



#83

Theme: 40 Days

Scripture: John 3:16 (NIV)

*“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”*

**A Thought:**

Two years ago I wrote an essay on the advent of the Lenten season. It wasn't a big deal other than the fact that I chose to participate in one of the Lenten disciplines; I chose to fast. I wanted to celebrate with millions of Christians for 40 days and my offering was to abstain from my favorite soft drink and sweets. Well, within 24 hours after I promised our Lord Jesus in prayer my intention... instant gratification took hold of me. A straw found its way to my mouth and my pleasure-seeking body was chugalugging a Big Gulp. *“The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak”* (Matthew 26:41b NIV). According to the respected Christian research firm Barna Group a majority of adults (72%) are aware of the Christian tradition. Though only *“17% of these adults have practiced Lenten fasting in the last three years.”* The annual spiritual discipline is not observed by all Christians. Though Catholics outpace other denominations by a large margin. A moment of clarification the Bible does not mention the custom of Lent. However many verses do state the practice of repentance and ashes (see Scriptures). Some Christians state that as believers observance of our Lord should be daily not just 40 days. *“If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.”* (Mathew 16:24 NIV). In case you are wondering, I did recovered from my lapse and with joy and reflection I continued my fast.

Now....what are your thoughts? Write them down.

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**Talk to yourself:**

- What should our focus and thoughts be during Lent?
- What does the Bible say about repentance and spiritual fasting?

**Scriptures to read:** Death and Resurrection of Jesus, our savior, our servant.

- Mark 14:1-16:20; Luke 22:1-24:53; John 18 - 21; John 16:33; Job 23:10;
- Zephaniah 3:17; John 10:10; 16:33; Psalm 73:26

**Quote:** Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Letters from Tegel Prison, Germany (1943)

*“The crucifixion also underscores true humanity marked by love. God so loved the world that He sent His only Son not only into the world, but to the cross. Christ becomes the one upon whom ultimately all human guilt falls. Jesus does not shirk it but bears it in humility and infinite love. And then we come to the resurrection, living the christian life in, through, and toward Christ means living in light of the resurrection. This gives us one word to ponder: hope..”*

**Bottom Line:**

The fact is that every Sunday we should pause, reflect and celebrate the resurrection of our Lord. Where would we be if our Lord Jesus satisfied his own fleshly pleasures and had forsaken His father’s will? The purpose of fasting, repentance and monitoring our daily habits is to remind us the moment that when we reach for the wicked goodie we should pause and reflect on our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. The only God on record that can redeem our sins. The 40 days of fasting should not be a ritualistic tradition. This spiritual deed should be with an open heart and compassion with appreciation that Jesus suffered the indignities of a criminal’s lot. Jesus died and was resurrected three days after His death for the sinners of yesterday, today and tomorrow. One writer wrote the following pithy statement... *“if you live a life of repentance and holiness before God all year long, then Lent has meaning and sends a powerful testimony to the world about the truth of God’s amazing grace.”* We can joke about it and many folks at one time or another have. Remember, Lent is not a one time event to shed a few pounds or a halt on drinking your favorite brew or curbing your profanity utterances. His death and resurrection and His infinite sovereignty brings into being a new and perfect world. **NOW.....THAT’S THE BOTTOM LINE.**

Spiritual Dabbler, Your bro, Ray

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