CALLED TO BLESS

1. Introduction

a. We have already established that for the values of the Kingdom to grow and blossom in our lives we need to resist certain temptations and also engage in certain Kingdom activities. These activities which describe as the fasted lifestyle are a call to embrace voluntary weakness to experience more of God's power.

b. There are five types of "fasting" in the Sermon on the Mount (Mt. 6:1-18). We fast **food, time**, **energy, money, and words** by **giving, serving, praying, blessing enemies, and fasting food.** Each is a form of fasting, in which we voluntarily embrace weakness to experience more of God's power. In giving, we fast our money and financial strength. In serving and prayer, we fast our time and energy, investing it in others and in intercession. In giving up food, we fast our physical and emotional strength. Blessing our enemies requires that we fast our words and reputation.

Matt.6:12-14 *….and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.[13] And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil [14] For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you,*

c. There are many principles for cultivating relationships throughout the Sermon on the Mount. Each of the 8 beatitudes (Mt. 5:3-12) has significant application in our relationships as do resisting the six temptations (Mt. 5:21-48) and pursuing the five kingdom activities (Mt. 6:1-18). Jesus exhorted us to forgive the people who mistreat us (Mt. 6:12-14). We can do this out of gratitude for the way that He graciously forgave us (Mt. 18:21-35). This principle is foundational to all that He said about building relationships in the Sermon on the Mount. However, He didn't only call us to forgive but also to bless i.e not just resist the temptation but also to take positive, intentional action.

d. He highlighted four principles as a framework in relating to those causing us pain and trouble.

i First, He urged us to deal with our anger and quickly **pursue reconciliation** (Mt. 5:21-26). He stressed that our worship and relationship with God will be hindered until we do this.

ii Second, He called us to **bless** those we are in an adversarial relationship with (Mt. 5:44).

iii Third, He exhorted us to **forgive** the people who are not treating us right (Mt. 6:12-14).

iv Fourth, He warned us to **not judge** (evaluate) people with a wrong spirit, with wrong information, and with a wrong process and to focus first on our failures (Mt. 7:1-5).

Matt.7:4-5 *[4] Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye', when there is the log in your own eye? [5] You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye.*

e. We can only respond rightly in these relational issues by asking God for His help. This is so opposite to the worldly response and we need spiritual transforming power to enable us to respond in a godly way. Which is why Jesus immediately follows this teaching with the answer:

Matt.7:7-8 *"Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. [8] For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened.*

f. This is how we move from the first to the second commandment – from loving God to loving our neighbour. Most often this challenge presents itself among those who are closest to us – our family and friends and our brothers and sisters in Christ.

2. Restoring Injured Relationships

a. A relationship can be injured at various levels, from being slightly wounded to deeply broken. The spirit of a relationship can be injured without the people themselves being deeply wounded. In other words, the trust and open communication can be injured between two good people who are not emotionally devastated and dysfunctional. In other words, this applies to you and me.

b. The signs of a wounded relationship include a ***closed spirit*** (unreceptive), ***being guarded*** (unwilling to share freely), ***strained communication*** (defensive, argumentative, and sarcastic) and ***resisting touch*** (a spouse or child with a wounded spirit resists being touched).

c. Jesus' deep desire for us to overcome in this area is clearly evident in John 17

John 17:20-23 *[20] "I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, [21] that they* ***may all be one****, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. [22] The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that* ***they may be one even as we are one****, [23] I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me.*

d. One of the greatest issues in the church today is that we are not "one in Christ". However, I do believe that the Lord is at work and that family unity will be the real hallmark of a mature Bride prepared for her Bridegroom. Our offense and accusation are the spots and wrinkles that He is in the business of removing at this time.

Eph.5:27 …. *so that he might present the church to himself in splendour, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.*

3. Mature Love: Embracing God's Narrative When Mistreated

a. As we cultivate agreement with God's perspective of the people who mistreat us, we can enjoy mature love and family unity with joy.

Zech.3:1-4 *Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the Lord, and Satan standing at his right hand to accuse him. [2] And the Lord said to Satan, "The Lord rebuke you, O Satan! The Lord who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you! Is not this a brand plucked from the fire?" [3] Now Joshua was standing before the angel, clothed with filthy garments. [4] And the angel said to those who were standing before him, "Remove the filthy garments from him." And to him he said, "Behold, I have taken your iniquity away from you, and I will clothe you with pure vestments."*

b. Both in title, High Priest, and position, "standing before the…LORD" (v. 1), Zechariah is describing Joshua in the temple. Since the earthly temple parallels the heavenly, Joshua is in a high place reflecting the privilege and access of his position. Yet clearly he is soiled and unfit for duty. The Accuser only states the obvious and, in that sense, the truth—but it is truth without love. It is truth born of malice, hatred, jealousy, murder and contempt.

c. "The Lord rebuke you, Accuser!" Motivated by righteousness no less than love, the Lord reveals His vehement opposition to the very spirit and purpose of accusation. He disagrees

with it! This should greatly instruct and caution us against how readily we tend to agree with accusation against others.

d. Satan is a rebel, defiler, deceiver, liar and murderer. In other words, accusing is easy and requires no virtue. Pot calling kettle black. You cannot produce righteousness through a spirit of accusation, you only produce condemnation and/or self-incrimination.

