

Subj: No Subject

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Fasting

1. Fasting, basically means the going without food or water, for a particular purpose. Fasting was done on many occasions in the Bible; one of the most popular times being, on the day of Atonement. This was required in the law of Moses; that fasting be done on the day of Atonement. It was called, "the day of fasting." It is mentioned in Jer. 36:6, which tells us: "Therefore go thou, and read in the roll, which thou hast written from my mouth, the Words of the Lord in the ears of the people in the Lord's house upon the fasting day: and also thou shalt read them in the ears of all Judah that come out of their cities."

2. Fasting was called for on many occasions. Most of the time, it was when people really faced a time of fear, and wanted to seek the Lord's help; or when they just were desperately seeking the face of God, for a particular reason; when they really wanted an answer from God concerning something; or they just wanted to get closer to God. We read of Jehoshaphat calling for a fast, when Israel was being apposed by the Moabites and the Ammonites. We read in 2 Chron. 20:1-4: "It came to pass after this also, that the children of Moab, and the children of Ammon, and with them other beside the Ammonites, came against Jehoshaphat to battle. Then there came some that told Jehoshaphat, saying, There cometh a great multitude against thee from beyond the sea on this side Syria; and, behold, they be in Hazazontamar, which in En-gedi. And Jehoshaphat feared, and set himself to seek the Lord, and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah. And Judah gathered themselves together, to ask help of the Lord: even out of all the cities of Judah they came to seek the Lord."

3. When Ezra and the other people were returning from captivity, they fasted when they came to the river of Ahava, because of the dangers they faced on the journey. We read in Ezra 8:21-23: "Then I proclaimed a fast there, at the river of Ahava, that we might afflict ourselves before our God, to seek of Him a right way for us, and for our little ones, and for all our substance. For I was ashamed to require of the king a band of soldiers and horsemen to help us against the enemy in the way: because we had spoken unto the king, saying, The hand of our God is upon all them for good that seek Him; but his power and his wrath

is against all them that forsake Him. So we fasted and besought our God for this: and He was entreated of us.”4. When Queen Esther was going to have to go before the king, on the behalf of Mordecai, she called for the Jews to fast for three days and nights; for she was going to make a request of the king, which was highly unusual; and she feared that he may take her life. We read in Esther 4:3 & 16: “And in every province, whithersoever the king’s commandment and his decree came, there was great mourning among the Jews, and fasting, and weeping, and wailing; and many lay in sackcloth and ashes. Go gather together all the Jews that are present in Shushan, and fast ye for me, and neither eat nor drink three days, night and day: I also and my maidens will fast likewise; and so will I go in unto the king, which is not according to the law: and if I perish, I perish.”5. Many times, fasting was done in times of grief, or sorrow. One such example, is when the bones of Saul and his sons were buried. 1 Sam. 31:11-13: “And when the inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead heard of that which the Philistines had done to Saul; All the valiant men arose, and went all night, and took the body of Saul and the bodies of his sons from the wall of Beth-shan, and came to Jabesh, and burnt them there. And they took their bones, and buried them under a tree at Jabesh, and fasted seven days.”6. During the seventy years while Israel was in bondage, they held a fast on the fifth and seventh months; in remembrance of the beginning of the siege of Jerusalem, and of the time when Jerusalem fell to Babylonian captivity. Zech. 7:5 tells us: “Speak unto all the people of the land, and to the priests, saying, When ye fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh month, even those seventy years, did ye at all fast unto me, even to me?”7. In times of distress, fastings were carried out. When Saul and Jonathan were killed, David fasted. We read in 2 Sam. 1: 1-12: “Now it came to pass after the death of Saul, when David was returned from the slaughter of the Amalekites, and David had abode two days in Ziklag; It came even to pass on the third day, that, behold, a man came out of the camp from Saul with his clothes rent, and earth upon his head: and so it was, when he came to David, that he fell to the earth, and did obeisance. And David said unto him, From whence comest thou? And he said unto him, Out of the camp of Israel am I escaped. And David said unto him, How went the matter? I pray thee, tell me. And he answered, That the people are fled from the battle, and many of the people also are fallen and dead; and Saul and Jonathan his son are dead also. And David said unto the young man that told him, How knowest thou that Saul and Jonathan his son be dead? And the young man that told him said, As I happened by chance upon Mount Gilboa, behold, Saul leaned upon his spear; and, lo, the chariots and

