

Fasting

But thou, when thou fastest ... fast ... unto thy Father which is in secret ... **—Matthew 6:17-18, KJV**

Many of us may not find the subject of fasting pleasant because it comes down to the disciplined impulse of the Spirit, but its rewards may well exceed our greatest expectations.

Fasting is going without food to achieve a particular end. It is a means to an end. There are nonreligious reasons for fasting: we may fast for health reasons, for example, or people may fast as a protest to get the attention of the authorities and of world opinion. But I do not want to deal with that kind of public demonstration, and neither do I necessarily recommend it.

The Bible gives numerous accounts of fasting for spiritual reasons. It is often a sign of grief and mourning—even of desperation—as in the Book of Esther (chapter 4).

Fasting is not something one does flippantly, with joy or gladness. Yet the New Testament assumption is that the disciples of Jesus should, and in fact do, fast. Jesus said, “Moreover when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance” (Matt. 6:16, KJV).

Moses fasted for forty days. Jesus fasted for forty days. And it was not unusual for David to fast. In Psalm 35:13 he says, “But as for me, when they were sick, my clothing was sackcloth: I humbled my soul with fasting” (KJV).

The apostle Paul says in 2 Corinthians 11:27, “In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often ... ” (KJV).

When we read that people like Moses or David, Paul, or our

Lord Jesus Christ were given to fasting, we may see an answer to the question of why there is such a dearth of spiritual greatness at the present time. And if fasting is something new to us, we must ask ourselves whether God is leading us to engage in this particular spiritual enterprise.

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