

THE POWER OF FASTING
Matt. 17:15-21

I want to teach you something today that can be the greatest thing you learn.

1. What is Fasting? To abstain from the use of food or drink for a period of time for spiritual purposes.

2. Three Kinds of Fasting in the Bible:

a) Simple Fast-Luke 4:2-Jesus fasted 40 days & nights.

-It says He ate no food

-Does not say He did not drink

b) Selective fasting-Where a person chooses not to eat certain foods or abstain from meals.

-Dan. 10:2-Daniel ate no meat, wine, or pleasant bread

Note: If you have health problems or you are pregnant, this may be the only type of fasting you can do.

c) Supernatural Fasting-A complete fast-no eating or drinking

-Esther 4:15,16-3 days nothing

-You can go without food, but not water for more than 2 or 3 days

-Deut. 9:9-Moses abstained 40 days & nights

-God had to give Moses supernatural protection to do this.

I. The Occasions for Fasting

1. When Conditions Demand It. (Matt. 15:32)

-The people did not have a choice, they were following Jesus.

-They would have had to go away & find food.

Their hunger for Christ was more than their hunger for food!

2. When Contrition Dictates It. (Ps. 102:3,4)

-David was so overwhelmed with sorrow, he did not even want to eat-He just forgot about eating.

-This type of brokenness may have caused this in you.

Note: All your focus is on wanting comfort from the Holy Spirit.

3. Where Choice Directs It. (Matt. 4:2)

-Jesus chose to fast here.

-This is the type we are talking about today.

II. The Objectives to Fasting (Many people think it has no place in N.T. Christianity)

1. Some say it is Unscriptural.

-But almost 100 times (OT & NT) the Bible speaks of it.

-In OT. Moses, David, Elijah, Daniel, Jeremiah, Hannah, etc..

-In NT. Jesus, Paul, the Early Church, Anna, etc..

2. Some say it is Unspiritual

-They think of some fanatic, crazy, abusive person.

-They talk of the Pharisees fasting for showee purposes.

-But Jesus rebuked their praying, giving, & obedience

3. Some say it is Unhealthy.

-There are some folks like diabetics who can't have a complete fast.

-But if you are healthy, fasting is a cleansing, healthy process.

-When I have fasted, & testimony of others have noted, the spiritual depth experienced during a food fast.

-There is some weight loss, but there is high energy & the mind is sharp.

J. Harold Smith has a book "Fast Your Way to Health"

III. The Object of Fasting (Why Do People Fast?) 5 things

1. Fasting Rebukes Pride (Ps. 35:13; 69:10)

- Fasting states your total dependence on God.
- This fasting is the sincere desire to know God & His will.

2. Fasting Reinforces Prayer (Jer. 29:12-14a)

- We find God when we seek Him with all our heart.
- Joel 2:12-13-Seek God with all your heart, fasting, weeping, mourning.
- Here prayer is linked up with fasting as a reinforcement of seeking God.

Note: If I really want to seek God with all my heart, I should pray, fast & weep.

- Fasting gives power, depth & dimension to your prayers.

3. Fasting Redirects God's Program (Jonah 3:5-10)

- Jonah had finally preached to Nihevah.
- Here we see the people repent & proclaim a fast of people & cattle.
- God heard them & saw their humble spirits & turned away His wrath.

Note: Today people ask is there hope for America?

- YES! If the righteous, faithful people of God will:
 - a) Fall on their faces America Has Hope (2Chron. 7:14)
 - b) Fast & pray
 - c) Humble themselves & repent(When we humble ourselves & fast, we declare seeking God is more important than our needs)

4. Fasting Releases from Prison (Isa. 58:6)

- This verse is about letting people go from entangling sins.
- "loose the bands of wickedness" –Some sins become a stronghold in your life.
- "undo the heavy burdens" –Some burdens just nag on and on, then comes discouragement & depression.
(Bible Prayer & Fasting breaks discouragement.)
(Jesus said, Come unto me, all you who are burdened & heavy laden.)
- "break every yoke" –You are either yoked up with the world or Jesus.
- The worlds yoke is hard & heavy
- Matt. 11:29-30-Jesus' yoke is easy & light

Note: -Some of us have lost loved ones & friends who need to be saved.
-But it seems some invisible force is holding them from getting saved.
-You may be able to help set them free by prayer & fasting

5. Fasting Reveals God's Plan (Daniel 9:3-5)

- (v.20-23)-God revealed His will, His plan & His work to Daniel.
- (Acts 14:23)-An ordination or commissioning service.
- These men were sent out to be a great blessing for the kingdom of God

IV. Some Observation about Fasting

1. If you fast, it must be practiced in private. (Matt. 6:16-18)

- Jesus said, "when you fast", He assumed they would be fasting.
- Don't fast to be seen of men, to look spiritual

2. If you fast, it must be Prompted by Purity. (Matt. 6:16) "To be seen of men."

- You can have the wrong motive in fasting.
- Your motive must be pure –(for the benefit of God) For God's Glory.
- If motive not pure, it will not be blessed of God.
- The Pharisees were doing this fasting with impurity.

3. If you fast, it must be Preserved from Pride.

- If you are not careful, you get presumptuous.
- If you boast because you fast & God blesses you, the blessings can stop.

-Don't think you have God bound or forced into blessing you.

4. If you fast, it must be Preached as a Privilege.

-In the N.T., fasting is never commanded.

-Only on the Day of Atonement in the O.T., was fasting commanded.

-Don't hold fasting over peoples head as a must.

John Wesley said: "Some people have so exalted religious fasting, that it has gone beyond all scripture and reason; others have utterly disregarded it."

