

## Sermon to the Saints of God assembled at Topeka, KS: Sunday, August 14, 2016

### Fasting

In recent weeks, I've had several people ask me what the Bible teaches us about fasting. It is a topic that I have considered at various times, and a spiritual remedy that I have employed from time to time in my own life, but I have never done a careful study of the scriptures on the matter. So, I set about to look at every instance of fasting in the Bible, desiring that the Lord would help us all to have a better understanding of what fasting is, what it is not, and how it should apply to our lives.

As I looked into this topic, I encountered about 60 instances of fasting in the scriptures. I'm certain that there are more, but these were the obvious ones. To help me organize the information, I put together a spreadsheet that lists the scripture citation, who fasted, the manner of their fast, the length of it, and the reason / lesson behind it. Doing that little study was very instructive, and took me down a lot of different paths, but I'll try to stay focused on the central topic for today.

I hope you will come away from this discussion with a better understanding of the following:

- What is fasting?
- Why do people fast? (Both flesh and spiritual reasons)
- Should Christian's in the New Testament church fast?
  - If so, when, how, and for how long should we fast?

Let's start by laying a little bit of groundwork about what fasting actually is:

- Definition:
  - Dictionary: To abstain from all food; To eat only sparingly or of certain kinds of food.
  - Strong's: To abstain from food; Not having eaten.
- So, in the most common application, it just means that you go for a period of time without eating any food. A more extreme version is that you don't eat or drink anything, and a less extreme version is that you greatly restrict what you eat to only certain things (e.g. Daniel eating only pulse at Daniel 1:8-16).

Why do people fast in the flesh?

- People fast for a variety of reasons, which can all be good reasons to fast, but none of them are the type of scriptural, spiritual fasting that we are focused on today. A few examples of those reasons that people fast:
  - Sleep; We all fast every night, and break that fast at breakfast.
  - Don't have any food, can't get to any food, or can't afford food.
  - Too busy, or preoccupied to eat, or stressed to eat.

- Illness.
- Preparing for a medical procedure.
- For reasons of bodily health. Some people use fasting to try to reset their bodies, to eliminate toxins, to jump start a change in behavior or diet, or as a part of a diet (e.g. “juice fast”). The older you get, the more you have to struggle with the failings and weaknesses of this decaying body of sin. To moderately eat, moderately exercise, and moderately make use of such things as fasting, is in line with many scriptural instructions, ultimately helping us to keep our bodies under us. By doing such things, we reasonably do what is required to keep our bodies in a state where they are useful for the service of our God. Although we ultimately do this unto God, and there is much scriptural discussion to have on the matter, it is a different thing than the fasting that we are discussing today.

Our focus today isn't upon the mere act of fasting, but is on the spiritual exercise, the sacrifice that is offered unto God, by a soul in need. Let us then consider some scriptural examples of fasting, with an eye toward why, and how someone would fast.

- While we look at these examples, I would propose to you that the scriptures show us that there are at least a few elements that must always exist in this type of fast:
  - Prayer – scriptural fasting is primarily a spiritual exercise, and prayer is absolutely linked to it. You cannot be fasting with an eye toward God without keeping your heart focused in prayer.
  - Purpose – this exercise isn't a random thing; a person has a purpose in their heart when they seek the Lord in this manner.
  - Self denial and self affliction – the physical affliction that comes with fasting, is an aid to this spiritual exercise – it helps us to frame our hearts in focused prayer - whereby we turn our attention away from earthly things, and our reliance upon them, and put our attention on God and eternal things.
  - This self denial extends beyond just food.: **1Corinthians 7:3-5 “3 Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence: and likewise also the wife unto the husband. 4 The wife hath not power of her own body, but the husband: and likewise also the husband hath not power of his own body, but the wife. 5 Defraud ye not one the other, except it be with consent for a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your incontineny.”** So here we see that the marriage bed (a thing that we clearly have an affirmative duty to utilize) is to be suspended when we are setting aside time to fast and pray. How much more so should we then set aside vain recreation during such times.

Day of Atonement

**Leviticus 23:27-32** “27 Also on the tenth day of this seventh month there shall be a day of atonement: it shall be an holy convocation unto you; and ye shall afflict your souls, and offer an offering made by fire unto the LORD. 28 And ye shall do no work in that same day: for it is a day of atonement, to make an atonement for you before the LORD your God. 29 For whatsoever soul it be that shall not be afflicted in that same day, he shall be cut off from among his people. 30 And whatsoever soul it be that doeth any work in that same day, the same soul will I destroy from among his people. 31 Ye shall do no manner of work: it shall be a statute for ever throughout your generations in all your dwellings. 32 It shall be unto you a sabbath of rest, and ye shall afflict your souls: in the ninth day of the month at even, from even unto even, shall ye celebrate your sabbath.”

