



## Inner Growth - Fast 2

**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?**

*Isaiah 58:6*

**Fellowship** - 1 Corinthians 1:9

**Abstinence** - 1 Thessalonians 5:22

**Spiritual** - 1 Corinthians 15:46

**Time** - Ecclesiastes 3:7

What is a fast? Most earthly people would think speed first: moving quickly. However, from a dietary perspective, it would be abstaining from food or water, depending on the circumstance. Why do believers fast? The most popular reason in the past was to gain something, resolve a matter, or overcome a crisis.

The three types of fasts in the Bible are normal fast, absolute fast, and partial fast. The ordinary fast is abstaining from all food, solid or liquid, but not from water. Next is the absolute fast: abstaining from both food and water. However, this fast should not be for more than three days, for the kidneys may start to shut down and the body to dehydrate or dry out. The third

is the partial fast, a diet rather than complete abstinence.

From a godly outlook, the purpose of a fast is to minister or build up spirituality. It is not for getting physical things but for attaining holy things. However, if these earthly things hinder our spiritual development and relationship with God, then believers should be encouraged because the Lord knows the hearts of His people. He sees what is inside and can determine motives and future intentions. No human being can fool God because He made us.

The first time a fast appears in the Bible is in the Second Samuel of the Old Testament. David was doing this in chapter twelve, verse sixteen: "David, therefore, besought God for the child; and David fasted, and went in, and lay all night upon the earth." The child was sick and died despite David's efforts.

The result will not always be what we expect. After all, God knows best for every situation, especially for David. The child was born as a result of lust and adultery. If the Lord allowed the baby to live, he would grow up and be bothered by the public and label him as "a child born out of adultery." The people around him would keep reminding him how he came into existence.

A Fast is to fellowship with the Almighty God. In Second Chronicles twenty, verses one through two, Jehoshaphat faced a crisis in his life. He encounters a seemingly impossible circumstance from a large group of people coming to battle against him. In verse three, he seeks the Lord through fasting and gathers others to pray and fast in the next verse. An example prayer of his approach to the matter in fellowship with God begins from verses six through twelve.

**"And said, O LORD God of our fathers, art not thou God in heaven? And rulest not thou over all the kingdoms of the heathen? And in thine hand is there not**

power and might, so that none is able to withstand thee?"

"Art not thou our God, *who* didst drive out the inhabitants of this land before thy people Israel, and gavest it to the seed of Abraham, thy friend forever?"

"And they dwelt therein, and have built thee a sanctuary therein for thy name, saying,

If, *when* evil cometh upon us, as the sword, judgment, or pestilence, or famine, we stand before this house, and in thy presence, (for thy name *is* in this house) and cry unto thee in our affliction, then thou will hear and help."

"And now, behold, the children of Ammon and Moab and Mount Seir, whom thou wouldest not let Israel invade when they came out of the land of Egypt, but they turned from them, and destroyed them not;

Behold, *I* say, *how* they reward us, to come to cast us out of thy possession, which thou hast given us to inherit."

"O our God, wilt thou not judge them? For we have no might against this great company that cometh against us; neither knows we what to do, but our eyes *are* upon thee."

"And all Judah stood before the LORD, with their little ones, their wives, and their children."

After the fast and prayer, in verses fourteen through eighteen, "Then upon Jahaziel, came the Spirit of the Lord in the midst of the congregation:

And he said, Harken ye, all Judah, and ye inhabitants of Jerusalem, and thou king Jehoshaphat, Thus saith the LORD unto you, Be not afraid nor dismayed by reason of this great multitude; for the battle *is* not yours, but God's."

"To morrow go ye down against them: behold, they come up by the cliff of Ziz, and ye shall find them at the end of the brook before the wilderness of Jeruel."

"Ye shall not *need* to fight in this *battle*: set yourselves, stand ye *still*, and see the salvation of the LORD with you, O Judah and Jerusalem: fear not, nor be dismayed; to morrow go out against them: for the LORD *will be* with you."

"And Jehoshaphat bowed his head with *his* face to the ground: and all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem fell before the LORD, worshipping the LORD."

Jehosophat put his trust in the Lord and His Word, as in verse twenty, "And they rose early in the morning, and went forth into the wilderness of Tekoa: and as they went forth, Jehoshaphat stood and said, Hear me, O Judah, and ye inhabitants of Jerusalem; Believe in the LORD your God, so shall ye be established; believe his prophets, so shall ye prosper."

Then Joshosophat gave thanks to the Lord in verses twenty-one and twenty-two, "And when he had consulted with the people, he appointed singers unto the LORD, and that should praise the beauty of holiness, as they went out before the army, and to say, Praise the LORD; for his mercy *endureth* forever. And when they began to sing and to praise, the LORD set ambushments against the children of Ammon, Moab, and mount Seir, which were come against Judah; and they were smitten."

