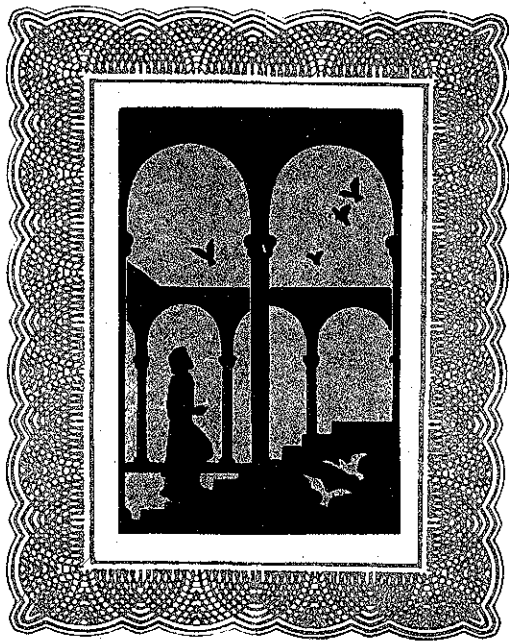


The Dynamic of
Prayer And Fasting



Ray Brubaker

*"This kind can come forth by nothing, but by prayer
and fasting."*

Mark 9:29

The Dynamic of Prayer And Fasting

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What is the value of fasting?

Fasting is described in Scripture as a chastening of the soul. (Psa. 35:13, 69:10) It is often linked to prayer (Acts 14:23) and may be for the purpose of being set free from burdens and oppressions.

Anna, the prophetess, served God with fastings and prayers night and day. (Luke 2:37) Whereas, on the other hand, the Pharisees were rebuked for fasting only as a religious ritual or to be observed by men.

The Apostle Paul, greatest missionary the world has ever known, spoke of fasting often.

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Can Prayer Save America?



Billy Graham, in an article in *THE NATIONAL ENQUIRER*, calls attention to the need of America to have a dynamic spiritual awakening.

Graham asserts that we first of all must admit our need of divine help. "History affirms that the times of greatest progress have been occasions when our needs have been keenly sensed and openly admitted." He points out: "God wants to bless us as a nation. But His blessing is triggered by our willingness to repent and believe."

Says Graham: "What a critical hour this is - across the face of the earth!" And he calls for prayer for revival everywhere.

Can prayer save America?

A visitor of President Abraham Lincoln recalls how he overheard him pray during days of the Civil War. In sighs and groans Lincoln entreated: "Oh, thou God, that heard Solomon in the night when he prayed and cried for wisdom, hear me. I cannot lead these people, I cannot guide the affairs of this nation without Thy help...O God, hear me and save this nation."

Surely this is the need of our nation today...and nations around the world.

As Dr. Carl F. H. Henry, writing in *CHRISTIANITY TODAY* magazine, says: "There is a crisis in America...a basic moral and spiritual collapse." He notes: "Europe and the United States are closer to moral chaos than men realize."

Today World Communism threatens to expand on nearly a dozen fronts. Believing we are in a strategic period of history, our nation needs to be called to prayer--a time of humbling ourselves before God, of confessing and forsaking sin, of renewing our dedication, of revival. It is hoped that God's people everywhere will take seriously this request.

Moses prayed and God withheld judgment.

Elijah prayed and it rained fire from heaven.

Isaiah prayed and saw the Lord in all His glorious holiness.

Jesus prayed. Oftentimes He prayed all night. Who are we to spend less time than He in prayer?

Perhaps you say, "I don't know how to pray." Prayer is simply talking to the Lord. As Hannah Moore says: "Prayer is not eloquence, but earnestness; not the definition of helplessness, but the feeling of it; not figures of speech, but compunction of soul."

Even the disciples who once asked our Lord to teach them to pray found that prayer wasn't easy. While Christ prayed in Gethsemane, they slept. But after Pentecost we read where the Apostles resolved, saying: "We will give ourselves continually to prayer." (Acts 6:4)

That's it, friends. If prayer is to be effective, we must give ourselves to it. Set a definite time and place each day to pray. Begin the day with prayer. Martin Luther once wrote: "I have so much to do (today) that I shall spend the first three hours in prayer."

We need to remember definite requests in our prayers. First of all, we need to pray for our world and our nation, and for our leaders that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life.

Lloyd George, a former British Prime Minister, attributes the united praying of God's people during the days of the Wesleyan Revivals for changing the history of the British Isles, sparing her the horrors of the French Revolution.

John Knox prayed, and it was said that Queen Mary feared his prayers more than all of the armies of Europe. One night during a time of bitter persecution, Knox and his friends who were praying suddenly sensed relief and declared that "deliverance at last had come." Soon there was brought to him the news that Bloody Mary was dead!

America was founded by praying men. The first act of the Pilgrims as they set foot on American soil was to kneel at Plymouth Rock and pray.

Every town meeting in New England in the early days of our nation's history found fervent prayer ascending to Almighty God.

The very constitution Americans revere was born in prayer.

Thus, should we not all remember our nation in prayer at this particular period of her peril?

It is related how during the critical days of the Reformation, Martin Luther went into his prayer closet and there wrestled with God like Jacob of old. At last, the burden lifted, with joyous heart and shining countenance Luther returned to his family and with both hands lifted exclaimed: "We have overcome!"

This was astounding, for as yet there was not the slightest indication of tolerance for Luther's cause. But soon the glad tidings came that the Emperor, Charles V, had issued his proclamation of RELIGIOUS TOLERATION IN GERMANY.

Luther claimed the promise of Proverbs 21:1, "The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water; he turneth it whithersoever he will."

Let us pray for all in authority, knowing God guides the destiny of men and nations.

Let us pray for lost men and women, remembering there are no hopeless cases. God isn't willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.

Mr. Moody, while at Edinburgh, was introduced to a man who was the chairman of an Infidel Club. Moody tried to get the man down on his knees and, when he refused to kneel, Moody sat beside him and prayed while the man only made light of it.

