine what this did for me.

The morning of December 5, 1996, I was praying for several former business associates and said to the Lord, "I forgive each one (and named them) of every sin they have ever committed from the day of their birth to the present day." As I did so I began to weep. I do not know why. However, afterward I entered into prayer for them as I had never done before. The thought occurred to me that I was given a burden for two of them and was weeping for their sins, since I knew they were involved in something the Lord would not approve. Certainly these two are responsible to God for their wrongs, but I learned that forgiving them from the heart triggered something within my spirit which freed me to pray for them in a more efficacious way than I had ever done before.¹⁶ Thus I continue to learn that there is more to forgiveness than I had thought originally, for it can be used as both an offensive and a defensive weapon to help set the captives free.

. . . to be continued in part six.

¹⁶An interesting thing about this incident is that I was totally unaware of any unforgiveness in my heart toward any of them. Therefore I believe the forgiveness I expressed went beyond the principle of forgive or not be forgiven as Jesus taught in Matthew 6:14, & 15, and opened the compassion of my heart to intercede for them in a way that is powerful. And I believe that this was totally a work of the Holy Spirit since I had prayed for these individuals for years in my daily prayers.