e. Divine intervention is Joshua's only hope, and ours. The Lord's rebuke includes a process that completely alters the legal presumption of guilt. Even more surprising, the remedy is merely the beginning of grace, not the end. Not only will Joshua be made clean, he will also be restored to his priestly ministry, given a share of God's nature, and promised ongoing access. On the front of the turban were the words "Holy to the Lord" (Exo. 28:36–37; 39:30–31). The turban points to Joshua receiving the mind of Christ.

f. The enemy's narrative is one of accusation but the Lord's narrative is one of blessing. We can either choose to agree with the enemy and accuse others or agree with God and bless them. Joshua's robes were filthy – he had become unclean – but the Lord's response is not to accuse and condemn Him but to bless Him and call him forth into his rightful place before the Lord in clean robes (righteousness) and with a clean turban (a renewed mind). Who are we going to agree with?

g. Our prayer needs to be, *"Let me see what You see and feel what You feel when You look at me and Your people"* so that we can fulfil our ministry assignment as the Bride of Christ. Zecheriah 3 prepared Joshua to step into his destiny in Zechariah 4.

h. If this is true for us (and it is) then it is also true for others. Without this glorious gift of mercy and grace we would not be able to step into our identity as priests before the Lord. However, if we live in this reality His church will become a kingdom of priests who can stand before Him and minister to Him in worship and intercession.

1 Peter 2:4,10 *[4] As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, [5] you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.* ***…..*** *[10] Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.*

i. This is about so much more than our personal relational struggles. It is about the bringing forth of a mature Bride who is preparing the way for our Bridegroom's return.

j. Satan's great weapon against God's people is his ***2-fold accusation*** against them to convince them to accuse themselves and then to accuse one another. Only by overcoming this can God's people walk with confidence before God and in mature love for each one as a spiritual family (Jn. 17:23).

k. The "God narrative" of our life is a view of our life through the lens of His marvellous kindness now and in His big-picture storyline for us. The "accusation narrative" is a view of our life through the lens of our deficiencies and failures—it is focused on our failures, deficiencies, and what we lack.

i The God narrative of our life is a view of our life through the lens of His kindness. It is the big story view of our life. It is not only the seventy/eighty/ninety year story, but it is the one billion year story too. God views your life through the lens of His own heart of grace.

ii Satan has a very opposite story; he has an accusation narrative against you. His desire is to put it into the lips of the people you live with, the people you work with, the people you serve in the kingdom with. He wants the accusation narrative to thrive. God says, "I rebuke you, Satan!"

iii That narrative is not going to lead the Body of Christ into John 17. That narrative will feed the betrayal culture that is exploding in the nations, and in the Church as well. The unity family movement is exploding as well. They are all emerging right now simultaneously.

l. In Zechariah 4 we see how God anointed Joshua and Zerubbabel to mobilize the people and to receive supernatural provision to accomplish God's corporate purpose in that generation—in establishing the temple—these promises can be applied to the worship and prayer movement today.

4. God's Glory in the End-time Church (Matt. 5 unto John. 17)

a. The Lord is leading His people into a glorious transformation. This will only be possible if we *embrace and impart the call to bless and not accuse*. Embracing this exhortation will usher us into a supernatural lifestyle as we love those who mistreat us by failing to honour us. He is not addressing self-defense against one who harms you physically. Acting in the opposite spirit of our enemies by actively loving them causes us to face our weakness and is part of the fasted lifestyle – fasting our words and strength.

b. The only way possible to be matured in our unity is to be matured in overcoming accusation in our own heart and having love that covers the multitude of sins against us by others in the Body of Christ. This John 17:23 transformation is the epicentre of what it is going on in the earth at this time as we are prepared for God's end-time purpose.

c. The call to love our enemies includes our ***words*** (bless), ***deeds*** (do good), and ***prayers*** (Mt. 5:44). It is an act of our will that transcends negative feelings. As we obey this, our feelings will change.

d. Our natural mind-set is: "If you do something bad to me, then I will do something bad to you. If you do something good to me, I will do something good to you." Our natural way is to give a reward for favours or to take revenge on those who trouble us. *"To return evil for good is devilish; to return good for good is human, and to return good for evil is divine" (Alfred Plummer, 1852-1916).*

5. Conclusion

a. If we truly desire to be His Bride and take up our authority as the Ekklesia, then we have to commit to walking out this teaching from Jesus. We have to choose to give up all negative thinking or speaking. The enemy's main strategy at the end of the age is clearly stated in Rev.12:10

Rev 12:10 *[10] And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, "Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for* ***the accuser of our brothers*** *has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God.*

b. When God raises up the priesthood to stand before Him to restore His temple in the earth the "Accuser of the Brethren" rages. We see it in Zech. 3 and we see it at the end of the age. Taking a corporate stance in refusing to speak negatively, will be a powerful stance in this coming season as we take up our place to stand in the breach before the Lord on the walls.

Ez.22:30 *And I sought for a man among them who should* ***build up the wall and stand in the breach before me*** *for the land, that I should not destroy it, but I found none.*

Isaiah 58:9-12 *Then you shall call, and the Lord will answer; you shall cry, and he will say, 'Here I am.' If you take away the yoke from your midst,* ***the pointing of the finger, and speaking wickedness****, [10] if you pour yourself out for the hungry and satisfy the desire of the afflicted, then shall your light rise in the darkness and your gloom be as the noonday. [11] And the Lord will guide you continually and satisfy your desire in scorched places and make your bones strong; and you shall be like a watered garden, like a spring of water, whose waters do not fail.[12] And your ancient ruins shall be rebuilt; you shall raise up the foundations of many generations;* ***you shall be called the repairer of the breach, the restorer of streets to dwell in.***