

# prayer & fasting

## *Fasting Benefits—Physical and Spiritual*

**Matthew 9:14-18**

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*Objective Sentence and Aim:* Everyone should fast because of the spiritual and physical blessings gained through fasting.

*Introduction: Sermon Central:* In Scripture we see several purposes for fasting. It's part of the discipline of self-control; it's a way of demonstrating the fact that we depend on God alone and draw all our strength and resources from Him; it's a way of focusing totally on him when seeking his guidance and help, and of showing that you really are in earnest in your quest; it's also, at times, an expression of sorrow and deep repentance, something that a person or community will do in order to acknowledge failure before God and seek his mercy.

*Pastor Dan:* we must set aside time in our lives when we demonstrate to God that He is more important to us than anything else. We should fast humbling our hearts before the Lord and give our whole being (body, soul, spirit) a rest and refreshing. We should cast our cares unload ourselves of stress and allow the peace of God to rule in our hearts (**Phil.4:6; Col. 3:15** let the peace of God rule).

- #1. **Physical Benefits** (**Is. 58:8** your salvation will come like the dawn, and your wounds will quickly heal)
  - A. **Dr. Paul Bragg:** Fasting is a rite in all religions; the Bible alone has 74 references to fasting. Fasting under proper supervision is absolutely safe.
    1. **Weight Loss** (My sources for the physical benefits are Dr. Paul C. Bragg M.D. Ph.D; in the book *Miracle of Fasting*, and Doctor Allan Cott, M.D *Benefits of fasting*.
      - a. **Pastor Dan:** The Bible does not talk about dieting. God's method of helping us manage our weight is through self control with fasting. (**Matt. 9:14-18** Jesus said ... then they will fast)
      - b. **Dr. Paul Bragg:** There is no easy way to take off fat, and I will not tell you fasting is easy but it does lead to improved dietary habits. It is a regulator, educating the body to consume only as much as is needed. Fasting requires Positive Thinking, and Positive Action, to attain Positive Results.
      - c. **Dr. Paul Bragg:** Every man is not only the "Master Builder" of his character, but he is also the custodian of his health and physical well-being.
    2. **Physical Cleansing** (Turn around at Conserve Chemicals)
      - a. **Franklin Hall:** Fasting purifies and cleanses the body; it permits a balancing of the circulation, absolutely essential to good health; it allows the various eliminating organs to dispose of the effete material from the system, and to

oxidize, or burn up, the useless matter which has accumulated, like ashes in a grate. Fasting is house cleaning for the body.

- b. *Dr. Paul Bragg:* A few days of fasting will coat the tongue with a thick, white, rancid, toxic material that has a terrible odor. In fact, you can scrap the tongue clean, but in a few hours, the heavy toxic coating will return. It is an accurate indication of the amount of putrifying toxic filth, mucus and many other poisons accumulated in the cells of your entire body, which is being eliminated from the inside surface of the stomach, intestines and from all parts and organs of the body. Fasting rids the body of toxins, giving it an internal shower.
- c. *Dr. Paul Bragg:* Fasting is not only the oldest method of fighting physical problems, but the best of all remedies as well, because it has no side-effects. It is the most natural, original process of purifying the body.
- d. *Paul Bragg:* I believe that 99% of all human suffering is caused by wrong and unnatural eating.... Sickness is Nature's way of indicating that you are filled with toxic wastes and internal poison.... In fasting, you are working with Nature to help expel the wastes and poisons you have accumulated in your body. Overeating encourages fermentation and putrefaction, creates discord of harmony, thus inviting millions of microbes to breed in your intestines.

### 3. **Physiological Rest,**

- a. *Pastor Dan:* I've often wondered why our bodies are wearing out before our lives have ended; why are we dying before being buried. Two things that are relevant for us as believers: the first is honoring the Sabbath—and that we should fast, giving our whole being (body, soul, spirit) a rest and refreshing
- b. *Franklin Hall:* Fasting gives the body a much needed holiday, a vacation in which to recuperate. It never occurs to most people that the body seldom has a rest from its ordinary labors. We overtax and overload all the organs with by-products of our wrong living, eating, drinking and thinking. We do not grant these of millions of little cells which labor so incessantly for our physical well-being any rest, no not even a Sabbatical rest.
- c. *Dr. Paul Bragg:* Most people think they can attempt to break all nature's good and just laws of Healthful Living. How very wrong they are...you cannot ever break a natural law. It will break you.
- d. *Dr. Paul Bragg:* Nature will not let you get away with abusing your body. You must pay a big price every time you insult your body with dead and devitalized foods. Of course, you could take some kind of "drug" to deaden your body, but you are living in a fool's paradise if you think you can eat any old thing and then swallow some kind of "pill" and get away with it.
- e. *Pastor Dan:* One of the problems with medication is that we often use it and continue in a self destructive lifestyle that made us sick in the first place.
- f. *Pastor Dan:* We are both spiritual and physical beings. What we do physically affects us spiritually and what we do spiritually affects us physically. Our physical condition can often influence our spiritual lives more than we realize.

