

Call to Obedience # 447
PO Box 299 Kokomo, IN 46903 USA
www.schultze.org

Fasting Is Better Than Feasting

As Obedience Is Better Than Sacrifice.

Reimar A. C. Schultze

Beloved of God, I decided many years ago to start fasting regularly. Previously, I had fasted occasionally but not very often. I had preached on it a few times, but the subject had never truly moved my soul. But there was a day when I became a faster. I am now convinced that fasting is to be part of my weekly agenda, my physical condition enabling. I believe that I must fast and pray, as much I must obey or tithe or give beyond my regular tithe.

Once Jesus was asked why His disciples did not fast and here was His response: *Can the children of the bridegroom mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? but the days will come, when The bridegroom shall be taken from them, and then shall they fast* (Matt. 9:15) The bridegroom is taken from us so now it is time to fast. The early church began fasting immediately following the ascension of our Lord! Tradition tells us that the early disciples fasted each Wednesday and Friday until 3:00 pm. This meant that they skipped breakfast and lunch on those days!

Fasting Enables God to Do What He Would Not Do Otherwise!

There are so many things that I want God to do: I want to see certain souls saved and others sanctified; I want to see the tide turn in many spiritual battlefields; I want to see the powers of communism defeated altogether; I want North Korea for Jesus; I want a mighty breakthrough for India because 90% of Indians are still Hindus; I want revival in the United States of America. Then there is the Middle East and Africa and China. God will do through fasting what otherwise He would not do. Remember that! In many of these situations, God would indeed work mightily if we would only add fasting to our prayers.

In Matthew 17, the disciples ran up against a difficult situation. They could not cure a lunatic. They were embarrassed. The father of the lunatic took his case to Jesus and the boy was cured at once. Then Jesus said to His disciples: *Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting* (Matt. 17:21). There it is. First of all, we already know that Jesus was a faster because

He began His ministry with 40 days of fasting. Secondly, we learn from this that some things can only be accomplished with fasting, and thirdly, we learn that there is more power when fasting is added to prayer. The professing church of today clamors for more and more power. She looks for the answer in better programs and methods. No, my friend, it is not there. God needs better men: men who will obey, pray and fast. We keep forgetting that the miracles in the book of Acts would never have happened had the church not fasted twice a week. Let us first look at some biblical examples from the Old Testament to see what God did through fasting which He otherwise would not have done.

Moses: After Israel had made the golden calf, God prepared to destroy disobedient Israel. He told Moses “Let me alone.” But Moses would not. He fasted forty days! God hearkened to Moses and God spared all the people. God turned the children of Israel back into the desert and finally led the young people into the Promised Land. Moses fasted to acquire from God what God would not otherwise have done.

Ezra: This man of God led forty thousand men, women and children to Jerusalem. The king of Babylon loaded them down with wealth as they began their journey. What a target for the bandits and robbers in the unbroken wilderness. Israel was unarmed. How could she get protection. Israel used the time proven method of fasting. They made it through unarmed and unharmed. Glory! Our churches today are armed to the teeth with programs, boards and committees, but they are continually robbed by the enemy. Why not consider beginning a fast in your weekly routine?

Nehemiah: This dear servant heard how the walls of Jerusalem were broken down and its gates were burned with fire. He sat down; he wept, mourned, fasted, and prayed. Then God heard him and the king supplied the materials for his journey. Nehemiah had fasted.

Esther: When crisis hit the Jewish people in Persia, a crisis that was headed for a genocide program of all Jews, Esther said: *Go, gather together all the Jews that are present in Shushan, and fast ye for me, and neither eat nor drink three days... I also and my maidens will fast likewise...* (Esther 4:16). What was the result of this fast? The genocide program was called off, the wrong man, Haman, got out of the palace and the right man, Mordecai, got in. Fasting puts something into the hands of God that will give Him a will to do what otherwise remains undone.

Daniel: For three weeks, Daniel tasted no pleasant food. During this period, he gave himself to extended prayer for the future of God's people. As a result, he was visited by an angel who gave him marvelous insights into the future. Oh, dear ones, just look at the variety of things acquired through fasting!

Joel: In the book of Joel, we read: *...turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting...* (Joel 2:12). God demanded fasting. At another occasion, Joel reads: *Blow the trumpet in Zion, sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly* (Joel 2:15). Notice that there are times when we must fast together.

Jonah: In my opinion, the hero of the book of Jonah is the pagan king of Nineveh. He declared the greatest fast recorded in history. This fast was not only for people, but for cats and dogs, sheep and oxen, horses and goats. He was a pagan king! I never heard of a preacher declaring that kind of fast for his people, a fast for revival or for a city to be convicted. All of our cities are under a similar sentence of damnation as Nineveh was; yet, instead of declaring fasts, we declare feasts: potluck suppers, prayer breakfasts and missions banquets. So then mark this: the greatest revival that ever occurred in the history of the church is Nineveh which was also one of the most wicked cities that there ever was along with Sodom and Gomorrah in Old Testament days. Is there anything too hard for the Lord? Nothing is too hard for the Lord if people add fasting to their prayers. Jesus said: *when the bridegroom shall be taken from them, and then shall they fast* (Matt. 9:15). Who is "they"? They are God's people.

Examples of Fasting in the Christian Era

Study the book of Acts and consider all of its references to fasting. The early church was not feasting; it was fasting and as long as she fasted, she had power! Look at all of the references **Paul** makes to fasting with no references to feasting! The church fathers believed in fasting. **Polycarp** wrote in A.D. 110 about fasting as a powerful tool against the temptations of the flesh. **Tertullian** wrote about it in A.D. 210, proclaiming that Christianity was the religion of fasting and not feasting. **Epiphanius** wrote in the fourth century "that the fast of the fourth and sixth days of the week (Wednesday and Friday), are observed by the Christians throughout the world."

Francis of Assisi was a faster. Thousands were converted under the ministry of this barefooted, singing preacher as he traversed throughout Italy. The fasting of **Savonarola** brought a mighty awakening to Florence. **Martin Luther** fasted for many days as he was translating the Bible into the German

language. **John Calvin** said the following about fasting: "...we practice it either as a restraint on the flesh... or as a preparation for prayers." **John Knox** was a faster. By it and the mercies of God, "...Providence drove Mary Queen of Scots into exile" for her murderous actions. **John Wesley** followed the example of the disciples in fasting twice a week, and this became the practice of the primitive Methodists. Is it any wonder that the day came when a Methodist church was found in every county in the United States. **Charles Finney** often fasted three days in succession. **Jonathan Edwards** sometimes fasted so much that it was difficult for him to stand in his pulpit on Sundays.

Charles Spurgeon, the famous English preacher whose sermons were telegraphed every week from London to New York for the daily newspaper, said: "I am not sure whether we have not lost a very great blessing in the Christian church by giving up fasting." And then he continued by saying: "I can advise brethren to try fasting; it will be good for the health, and it certainly will not harm them. If we only ate about half what is ordinarily eaten, we should probably all of us be in better health, and if, occasionally, we put ourselves on short fasts, not because there is any virtue in that, but in order to get our brains more clear, and to help our hearts to rest more fully upon the Saviour, we should find that prayer and fasting have great power."

These were men of spiritual power. Dear ones, are you ready to start? But remember, fasting is useless until your life is first fully consecrated to God. Begin there now.

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