Later, the evangelist again saw the infidel and asked: "Hasn't God answered the prayer?" The infidel only replied scornfully, "There is no God."

Moody was convinced that God would answer the prayer and was not surprised when later he heard that the infidel and seventeen of the members of his club had been converted.

Charles Finney relates the story of an inn keeper in the upper part of New York state who delighted in swearing, especially whenever Christians were around, to try to hurt their feelings.

A dear saint of God, having passed through the town and having heard the tavern owner swearing at a desperate rate, placed this man on his prayer list. Day and night in his waking moments, he would pray for this wicked man until one day he received word that he had been converted. His tavern became a prayer house.

A revival scheduled in a certain city found an unsaved wicked husband being invited by his concerned wife to attend the meeting.

In a rage he decided to leave home until the meeting ended.

The wife, burdened and broken, called upon the pastor to pray that the Holy Spirit might overtake her husband, bring him back, show him his sins, and save him.

That night, with great earnestness, prayer was being made for this man when, suddenly, he was seen standing in the doorway of the church. This is his story as he himself relates it:

"I went away...this morning, and told my wife I was going into the country to stay till this flurry was over. About... 18 miles away....on the top of a hill, I was stopped as Paul was, and just as suddenly, and made to feel what a horrible sinner I am....I know I must be born again or I can never see the kingdom of Heaven."

Amid sobs and tears, the hour was spent full of prayer for the man's conversion, and he became genuinely saved.

Finally, we would urge upon you to bring to God all of your needs.

In New York City there are some, no doubt, who still remember the Fulton Street prayer meetings. A wife, whose husband was an eminent physician, sent in a special prayer request for their daughter whom they thought was dying and sinking fast.

The mother attended the noon prayer meeting herself. One request after another was prayed for, but hers was not even read. At the close of the meeting, she went to see the prayer leader who discovered that the request had been overlooked, but who promised that special prayer would be offered first thing the next day.

With heavy heart the mother went away, back to her dying child who survived the night but whose life was slowly ebbing away. Just a few minutes to 12, when the Fulton Street prayer meeting would be considering her request, the mother noticed that her daughter's eyes closed in death, with neither a breath nor a motion. Yet the mother, seeing it was nigh 12 noon, joined those who were praying for her daughter.

At fifteen minutes past twelve, the daughter opened her eyes, saying: "Mother, I feel better," then sank into an easy sleep, breathing restfully. Before evening, she was able to arise from her bed and walk around in her room.

The mother was reminded of the Lord's promise at the raising of Lazarus: "If ye believe, ye shall see the glory of God."

From Chicago comes this incident of a mother of 85 years of age who had stiffened with age, and then fell and broke one bone and dislocated another in her wrist. The shock brought on severe sickness. She had almost lost her sight and hearing, and even her mind became greatly impaired. She

mourned the fact that she had outlived her usefulness, could not feed herself, read her Bible, nor remember subjects for prayer.

During this time her two daughters also became ill, one with paralysis and the other with TB. The daughter with the paralysis in her whole right side and comparatively helpless, decided to take therapeutic (electric) treatments but failed to make her appointment. She made a second appointment but, upon considering Christ's miracles of healing and the Bible promises to the sick, and having a feeling that she may be doing wrong in not relying upon the promises of God, she again failed to meet the appointment.

Depressed over her need and that of her sister and mother, she went to the Lord in prayer. Soon her conviction grew that the Lord would heal her body as she meditated on the Lord's healing of paralytics on earth, and stretching forth her hand, she prayed: "Dear Lord, will you heal me?"

It seemed that the Lord had just been waiting for her call, and like an electric shock, the life began to move in her arm, up to the head, and down the body to the foot. SHE WAS HEALED!

Then she began to pray for her sister whose case was considered hopeless. In fact, her sister grew increasingly worse in spite of her medicine, and one day was so near death that she could hardly be aroused to take her medicine.

In prayer she agonized before God while her sister suffered intense indescribable pain. Then the pain left and a bright look came on her face as she said: "I believe I'm better." Soon her breathing became perfectly normal and, in time, her cough left her and she dedicated her life to the Lord as a missionary.

These two sisters having been marvelously healed then went to praying for their 85-year-old mother who suffered much from the broken and dislocated wrist, whose leg was stiff, sight and hearing nigh gone, and mind impaired.

One night, the one sister claimed assurance that her mother would be healed and next morning listened to the movements in her mother's room. Next thing they knew, the aged mother was walking without cane into the dining room.

"Are you not healed, Mother?" inquired the girls anxiously, whereupon their mother began to think she was for she could move her wrist with perfect freedom. Her hearing, too, had returned, and when they brought her a Bible, she read without the use of glasses. In fact, she could thread the finest needle. For eight years she had not been on her knees, but she knelt down and thanked her Lord for His goodness and miracle-working power.

Friends, God hears and answers prayer. As Tennyson once said: "More things are wrought by prayer than the world dreams of."

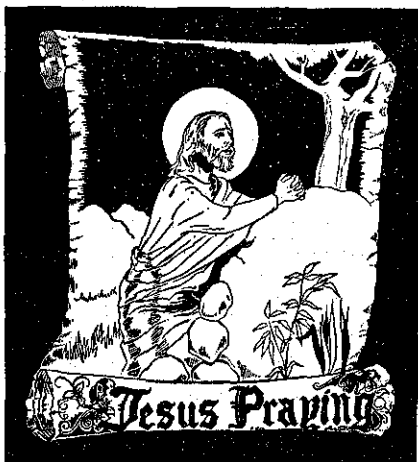
Declared Adoniram Judson, "I have never prayed sincerely for anything but it came, at some time...somehow, in some shape."

The Psalmist would remind us, however, that if we regard iniquity in our hearts--if we harbor and condone sin--then the Lord will not hear us. But if we confess and forsake our sin, then no good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly.

