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Benefits Of Fasting

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As we are beginning a new year we are setting aside a period of ten days for a time of fasting. The importance of fasting has been something that we as a congregation have participated in for the past few years. However, the kind of fast has always been the choice of the person involved and not a definite kind of fast from the Lord. Choosing whatever it may be that you fast, is up to the one making the choice. These fasts are not total fasts, nothing but water and no food, but can be what the person involved has chosen. Fasting something, ie: sweets, fast food or wasted time. Spending that time in prayer, bible study and reading the word, for a period of days can be very beneficial to you.

There are many different concepts and teaching on the subject of fasting, in the church world. There are many questions asked regarding the kinds of fasts and the length of time should there be a fast. Scripture mentions fasts that last 3 days, 10 days, 21 days, 40 days either with no food or little food or different kinds of foods. In the book of Daniel, we find the 10 days that the Hebrew children fasted leaving off certain types of food, and later in chapter 10 we find the 21 day fast that Daniel participated in. After 10 days they found the children were many times wiser and healthier than the other people who were living in the king's palace.

Matt 17:19-21 "Then came the disciples to Jesus apart, and said, Why could not we cast him out? 20 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. 21 Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by *prayer and fasting." KJV

Jesus is speaking to the disciples regarding a man who had come to Him asking for help with his demonic son who was continually tortured by demons. Jesus had just finished ministering to the disciples on the mount of transfiguration where Moses and Elijah had been seen. The disciples were unable to help the son and Jesus told

them that it was because of unbelief that they were unable to do anything. Maybe because of the business of the disciples in their ministry, they were not spending time in prayer and with God, that they could do nothing to help. It was Gods plan that nothing would be impossible to the disciples. Unbelief was not the only thing that caused the disciples to not be able to cast the demon out, it also involved prayer and fasting.

Matt 10:1 "And when he had called unto him his twelve disciples, he gave them power against unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease" KJV

They had been given the power but were just not walking in it. This is basically where the majority of the church fails, they have been born again and after being baptized with the Holy Spirit have received power but are not walking in that power. For some reason we don't walk in the light of that power, there can be many things involved in this as to why it may happen, not having discipline, not spending time with the Lord, other interests, just the business of life, these things will all keep our spirit from being tuned up. When we quit doing what we know to do, praying, reading and renewing our minds, spending time with the Lord, even though we have been endued with power and authority it makes a difference in our lives. Immediately the devil will come and try to steal what we have.

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. 17 But thou, **when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face; 18 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." KJV

*Old Testament type of fasting ** New Testament type of fasting

In the Old Testament prayer is always linked with fasting. The Old Testament fast is different than the fast mentioned in the New Testament but both include prayer.

*Prayer and fasting is an antidote to unbelief. Fasting does not only deal with food, but is important what kind of fast is being required by the Lord. There were certain guidelines involved with fasting in the Old Testament, see verse 16 in the above scriptures. Verse 17 tells what is required in the New Testament. Fasting can be done with wrong motives but in the following scriptures the purpose of the fast is taught. Jesus has outlined the purpose of the fast that He wants, why and the result of the fruit of that fast. When the fast is done the right way, there will be a reward.

Isa 58:3-6 "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 labours. 4 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. 5 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? *6 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?" KJV

The fast mentioned in the above scripture, verses 3 thru 5 is the fast that God had not chosen, how it was being done and the results of it were not a good thing, in verse 6 God tells of the kind of fast that He would choose and what the results of that fast would be.

Jesus, Moses and Elijah each participated in a 40 day fast, and when they came out of the fast, they came out with a fresh anointing and power. Elijah came out with no fear, he had been fearful for his life and the threats that had been made to him. Daniel chose a 21 day fast eating no pleasant food.

Daniel 10: 2-3 "In those days I Daniel was mourning three full weeks. 3 I ate no pleasant bread, neither came flesh nor wine in my mouth, neither did I anoint myself at all, tell three whole weeks were fulfilled." KJV

Fasting is a New Testament principle. Jesus was asked by the Pharisees and John's followers why the disciples did not fast, His response was that while the bridegroom was with them, there was no need, but when He was taken away, in that day they would fast.

1 Tim 4:3-6 "Forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth. 4 For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving: 5 For it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer. 6 If thou put the brethren in remembrance of these things, thou shalt be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine, whereunto thou hast attained." KJV

Paul is writing to Timothy what the Holy Spirit is revealing to him, that people will depart from the faith, becoming hypocrites, listening to wrong things, seducing spirits and doctrines of devils, backsliding, their consciences won't be working because they are so seared. But Paul is telling him that everything that God has created is to be received with thanksgiving that there is nothing to be refused. This

why we give thanks over our meals, it is sanctified by Gods word and prayer. He is not teaching about fasting in this scripture.

A 3 day fast will bring direction, not at the time, but it follows up. A true New Testament fast needs to be directed by the Holy Ghost when going without food and taking only water. God does not change because of our fast, we are the ones making the change, we become more aware of spiritual things. God is far more pleased with a disciplined life than a fast. Gods desire is to see a change in our lives, being able to help someone else. We make resolutions because we know there needs to be a change in our lives, the New Testament fast will enable us to break free from those things that are holding us captive.

Isa 58:3-14 "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 labours. 4 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. 5 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? 6* 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? 7 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? 8 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 reward. 9 Then shalt thou call, and the Lord shall answer; thou shalt cry, and he shall say, Here I am. If thou take away from the midst of thee the yoke, the putting forth of the finger, and speaking vanity; 10 And if thou draw out thy soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul; then shall thy light rise in obscurity, and thy darkness be as the noon day: 11 And the Lord shall guide thee continually, and satisfy thy soul in drought, and make fat thy bones: and thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not. 12 And they that shall be of thee shall build the old waste places: thou shalt raise up the foundations of many generations; and thou shalt be called, The repairer of the breach, The restorer of paths to dwell in. 13 If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable; and shalt honour him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words: 14 Then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it." KJV

v. 6 this is the fast that God has chosen, will loose, remove heavy burdens, breaking yokes

v. 7 find someone who is less fortunate, feeding and clothing them, you do without if necessary in order to help someone else, when we give of something we need, it becomes a true sacrifice

v. 14 an amazing reward from the Lord will be received

"To unbind the tight cords of lawlessness and unloose the bands of the yoke and let the crushed or the broken go free and every yoke you tear off." Rotherham

There is something about a true fast done with the right motive and purpose in mind that will enable us to break loose from chains and bondages or habits that are destructive. If you are struggling and want to be free, a true fast will get the job done. The first principle for freedom in any area is that you want to be free. Getting control of your flesh, don't hide in pride and deny that there is something you should be doing, your confidence will be built up, taking authority and speaking forth those things that you are believing to be done.

Write down what you are expecting to receive from God because of entering into a time of fasting. Listen to the Holy Ghost for the direction that you should be going.