

# The Comforter

Isaiah 40:1: "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people...."

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## Touching Jesus

Elder Steve Woods

... as many as touched....

**Matthew 14:36 (KJV)** And besought him that they might only touch the hem of his garment: and as many as touched were made perfectly whole.

I love Jesus. As many as touched him were made perfectly whole. I am not whole, the son of my loins is dead and in the grave. My heart is vexed and torn asunder, my soul is nigh gone but touching Jesus I am "made perfectly whole".

Made.

Scripture uses this word carefully. The Lord made heaven and earth. The Lord made your mouth and your ears. **Exodus 4:11 (KJV)** "And the LORD said unto him, Who hath made man's mouth? or who maketh the dumb, or deaf, or the seeing, or the blind? have not I the LORD?"

When Adam sinned we were made sinners. **Romans 5:19 (KJV)** For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous. Even so, by the obedience of one many were made righteous.

As many as touched (the hem of his garment) were made perfectly whole.

It was not the touching that made them whole. It was their faith that made them whole and the power and virtue of God was the active agent, but why were not all healed who were sick, why only those who came? Why only those who touched? First of all, scripture does not say only those, but simply says as many as touched. Hence we learn, that without exception, every one possessing faith and touching him were made perfectly

whole. Today can you imagine being perfectly whole? I have experienced injuries that were fixed by men, but there are scars to show on my face and my leg, I am not perfectly whole. Imagine being made perfectly whole.

Some day we will. Once a week, on the first day of the week, the Lord's day, we are commanded to assemble ourselves together and to forsake not this assembly. When we assemble together, we are made to feel a part of something more than ourselves. We are made to feel our faith strengthened and in the presence of his people we experience righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. In the comfort of his presence.

God has not commanded us to assemble every first day of every week for no reason and it is not for the reason of him exerting his lordship over us, but it is for our good, for our benefit and primarily for his glory. We need this. We need these reminders that these troubles of this life will soon be over. We need these reminders that God will one day raise these vile bodies from the dust and make them like unto his glorious body. We need to worship God and we should go for his glory but in doing what he has commanded us to do we receive a wonderful benefit.

This text comes from the same chapter which records Christ walking on the sea. When those that were in the ship saw the Lord and Peter walking on the sea, their response after they got back in the ship (and the wind ceased) was that they declared truly this is the Son of God and they worshiped him. Ought we not to do the same? Ought we not to come together the first day of every week and begin our week aright with the glorious worship and divine service of our Great God and Savior Jesus Christ?

Consider what I say and the Lord give thee understanding in all things.

## **Does Believing or Unbelieving Change The Truth or the Facts**

### **Elder Ronnie Loudermilk**

Romans 8:29-30, "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified."

One morning last week I stopped at a local gas station to fuel up. The pump failed to give me a receipt, so I walked in and asked the attendant for one. While in the store I overheard two gentlemen talking about the truth and facts, One of them said, "My believing or unbelieving will not make it true or not true." The other said, "Yes sir, our believing and unbelieving will not change the facts." Both of them left the store before I could try to enter into the discussion, but my mind quickly raced to Romans 8:29-30.

The Apostle Paul was a man who, by the revelation of the Lord, understood the truth. He had opposed the truth at one time in his life, but at the time he penned the Epistle to the Romans he was willing to die for it (Galatians 1:13, 23). In our study verses, the Apostle Paul declares the truth about Eternal Salvation. These are the facts:

- The Sovereign God of the universe "did foreknow"; or before the world began, loved His people with an everlasting love in a covenant of grace. Some have interpreted the word "foreknow" to mean that God simply knew about everyone on earth. I do agree that He knows about everyone, but this word cannot be defined in such a manner. In Genesis 4:1 we read that "Adam knew his wife;..." In Amos 3:2 we read the Lord's words to Israel, "You only have I

known of all the families of the earth:..." In both of these examples there is no argument that the knowledge of existence was present, but the word is stronger than that definition. In Genesis 4:1 Adam became intimate with his wife. In Amos 3:2, the Lord is declaring He loved Israel in a way, other nations didn't experience. In Romans 8:29 when we read the Lord "did foreknow" it is making reference to something much stronger than a mere knowledge of existence. It's referring to God's covenant love that He had and has for His people.

- Those He "did foreknow", He "did predestinate." The word means that God before-hand determined the people He "did foreknow" would be with Him in glory in the image of His dear Son (Ephesians 1:5, 11).
- Those He did "predestinate" them He also "called." The word "called" in this verse is telling us about the time in the elect child of God's life when the Lord regenerates them to life in Him. Paul would say in Ephesians 2:1, "And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sin;..." In John 3:3 when the Lord says "born again" He is teaching the same as "called" in Romans 8:29.
- Those He "called" them He "justified." The Lord paid the debt owed for sin when He died on the Cross. He removed the record of sin in heaven with His atoning blood. Hebrews 8:12 says that "their sins and iniquities I will remember no more."
- Those he "justified, them He also "glorified," Praise God, one great and glorious day the entire family of God without the loss of one will be with God in heaven glorified together and glorified forever.