horsemen followed hard after him. And when he looked behind him, he saw me, and called unto me. And I answered, Here am I. And he said unto me, Who art thou? And I answered him, I am an Amalekite. He said unto me again, Stand, I pray thee, upon me, and slay me: for anguish is come upon me, because my life is yet whole in me. So I stood upon him, and slew him, because I was sure that he could not live after that he was fallen: and I took the crown that was upon his head, and the bracelet that was on his arm, and have brought them hither unto my Lord. Then David took hold on his clothes, and rent them; and likewise all the men that were with him: And they mourned, and wept, and fasted until even, for Saul, and for Jonathan his son, and for the people of the Lord, and for the house of Israel; because they were fallen by the sword.”8. Nehemiah, when he learned that Jerusalem had lain in ruins, since the time of it’s destruction, fasted and prayed. We read in Neh. 1:1-4: “The words of Nehemiah the son of Hachaliah. And it came to pass in the month Chisleu, in the twentieth year, as I was in Shushan the palace., That Hanani, one of my brethren, came, he and certain men of Judah; and I asked them concerning the Jews that had escaped, which were left of the captivity, and concerning Jerusalem. And they said unto me, The remnant that are left of the captivity there in the province are in great affliction and reproach: the wall of Jerusalem also is broken down, and the gates thereof are burned with fire.

And it came to pass, when I heard these words, that I sat down and wept, and mourned certain days, and fasted, and prayed before the God of Heaven.”9. Isaiah tries to show us, that it is not the matter of going without food and water, that impresses God; but the changing of the heart; the taking thought of others. We read in Isa. 58:1-8: “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.”A. Cry aloud, spare not. Hebrew-chasak (khaw-sak): to restrain, or to withhold; to hold on to something. B. Lift up thy voice like a trumpet. This scripture is telling us to speak out loudly; to proclaim God’s Word; to let it be a constant thing with us. Do not be ashamed to speak loudly and clearly, God’s Holy Word.C. Show my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins. God is telling his people, to reveal unto the people who are walking in sin; or to bring to their realization; that they are walking in sin; and help them to know what the sins are, so that they may confess and repent of their sins. D. God is saying that people are walking in sin, yet they are continuously seeking Him, and desiring to know his ways; just as if they had never forsaken his ordinances, and had continually walked in his righteousness. They certainly had done wrong, yet they were continually asking God for justice; and they loved to approach God; just as if they were completely righteous before Him. E. The sinful people were accusing God of failing to see their fasting, and of failing to see the affliction which they brought upon their soul. They claimed that they held fasts, which God never recognized; and He never noticed the labors of their efforts. F. God said that their fasts were full of strife and trouble; and all that they wanted to do was to fight in a wicked way. God told them if they were going to fast and expect their prayers to be heard by Him, then they were going to have to learn to fast and pray in the proper way. G. God questioned the people, as to whether or not the type of fasting which they performed, was the type of fasting which God approves of. He made it very clear to them, that it certainly was not a fast that met his approval, by any means. H. God makes it very clear, that his type of fasting, loosens the bands of wickedness, unties the heavy burdens, to set free the oppressed, and that every yoke be broken. Also, God’s way is to feed the hungry, to allow the poor to come in to our house, to give clothes to those who are naked, and to also serve your own relatives in this manner. I. When our fasting is carried out in this manner which God approves of, then we will begin to have the light of God in our soul, and our perfect health will in a very fast manner, come to manifestation . Our righteousness shall go before us, and the glory of the Lord will be our reward. 10. In the New Testament,

there was one named Anna, a prophetess, who served God in the temple, with fastings and prayers day and night. We read in Luke 2:36-37: "And there was one Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Aser: she was of a great age, and had lived with an husband seven years from her virginity; And she was a widow of about fourscore and four years (84), which departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day." 11. Jesus taught about fasting also. He was questioned as to why his disciples did not fast, like the disciples of John had done. We read in Mark 2:18-20: "And the disciples of John and of the Pharisees used to fast: and they come and say unto Him, Why do the disciples of John and the Pharisees fast, but thy disciples fast not? And Jesus said unto them, Can the children of the bridechamber fast, while the bridegroom is with them? As long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast. But the days will come when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then shall they fast in those days." Jesus was teaching, that there was no need for fasting, as long as He was in the presence of the disciples. But after He was resurrected back into Heaven; separated from his disciples; then would be the time when they would be a need for fasting. And we are living in that time today. Christians all over the earth, should be taking the time to fast before God. When problems come, during times of difficulty and sorrow, we should be fasting and seeking God with our whole heart. Then we will find ourselves in a much closer walk with God, and our problems will seem much smaller. When we have a need to seek the face of God, for whatever the cause may be, fasting in a sincere manner before God, will get our mission accomplished much faster. 12. Jesus fasted for forty days and forty nights, just before He went into the wilderness, to be tempted of the devil.

We read in Matt. 4:1-11: "Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. And when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, He was afterward an hungered. And when the tempter came to Him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread. But He answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. Then the devil taketh Him up into the holy city, and setteth Him on a pinnacle of the temple. And saith unto Him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone."