"And whatsoever we ask, we receive of Him, because we keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in his sight." (I John 3:22)

In view of the desperate hour in which we live, let us join together in praying for our nation and our world, believing for our own needs as well. "For my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus." (Phil. 4:19) God grant this for His glory. Amen.

Secrets of Prayer



A weekly magazine polled its readers to inquire, "What sermon would you like to hear most?"

The subject selected: "How can I make prayer more effective?"

"Prayer is conversation with God," declared Clement of Alexandria. A sinner, however, is not on speaking terms with God until he first prays from the heart, "God, be merciful to me a sinner, and save me for Jesus' sake."

The story is told of a man in a rowboat lost at sea, who rows until he is exhausted. Only in desperation does he cry out: "Lord, you know I haven't bothered you for fifteen years. Get me out of this mess and I'll not bother you for fifteen more!"

How many today call upon the Lord--not to save them, but merely to help them out of their trouble!

The Psalmist would remind us: "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me." (Psa. 66:18) Only as we repent of our sins and trust Christ as Lord and Saviour can we expect God to hear and answer our prayers.

In his Sermon on the Mount our Lord reveals three ways whereby sincere worship will be rewarded. He promises to reward openly those who give, who pray, and who fast. So POWERFUL a combination are these three that we should like to refer to them as SECRETS TO ANSWERED PRAYER.

Perhaps few relate giving as being beneficial to our praying. Our giving, however, is something of a barometer which helps to measure our love for Jesus.

Take a young man who is in love. No sacrifice is too great, no gift too expensive, as long as it is practical and he can afford it. So our love for our Lord is somewhat reflected by our giving.

Notice, Jesus places giving first, saying: "When thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth; that thine alms may be in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly."

Did you see it? God, here, promises to reward openly those who give.

Beloved, if you want the favor of God, begin to give. How many are spared hospital bills, accidents and other needless expenses because they give freely to the work of the Lord. Indeed, they are rewarded in this life as well as in the life to come.

Again, Jesus says: "When thou prayest, enter into thy closet and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly."

Adoniram Judson, the great missionary, once said: "I have never prayed sincerely and earnestly for anything, but it came at some time--no matter at how distant a day, somehow, in some shape, probably the last I would have devised, it came."

Yes, God hears and answers prayer--not always the way we expect, but always according to the urgency of our need and to His own glory.

Billy Graham says: "One of the main principles in prayer is to have a definite time and place each day to meet God. Many people say that they pray only when they feel like it. Moods are the Public Enemy # 1 of prayer."

We need to begin each day with prayer, arising early, if necessary, to thank the Lord for His loving care in the night and to seek His guidance and protection for the new day.

Another secret to answered prayer is fasting. Again we read: "When thou fastest...thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly."

We know very little about fasting. In fact, in America there are 25 million overweight people. The Bible has a great deal to say about fasting--denying ourselves of daily food. For instance, we read: "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?"

Fasting will help release a person from carnal appetites and fleshly lusts. Drinking, smoking, sexual impurity--all have been known to lose their hold upon an individual given to fasting.

Remember the lunatic whom the disciples could not cure even though they rebuked the devil in the name of Jesus? Jesus replied: "This cometh about only by prayer and fasting."

Many are fearful lest fasting border on fanaticism. But Jesus fasted. Paul spoke of fasting often.

Epiphaneus wrote: "Who does not know that the fast of the fourth and sixth days of the week are observed by Christians throughout the world?"

Luther, the Wesleys, Knox, Calvin and Finney were men of God who moved men for God by prayer and fasting.

Finally, we would point to Cornelius as evidence that God rewards openly those who give, fast and pray.

Concerning Cornelius, we read how he was a devout man who feared God, who gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway. It was upon the fourth day of fasting that an angelic messenger in bright clothing appeared saying: "Cornelius, thy prayer is heard and thine alms are had in remembrance in the sight of God." (Acts 10:1-2, 12, 30-31)

Beloved, crises days come to all of us and we would do well to learn these secrets to answered prayer.

Indeed, our faith and our earnestness will be rewarded as we seek the Lord in humility of mind and in sincerity of purpose. God grant it. Amen.

Fasting



(M-39)

Is Fasting for Today?

According to U.N. Secretary-General Kurt Waldheim, the "single most devastating indictment of our current world civilization is the continued existence of stark, pervasive mass poverty among two-thirds of the world population. It permeates every phase of life in developing countries - in the malnutrition of children, in the outbreaks of diseases, in widespread unemployment, in low literacy rates, in overcrowded cities."

Concerning the food situation, Waldheim warns: "Never in recent decades have world reserves been so frighteningly low."

In spite of a good grain harvest in the United States, there are millions on earth that are starving.

Sylvan H. Wittwer, head of the National Research Council's Board on Agriculture, says the world is "living on borrowed time." He calls upon the government to devise a speeded up program something like the Manhattan Project - the effort during World War II to devise an atomic bomb - in order to produce more food for the world's hungry.

Senator Mark Hatfield says hunger and famine are "more explosive than all atomic weaponry possessed by the big powers."

Hatfield, a member of the Senate Agriculture Committee, points out "desperate people do desperate things!"

Earlier this year the senator called for days of fasting in order to make more food available for the poverty-stricken abroad.

Southern Baptists, at their last convention meeting in Miami Beach, passed a sharply debated resolution, calling on church members to have a day of fasting and prayer once a month "for the starving people of the world."

United Methodist Bishop Francis E. Kearns of Canton, Ohio, similarly urges members in his area to skip a meal a week, declaring it helps to sensitize Americans to "the agony and suffering of great multitudes of people."

The Lutheran Church of America similarly has called upon its three million members to take up the practice of fasting. The Rev. Dr. Robert J. Marshall, the denomination's president, says: "Giving up one main meal a week should be the minimum response."

