**Seeking the Favor of the LORD**

“Does God want me to fast?”, the people of Bethel asked themselves. They have been having a special fast in the 5th month. The temple that Solomon built was burned during the 5th month (exactly on the 7th day of that 5th month). So they had been accustomed to a special fast. But now they were 1/2 way done with rebuilding that temple, so should they fast when it was almost restored? If they had fasted for the temple, and now it’s almost rebuilt, should they continue to fast in this month? They did’t have an answer. The people of Bethel sent two men to “seek the favor of the Lord” (Zech. 7:2) to Jerusalem.

They asked two groups of people in Jerusalem, the priests and the prophets, “Shall I weep in the fifth month and abstain, as I have done these many years”? Perhaps as long as 70 years or more they had a tradition of fasting during the 5th month when the temple was destroyed by the Babylonians. So does God want us to continue to Fast? Will this fasting find favor in God’s sight? There were two prophets in Jerusalem at this time, Haggai & Zechariah. God chose to speak the answer to Zechariah. “Say to all the people of the land and to the priests, ‘When you fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh months these seventy years, was it actually for Me that you fasted? (Zech. 7:5). Oh, hmmm, this is God’s reaction?

Did they have good motives for fasting? It seems they didn’t. At least it was not enough to gain God’s favor. Can God question their motives? Yes, he can question our motives too. When they fasted, did they actually find favor with God? It seems through this means of fasting they didn’t find favor.

This makes me reflect a bit about what we do for God. Do I attend church for myself or for God or for family? How would God answer that? How many acts of service have I done for someone that was not received like I thought they would receive it? How many gifts are given that are received differently than the intention of the gift giver? My intention in serving is not the same as their reaction in receiving.

God has made us in so many ways like himself that we must give careful thought before our acts of service, gifts, worship. We must clarify our intentions. One of the best ways to do such is write our intentions down. As an example, here is Jesus’ intentions stated before his gift. “Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends.” (John 15:13). Jesus’ intentions is to love you in the greatest love, and followed up with laying his life down. Let us now turn to him, with the same intentions and follow up. DP