



#39

Theme: Lent

Scripture: Acts 10:34-43 (NIV-Partial)

Then Peter began to speak: 38) *“We are witnesses of everything he did in the country of the Jews in Jerusalem. They killed him by hanging him on a tree, but God raised from the dead, on the third day and caused him to be seen....43b) that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.”*

A Thought:

Lent is upon us. The 40 days leading up to Easter is observed by many Christian churches as a time for spiritual preparation. Fasting, doing penance and abstaining from stuff that you enjoy are supposed to give you an understanding of the passion and suffering of Jesus prior and during the crucifixion. This observance is not practiced by all denominations. Though I found in my research there seems to be a movement by a few to embrace the Lenten season. Some Christians have a problem with Lent. They state that as believers observance of our Lord should be daily and not just for 40 days (Matthew 16:24) Then Jesus said to his disciples, *“If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.”* One particular writer stated that...ends *“if you live a life of repentance and holiness before God all year long, then Lent has meaning and s a powerful testimony to the world about the truth of God’s amazing grace.”* Amen! I submit that many believers find comfort by way of giving up something, fasting, praying and a purposeful self-examination before God. The 40 days lead up to one of the most transformative events of human history...the crucifixion and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ! Our Lord came down from heaven to fulfill the will of His Father. The ultimate sacrifice was for us....read, contemplate, reflect and pray. (John 6:38-40)

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

Talk to yourself:

- From your perspective - what is the meaning of Lent? Significance of fasting?
- How often do you go before the Lord and repent?
- Are you familiar with the chronology of the 40 days leading up to crucifixion and resurrection of our Lord Jesus?

Scriptures to read: Joel 2:12-14; Matthew 6:18; Mark 1:12:15; 8:2-10, 34, 12:28-34; Luke 9:23; John 3:14-18; Romans 2:4, 3:24-25; 1 Corinthians 1:25-30

Quote: Charles Spurgeon, Christian Writer and Theologian

“A high calling to aspire this Lenten season. May this season of penitence and seeking the Lord produce this Christ-likeness in us.”

Bottom Line: Well, folks, I decided that I would deny myself a few pleasures during the Lenten season (it's been awhile). Last evening my wife and I went out for dinner at a local eatery and the first thing I did was order a soft drink (I hate water). Oops! A quick shout out to the waiter... “Hold it! I'll have some water instead.” Hello Mr. Spiritual...wow! In less than a day I forgot that I had promised the Lord that I would abstain from cold drinks and sweets. Focus man! Listen to a wise commentary from the founder of Campus Crusade Dr. Bill Bright says it best.... *“Fasting is the most powerful spiritual discipline of all the Christian disciplines. Through fasting and prayer, the Holy Spirit can transform your life.”* In my case - abstaining. We have this obsession for “instant gratification.” Deliberately delaying a pleasure is difficult in a world of “instant.” It was not so instant for our Lord. At the dawn of Jesus' ministry for 40 days He suffered greatly. He fasted in the wilderness and overcame three of Satan's temptations. In His final week on earth Jesus was humiliated, beaten and nailed to the cross - for our sins! Yes, for our sins! A cautionary note - be careful not to fall into the spiritual trap of the Pharisees. In one of my readings referring to Matthew 9:14...their fasting was called “conspicuous piety.” Phony actions are plain phony. In closing...Paul's letter to the Romans 5:7-8 (NIV) *“Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though of a good man someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners. Christ died for us.”* Remember gents - fasting without prayer is a diet. Happy Easter!

NOW.....THAT'S THE BOTTOM LINE.

Spiritual Dabbler, Your bro, Ray

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