God here commands this “Day of Atonement”; every year, on this day, the Jews were to afflict themselves in acknowledgement of their sinfulness, and as a sign of true penitence, and their utter reliance upon the mercy of God. It is commonly understood that the primary outward means of afflicting their souls was fasting for this full day. Appropriately, God commanded this afflicting, and penitence as a precursor to the full week of feasting during the Feast of Tabernacles, which was to be observed 5 days later, wherein we see the redeemed, penitent sinner returned to communion, peace, and joy with God. This is the only fast that God commands in the Law of Moses; over time, the Jews added lots of other fasts to their calendar, but they were not ordered of God. They would have done well to observe the spirit of this fast, and set additional fleshly rituals aside.

#### The afflicting hand of God in the wilderness: fasting by force

**Deuteronomy 8:1-9** “1 All the commandments which I command thee this day shall ye observe to do, that ye may live, and multiply, and go in and possess the land which the LORD sware unto your fathers. 2 And thou shalt remember all the way which the LORD thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments, or no. 3 And he humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the LORD doth man live. 4 Thy raiment waxed not old upon thee, neither did thy foot swell, these forty years. 5 Thou shalt also consider in thine heart, that, as a man chasteneth his son, so the LORD thy God chasteneth thee. 6 Therefore thou shalt keep the commandments of the LORD thy God, to walk in his ways, and to fear him. 7 For the LORD thy God bringeth thee into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and depths that spring out of valleys and hills; 8 A land of wheat, and barley, and vines, and fig trees, and pomegranates; a land of oil olive, and honey; 9 A land wherein thou shalt eat bread without scarceness, thou shalt not lack

**any thing in it; a land whose stones are iron, and out of whose hills thou mayest dig brass.”**

Here, God spells out the fact that he humbled and afflicted the children of Israel while they were in the wilderness, primarily by giving them periods without food and without water – forcing them to fast. He did it for the express purpose that he would cause them to recognize their reliance upon Him for all things. God Almighty most often makes use of the natural world to supply our needs – the natural world that HE CREATED AND CONTROLS – but he doesn’t have to use the natural world; he can provide for us with a mere word from his mouth! In our prideful, short-sighted flesh, we are prone to forget that, and to take for granted the workings of the natural world, and to rely upon them for our sustenance and satisfaction. Here, the Lord deprived them of those things, so that he could then provide for them with supernatural sustenance! There’s nothing natural about the manna that he blessed them with, or the process that brought the manna to them each morning. We should recognize, and stir each other up continually to remember that God can AND DOES provide for us however he desires, and that it is always him, and never us, or any other power, that does the providing.

*Calvin: “Inasmuch as they were sometimes made to suffer hunger in the wilderness, he proves the advantage of this discipline, because they thus learnt that the human race does not live by bread and wine alone, but by the secret power of God. For though all confess that it is through God’s goodness that the earth is fruitful, still their senses are so tied to the meat and drink, that they rise no higher, and do not acknowledge God as their Father and nourisher, but rather bind Him down to the outward means to which they are attached, as if His hand, of itself, and without instruments, could not effect or supply anything. Their perception, therefore, that the fruits of the earth are produced by God, is but a cold notion, which speedily vanishes, and does not cling to their memory. The power of God, as well as His goodness, is indeed abundantly manifested in the use of His creatures, which we naturally enjoy; but the depravity of the human mind causes that the testimonies of it act like a veil to obscure that bright light. Besides, the majority of mankind think of God as if banished afar off, and dwelling in inactivity as if He had resigned His office in heaven and earth; and hence it arises, that trusting in their present abundance, they implore not His favor, nay, that they pass it by as needless; and, when deprived of their accustomed supplies, they altogether despair, as if God’s hand alone were insufficient for their succor.”*

This passage in Deuteronomy should sound familiar, given that this is the passage that Jesus Christ is quoting in Matthew 4:

### Jesus in the wilderness

**Matthew 4:1-4 “1 Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. 2 And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he**

was afterward an hungred. 3 And when the tempter came to him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread. 4 But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.”