In Isaiah, chapter 58, there are a variety of reasons given for fasting. Sharing with the poor and needy is just one of them. In verse 6 we read: "Is not this the fast that I have chosen? (saith the Lord) 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?"

Fasting is good for many reasons.

George Cornell, Associated Press Religious writer, notes: "Fasting...(is) an ancient Judeo-Christian practice to foster temperance and self-discipline."

Let's take a look at some of the Bible reasons for FAST-ING.

The first one given here is "to loose the bands of wickedness." How many, including Christians, are bound by some hurtful lust or habit. They have prayed and sought deliverance but to no avail. Fasting and prayer may be the answer.

In the case of the little lad brought to Jesus who gnashed with his teeth and foamed at the mouth, even throwing himself into the fire and into the water to destroy himself, our Lord rebuked the foul spirit that possessed him and cast it out. Then the disciples inquired of Jesus, "Why could not we cast it out?" Our Lord replied, "This kind can come forth by nothing, but by prayer and fasting." (Mark 9:29)

Did you hear it?

Fasting is often God's ordained means to accomplish what cannot be done otherwise. It is a source of prevailing with God as Jacob of old who wrestled with an angel, saying, "I'll not let you go until you bless me." So fasting can be our way of saying to the Lord, "You must help me. I need deliverance from this tobacco habit, or this drug addiction, or to the liquor thirst."

You say you want deliverance? You really want to be set

f-r-e-e from binding lusts and from the power of the devil. Then try fasting and prayer.

The second reason for fasting that we find in Isaiah, chapter 58 is "to undo the heavy burdens."

Have you had burdens too heavy to carry--an unfaithful husband, a son or daughter who has become delinquent? Don't despair. There is a God-given remedy.

Of course we are told to cast our cares on Jesus for He careth for us. But there are times we carry a heavy load and there is no way it can be lifted but by prayer and fasting.

A mother whose son was unsaved and in jail facing a life sentence went to prayer and fasting on his behalf. She went 22 days without eating, spending time in prayer for her son. Her prayers were answered in that her son was saved. And when he confessed all to authorities, the sentence was withdrawn and he was set free. Today he's preaching the Gospel.

The third reason given here for fasting... "to let the oppressed go free." There is so much oppression today - oppression of mind and body. How many are in mental institutions who need not be there. They are oppressed by the devil. How many are in hospitals who need not suffer on beds of pain? Too often they are oppressed by the devil.

Not all mental oppression and not all physical affliction is of the devil. But Luke, who was a doctor, is recorded as saying in Acts 10:38 that when Jesus was on earth, He "went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil..."

Did you hear it?

Whom did Jesus heal? "Those who were oppressed of the devil." Whose verdict was this - who made this statement? Luke, the physician.

A 12-year-old girl had cancer in her right hip and given up to die. Her mother was encouraged to take her to a meeting where there was prayer for the sick, and the little girl suddenly felt a warm sensation in her body. "Mommy, I feel real hot in my stomach," she told her mother. She arose from her wheel chair healed, able to run and play again.

Her doctor who testified that her hipbone was like a piece of Swiss cheese, later performed an examination to declare she was made whole. Radiographic films made at the hospital showed the hip to be normal.

Isn't it time we recognize that the devil is the author of much of our pain and our affliction?

Jesus came to bring deliverance. He bore our sicknesses and our pains, and by His stripes we were healed.

Why don't we believe it? Because the devil doesn't want us to believe it. It's one of his secrets often propagated by

ministers who should be praying for the sick but instead are found preaching sermons saying that healing isn't for today.

As a personal testimony I recall so vividly standing before doctors who seemed helpless to do anything for me. I had a frozen shoulder swollen to twice its size, with a rheumatoid-arthritis condition seizing half of my body. When given an injection for the shoulder condition, it broke loose an ulcer in my stomach.

Following an operation on the shoulder which was discovered to be greatly infected with the poison almost to take my life, I went to fasting and prayer. In one way I did not know why I was fasting except that I knew it was mentioned in the Bible. I knew Jesus fasted for forty days and that Moses fasted for a similar period of time, so who was I not to fast? Daniel went for three weeks without eating any pleasant food. Esther and her people fasted for three days. Paul fasted, as did many in the early church.

The fourth night of fasting and prayer I was awakened as by someone, and a voice said: "I've healed you from the top of your head to the soles of your feet." Praises began to form and in my inner consciousness I was singing praise to God. Although it was in the early hours of the morning, I stood to my feet, and then I knelt in prayer. Before, when I would kneel down, I would freeze in that position because of the rheumatism. But now I was healed and there was only a slight weakness there which soon left me entirely.

Following such a marvelous healing I decided to study the Scriptures and read everything I could find on this subject of FASTING. I found this chapter in Isaiah which I had read many times but now it became an open secret - a Bible formula for freedom from oppression.

Notice verse 8 where, as a result of fasting, we read: "Then shall thy light break forth as the morning." When you don't eat, you can think better. The blood is not in your stomach digesting food but being utilized to give clear thinking. Again we read, "and thine health shall spring forth speedily."

Did you hear it? Your health is affected by fasting. Why aren't we told this from our pulpits today? Why isn't this preached in our churches? Here is a God-given secret to deliverance. Why die when there are weapons that we can use to have victory over disease and death? Prayer and fasting are tools in our deliverance in bringing about freedom from oppression.

Then notice what we read: "Then shalt thou call, and the Lord shall answer; thou shalt cry, and he shall say, Here I am."

Don't think for one moment that fasting by itself will accomplish very much. One clergyman declared: "For millenniums, people have fasted on Fridays and it hasn't helped much."

That may be true. But the Bible declares when we fast as a form of worship that it will bring results. Fasting is persistence with God wherein we call and He answers. We cry and He says, "Here I am."

Finally, the fourth reason for fasting... "that ye break every yoke."

I happen to believe that God doesn't want us bound by anything--whether sickness or sin. Our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit and Satan has no right to oppress us.

Fasting is for the purpose of breaking every yoke - every tie that binds us to the devil.