### 4. **Healing** (*Fasting is used successfully in the treatment of many physical ills*)

- a. Fasting lowers cholesterol and blood pressure levels,

- b. *Dr. Paul Bragg:* Sickness is nature trying to purify the body from an overload of toxic poison.
- c. *Dr. Paul Bragg:* I do not believe that fasting is a cure for heart trouble. Fasting is a preventive health measure, because it is a cleanser of internal impurities. We help our arteries by keeping them clean and free of substances that prevent the free flow of blood into the heart and through the entire arterial system.

## 5. Fasting gives you peace of mind

- a. *Dr. Paul Bragg:* Fasting works in three ways—you purify your body physically, mentally and spiritually and therefore enjoy super-vitality and super health! Your mind becomes like a sponge which can absorb new facts and knowledge! Greatest of all is the inner peacefulness and spiritual tranquility that make life worth living. Through fasting you find “Peace of Mind”, the greatest and rarest boon of modern life.
- b. Fasting is a calming experience, often relieving tension and insomnia,
- c. Fasting frequently induces feelings of euphoria, a natural high (Jacksonville 4 day fast. During those four days I had a peace of mind, was very sensitive to the needs of others and totally at peace.)

## 6. Compassion and Joy

- c. *Franklin Hall:* I have experienced a sublimation of the Spirit, during a prolonged fast, which is difficult to put into words. It must be experienced to be known. There is a spring to the step, a feeling of joyous release, of gladness which fairly overwhelms one. There is, too, an exaltation of spirit, a broad and more generous sympathy, love and understanding for all things and for all mankind, a feeling of well-being, and of peace with God, with one’s fellowmen and women, with the world, and with all things which are a part of our everyday living.

**More Physical Benefits:** Fasting is a rejuvenator, slowing the aging process. Fasting is an energizer, not a debilitator. Fasting often results in a more vigorous sex life. Fasting aids in the elimination process. Fasting helps to eliminate or modify smoking, drug and drinking addictions

## 2. *Spiritual Benefits* (Mark 9:23 *Anything is possible if a person believes*)

- A. *Franklin Hall:* *Christians with everyday cares of business, job and home are usually so out of tune with the spiritual realm, that it seems practically impossible to get into communion with God. Therefore they are not in a position to contact God about the major problems of their lives, without fasting and prayer.*
  - B. *Pastor Dan:* *There are no spiritual rewards without commitment, prosperity without giving, answers without dedication and ease without sacrifice.*
  - C. *Mahesh Chavda:* *The observation of some kind of fast is important because it shows a desperation and determination to touch the Lord who alone is the source of all healing.*
1. **Peace** (Is. 40:31 *they that wait on the Lord*)
- a. *Bonnie Chavda; The Hidden Power of Prayer and Fasting:* There are two kinds of people. Those who live completely absorbed in the stress and hurried nature of our time; and those who are seeing that scene from a distance and crying out, “My

God, I don't want to be a part of that.” The key to overcoming [this all consuming hurried way of life] is the intimacy borne out of hunger and personal surrender through prayer and fasting

2. **Power** (Mark 9:29 *this kind by prayer and fasting*)
  - a. *Mahesh Chavda*: The disciples failed because there are certain obstructions, challenges, and demonically induced possessions and diseases that will not yield to secondhand authority. The solution for both is found in the final comment Jesus made about the situation—This kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting.
  - b. *Franklin Hall; Atomic Power* : Doubt, unbelief and a lack of faith prevent one from taking off and obtaining the great things that God has for those who will only believe. Many Christians are not getting their prayers answered, are not being healed in answer to prayer, and are not seeing their loved ones saved, just because they fail to have the faith that comes by prayer and fasting. Many pray, but how many follow Jesus' complete formula, and fast with their prayers. Doubts and unbelief disappear through fasting and prayer. The Christian gets his spiritual wings. His or her unanswered prayers become answered. Divine healing becomes an accomplished fact. Jesus is exalted. The fasting Christian becomes a conductor of spiritual and supernatural power. He is enabled to carry on the works of a believer
  - c. *Mahesh Chavda*: Fasting boosts the intensity and effectiveness of your prayer at least tenfold and often a hundredfold! This is why the hidden power of fasting has become such an imperative from the Lord. It's a crucial end-time tool for proclaiming the gospel to the nations with signs and wonders confirming the Word we preach
  