Jesus said unto him, It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God. Again, the devil taketh Him up into an exceeding high mountain, and showeth Him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; And saith unto Him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me. Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve. Then the devil leaveth Him, and, behold, angels came and ministered unto Him.” Why do we believe that Jesus took the time to fast and pray for forty days? He done so, because He knew the ministry which He was about to start carrying out, was going to be a time when He would be tempted day after day, in one way or another; and He also knew that He must have the power of the Heavenly Father upon Himself, at all times. For He knew that his ministry would be hard; He knew that the devil would be after Him from the beginning, just as we can see is certain. He knew of those who would come against Him; such as the Pharisees, and the priests. He knew of the many miracles which He would be asked to bring to pass, along with all the other many tasks which He would face. And He knew that the only way that He would ever be successful, in accomplishing all these things, would be to continually seek the face and the presence of the Heavenly Father; realizing that all his power must come from Him. When we think of Jesus’ temptations, or of his forty days of fasting and praying, we seem to think that Jesus only had to fast and pray before his ministry began. But we can be certain, that He had to go alone many times during his ministry; probably every day; just to fast and pray, and seek the face of the Heavenly Father. Don’t ever think that Satan’s three temptations, which he faced Jesus with at the beginning of his ministry, were the only temptations which he ever faced Jesus with. I’m certain that Jesus was faced with temptations from Satan every day of his earthly life; just like me and you will be done also. The only way that Jesus was ever able to overcome the devil, was by daily prayer and fasting. Many times, Jesus went out very early in the morning; before his disciples or anyone else were even awake, just to be alone with the Heavenly Father; to fast and to pray, and to get strength from God the Father. 13. Cornelius fasted, and he had a vision of an angel; who told him to send men to Joppa, and call for Peter. We read this

story in Acts 10:1-43: "There was a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius, a centurion of the band called the Italian band.

A devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God always. He saw in a vision evidently about the ninth hour of the day an angel of God coming in to him, and saying unto him, Cornelius. And when he looked on Him, he was afraid, and said, What is it, Lord? And He said unto him, Thy prayers and mine alms are come up for a memorial before God.

And now send men to Joppa, and call for one Simon, whose surname is Peter: He lodgeth with one Simon a tanner, whose house is by the sea side: he shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do. And when the angel which spake unto Cornelius was departed, he called two of his household servants, and a devout soldier of them that waited on him continually; And when he had declared all these things unto them, he sent them to Joppa. On the morrow, as they went on their journey, and drew nigh unto the city, Peter went up upon the housetop to pray about the sixth hour: And he became very hungry, and would have eaten: but while they made ready, he fell into a trance. And saw Heaven opened, and a certain vessel descending unto him, as it had been a great sheet knit at the four corners, and let down to the earth: Wherein were all manner of fourfooted beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air. And there came a voice to him, Rise, Peter, kill, and eat. But Peter said, Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten any thing that is common or unclean. And the voice spake unto him again the second time, What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common. This was done thrice; and the vessel was received up again into Heaven. Now while Peter doubted in himself what this vision which he had seen should mean, behold, the men which were sent from Cornelius had made inquiry for Simon's house, and stood before the gate. And called and asked whether Simon, which was surnamed Peter, were lodged there. While Peter thought on the vision, the Spirit said unto him, Behold, three men seek thee. Arise therefore, and get thee down, and go with them, doubting nothing: for I have sent them. Then Peter went down to the men which were sent unto him from Cornelius; and said, Behold, I am he whom ye seek: what is the cause wherefore ye are come? And they said, Cornelius the

centurion, a just man, and one that feareth God, and of good report among all the nation of the Jews, was warned from God by an holy angel to send for thee into his house, and to hear words of thee. Then called he them in, and lodged them. And on the morrow Peter went away with them, and certain brethren from Joppa accompanied him. And the morrow after they entered into Caesarea. And Cornelius waited for them, and had called together his kinsmen and near friends. And as Peter was coming in, Cornelius met him, and fell down at his feet, and worshipped him. But Peter took him up, saying, Stand up; I myself also am a man. And as he talked with him, he went in, and found many that were come together. And he said unto them, Ye know how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or come unto one of another nation; but God hath shown me that I should not call any man common or unclean. Therefore came I unto you without gainsaying, as soon as I was sent for: I ask therefore for what intent ye have sent for me? And Cornelius said, Four days ago I was fasting until this hour; and at the ninth hour I prayed in my house, and, behold, a man stood before me in bright clothing. And said, Cornelius, thy prayer is heard, and thine alms are had in remembrance in the sight of God. Sent therefore to Joppa, and call hither Simon, whose surname is Peter; he is lodged in the house of one Simon a tanner by the sea side: who when he cometh, shall speak unto thee. Immediately therefore I sent to thee; and thou hast well done that thou art come.

Now therefore are we all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God. Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that feareth Him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with Him.