We see here that Jesus was led of the Holy Spirit into the wilderness, and was sustained for 40 days and nights without food, in what appears to be a supernatural way. When that period was over, and Christ was standing hungry in his flesh, Satan’s temptation is this: God has now forsaken you, so you must declare him unfaithful, and take matters into your own hands - provide for yourself. You see then that Christ is magnifying the point that we just discussed regarding the passage in Deuteronomy 8: God just provided for me for 40 days by supernatural means – I will not faithlessly, unlawfully take matters into my own hands – even if every kind of food was unavailable to me, I would trust God, since his blessing alone is enough to sustain my life.

A couple of other notes on this passage:

- In the “survival” world, there is a saying called “the rule of threes”: An average human cannot survive more than 3 minutes without air, 3 hours without shelter (in extreme conditions), 3 days without water, and 3 weeks without food. Obviously there are variables that can change those numbers, and in fact there are people in this room who have fasted for more than 21 days, and even more than 40 days. However, it is very difficult to fast for so long, and very dangerous, if not deadly.
- There are 3 instances in the scriptures where a person fasted for 40 days, and I believe that they were each supernaturally maintained during those times.
  - Moses, while in Mount Sinai receiving the 10 Commandments (**Exodus 34:28**). He ate no bread OR WATER. There is no way that his natural flesh could have survived that.
  - Elijah fled to the wilderness after having killed the 400 prophets of Baal, and was there fed by an angel, and went on that strength for 40 days and nights. (**1Kings 19:8**) Again, there appears to be supernatural sustenance here, given that he had just slaughtered 400 people, and then run a marathon faster than a chariot! I’m thinking a little bit of bread and water isn’t going to be enough to naturally recover his strength, much less sustain him for an additional 40 days.
  - Christ, in our text at Matthew 4. There is a peculiar phrase here: “He was afterward an hungred”. That seems to imply that he was not “an hungred” during the 40 days of the fast, but that his body was sustained until the end of the 40 days, and then again made to hunger for natural food. I don’t believe that the point of these three events is to teach us that we need to fast for 40 days.

Fasting in the midst of affliction, confessing our sin; seeking strength, wisdom, help, and deliverance in the face of peril

There are many instances in the scriptures of people mourning with godly sorrow, confessing their sins in true repentance, and seeking deliverance and mercy from God.

**Judges 20:26 “Then all the children of Israel, and all the people, went up, and came unto the house of God, and wept, and sat there before the LORD, and fasted that day until even, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before the LORD.”**

Here we find the children of Israel seeking the Lord with fasting, prayer, and sacrifices, after 40,000 of them were killed fighting against the tribe of Benjamin in the matter of Gibeah.

**1Samuel 7:6 “And they gathered together to Mizpeh, and drew water, and poured it out before the LORD, and fasted on that day, and said there, We have sinned against the LORD. And Samuel judged the children of Israel in Mizpeh.”**

The children of Israel were here repenting because they had turned to idols.

**2Samuel 12:16-23 “16 David therefore besought God for the child; and David fasted, and went in, and lay all night upon the earth. 17 And the elders of his house arose, and went to him, to raise him up from the earth: but he would not, neither did he eat bread with them. 18 And it came to pass on the seventh day, that the child died. And the servants of David feared to tell him that the child was dead: for they said, Behold, while the child was yet alive, we spake unto him, and he would not hearken unto our voice: how will he then vex himself, if we tell him that the child is dead? 19 But when David saw that his servants whispered, David perceived that the child was dead: therefore David said unto his servants, Is the child dead? And they said, He is dead. 20 Then David arose from the earth, and washed, and anointed himself, and changed his apparel, and came into the house of the LORD, and worshipped: then he came to his own house; and when he required, they set bread before him, and he did eat. 21 Then said his servants unto him, What thing is this that thou hast done? thou didst fast and weep for the child, while it was alive; but when the child was dead, thou didst rise and eat bread. 22 And he said, While the child was yet alive, I fasted and wept: for I said, Who can tell whether GOD will be gracious to me, that the child may live? 23 But now he is dead, wherefore should I fast? can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me.”**

In this sorrowful matter, David sought the Lord while there was yet hope, but once the Lord answered the matter, he contented himself in the Lord’s judgment. To have continued to fast and pray about this matter that the Lord had already concluded would have been only to serve himself, and rebel against God.

**1Kings 21:27-29** “27 And it came to pass, when Ahab heard those words, that he rent his clothes, and put sackcloth upon his flesh, and fasted, and lay in sackcloth, and went softly. 28 And the word of the LORD came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying, 29 Seest thou how Ahab humbleth himself before me? because he humbleth himself before me, I will not bring the evil in his days: but in his son’s days will I bring the evil upon his house.”