3. **Sanctification** (Is.58:8 *Your righteousness shall...*)
  - a. *Chuck Colson*: So many Christians interpret Christ's words to witness rather than to be a witness. And they see it as an activity instead of what it really is; the state of our being—what you do emerges from who you are.
  - b. *Ro. 8:5* *they who live according to flesh*
  - c. *Mahesh Chavda*: When we are touched by God's glory, the things of earth grow dim in comparison. The closer we draw to Him the more we die. The more we die, the more like Him we become. This is what Paul meant when he said, “As we behold Him we are changed from glory to glory.” If you will pay the price to seek His face in prayer and fasting, then you will experience a life of transformation as you literally put on the strength of the Lord and the power of His might (2 Corinthians 3:18)
  - d. *Watchman Nee*: Fasting is an announcement the soul makes that the body will not rule over it, and it declares there will be no relief until the issues set before

God are resolved in spirit. Fasting does not signal sincerity but rather humbles the soul with dependence upon God (**Ezra 8:21**).

4. **Faith** (**Mk 9:23** *if you can believe all things are possible*)
  - a. **Matthew Henry**: Fasting secures God's power to assist us, it sharpens prayer, it demonstrates humility before God, it controls the body.
  - b. **1 Corinthians 2:4-5** **Leonard Ravenhill**: The world is not waiting for a new definition of the gospel, but for a new demonstration of the power of the gospel.
  - c. **Mahesh Chavda**: Fasting is found throughout the Bible. It always seem to show up when ordinary men and women need extraordinary power, provision and perseverance to overcome impossible odds, enemies or obstructions.
  
5. **Supernatural protection** (**Is. 58:8** *The Lord your guard*)
  - a. **2 Chron. 20:1-3** Jehoshaphat was terrified by this news (a huge army from Edom was marching his way) and begged the LORD for guidance. He also ordered everyone in Judah to begin fasting
  - b. **Esther 4:16** Go and gather together all the Jews of Susa and fast for me. Do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. My maids and I will do the same. And then, though it is against the law, I will go in to see the king. If I must die, I must die
  - c. **Mahesh Chavda**: The key to defeating dark strongholds is twofold: First we must tap the power of the Spirit through the combination of prayer and fasting; and second, we will overcome in the largest battles in this generation only when we pray and fast together and unleash the incredible power of the Body of Christ on its knees.
  - d. **Isaiah 54:17** no weapon
  
6. **Revelation** (**Dan. 10: 2** *In those days I, Daniel, was mourning three full weeks. <sup>3</sup>I ate no pleasant food, no meat or wine came into my mouth, nor did I anoint myself at all, till three whole weeks were fulfilled*)
  - a. **Andrew Murray**: Prayer is reaching out after the unseen; fasting, the letting go of all that is seen and temporal. Fasting helps express, deepens, confirms the resolution that we are ready to sacrifice anything, even ourselves, to attain what we seek for the kingdom of God.
  - b. **Three fasts**: **Normal fast**: no food and water only; **Partial fast**: This Fast emphasizes the restriction of diet [drinking of juices and such] rather than complete abstinence [of any kind of food source; **Absolute fast**: The abstinence from both food and water. **Acts 9:9** Paul neither ate nor drank" for three days. **Ezra 10:6; Esther 4:16**
  
7. **Humility** (**Ps. 35:13** *I humbled myself with fasting*)
  - a. **2 Chron. 7:14; 1 Pet. 5:5-8** **Pastor Dan**: Fasting is a tool helping you to purge yourself of selfish ambition and pride (**Matt. 13:22** *cares of this world*). Fasting enables us to conquer our natural appetites which can hinder us from a fruitful relationship with God. The appetite of acquisition, sex, hunger and control are things we must keep under control.

b. **Deut. 8:3** Humbled you, allowing you to hunger

*Closing and Invitation: Mahesh Chavda:* To the irritation of some and to the delight of others, the godly disciplines of prayer and fasting show up in every nook and cranny of God's Word and in the history of the Church. And everywhere you find prayer and fasting, you find victory in the midst of difficulty, the miraculous invading the impossible, and supernatural intervention permanently diverting natural intention. In other words, God tends to show up in His glory and power whenever and wherever His people set themselves to pray and fast before him.

Riverview and Sister Bird (Eleven day water fast—Pizza Hut)