At Calvary our Lord provided a perfect deliverance so that we read: "Whom the Son maketh free, he is free indeed."

Fasting may be God's ordained means to find this deliverance. By going without food for a day or several days one can spend that time in prayer and expect results if performed to the glory of God.

How many today would sooner enjoy the appetites of the flesh. Fasting is unthinkable - too rigid a demand.

Paul says: "If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die, but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live."

Fasting is a means whereby we can put to death the lower deeds of the body - carnal appetites and passions - and gain victories never dreamed possible. But it must be to the glory of God and by the power of the Holy Spirit. And, fasting should be with the help of a physician who can advise you on your body's health - whether you can fast.

Fasting, however, has been known to be one of God's secrets that He has shared with us as how we can have victory over the flesh life and over the carnal nature... "that ye break every yoke," says the Scripture.

Friend, are you bound today? Jesus can set you free. By the power of the Holy Spirit the spirits of oppression can be driven out and peace can come to your troubled soul.

Why not pray right now - "Lord, save me. Forgive me of my sins and come into my heart and life. Change me completely from the top of my head to the soles of my feet. Make me every whit whole...for your glory. Amen."

Pray that prayer and mean it and you should see a definite change we call conversion. Then live for Jesus every day, for He is coming soon.

Remember, He hath said, "Be ye therefore ready also, for in such an hour as ye think not, the Son of man cometh."

WAY TO FASTING



Senator Mark Hatfield of Oregon has called for a National Day of Fasting on the Monday before Thanksgiving. The Senate has backed up his proposition with a resolution which goes on to encourage Americans to re-evaluate their life styles and share with the "starving millions of the world" the money thus saved by eating less.

What about fasting? Of what value is it?

For the Christian there are tremendous reasons for fasting.

John Wesley once wrote: "When you seek God with fasting added to prayer, you cannot seek His face in vain." (Letters V, 112) Wesley and the early Methodists patterned their lives after the early church. They would fast every Wednesday and Friday, breaking their fast at three in the afternoon.

Other notable examples of men who fasted might be given.

There was John Calvin who fasted and saw his prayers answered in the conversion of almost the entire city of Geneva.

Jonathan Edwards is said to have fasted and prayed till he was too weak to stand in the pulpit, but how wonderfully God used his ministry.

Charles Finney, upon detecting a lack of the power of the Holy Spirit, would set aside a day, or several days, for prayer and fasting.

Martin Luther fasted to the point of injuring his health but through the mighty Spirit of God gave witness to the power of the Word.

Lengthy fasts are considered dangerous by doctors who point out that the crucial period is the end of the fast. If the person who is fasting eats food immediately, he may suffer severe damage to his body unless he breaks the fast gradually.

For instance, it is suggested on the first day after a projected fast that one drink only fruit juices. Canned pineapple juice is good.

On the second day a light soup or milk in moderation might be consumed.

On the third day one can gradually work into a regular diet.

A minister, John Stanton, writing in *GUIDEPOSTS*, tells how he read Matt. 17 where our Lord declared the need of fasting and prayer in order to cast out certain spirits that possess men.

This minister thought of a doctor who had a fine medical practice but who was addicted to drink. Nothing, it seems, could bring about his deliverance.

The next morning the minister said to his doctor friend, "Jack, I'm going to fast for you for three days."

"Why should you do that?" asked the doctor.

"Because nothing else has helped you," he replied.

Fasting is abstaining totally from food but to continue drinking liquids. He writes: "That morning I had one glass of water. By two p.m. I felt strong hunger pains. Those left only to be replaced by a headache after about 12 hours of fasting. On the second day I felt periods of faintness and a great craving for food. However, there was also the power and presence of the Lord which sustained me."

The third day was easier. The feeling of being master of your physical needs is hard to describe, but it comes from being totally removed from yourself in loving concern for the Lord and His people.

Through a series of incidents his doctor friend immediately began to be free from his alcoholism. Others for whom he fasted similarly were delivered, some of whom joined him in fasting.

This minister testifies that fasting to help others not only brings results to them. It can give one a real sense of physical well-being, inner discipline and control. Most important, the experience can deepen our prayer life, bringing us closer to God and to the disciplined life our Lord led while on earth.

It should be remembered that our Lord encouraged fasting. In His sermon on the mount He declared the promise of God to reward three acts of worship: first, those who give alms; second, those who pray in secret; and third, those who fast.

How many there are today who give to their church or to charity, and who have a regular prayer life, but who never fast. Could it be they are missing out on a great blessing the Lord has for them?

Cornelius is an example of one of whom it was said, "He gave much alms to the people." And we read, "He prayed to God always." And finally, it was during a period of fasting that an angel appeared unto him to say, "Cornelius, thy prayer is heard."

Think of it! God honored this threefold promise to bless our giving, our praying, and our fasting by sending an angel on a mission such as this.

Hear me, the early church prayed and fasted often and had power with God. Miracles were wrought and Christ became real to people.

An article in HERALD OF HIS COMING states: "Fasting and prayer deepens and ennobles the experience into a deep, sweet, composed character; develops meekness, humility, and divine loveliness; increases supernatural power in the life, and with the prayer of faith in Jesus' name - eradicates demon power from the physical and from the spirit of a person."

While some see the reason for fasting being only for the giving of food to the needy, there are other Scriptural reasons given as to why we should fast.

In Isaiah 58 we read: "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?" (v. 6) How many can testify to the breaking of the power that has enslaved them as a result of fasting and prayer.

Fasting and prayer are most certainly the Lord's way out of bondage from the body of flesh. To be crucified with Christ may necessitate putting the old man to death that the body of sin might be done away with, according to Rom. 6:6.

Fasting can help accomplish this.

Someone has testified; "It is not hard to live the fasted life when the will is made up to do so. Determine to receive what God has for you. Live the fasted life, with prayer, for deliverance from every infirmity in the body temple. God will be thy sufficiency!"