**Ezra 10:6** “Then Ezra rose up from before the house of God, and went into the chamber of Johanan the son of Eliashib: and when he came thither, he did eat no bread, nor drink water: for he mourned because of the transgression of them that had been carried away.”

**Nehemiah 9:1-3** “1 ¶ Now in the twenty and fourth day of this month the children of Israel were assembled with fasting, and with sackclothes, and earth upon them. 2 And the seed of Israel separated themselves from all strangers, and stood and confessed their sins, and the iniquities of their fathers. 3 And they stood up in their place, and read in the book of the law of the LORD their God one fourth part of the day; and another fourth part they confessed, and worshipped the LORD their God.”

**Jonah 3:5-10** “5 ¶ So the people of Nineveh believed God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them. 6 For word came unto the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, and he laid his robe from him, and covered him with sackcloth, and sat in ashes. 7 And he caused it to be proclaimed and published through Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles, saying, Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste any thing: let them not feed, nor drink water: 8 But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily unto God: yea, let them turn every one from his evil way, and from the violence that is in their hands. 9 Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not? 10 And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil, that he had said that he would do unto them; and he did it not.”

**Esther 4:3** “And in every province, whithersoever the king’s commandment and his decree came, there was great mourning among the Jews, and fasting, and weeping, and wailing; and many lay in sackcloth and ashes.”

Here we find all of the captive Jews looking down the barrel of certain death at the hands of Haman’s murderous law.

**Esther 4:16 “Go, gather together all the Jews that are present in Shushan, and fast ye for me, and neither eat nor drink three days, night or day: I also and my maidens will fast likewise; and so will I go in unto the king, which is not according to the law: and if I perish, I perish.”**

Esther is preparing to put her life on the line, by approaching the King without having been summoned, in order to plead the cause of the Jews.

**Psalm 35:11-14 “11 False witnesses did rise up; they laid to my charge things that I knew not. 12 They rewarded me evil for good to the spoiling of my soul. 13 But as for me, when they were sick, my clothing was sackcloth: I humbled my soul with fasting; and my prayer returned into mine own bosom. 14 I behaved myself as though he had been my friend or brother: I bowed down heavily, as one that mourneth for his mother.”**

**Daniel 9:3 “And I set my face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes:”**

Here Daniel is humbling himself in fasting and prayer, asking the Lord to do something that He had already promised to do! It is pleasing to the Lord to receive our petitions.

**Luke 2:37 “[Anna the prophetess] was a widow of about fourscore and four years, which departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day.”**

### Self-serving, ritualistic fasting

**1Kings 21:4 “4 And Ahab came into his house heavy and displeased because of the word which Naboth the Jezreelite had spoken to him: for he had said, I will not give thee the inheritance of my fathers. And he laid him down upon his bed, and turned away his face, and would eat no bread.”**

It is a bad mistake to use fasting and prayer as a means to pout at God, because we are discontent, and want something in our lives to be different.

**Isaiah 58:1-7 “1 Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and shew my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins. 2 Yet they seek me daily, and delight to know my ways, as a nation that did righteousness, and forsook not the ordinance of their God: they ask of me the ordinances of justice; they take delight in approaching to God. 3 ¶ 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?"

What good does it do a person to perform a ritual, and then race back to working iniquity? This is the very picture of having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof!

**Jeremiah 14:11, 12** "11 Then said the LORD unto me, Pray not for this people for their good. 12 When they fast, I will not hear their cry; and when they offer burnt offering and an oblation, I will not accept them: but I will consume them by the sword, and by the famine, and by the pestilence."

If they fasted and prayed with a true heart of repentance, then he would most assuredly hear them; but they would not! They fasted and prayed for their own desires, asking amiss, so that they could consume it all upon their lust!

**Zechariah 7:5** "Speak unto all the people of the land, and to the priests, saying, When ye fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh month, even those seventy years, did ye at all fast unto me, even to me?"

We can be the Michael Phelps of fasters, but it avails nothing if the spirit is not right, and if it is not done toward God, and for his glory.

**Luke 18:10-14** "10 Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. 11 The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. 12 I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. 13 And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. 14 I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted."

This Pharisee imagined that fasting was a credential that added to his righteousness.

## Should Christians in the New Testament church fast?

Short answer: of course!

