

Turn over to **Zechariah 7**. Remember in Zechariah's day, the remnant of Israel had returned to Jerusalem. The only problem was that Jerusalem's walls were torn down, Solomon's temple was destroyed, and after some coaxing by Haggai and Zechariah, the temple is finally being rebuilt but it is nowhere close to the beauty and majesty of Solomon's. So, the people are very discouraged. They may even think God has abandoned them.

Zechariah 7:2-3, Bethel sent men to seek the favor of the Lord and they ask the priests, "Should we keep on fasting and mourning like we have been every 5th and 7th month? We've been doing this for years?" Remember they had been in captivity! They were pouring out their hearts to God because they wanted to be out of it. They thought they were fervently praying to God, but God saw it differently than they did.

7:4-6, God asks them, "Was it actually for me? When you were praying and fasting and mourning, were you really doing it for me?" Then notice what God says in **verse 6**, He says . So altogether the Lord is saying, "Were you really doing that for me? No, you were doing it for yourselves, just as when you eat and drink it is for yourselves."

How were the Israelites doing this for themselves? They were praying and fasting and mourning for two months? Doesn't that show a lot of devotion and how can that not be for God? How is that for themselves?

THE PROSPERITY GOSPEL

1. The Israelites had bought into this idea of a prosperity gospel. The prosperity gospel is the idea that if I do what God wants, then he will give me earthly things and my life on Earth will be easy and great. People like Joel Osteen and the people that you could watch on TV at midnight and the wee hours of the morning also buy into this idea that if you do something God wants you to do, then God is obligated by his grace to give *you* something *you* want. Some verses they might use to defend this idea are **2 Corinthians 8:9** and **Malachi 3:10**.
2. So, for the Israelites in Zechariah's day, they had this idea that since they prayed and mourned and fasted for so long in the captivity, that when they got out of the captivity they send this delegation to the priests and prophets and basically say, "We got what we wanted from our prayers and fasting, so why would we keep going? God owes me this."
3. Do you see a fundamental problem in all of this? This approach is using God and trying to manipulate God. We can't manipulate God! But sometimes, we may fall into a way of thinking that is just like training a dog. If we are the dog then the only time we will do what our master says is when we want the treat! So, the question is, are we doing what the Lord says for *him*? Or are we doing it for *ourselves*? The question is exactly what the Lord asks in **verse 5**, "Is it actually for me?" When we are in times of trouble we probably pray all the time, but what about when those troubles are gone?
4. What is our motive for serving God? If we buy into the prosperity gospel, we are missing the point of what Christ and the NT teach. Let's look at some passages.
 - a. **Luke 12:15** – Jesus comes right out and says that even if we have a whole bunch of stuff and are living well, our possessions don't make up our lives. Jesus is teaching that possessions don't matter.
 - b. **Matthew 6:19** – Jesus teaches not to worry about treasures on earth and earthly things, he says the much greater focus is on the spiritual things.
 - c. **Romans 5:3-5** – The prosperity gospel says that if we follow God then everything will be easy in our lives, but Paul says he has not only been through tribulations, but that he is thankful for them!
 - d. **2 Corinthians 11:24-29** – Speaking of Paul's hardships, if the prosperity gospel were true, then none of this would have happened to him!

Now I hope everyone here has seen and understands that the prosperity gospel is a false idea. And I don't think there is anyone here who is a full-fledged believer of this, but there may be something else that we fall into.

ANOTHER GOSPEL

1. There is a type of gospel that is so easy for us to slip into. For some reason, we as humans always want others to know how awesome we are. We may sometimes be religious people not to get blessings from God, but sometimes we may be religious people to be seen by men. To let everyone else in the world know that we are righteous. So, this gospel, is the idea that if I do what God wants, then other people owe me something. If I do what God says, then others will see me and admire me.
2. But that's not right either! Our motives for following God need to be because of who God is. Let's look at **Matthew 6:1-18**.
 - a. Giving (**6:1-4**)