The need of fasting for a day, or three days, or a month, may be determined by one's desperate circumstances or one's desire to commune with God.

During a fast some people drink only water. Others take various kinds of fluid such as fruit juices, broth, skim milk. Personally, I find it difficult to drink only water so prefer a bouillon cube in hot water. Or, if you want to cleanse your

system, you might find grape juice diluted in water to be effective.

Just remember your physical body is a wonderful gift from God. Too often we are overfed and the body is poisoned by the refined foods such as white flour and white sugar which can deteriorate the system. While fasting is not a cure, it is a Scriptural means whereby one can attain physical as well as spiritual results.

If you have any questions about fasting, see your family doctor. But don't neglect one of the secrets of God's Word as to how you can attain spiritual victories never dreamed possible.

A person wrote to me about problems of demonic oppression which he was experiencing. I wrote back to suggest a time of prayer and fasting. His reply is as follows: "I want to thank you for your wonderful letter of advice and counsel you sent last month concerning oppression by the devil and demons. You are the first pastor I've written to in the last 15 years that's really given me any advice about how to deal with the problems in my life. Most people I've ever written or talked to didn't seem to have the faintest idea about what I could do to overcome the problems in my life. You stated in your letter that I should fast four days. I never knew anything about fasting. I must say during those four days God was very close to me."

Another testifies to the power of prayer and fasting. She writes: "My husband has been unsaved for ten years. I have prayed for him a long time, but when I fasted ten days, the Lord heard my cries and saved him in a glorious manner. Fasting and prayer did immediately what I have been waiting ten years for. I am so happy to know there is more for us through this hidden truth."

In NEWSWEEK magazine is a report of one who testifies that when you fast, you are on nature's operating table. He writes: "During my fast, I was more at peace with myself. On the fourth day, I began to enjoy sensations around me which I had not been attuned to before. I'd wake up in the middle of the night and I could think deeply for long periods of time."

Again, as a personal testimony, I might relate how this broadcast was brought into being during a time of prayer and fasting. I give God all the glory for ever bringing me to a place where, following a time of physical affliction, I declared I couldn't do anything - I was so weak and helpless. But then the Lord healed me and called me to this broadcast which today is heard on a thousand radio stations.

I will not promise that fasting will do this for everyone. But being led of the Spirit of God and coming to know the

will of God more clearly can result from periods of fasting and prayer.

Today, during days of crises, we do well to heed the word of God through the Prophet Joel who writes: "Therefore... saith the Lord, turn ye even to me with fasting. Sanctify a fast!"

If there is sin in our lives, then fasting may be to no avail until we first repent and get right with God and with our fellow man. Jeremiah writes of those who fast but whose hearts are not right. Saith the Lord, "When they fast, I will not hear their cry." (Jer. 14:12)

In view of the coming of the Lord, we would do well to heed this message. Rather than live the life of luxury, God may be calling us to times of prayer and fasting.

As one testifies: "In the denial of the lustings of the flesh by fasting, we are enlisting our time and energies on the side of the Holy Spirit in His battle against the flesh. Power that is otherwise used to digest food is released to be turned by the Holy Spirit into His power to defeat the enemy." (R. H. Moon in HERALD OF HIS COMING, May, 1975)

Or, as Leonard Ravenhill writes: "It's time to leave the breakfast and the banqueting circuit for the battlefield. We have feasted long enough, now is the time to fast and fight."

Referring to various congresses on evangelism that have been conducted, Ravenhill says, "Now we need a congress on fasting prayer." He asks, "What about 500 ministers meeting for a week of prayer and fasting in the Los Angeles area, another 500 in the Minneapolis area, another 500 in the Chicago area, the same in Philadelphia and New York City?" Notes Ravenhill, "Jesus is coming for a Bride, not for a widow, not for a sick church."

Could it be that some who anticipated the rapture will be left behind when Jesus comes...to fast, to weep and to mourn? Our Lord warned us, saying: "The days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then shall they fast in those days." (Mark 2:20)

We are not telling anyone to fast. But if the Spirit of God is calling you today to repent of sin, or turn to Christ with all your heart in believing faith, or to follow the Lord in baptism, or in fasting...whatever God says in His Word you can do and have the assurance of blessing.

Jesus is coming and He wants those that are ready to meet Him.

"Indeed, be ye therefore ready also, for in such an hour as ye think not, the Son of man cometh."

"AM I MY BROTHER'S KEEPER?"

"We should store food now, for a Famine is likely..." That's the opinion of Scientist Stephen H. Schneider as found in an article in THE NATIONAL OBSERVER. He goes on to say:

"The seriousness of the food issue has largely eluded the public, in part because its complexities have been mired in scientific and technological controversy. We may also have become so weary of prophecies of doom and gloom that we figure that somehow we'll survive this crisis, too, if it comes. I believe, however," says Schneider, "that immediate action must be taken."

"Since the United States and Canada are responsible for much of the world's food exports, the decisions made in North America may well influence the lives of hundreds of millions of people throughout the world.

Schneider then quotes from the Bible where Joseph says to Pharaoh: "Behold, there come seven years of great plenty in the land of Egypt. And then there shall arise after them seven years of famine..."

Whereas in Biblical times the famine affected thousands, today, Schneider notes, "We talk of billions of people."

"Maintaining food security is a plan as old as recorded history. Perhaps, in our age of space travel and mass media, we should relabel this ancient policy, "The Genesis Strategy." Maybe then it might be pursued with new zeal. The lessons of history have been taught." Schneider asks: "Will we ever learn them?"

Southern Baptists meeting in convention, while calling for church members to observe a day of fasting and prayer once a month "for the starving people of the world," likewise called on Baptists to "work to replace any tendency toward hoarding." Instead, the challenge was given to the government and private U.S. agencies to "seek ways to share agricultural technology."