The fellowship of Jehoshaphat is an example for all believers because he treated God as though He was right beside him and with him, which is a way believers should believe. Jehoshaphat's activity of worshipping the Lord after receiving the Word of the Holy Spirit through Jahaziel, following through with doing what was said by the Spirit of God, and singing and praising God while doing it moved God to manifest on their behalf with the result.

A fast is a restraint from the physical desires that would surface. Christians

today fast from eating food and water, and that is a spiritual victory. However, to excel and draw closer to God is to abstain from physical activities associated with the world, especially during a fast. Remember, the goal for each believer is to allow the inner being to lead and not flesh. "For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would," as in Galatians five, verse seventeen.

For a believer to shun from all appearance of evil during a fast will take desire and help from the Lord. The hobbies and all physical delightful things that create fleshly enjoyment while seeking God with the inner being will be a test. The outer side is the flesh, which the devil uses against all, including believers. Anything ungodly that the godly people allow through their eyes and ears opens the opportunity for the enemy to have access. In the Bible, fasting refers to disciplined abstaining from food for spiritual purposes. Although often linked with prayer, fasting is a spiritual discipline all on its own. It is a continuous prayer without words. **Fasting with prayer** has several purposes: to honor God, as in Zechariah seven, verse five, Luke two, verse thirty-seven, and Acts thirteen, verse two. To humble ourselves before God, as in Ezra eight, verse twenty-one, Psalms sixty-nine, verse ten, and Isaiah fifty-eight, verse three.

Another benefit is to experience more grace in First Peter five, verse five, God's intimate presence, as in Isaiah fifty-seven, verse fifteen, chapter fifty-eight, verses six through nine, to mourn over personal sin and failure, as in First Samuel seven, verse six, and Nehemiah nine, verses one to two, and to seek grace for a new task and to reaffirm our consecration to God, as in Matthew four, verse two. To seek God by drawing near to Him and persisting in prayer against opposing

spiritual forces, as in Judges twenty, verse twenty-six, Ezra eight, verses twenty-one, twenty-three, and thirty-one, Jeremiah twenty-nine, verses twelve through fourteen, Joel two, verse twelve, Luke eighteen, verse three, Acts nine, verses ten to nineteen. To show repentance and so for God to make a way to change His declared intentions of judgment, as in Second Samuel twelve, verses sixteen and twenty-two, First Kings twenty-one, verses twenty-seven to twenty-nine, Jeremiah eighteen, verses seven to eight, Joel two, verses twelve to fourteen, and Jonah three, verses five, and ten. To save people from bondage to evil, as in Isaiah fifty-eight, verse six, Matthew seventeen, verses fourteen to twenty-one, Luke four, verse eighteen, to gain revelation and wisdom concerning God's will, as in Isaiah fifty-eight, verses five to six, verse eleven, Daniel nine, verse three, twenty-one to twenty-two, and Acts thirteen, verses two to three. Fasting can open the way for the outpouring of the Spirit and Christ's return to the earth for His people.

In Matthew nine, verse fifteen, it is clear that Jesus expected believers to fast after He was gone. This age is the time of the bridegroom's absence from His ascension until His return. The church awaits this return of the bridegroom. Therefore, fasting in this age is a sign of the believer's longing for the Lord's return, a way to increase spiritual intimacy with Christ, a placing of His kingdom interests above our own, a heart preparation for the end of the age, and Christ's coming, a mourning of Christ's absence, a sign of sorrow for the sin of the world, and a time of intercession for the unsaved. Fasting benefits more the spiritual than the natural. The bottom portion of First Corinthians fifteen, verse forty-four, gives the basis of humanity. "There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body." Fasting enables the spiritual side of humanity to come alive and the

opportunity to connect with the Spirit of God through salvation through prayer. The natural part of us born in sin is now in control by the Spirit and gains strength in fasting so that God can draw closer to our inner being.

To fast from a dietary perspective will require time. As mentioned earlier, it is a continuous prayer without words.

However, adding prayer with fasting magnifies the spiritual connection with God and intensifies our inner being with the flesh subdued. The things that irritate the believer will be less effective because the Spirit leads and not the flesh: "For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would," in Galatians five, verse seventeen.

What is a fast from a godly perspective? It is abstaining from desirous food and liquid, with water as the substitute to keep the body lubricated (over fifty percent of our body is water). To spiritually connect with God, draw close to Him, and achieve physical discipline. The goal is to let God arise in our life by His Spirit and the power of darkness scatter. Fasting will enable believers to fulfill Ephesians four, verse twenty-seven, "Neither give place to the devil."