The Word which God sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ (He is the Lord of all:) That Word, I say, ye know, which was published throughout all Judaea, and began from Galilee, after the baptism which John preached; How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with Him. And we are witnesses of all things which He did both in the land of the Jews, and in Jerusalem; whom they slew and hanged on a tree: Him God raised up the third day, and showed

Him openly; Not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God, even to us, who did eat and drink with Him after He rose from the dead. And He commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is He which was ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead. To Him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins.” God was revealing to Peter, that he need not be concerned about eating any thing unclean; for what used to be considered to be unclean, was now made clean by the blood of Jesus. And also, Peter need not be worried about going into the house of a Gentile. For in God’s eyes, all were made clean through the blood of Jesus; both the Jews, and the Gentiles. 14. The church at Antioch fasted and prayed, just before separating Barnabas and Saul (Paul) for the work of the Lord. Acts. 13:1-3 tells us: “Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.”15. Paul and Barnabas also fasted and prayed when they appointed the elders in the churches. Acts 14:21-23 tells us: “And when they had preached the gospel to that city, and had taught many, they returned again to Lystra, and to Iconium, and Antioch, Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God. 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.”16. Paul suggested that men and women withdraw from sexual relationships for a while, in order to fast and pray. We read in 1 Cor. 7:5: “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.”17. Jesus gave us some tips to observe, if we want our fasting to be effective. We read in Matt. 6:16-18: “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.”

What Jesus is telling us, is that it does no good at all, if we are only fasting so that we may be recognized by others for doing so. We must always pray and fast with a sincere heart, if we expect God to hear us. 18. Prayer and fasting are very powerful tools, when it comes to having spiritual power. People of God need spiritual power today, more than ever before; because Satan is out to destroy every Christian he can; anyway he can. We read a story from Matt. 17:14-21: “And when they were come to the multitude, there came to Him a certain man, kneeling down to Him, and saying, Lord, have mercy on my son: for he is lunatic, and sore vexed: for oftentimes he falleth into the fire, and oft into the water. And I brought him to thy disciples, and they could not cure him. Then Jesus answered and said, O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I suffer you? Bring hither to me. And Jesus rebuked the devil; and he departed out of him: and the child was cured from that very hour. Then came the disciples to Jesus apart, and said, Why could not we cast him out? And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder; and nothing shall be impossible unto you. Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting.” 19. Lastly, I want to mention one other important point concerning the subject of fasting. When we think of fasting, we usually always think of going without food for a period of time. Yet I believe that there are more ways to fast and to seek God, than just going without food. First of all, let us always remember that the reason for fasting is to find out what the will of God is in a particular situation; or to seek the leadership of God. It is not to try and change God’s mind about any matter. It is especially hard in the society which we live in today, to be able to fast for a very long period of time, when we are speaking of going without food. For the majority of us are working everyday, for the purpose of supporting our families; and it is very hard to fulfill the duties of a full-time job, while going without food for very long. That is why I believe that there are other ways in which we can fast, besides just going without food. I believe that we can also fast and seek the face of God by giving up sleep, and by withdrawing from regular everyday activities. Even though we all love to lie down and rest, and sleep during the night, when we are truly sincere about seeking God, and finding out his will on any particular subject at hand, and we are willing to stay awake and just talk with Him; or allow Him to talk to us; I believe that this gets the attention of God. And

when we are willing to withdraw from regular everyday activities; even though it may be things which we love to do; I believe that this will get God's attention also. And I believe that these are ways in which we can fast and give our time to God, which will produce good results, just as much as going without food. The main purpose, once again, is to just be able to spend time with God; and to be able to find out what his perfect will is, concerning any situation which we may find ourselves facing. May we all learn to fast and to pray to God much more in our daily lives.

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Conclusion:

It is time for God's people to get back to sincere prayer and fasting. We are living in a world that appears to be ruled by Satan, rather than by God. Satan is called, "the god of this world." Why is this? It is because Christian people have forgotten how to pray and fast. They never think of fasting anymore. They have allowed matters of the world, to become more important than doing the will of God. If we want to see things change; to see God move in our own individual lives; see his precious promises fulfilled; then we must start taking the time for sincere prayer and fasting. It is time for us to see a manifestation of the spiritual power, which God promised to give us, if we are going to survive in this world of sin. How do we do this? By seeking God first, with all our heart; and then the power will come; the power to start living in victory, instead of defeat. The battle has already been won by Jesus. What we must do is to start allowing Jesus to have first place in our lives, and begin fasting and praying on a regular basis. And by this I am not only speaking of giving up daily food; but start giving up some of the daily activities which we love so much; and spending the time just to seek the face of God. And if it becomes necessary, also be willing to give up our hours of sleep, just to stay awake and talk with Jesus, and allowing Him to speak to us. We must allow Jesus to be the light which leads us each day.

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