- Both types of people are doing something good! They are both giving to the poor! But their motive behind it is very different. Jesus says when the hypocrites give to the poor, they make sure everybody can see it. They want everyone to see they are so generous and kind and thoughtful. But if God were to ask the question he asked the Israelites in **Zechariah**, “was it really for me?” then we know the answer would be no. They put on a show so everyone will see them and the praise they get from men is all they get! Look at **verse 2**, “truly I say to you, they have their reward in full.” This is a self-serving act instead of a God-serving act.
 - Jesus then explains how we should give. In **verses 3-4**, Jesus says **_**. We’re supposed to give to the poor or needy in secret. Why would we do that? The reason we would do that is because if we do it in secret, there are only 3 that know about it: the needy person, yourself, and God. You won’t receive any praise from other people for what you have done, so in our human minds that makes it less appealing. But as the children of God we know that we will be rewarded, **verse 4**, by our Father for what we have done, and that should make it one of the most appealing things we can do!
- b. Praying (6:5-8)**
- Both types of people are doing something good! They are both praying! But their motive behind it is very different. Jesus says when the hypocrites pray, they make sure everybody can see it. They want everyone to know how holy and devoted to the Lord they are. But if God were to ask the question he asked to the Israelites in **Zechariah**, “was it really for me?” then the answer would be no. They stand in the middle of the synagogue or on the street corner to be seen by everyone and the praise that comes from that is all they get! Look at **verse 5**, “truly I say to you they have their reward in full.” This is a self-serving act instead of a God-serving act.
 - Jesus then explains how we should pray. In **verses 6-8**, Jesus says **_**. We are to pray to our Lord in secret. Why would we do that? The reason we would do that is because if we do it in secret, then there are only 2 that know about it: yourself and God. You won’t receive any praise from other people for your holiness and devotion, so in our human minds that makes it less appealing. But as the children of God we know that we will be rewarded, **verse 6**, by our Father and that should make it one of the most appealing things we can do!
- c. Fasting (6:16-18)**
- Both types of people are doing something good! But their motive behind it is very different. Jesus says when the hypocrites fast, they make sure everybody can see it. They put on a gloomy face and look dirty so everyone knows they are fasting. But if God were to ask the question he asked the Israelites in **Zechariah**, “was it really for me?” then the answer would be no. They intentionally look miserable so everyone will notice them and the praise that comes from it is all they get! Look at **verse 16**, “truly I say to you, they have their reward in full.” This is a self-serving act instead of a God-serving act.
 - Jesus then explains how we should fast. In **verses 17-18**, Jesus says **_**. Now fasting isn’t something we do culturally, but the idea is giving up something to spend more time with God and get closer to him. We could do this with our electronics or with our relaxing time and give it up for a while to focus on God. But Jesus says we are to fast in secret. Why would we do that? The reason we would do that is because if we do it in secret, then there are only 2 that know about it: yourself and God. You won’t receive any praise from other people, so in our human minds it makes it less appealing. But as children of God we know that we will be rewarded, **verse 18**, by our Father and that should make it one of the most appealing things we can do!

But there is something else I want you to notice. If we only take what I have been talking about from **Matthew 6**, then we have bought into the prosperity gospel. We have been talking about how we shouldn’t do things to be seen by men because then it is not for God! But we also noted how if we do these things in secret then God will reward us. If the only reason we are doing what God says is because he is going to reward us then we are missing something huge!

THE REAL GOSPEL

One more text to look at. **Ephesians 1:5-6, 12, 14**. In **verses 5-6**, Paul says that through Christ we are children of God and our purpose is **verse 6**, “to the praise of the glory of his grace.” We are children of God to praise and glorify God in our lives. That is our purpose. Look at **verse 12**, Paul says the apostles, who were first to hope in Christ, were “to the praise of his glory.” The apostles, who gave up so much, who were definitely not physically prosperous, were called to praise and glorify God in their lives. That was their purpose. Jump to **verse 14**. Paul says **_**. He says that when we have been redeemed and made God’s own possession, we are to praise and glorify God. That is our purpose.

As you look at your life tonight, if God were to ask you right now what he asked over in **Zechariah**, if he asked you “Is it really for me?” How would you respond? Your lifestyle, is it for God? Your faith, is it for God? Your entire being, is it for God?