

who fasted when seeking the Lord's blessings in their lives. Never forget that true fasting is renouncing sin in our lives; abstaining from food alone is of no value if our hearts are not touched from on high and our lives are not changed. It is sin that separates us from God, **Isaiah 59:2** "*But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear.*" In **Isaiah 58**, the Scripture reveals to us what a genuine fast is all about.

In closing, when Jonah informed the people that destruction was at hand, they were advised to sanctify a fast and call a solemn assembly. That is, they were to humble themselves before God and cry out for His mercy and grace. We, as Christians, must do the same for ourselves, our churches, and our nation. Amen.

"Our seasons of fasting and prayer at the tabernacle have been high days indeed: never has heaven's gates stood wider: never have our hearts nearer the central glory."

Charles Spurgeon

Jonah 3:5-10, "*So the people of Nineveh believed God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them. For word came unto the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, and he laid his robe from him, and covered him with sackcloth, and sat in ashes. And he caused it to be proclaimed and published through Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles, saying, Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste any thing: let them not feed, nor drink water. But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily unto God: yea, let them turn every one from his evil way, and from the violence that is in their hands. Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not? And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil, that he had said that he would do unto them; and he did it not.*"



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"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ,
and thou shalt be saved, and thy house."
Acts 16:31

The RICHES OF GRACE

Robert W. Reed
November 2003

"hath appeared to all men." Titus 2:11

Fasting

"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."

Matthew 6:16

+ THE DISCIPLINE OF FASTING +

Fasting, being found in both the Old and New Testaments, is an important part of Christianity. Even though fasting is a neglected discipline among God's people today, it cannot be separated from prayer. Fasting may seem old fashion, but it is a mighty spiritual weapon and an essential part of the Christian life. Fasting is designed to strengthen our spiritual life by weakening the desires of the flesh. To give prayer and fasting second place is to make God secondary in our lives. It is a discipline that we should cultivate in our lives. Fasting is a doctrine seen throughout Scripture and should not be considered as a dispensational issue.

"Fasting helps to express, to deepen, and to confirm the resolution that we are ready to sacrifice anything, to sacrifice ourselves to attain what we seek for the kingdom of God."

Andrew Murraray

Fasting is found over one hundred times in the Bible. The Lord Jesus Christ embraced fasting with both almsgiving and prayer in **Matthew chapter six**. All three of these are very important to the Christian life. The Lord Jesus did not say, “If ye fast, but when ye fast”, showing that Christians are to fast. The only condition placed on fasting by the Lord in **Matthew 6:16-18**, is that it must come from the heart, “*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 IS FASTING

Fasting can be defined as a voluntary discipline. It is the abstaining from food which is a strong fortress of the flesh. Food is the number one thing in our physical lives and is the number one thing to set aside for the glory of God. So, fasting is the opposite of feasting. It is designed to find a balance between spiritual and physical things. It is a way of humbling ourselves before God and sacrificing personal will. The expression “afflicting the soul” is used in the first five books of the Bible in reference to fasting (see **Leviticus 16:29,31, 23:27**). The children of Israel had an annual day of atonement and fasting which became the most memorable day of the Jewish year. In Scripture, there are different types of fasting: national, congregational, individual, voluntary and involuntary. Fasting is simply another means by which the believer can draw near to God. As we deny the flesh we are able to rely on the Spirit; we are to keep our body under subjection (**I Corinthians 9:27**).

WHY FAST

According to **Matthew 17:20-21**, fasting is an aid to prayer, “*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 place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you. Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting.*” Our faith actually

increases and grows by fasting. The context (**vv. 14-21**) shows that the disciples of Jesus Christ could not heal a young boy and they were asking why. The Lord’s response was a lack of faith in **verse 20**, and **verse 21** shows that this kind of faith comes from prayer and fasting. Our faith combined with prayer and fasting brings the power of God in our lives. In **Matthew 4:1-2**, the Lord Jesus Christ fasted before He began His public ministry to prepare Him for the work that lay ahead. If our Lord felt a need to fast, should not His followers do the same? According to **Matthew 9:14-15**, John the Baptist and his disciples practiced fasting. The Lord said that His disciples would fast after the bridegroom left. We are living in the church age, that is, the period of the absent bridegroom, and the church is to practice fasting. The church at Antioch fasted before sending out missionaries (**Acts 13:2-3**). The churches also fasted before ordaining elders (**Acts 14:23**). The apostle Paul had spent much time in prayer and fasting (**Acts 9:9, II Corinthians 6:4-5, II Corinthians 11:27**). In **Luke 2:36-37**, ANNA fasted and prayed night and day as a service to the Lord. David fasted for his child in **II Samuel 12:15-22**. Husbands and wives are encouraged to fast according to **I Corinthians 7:5**. All of the great men and women who have been used of God down through the centuries practiced fasting. It is a means of humbling ourselves before God.

WHEN TO FAST

In the Scriptures, God’s people fasted when there was a great need that arose in their lives. For example, Daniel went before the Lord in prayer and fasting when he needed understanding and insight about Israel’s returning to their home land after the Babylonian captivity (**Daniel 9:3-5, 24-27**). Moses prayed and fasted when he interceded for Israel in the wilderness (**Deuteronomy 9:9**). Jehoshaphat proclaimed a fast among the nation when they were surrounded by their enemy in **II Chronicles 20:3**. Esther called a three day fast when the Jews were about to be exterminated (**Esther 4:1-17**). Samuel called a fast when the Philistines came against Israel (**I Samuel 7:5-6**). Ezra and Nehemiah called a fast when they sought to reestablish true worship among the Jews after their return from Babylon. The entire city of Ninevah fasted after hearing of God’s wrath against them (**Jonah 3:1-10**). There are several other examples in the Scriptures of those