



A Systematic Expository Study of the Word of God

Special Study:

CHRIST'S TEACHING ON PRAYER AND FASTING

Matthew 6:16-18; 17:19-21

Fasting is not new or peculiar to the New Testament. It has an abundant record in both the Old Testament and the New Testament. It has a long history that spans thousands of years. From Moses to Paul, from the exodus of Israel from Egypt to the present day fasting has been part of believers' communion with God. The record of God's Word shows that many great intercessors in different dispensations have sought God's face with fasting. Leaders, prophets, kings, queens, people and even nations have prayed to God with earnestness, fervency and fasting in times of great difficulty and danger. Moses, David, Esther, Ezra, Nehemiah, Daniel, Paul are among the great intercessors in the Bible that prayed and fasted, thereby experiencing great supernatural breakthroughs for themselves and for others. John the Baptist and his disciples fasted often and what a great ministry John had! What a life! What a ministry! What impact he had on a corrupt and perverse nation! Our Lord, Jesus Christ, began His ministry with fasting - waiting on God without eating or drinking - and no one has equalled His influence or power on the world. Paul started his christian journey and ministerial duty with prayer and fasting; the world is yet to see anyone else like him.

SCRIPTURAL PATTERN OF PERSONAL PRAYER AND FASTING

Matthew 6:16-18; Psalms 35:13,14; 69:9,10; 109:21-27; Nehemiah 1:4-6; Jeremiah 36:6,7; Daniel 9:3,4,20-23; Acts 9:8,9,15-20; 10:1-6,30-33,44.

Fasting has been a constant feature in the believers' communion with God. Many men and women of God have fasted when they were burdened with some spiritual or physical problems. Fasting is not to be done to make a good impression upon people, to attract or win the praise of men (Matthew 6:16-18). Driven by the prevailing need of one's life or led by the Spirit of God when we are confronted with overwhelming challenges of life, we seek God's face with fasting, laying our petition before the Lord.

For a fast to be beneficial, it must be done in a spirit of reverence toward God, in which we acknowledge our dependence on God and worship Him as a covenant-keeping Redeemer. In its strictest sense, fasting meant (to believers in Bible times) and still means today going without food and drink for a designated period of time. Times of fasting are special times of prayer, in times of personal distress when we humble ourselves before God as we seek divine intervention. Recorded examples of effective prayer and fasting in the Scripture reveal the connection of fasting with personal humility, confession, restitution, obedience and absolute dependence on God.

SUPERNATURAL POWER THROUGH PURPOSEFUL PRAYER AND FASTING

Matthew 17:19-21; Luke 4:1,2,14-21,32; Deuteronomy 9:18-20; 34:10-12; Psalm 68:35; Acts 13:1-12; 14:23; 2 Corinthians 6:1-7; 1 Corinthians 2:4,5; Isaiah 40:28-31.

Fasting is spoken of by Christ as a source of spiritual power. It seems contrary to natural reasoning to deplete oneself of physical energy at a time when it is needed most. But the diminished bodily strength is replaced by spiritual energy and power necessary for moving mountains and solving longstanding problems. Jesus said, "**This kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting**" (Matthew 17:21). Fasting (with prayer) grants believers extraordinary spiritual power - **power** with God to prevail on men (Genesis 32:28; Hosea 12:3,4), **power** to do exploits in difficult, dangerous times (Daniel 11:32), **power** to remove obstacles and move mountains (Matthew 17:20,21), **power** over all the power of the enemy (Luke 10:19), **power** over persecutors and oppressors (Daniel 3:27; 6:27), **power** to heal sicknesses (Mark 3:15), **power** over demons, over evil, unclean spirits (Mark 6:7), **power** to declare unwelcome truth to all categories of sinners (Micah 3:8), **power** to convict and convert hardened sinners (Luke 1:17), **power** to work miracles and accomplish the impossible (Acts 6:8), **power** to subdue and conquer sorcerers and possessors of power of darkness (Acts 13:6-12; Exodus 9:11), **power** from on high (Luke 24:49). Through prayer and fasting, every believer can have spiritual power to do everything God has appointed him to do.

SURPASSING POSSIBILITIES OF PREVAILING PRAYER OF FAITH

Mark 11:22-24; James 5:15-18; Ephesians 2:8-10; Acts 15:9; 26:18; 3:16; Ephesians 6:16; Matthew 9:29; Mark 9:23; Romans 4:17-21; John 14:12-14; Hebrews 11:5,11,17-19,29,30,32-34.

Faith in God makes believers mightier and more powerful than natural people. God's promises provide for all our needs. All that God promises the believer in His Word can be received by an act of faith. This is true concerning salvation, healing and deliverance, the provision of our material requirement or whatever our particular needs and problems might be. By faith we are justified, sanctified, filled and baptized in the Holy Spirit. By faith we are kept and preserved, by faith we stand, by faith we walk, by faith we inherit the promises. The central importance of faith in the life of the Christian is clearly revealed in God's Word. **"But without faith it is impossible to please Him: For he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him"** (Hebrews 11:6). Jesus has provided **"all things that pertain unto life and godliness"**. **"All things are yours"** (2 Peter 1:3,4; 1 Corinthians 3:21). With the prayer of faith all things are possible in your life.

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