**Luke 5:33:35 “33 And they said unto him, Why do the disciples of John fast often, and make prayers, and likewise the disciples of the Pharisees; but thine eat and drink? 34 And he said unto them, Can ye make the children of the bridechamber fast, while the bridegroom is with them? 35 But the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then shall they fast in those days.”**

While we may have enjoyment in this life, and the Lord certainly appoints many kindnesses and blessing to us, we should not give ourselves over to those things. We can enjoy the good things that the Lord gives us without being conformed to the world. This exercise of fasting and prayer helps us to attain to temperance and moderation; knowing both how to be abased, and how to abound. Beloved, we have much reason for godly sorrow, for mourning, for humility, for affliction – we don’t need to be too eager to be relieved of these things – the day will soon dawn when these things will all fall away, when we see the bridegroom return in power and glory!

**Matthew 17:14-21 “14 And when they were come to the multitude, there came to him a certain man, kneeling down to him, and saying, 15 Lord, have mercy on my son: for he is lunatick, and sore vexed: for oftentimes he falleth into the fire, and oft into the water. 16 And I brought him to thy disciples, and they could not cure him. 17 Then Jesus answered and said, O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you? bring him hither to me. 18 And Jesus rebuked the devil; and he departed out of him: and the child was cured from that very hour. 19 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.”**

This passage shows us that fasting and prayer are a device by which our hearts and minds are brought to a proper perspective of reliance upon God, and not upon the flesh; a refreshing and invigorating of our faith.

**Matthew 6:16-18 “16 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.”**

We are warned not to fast in such a way that makes a show of our piety; don't do it for the applause of men. Certainly it would be difficult, if not impossible to do such a thing without someone knowing, but it should be done as discreetly as possible, given that it is not done unto men, but unto God.

**Acts 13:1-3 “Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. 2 As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. 3 And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.”**

Here we see two separate instances of fasting: these prophets and pastors were fasting and praying together, seeking wisdom from the Lord in their work; and then the same group fasted and prayed together seeking the Lord's wisdom and blessing upon the work that they were sending Paul and Barnabas to do. This shows us that it is appropriate for people to engage in fasting and prayer together; not by compulsion, but because they desire to.

**Acts 14:23 “And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed.”**

Here we find the apostles fasting and praying together.

**Paul's exhortation to the elders at the church in Corinth: “4 But in all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, 5 In stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labours, in watchings, in fastings 6 By pureness, by knowledge, by longsuffering, by kindness, by the Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned, ...” (2Corinthians 6:4-6)**

Paul said that he had been “in fastings often”. (2Corinthians 11:27)

Some conclusions:

- Fasting and prayer is a scriptural, spiritual exercise, and remedy that the Lord has provided us, whereby we draw near to God, by purposefully turning away from earthly things; we should make use of it with thanksgiving.
  - It is not a dead, meaningless ritual, but an active, lively seeking of the Lord; we employ it with an expectation that the Lord will hear our cry, and help us: “The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much” (James 5:16).

- The precise form of it is not spelled out in the scriptures, and is therefore not something that we should try to dictate to anyone; it is a thing that is personal to each of us, and should be employed according to conscience.
  - The spirit of the thing is more important than the precise form. While eating nothing is clearly the primary method, there may be a situation where you feel the need to fast, but complete fasting isn't practical, while some modified form is. This isn't a ritualistic ceremony; do whatever you do with a full heart, unto God.
  - There are many things in our lives that pull our time and thoughts away from God, which we would do well to turn away from for a time, which have nothing to do with food; I believe that the same principles can apply.
  - It is not to be done in a way that makes a show.
- The length of a fast is not the measure of it; while there are some miraculous examples in scripture, the vast majority are short, with most of them being one day.
  - *John Trapp on Ezra 10:6 "It was not then a natural abstinence, arising from sickness, nor a civil, for health's sake, or for some other worldly respect; but a religious fast, which is usually to be held out a whole day (as an old canon hath it), till the stars appear in the sky; yet so as that nature be chastised, not disabled for duty."*
  - It shouldn't be done to the exclusion of our duties; See 1Samuel 14, where Saul commanded a fast for his army as they were entering into battle, by which he "troubled the land", putting them all at risk, and ultimately leading them into sin.
  - If you fast for a long period, and it turns you to an improper spirit, by which your heart has turned to malice, and you are mistreating the people around you - sucking the life out of them - then what have you gained? Be sure that you have not turned a holy pursuit into a prideful idol.

I hope that this has been helpful to you. I love you all.

Amen