What is the solution to the world's food dilemma? Is it fasting - denying ourselves of food that others may share in the food that is available to a world in need? Should restaurants and hotels cut down on the amount of food being served?

Stan Mooneyham, president of World Vision International, says: "Food portions served in most restaurants far exceed the quantity we need. The amount of uneaten food we send

back to restaurant kitchens would feed millions of hungry people," he observes.

Mooneyham points out that the average American consumes 3,200 calories daily while those in the "fourth world" of starving millions are trying to exist on less than 1,000 calories a day--the minimum needed to keep alive.

By cutting down on the amount of food portions served, restaurants could easily save food and cut waste, thus providing larger food surpluses for overseas aid. It would also strike a significant blow against inflation," he noted.

Allen Hengst suggests fasting as a way to make more food available for the hungry abroad.

Working with CROP, a division of Church World Service, he dramatizes the world food problem by suggesting a 30-hour fast beginning Friday or Saturday noon. Then at the end of the fast, the participants are served a meal. But at this "third world banquet," as he calls it, there are wide disparities in what is served. A third of the group, chosen at random, get the traditional meat and potatoes. Another third gets a single glass of corn-soya milk, a typical aid-program food. And the last third gets a bowl of rice. The idea of the banquet is to have those present enjoying their meat and potatoes to share with those with only milk or rice. Says Hengst: "I honestly believe if the American people could see that other person at the end of their own table, they would share. It is just hard to educate people to see it that way."

How should Christians respond "in light of the inequities in today's world"?

Sen. Mark Hatfield, perhaps the U.S. Senate's best-known Christian spokesman, calls upon other Christians to become involved in feeding the world's hungry. Says Hatfield: "Let us not abdicate this work to agencies which do not have the love and motivation of Jesus Christ." Says Hatfield, "If we really believe that God loved us while we were yet sinners, then we will love the poor and the outcasts of society...because of the cross."

Am I my brother's keeper?

This was the cry of Cain who slew his brother Abel. And it might be the cry today of all those who care not about their starving brethren abroad.

Recently I heard that there is enough food being thrown away in garbage cans to feed all of the starving peoples of Ethiopia and several other countries. May God help us.

Our Lord calls attention to the test of true discipleship for those nations seen entering the kingdom age.

In Matthew 25 we read of a time coming when the Lord shall return in His glory and gather the nations before Him.

To the group on His right hand He shall say, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: Naked and ye clothed me: I was sick and ye visited me: I was in prison and ye came unto me."

Then these righteous shall answer Him, saying, "Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink?" etc.

Our Lord replies, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." (Matt. 25:40)

Senator Hatfield observes that Christ's statements concerning the "coming judgment" are related to feeding the hungry.

He asks: "How dare we present Christ as the bread of life to a hungry man and only be concerned with Christ as the spiritual bread, and not obey Christ by providing the physical bread to meet that man's physical needs of today?"

He further states: "The message of God's redeeming love in Jesus Christ is inseparable from the living witness of the love in each of our lives for other people."

Am I my brother's keeper?

Could it be that selfishness and carelessness so characterize our lives that we show no concern for the needs of others? Should we not have a revival of concern that will do away with the callousness and indifference that characterizes our lives?

If we are true Christians, there should be love and compassion in our lives.

James writes: "If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit?"

James asserts that this kind of faith without works is dead.

So, if we truly believe that Jesus Christ is our Lord and Saviour, and our brethren abroad are hungry and starving and we do nothing about it, we are surely shallow Christians if we are believers at all.

John declares: "Whoso hath this world's goods, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?" (I John 3:17)

Did you hear it?

If we have God's love within us, we will share our love with others. To love your neighbor as yourself is to see him clothed and fed as you are clothed and fed.

While we do not believe in stressing a social gospel that omits the salvation emphasis, we do thank the Lord for ministries such as the World Relief Commission that includes a Gospel witness when distributing food and clothing.

(And we might add - should any contribution be sent to our attention for this purpose - to feed and clothe the world's needy - it will go 100% to that cause.)

We need a John the Baptist to once again appear on the scene. Hear him as he calls the people to repentance.

"What shall we do?" inquires the crowd. John replies: "He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none; and he that hath meat, let him do likewise." (Lu. 3:10)

I can hear someone ask, "What does that have to do with repentance? Is sharing our food and clothing with others an evidence of repentance?"

Most of us think of repentance as being remorse for sin and turning from it. But John relates repentance to our attitude toward those in need.

In the early church following Pentecost, we read how those who were converted shared their possessions with those in need. We read how they sold their houses and lands and laid the amount at the apostle's feet so that distribution was made to everyone who was in need. (Acts 4:35)

In view of the coming of the Lord, should this not be our attitude?

Paul writes: "But this I say, brethren, the time is short: it remaineth, that...they that buy...(be) as though they possessed not." (I Cor. 7:29-30)

Indeed, may we be found living with the knowledge that we are going to leave it all behind when Jesus comes...stocks, bonds, bank accounts. May we live in view of eternal riches - ready to meet the Lord who will greet us with His "well done" if we are found faithful.

Now is the time to get right with God--to turn from sin to trust the Saviour and prepare for our Lord's Coming.

For remember, He hath said, "Be ye therefore ready also, for in such an hour as ye think not, the Son of man cometh."

Prayer and Fasting



In a nation-wide survey, a magazine asked readers to pick their favorite sermon topic from a list of thirteen titles that were given.

The sermon most people said they would like to hear was, "How Can I Make Prayer More Effective." We'd like to talk about this today.

One of the greatest prayer promises in the Bible is found in Mark 11:15, "What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them." WHAT A TREMENDOUS PROMISE made by our Lord.

Just a few days before our Lord gave this promise to His disciples, you will recall, James and John came to Jesus to make of Him a very special request. "Master," they said, "We would that Thou shouldest do for us whatsoever we shall desire."

WHAT? Are James and John out of their minds to make such a blanket-request of our Lord?

Hear again their request: "Master, we would that Thou shouldest do for us whatsoever we shall desire."