This is the truth, and these are the facts. Whether we believe it or not it doesn't change the truth or the facts. But by

believing the truth and the facts I find it makes a big difference in my life while living here in this world. Believing the truth and resting in God gives me peace and joy. Believing the truth motivates me to serve Him more. Serving Him more gives me more assurance that I'm found in the number that He did foreknow, predestinate, call, justify and will one day glorify. And that makes the burdens of this life much easier to bear because the best for all of His people is yet to come. Amen!

## **What About Fasting?**

**Elder Joe Holder**

*Moreover when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face; That thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly. (Matthew 6:16-18 KJV 1900)*

Should New Testament believers fast? What New Testament teaching can we find to guide the process, if we choose to fast? My answer to these questions as a pastor has been that fasting, according to this passage, is a very personal and private matter. Jesus didn't command that we fast, nor did He forbid us. In obvious contrast to His specific commandments throughout the Sermon on the Mount, in this lesson, Jesus begins with "...when ye fast." He didn't command it; He didn't forbid it. We should note carefully, however, that He became quite emphatic and specific about making our fasting a private matter. In fact, He requires

that, if we choose to fast, we put on the physical appearance of not fasting. No New Testament passage specifically commands fasting, though a few passages mention it. Nor does any New Testament passage forbid it. For most believers, this point alone should settle the question.

Two New Testament passages, after the gospels, mention fasting in a setting that advocates of fasting might cite as authority for their fasting.

*And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed. (Acts 14:23)*

As mentioned above, this passage doesn't require fasting. It mentions the fact that prayer and fasting occurred on this occasion. Grammatically, the link between prayer and fasting in this verse suggests that the prayer was simultaneous with the fasting; both are the same in duration. If you choose to fast for a day, do you also devote the entire day to nothing else but prayer?

Many believers overlook the point that Acts is a transitional history of the shift of the worship of God from the Old Testament method to the New. If we understand that Acts is not a normative letter, dictating faith and practice, we will have no problem with this passage. If we miss that point, we have much to explain. How many believers today would dare to teach or believe that merely walking between a sick person and the sun, so that their shadow passed over the sick, would result in immediate healing for that person? But just such an event is recorded in Acts 5:15. How many believers today are willing to give their handkerchief to a sick person, fully believing that the sick person's mere possession of the handkerchief will produce immediate healing? (Acts 19:12) If you believe either of these practices to be

normative for New Testament believers, please; come and walk between the sun and me, or simply send me your handkerchief. I have suffered for almost twelve years with near constant low back pain. If your remedy works, I'll be the first to shout it from the housetops. But, if it doesn't work, I'll also publish that fact. Acts records actual historic events that happened, often quite unique events that occurred during that brief transitional period of time. Those miraculous events really occurred. The Lord stamped the change from Old to New Testament worship with great power and affirmation in many events that are unique to that time.

*Defraud ye not one the other, except it be with consent for a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency. (1 Corinthians 7:5)*

Again, this passage mentions fasting and prayer, but it does not command fasting. And, interestingly, as in Acts 14:23, the prayer is synchronized with the fasting. It lasts as long as the fast. If we carefully study Scripture, we need to grasp that Biblical fasting may involve something far more intimate in our life-habits than the food we eat—or choose not to eat.

A related question frequently remains unasked and unanswered. What is fasting? The basic idea of the word means that you abstain from something for a time as a symbol of your earnestly seeking answers and direction from God. It might mean, as some of the Old Testament Jewish fasts that you abstain from certain foods for a time. I seriously doubt that “I am abstaining from steak for a month as my fast to seek the Lord's direction” would gain a lot of attention from the Lord. The essential idea of fasting relates to food. However, can—or for that matter, should—we restrict the idea of fasting to food alone? Can we find a Bible

passage that helps us grasp what kind of self-restraint or abstinence, “Fasting,” honors God? Yes, indeed we can.

*Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and show my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins. Yet they seek me daily, and delight to know my ways, as a nation that did righteousness, and forsook not the ordinance of their God: they ask of me the ordinances of justice; they take delight in approaching to God. Wherefore have we fasted, say they, and thou seest not? wherefore have we afflicted our soul, and thou takest no knowledge? Behold, in the day of your fast ye find pleasure, and exact all your labors. Behold, ye fast for strife and debate, and to smite with the fist of wickedness: ye shall not fast as ye do this day, to make your voice to be heard on high. Is it such a fast that I have chosen? a day for a man to afflict his soul? is it to bow down his head as a bulrush, and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him? wilt thou call this a fast, and an acceptable day to the Lord? Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke? Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh? Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thine health shall spring forth speedily: and thy righteousness shall go before thee; the glory of the Lord shall be thy rearward. (Isaiah 58:1-8)*

In the early section of this passage, God rebukes His people for their blatant hypocrisy. In their warped thinking, they believed that they could put on a pretense of devotion in fasting and gain God's approval. Two examples

make this point; first, consider the hypocrisy revealed in their attitude toward their workers, "...*exact all your labours.*" The marginal alternate reading in my King James Bible reads, "...*exploit your workers.*" If fasting was a divine commandment, why did these people demand that their employees continue working while they pretended to fast? Second, "...*ye fast for strife and debate,*" implies that they actually competed with each other to gain boasting rights. "I fasted more than you fasted." Despite their hypocrisy, they complained to God that they had indulged in their pretenses, and He dared not to respond. Isaiah rebukes this self-serving motive. But in the last half of the lesson, Isaiah turns to the true spirit of fasting that will demonstrate sincere and right devotion to God that should accompany our seeking His will for our lives. Our challenge today is gloriously simplified by this passage. Do you seek the Lord's will for your life, for a specific decision you must make? For this moment in your life, literally memorize these verses from Isaiah, specifically verses 6-7.

*Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke? Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh?*

How could God be more simple and clear in His teaching to us? This conduct transcends Old Testament versus New Testament. It defines timeless godliness of a quality that God approves, whether His child who does it lived in the Old or New Testament era. He tells us that this is "... **the fast that I have chosen.**" If we devote ourselves to the

lifestyle that God describes in this lesson, **what must we give up** in order to practice these habits that the Lord commands?

1. ...*to loose the bands of wickedness.* When they saw wickedness in their world, how did they react? Did they object? Did they confront the wicked person for his sinfulness? Did they do anything to relieve the injury the wickedness imposed onto people who were the object of wickedness? Or did they go their way and ignore wickedness?

2. ...*to undo the heavy burdens.* When they saw someone with a heavy load, literal or emotional, did they step into that person's world and try to give relief?

3. ...*and to let the oppressed go free.* Were they interested in helping the oppressed, especially if, as implied by "...*go free,*" it required that they part with some of their money?

4. ...*and that ye break every yoke?* Were they at all concerned at the uneven and oppressive burdens often imposed on people by popular religious leaders? Remember Jesus' words regarding this problem? (Matthew 23:4)

5. *Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry?* Were they willing to share their groceries with less fortunate hungry people?

6. ...*and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house?* Did they even think about inviting their poor neighbors to their home for food and encouraging hospitality?

7. ...*when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him?* Did they think at all about emptying their closets of some of their clothes for people who did not

have sufficient clothing to keep them warm?

8. *...and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh?* How did these people treat their own family, their own “Flesh and blood”? On a number of occasions, I have observed professing Christians quote Jesus’ words about leaving father and mother for Him, who interpreted the words as commanding that they literally and intentionally neglect their family’s personal needs. They would do anything for a sick person in their church or workplace, but nothing whatever for their own sick family member. In this self-serving habit, they run headlong into 1 Timothy 5:8, “*But if any provide not for his own, and especially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.*”

Every godly action named in this passage requires—demands—that we give up something of our selves for others. And in most cases, that giving up involves a permanent giving up, not a brief interruption of self-service for a few hours or days. And giving up something for God and for His people defines God’s preferred fast in the text.

In this lesson, God magnifies His definition of fasting to a permanent lifestyle, not a brief and superficial abstinence from food. If we truly desire to honor the Lord, to show in our thoughts, words, and deeds that we love Him and long to honor Him in our lives, we should study and strive to practice this true godly fast. In the New Testament, Jesus referred to the same principle as denying of self and taking up our cross “**daily**” to follow Him. (Luke 9:23) That, my friends, is a true Biblical, God-honoring fast. How willing are you to practice it?

### **Resolution of Respect**

Doris M. Jacobs

We, the members of Mt. Nebo Primitive Baptist Church, Bond County, Illinois, bow in humble submission to the will of Our Heavenly Father in calling Doris M. Jacobs from our midst. We feel great sorrow and loss in her passing, but we realize God’s mercy is far above our ability to comprehend and our loss is His gain.

Doris M. Jacobs was born July 22, 1923, in Greenville, Illinois, a daughter of Mike and Polly (Willeford) Mollet. She joined Mt. Nebo in June, 1940. She was baptized by Elder T. Leo Dodd. Doris passed away February 16, 2020. Her funeral was conducted February 22, 2020 at Mt. Nebo with her grandson, Chaplain Anthony Silano, conducting the memorial service and Elder Willie Huffine presiding at the graveside. She was buried in Mt. Nebo Cememtery.

Doris married Carl Jacobs August 25, 1948. They enjoyed 71 years together. He passed away November 8, 2019. She is survived by her four daughters, Ginger Hanley (Marty), Brenda Silano, Sara Conteirta (John, deceased), and Rebecca Jacobs (Ed Richter). She was the loving grandmother to 8 grandchildren and 4 great granddaughters. She is also survived by her brother, Marshall Mollet and sister Patty Whitchurch.

She was preceded in death by her parents, husband Carl, brother Marion Mollet and sisters Martha Jenner, Evelyn Whitehead and Polly Alice Mollet.

Doris was a graduate of the University of Illinois. She was an extension advisor in Edwards County and a teacher at Mary W. French School in Decatur. She was known for her sweet smile, sharp mind, thoughtfulness and generosity. She loved her family and was a source of unwavering support and encouragement. She touched many lives with her kind heart and will be dearly remembered.

