

XLVI. WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS
LESSON FORTY-SIX
... ABOUT PRAYER AND FASTING

INTRODUCTION

Fasting adds a new dimension to the prayer life of the child of God. Jesus in Matthew 17:14-21(21) tells us that certain things will not happen without prayer and FASTING. What is the new dimension that fasting adds to your prayer life?

Fasting prepares the heart of the child of God, who desires to walk with God, praying effective, powerful, Holy Spirit energized prayer to pray the life changing PRAYER OF FAITH. Especially, in those instances where satan has a long standing stronghold or where there is a strong resistance and stubbornness in the soul, to the getting rid of bad (evil), ungodly habits and attitudes.

The fact that fasting is to have an important place in our Christian walk is shown by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 6:1-16) where He places fasting in the same context as giving and praying.

Therefore if giving and praying are an important part of the Christian walk, then fasting must also be an important part of the Christian devotion and walk.

The purpose of this lesson is to develop the proper attitude toward fasting and encourage the regular practice of this important aspect of the Christian walk. So that the enemy (satan and the stubborn flesh) will not be able to hinder the effectiveness of our prayers.

BIBLICAL FASTING

Throughout the Bible fasting refers to the abstaining from food for spiritual purposes. It stands in distinction to the hunger strike, the purpose of which is to gain political power or attract attention for a good cause. It is distinct from health dieting, which stresses abstinence from food, but for physical not spiritual purposes.

The Bible gives examples of at least four different types of fasts. There is the Absolute Fast, the Normal Fast, the Partial or Daniel Fast, and the Supernatural Fast. What are the specifics concerning fasting in the following Scriptures?

Deuteronomy 9:9

I Kings 19:8

Esther 4:16

Acts 9:9

Luke 4:2

Matthew 4:2

Daniel 10:3

Conclusions: We would note from the above Scriptures that:

- 1. Abstaining from food and water is an ABSOLUTE FAST;**
- 2. Abstaining from food is a NORMAL FAST;**
- 3. Abstaining from meats and deserts is a DANIEL FAST;**
- 4. Abstaining from food and or, food and water for an extended period of time is a SUPERNATURAL FAST. It is a supernatural fast because after 3 days without water and 21 days without food the human body begins to dehydrate without water and starvation sets in without food.**

CIRCUMSTANCES AND PURPOSES FOR FASTING

According to the following Scriptures, what are the circumstances of fasting and the purposes which are mentioned?

Joel 2:12-17

Mark 9:29

Zechariah 8:19

Luke 18:12

Matthew 6:16-18

Luke 2:37

Acts 13:2

Zechariah 7:5

Psalms 35:13

1 Corinthians 6:12

1 Corinthians 9:27

Psalms 69:10

Conclusions: We would note from the above Scriptures that the circumstances and purposes for fasting includes, but not necessarily limited to:

- 1. Circumstances;**

1. God's judgment on ones/church's/people's sin;
 2. Need for deliverance from demon spirits and or, getting flesh/soul/self under control;
 3. Regular scheduled days of fasting;
2. Purposes:
1. Turning back God's judgment on sin;
 2. Humble/humiliate the soul through exposure of the areas of reproach (bondages, chains, and strong-holds of shame, disgrace, ungodly emotions, self-indulgences, evil (sin), unclean spirits in the flesh/soul), in-order that, these reproaches may be brought under control or cast out, in the case of unclean spirits;
 3. Ministering and serving God;
 4. For God's blessings (rewards for faithfulness).

According to Jesus in Matthew 6:16-18, what is to be our appearance and attitude when we are fasting?

Answer: As unto the Lord

JESUS' ATTITUDE TOWARD THE FASTING OF HIS FOLLOWERS

From the following Scriptures determine what Jesus' attitude and expectations were concerning fasting in the lives of His followers.

Matthew 6:16

- from context
- from statement - "when you fast"

Matthew 9:15 - from the statement "then shall they fast"

In the above Scriptures was Jesus commanding His disciples to fast
____ Yes ____ No?

Conclusions: From the above passages it is clear that Jesus expected His disciples to fast after He was gone. It is, also clear from these Scriptures that Christ both upheld the discipline of fasting and that He anticipated that His followers would do it.

RESPONSE TO THE TRUTH

What is your opinion concerning fasting as an important part in discipline of the Christian walk? Does Fasting have a place in your walk with Jesus? If not, why?