Ah! Those are words our Lord loves to hear. He wants His disciples to come to Him. He has said, "He that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out."

Our Lord also wants us to come to Him--anytime--anywhere--with any burden--any problem--any need.

“Come unto Me.” Those are indeed the gracious words of our loving Saviour, not only to the poor lost sinner without hope, but also to the believer who may be stranded with one of life’s many perplexing problems.

“Come unto Me.” James and John, the sons of Zebedee, are here seen coming to Jesus to make of Him this very special request. Listen as we read: “And Jesus said unto them, What would ye that I should do for you?” (So gracious is our Lord, wanting to grant them the desire of their heart.)

James and John say unto Jesus: “Grant unto us that we may sit, one on thy right hand, and the other on thy left hand, in glory.”

We sometimes scorn James and John for making this request. “Who do they they think they are?” some ask. In fact, the other ten disciples were very much displeased with James and John.

We, too, might be displeased with them, except we see the reason WHY these disciples may have made this request. James and John loved their Lord. They wanted to be close to Him always!

In some of the romantic love songs that you hear as you turn the dial of your radio, you hear something like this: “Just to be near you always.” Those are the sentiments expressed, I believe, by James and John who loved the Lord Jesus dearly. This is an admirable characteristic! These men are not to be condemned! Oh, that that desire would be in every one of our hearts!

WHAT AN OFFER made by our blessed Lord--to tell us we can have what we desire!

“Of course,” you say, “there are strings attached.” And you’re right!

To receive the desires of your heart from Jesus, you must be in love with Him, like James and John!

The Bible says, “Delight thyself also in the Lord and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart.”

It’s the “prayer-meeting saint” that gets blessed.

It’s the “Bible-reading Christian” that gets answers to prayer. Jesus said: “If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you ye shall ask what ye will and it shall be done.”

Dear ones, to receive answers to prayers, to receive the desires of our heart, we need to love Him and faithfully serve Him. Then, His promise will be fulfilled which says: “No good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.”

Again, we would observe that your desires must be to the glory of God. Many do not receive the answers to their prayers because they pray selfishly. James says: “Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss that ye may con-

sume it upon your lusts."

Your desires must be to the glory of God! "What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them."

What do you desire today? More money, so you can buy fancy clothes and needless luxuries? Then your request isn't granted.

What is it ye desire? More liquor and more tobacco? Americans should be reminded of the words of the prophet Haggai who writes: "Consider your ways. Ye have sown much, and bring in little; ye eat, but ye have not enough; ye drink, but ye are not filled with drink...and he that earneth wages earneth wages to put it into a bag with holes." Over 15 billions of dollars spent each year on alcohol and tobacco alone--that's three times as much as is given to all of our churches--Protestant, Catholic and Jewish!

Money is needed to support the orphans at home and abroad. In India, there are thousands starving. In Japan, over a million homeless. Around the world, missionaries are crying for more money to evangelize the lost. There is the need for more gospel literature as the communists are sacrificing to get their message into print. There is the constant plea made by evangelists and ministers for funds.

Oh, that we may "desire" to the glory of God. Money spent for Jesus is never wasted; rather, it is an investment for eternity. Thus, God will honor your request for a better job so that you might support a missionary, or a needy orphanage, or a radio broadcast.

The Lord will honor your desire to be healed if it is to the glory of God. Look at the many instances in the Bible where people were healed and read how God was glorified. I believe in healing! God wants to heal when it brings glory to His name.

We read: "When they saw the dumb to speak, the maimed to be whole, the lame to walk, and the blind to see...they glorified God." (Matt. 15:31)

Again: "When the palsied man was healed, the multitude marvelled and glorified God." (Matt. 9:8)

When the widow's son was raised to life, "they glorified God...saying God hath visited his people."

The woman bowed with infirmity for 18 years, suddenly loosed as Jesus healed her, "glorified God."

The leper cleansed, with a loud voice, "glorified God."

Friends, I want you to know that if you are in love with Jesus, if you love His precious Word, and if it would bring glory to God to heal you, the BIBLE SAYS HE WILL DO IT. "What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them."

Ah, yes, some folks pray and their prayers aren't answered immediately, so they become disappointed in our wonderful Lord, or they cease to believe the Lord any longer.

Listen, dear one, your prayers must be persistent.

Remember, Jesus spoke a parable to this end that men ought always to pray and not faint--not give up!

Jesus then told of a widow who went to a certain judge and kept insisting that he relieve her of her adversary. The judge would not hear her at first, but then granted her request on the basis that her continual coming would become wearisome. Says Jesus: "Shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them? I tell you that he will avenge them speedily."

"Nevertheless, when the Son of man cometh," says Jesus, "shall he find faith on the earth." (Luke 18)

Friends, don't give up praying and believing. It took Abraham around twelve years before his prayer for Isaac was answered.

It took Daniel three weeks of fasting and prayer before his prayer was answered.

It took Cornelius four days of fasting and prayer, besides giving alms that brought the answer to his prayer.

NEVERTHELESS, persistency brought results!

Sometimes we need only to ASK. Nevertheless, the promise is--"we shall receive." Sometimes we need to seek. But the promise is--"we will find." Sometimes it is necessary to keep on reverently knocking at the doors of heaven, but the promise is--"it shall be opened unto us."

Oh, for the persistency of Jacob who, wrestling with the angel, said: "I'll not let you go until you bless me." God delights in answering such prayers.

Just to have the gumption of Zacchaeus who ran and even climbed up a tree to see Jesus. Just to have the faith of the men who brought the paralytic to Jesus. Just to believe like the woman with the issue of blood, who cried: "If only I can touch the hem of his garment, I will be healed." Even to believe when all hope is gone, as in the case of Jairus' daughter who lay dying when Jesus was called to go and heal her. Yes, friends, God is a great God! With Him all things are possible.

Remember our text: "What things soever ye desire when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them."