

Praying and Fasting for a Powerful 09 Pt.2

*“Come and Dine in 2009”
“Leave the Plate and 2008”*

Fasting is good for us PHYSICALLY

- This might come as a shock to some of us.
 - * We think that doing without food might be harmful to us.
 - * We buy into this misconception because we have been conditioned to think that we cannot do without three full meals a day and several snacks in between which of course is not true.
 - * In fact fasting is good for us / It gives our digestive systems a rest.

It also purifies our bodies by allowing built up toxins to filter out of our systems.

It also purges our spirit by allowing built up things to filter out of our lives more God and less of world.

[Let's agree together that in 2009 this fast will draw us closer to the Lord, our faith will be strong, that we will see the things of the spirit / and for physical health that sickness and diseases will be healed!]

One writer wrote about fasting this way:

‘Our human cravings and desires are like a river that tends to overflow its banks; fasting helps keep them in their proper channel. More than any other discipline fasting reveals the things that control us’

7.

Prayer / Fasting concerning the Course of History

Acts 13:1-4

“Now there were at Antioch, in the church that was there, prophets and teachers: Barnabas, and Simeon who was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.

And while they were *ministering to the Lord and fasting*, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.

Then, when they had *fasted and prayed* and *laid their hands on them*, they sent them away.

So, being sent out by the Holy Spirit, they went down to Seleucia and from there they sailed to Cyprus”

Hungering for God's Leading in Antioch

* The situation is that Saul (Paul) and Barnabas and some of the other leaders in the church in Antioch were worshiping—ministering to the Lord—and fasting.

Judging by what happened we may assume, I think, that the burden that drove them to fast was this: "Where do we go from here as a church?"

They were fasting to seek the leading of the Holy Spirit in the direction of their mission

* They were hungry enough for God's leading that they wanted to say it with the hunger of their bodies and not just the hunger of their hearts.

* "We want your leading, O God! O Holy Spirit, what is your will for the mission of this church?"

Four Observations

Consider four observations the example of Fasting and Prayer in Acts 13

1. This fasting was after Christ's coming [It's for today]

I simply point this out lest someone say that fasting was a part of the Old Testament spirituality but not of New Testament spirituality.

8.

2. By a Group Together

- * This fasting was a corporate time of Fasting and Prayer
- * Another concern with fasting is that Jesus warned against fasting to be seen by men ([Matthew 6:17-18](#))
- * He said, "Your Father who sees in secret will reward you."
- * But Saul and Barnabas evidently do not take Jesus to mean that group fasting is evil, even though people often know you are fasting when you are doing it as part of a group.
- * Church leaders at Antioch take Jesus to mean not that we sin if someone knows that we are fasting, but that *we sin if our motive* is to be known for our fasting so that men applaud us.
- * Group fasting has marked God's people all through biblical and post-biblical history.

3. An Occasion for the Spirit's Special Guidance

- * This time of Fasting and Prayer proved to be an occasion for the Spirit's special guidance.

Verse 2 says,

“And while they were *ministering to the Lord and fasting*, [While they were **worshipping the Lord and fasting**] the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them."
3 Then, when they had *fasted and prayed* and laid their hands on them, they sent them away”

- * In reporting it this way, Luke clearly wants us to see a connection between the worship, prayer, and fasting on the one hand, and the decisive guidance of the Holy Spirit on the other.

I would say that this teaches us the value of worship-fasting-prayer in the earnest pursuit of God's will for our lives and the life of our church.

4. Changed the Course of History

This fasting changed the course of history

- * It is almost impossible to overstate the historical importance of this moment in Antioch in the history of the world.
- * Before this word from the Holy Spirit there seems to have been no organized mission of the church beyond the eastern seacoast of the Mediterranean.

9.

* Before this, Paul had made no missionary journeys westward to Asian Minor, Greece, or Rome, or Spain.

* Before this Paul had not written any of his letters which were all the result of his missionary travels beginning here.

This moment of prayer and fasting resulted in a move of God that would make Christianity the dominant religion of the Roman Empire within two and a half centuries and would yield 1.3 billion adherents of the Christian religion today with a Christian witness in virtually every country of the world.

* **13 out of the 29 books of the New Testament** were the result of the ministry that was launched in this moment of prayer and fasting.

* I think it is fair to say that God was pleased to make worship and prayer and fasting the launching pad for a move of God that would change the course of world history.

Acts 13:1-3—worship, prayer, and fasting

[Let's agree together that in 2009 this fast will draw us closer to the Lord, our faith will be strong, that this fast will change the course of history, that things will be changed, ministries will be launched, souls will be saved!]

Prayer and Fasting touched this world

1. Moses fasted and prayed for Israel

[Deuteronomy 9 and 10]

2. David's fast as he lamented over Saul's death

[2 Sam. 1:12]

10.

3. David's fast as he lamented over Abner's death

[2 Sam. 3:35]

4. David's fast as he lamented over his child's sickness

[2 Sam. 12:16]

5. Elijah's 40-day fast after he fled from Jezebell

[Kings 19:7-18]

6. Ahab's fast as he humbled himself before God

[1 Kings 21:27-29]

7. Darius's fast as he was concerned over Daniel's fate

[Dan. 6:18-24]

8. Daniel's fast as he read Jeremiah's prophecy and prayed for Judah's sins

[Dan. 9:1-19]

9. Daniel's fast as he prayed over a mysterious vision God had given him

[Dan. 10:3-13]

10. Esther's fast as she sorrowed over Haman's wicked plot to destroy her - people –

[Esther 4:13-16]

11. Ezra's fast as he wept over the sins of the returning remnant -

[Ezra 10:6-17]

12. Nehemiah's fast as he wept over the broken-down walls of Jerusalem

[Neh. 1:4-2:10]

13. The Ninevites' fast after they heard the preaching of Jonah

[Jon. 3]

14. Anna's fast as she awaited the Messiah

[Luke 2:37]

11.

15. Jesus' 40-day fast before the temptation

[Matt. 4:1-11]

16. John's disciples' fast

[Matt. 9:14-15]

17. The elders' fast in Antioch, prior to the sending out of Paul and Barnabas - [Acts 13:1-5]

18. Cornelius's fast as he sought out God's plan of salvation

[Acts 10:30]

19. Paul's three-day fast after his experience on the Damascus Road

[Acts 9:9]

20. Paul's 14-day fast while on a sinking ship

[Acts 27:33-34]

Conclusion

One reason that fasting and prayer is so important...so valuable...is that it is literally life-changing

The first thing that fasting and prayer changes...is US

- * Fasting and Prayer changes our attitudes.
- * It changes is the way we feel about a situation.
- * It changes the way we look at the trials and tribulations of life.

God is the REAL THING when we spend time with Him through fasting and prayer, His nature rubs off on us.

It impacts us...changes us...like nothing else will