

IP 9 "FASTING"

Matthew 6:

When I ~~was~~ nine years old we moved into a newhouse and in the kitchen painted in large red letters next to a large red heart were these words, "the way to a man's heart is through his stomch." I thought that was pretty neat to have painted in the kitchen over the stove, "the way to a man's heart is through his stomach." And many of us tonight could testify to the truth of that~~s~~ statement. But you know, I've found that the devil has been operating on that premise for thousands of years. And long before anyone every painted that saying on the wall of our kitcher, the devil discovered that the way to a man's heart is many times through his stomach, through his physical appetite. I think it is interesting to notice that the first temptation that Satan ever leveled against man was at the point of physical appetite. As he brought her to the tree and she looked at the tree and she saw that it was a tree desired and it was good for food and at the very beginning of human history, the devil got to man's heart through his stomach. you discover that when Noah, after having been delivered of that 40 days and 40 nights of God's judgment and after he had made sacrifice to the Lord, that the devil to him through his ph~~y~~sical appetite. And Noah began to drink and he was found by his sons in a drunken stupor. And the devil got to Noah through the abuse of p hysical appetite.

The same thing is true with Isaac and Esau and Jacob. The Bible tells us that Esau soldhis birthright for a morsel of meat. And do you know why his father favored Esau~~s~~ above

his brother? Even though God had rejected Esau from the line, yet his father still favored him above God's choice. Do you know why? Because of the food that Esau put on his father's table.

Over and over again Satan getting through men, getting to men through their physical appetites.

When the children of Isreal had been led out of Egypt and God had given them the law, the Bible tells us that they committed the sin of idolatry and to me it is significant that in I Cor. 10 when Paul talks about the idolatry of the people of Israel, he doesn't say a thing about the golden calf. Now wouldn't you have -- if I had been describing the idolatry of the people of Israel I would have described the golden calf. But Paul never mentions the golden calf, he simply says, "the people ~~xxx~~ sat down to eat and to drink and they rose up to play." And as far as the apostle Paul was concerned that was the substance of their idolatry. Jesus' first temptation from Satan was leveled at the point of physical appetite. "If thou be the son of God command that these stones be turned into bread." Paul says in Phil. 3 that there are a generation of people "whose god is their belly." And that word indicates their physical ~~xxxx~~ appetite. And all throughout the word of God you'll see a peculiar relationship between the physical and the spiritual. And a relationship between the use or abuse of physical appetite and a person's spiritual temperature.

Perhaps this is why the Bible has so much to say about fasting. Because God along with Satan recognizes that the way to a man's heart is many times through his stomach. And that

there can really be no victory in the Christian life until first of all the physical appetite of man is mastered. And it just so happens that along with the abuse of the physical, there is a corresponding abuse of the spiritual.

Now when we come to a conference such as this and we're going ~~X~~ into depth concerning the study of prayer you just cannot study in depth what the Bible has to say about prayer and intercession, and neglect the Biblical truth of fasting. And so if you have never heard a sermon on fasting, you're getting ready to hear one tonight. Now I notice a hoarse cry of excitement go up when I announce that I am going to preach on Fasting. Everybody is interested in fasting. How long has it been since you've heard somebody say, "Man, I just wish I could get alone and fast." It's just really something that you and I don't care much for and it's something we don't talk much about. But you know I ~~do~~ not think that there is another subject in the Bible about which so much is said that we neglect so very much. And as we go through the Word of God tonight, I think you'll be startled to discover just how much there is in the Bible about this matter of fasting. And what I want you to ask yourself tonight as we go through this message, "why is it that it has never occurred to me to consider fasting?" Well now usually we relegate fasting to legalism, some of the Eastern cults fast and some of the false religions in our own country fast, and so we kind of have that idea that fasting belongs to fanatics and belongs to extremists and belongs to the Eastern meditation religions, that really has no place in Christianity. But it very well has a place in Christianity. And I repeat, if you are going to get serious about this matter of praying and especially if you are going to make yourself

available to God as an intercessor and place yourself in the position of interceding for others, I think it is imperative that you understand and become experientially acquainted with the practice of fasting.

The Bible tells us that on two different occasions, Moses fasted, when he went to Mt. Siani to receive the law, for forty days and forty nights he fasted. After the people had sinned and Moses went again to the mount to intercede for their deliverance, that intercession was accompanied by another period of 40 days fasting.

Elijah after his encounter with Jezebel when he backslid and was in desperate need of personal revival went to Mt. Horebe and there for 40 days he fasted.

The Bible tells us that Esther, at a time of national crisis, fasted, and it was her fasting that had a part in the deliverance of the nation.

David, when his baby was stricken with illness~~X~~ fasted for the deliverance of that baby. N

Nehemiah and Ezra both ~~XXXX~~re~~X~~ practiced fasting.

Daniel fasted.

In the book of Jeremiah, God commanded His people to fast regularly every year.

But fasting is not confined simply to the ~~N~~<sup>O.T.</sup>. And I want us to read an amazing verse of Scripture found in the gospel of Matthew chapter 6. This is Jesus speaking and the context is the Sermon on the Mount. Now what Jesus is doing in the sixth chapter of Matthew is warning his disciples about the abuse of religious duties. He begins that sixth chapter by saying, "take heed --- in other words, handle with care your Christian service because it is very easy for you to enter into your Christian obligations such as helping others, and praying and fasting, it's very



easy for you to engage in these practices with the wrong motive and with an impure heart. And so what Jesus is doing in Matthew 6 is taking the three primary religious duties and telling us ~~X~~ how these religious duties are to be performed. He begins in that second verse by talking about doing alms, that means helping others, doing acts of kindness and acts of charity then He turns to the matter of prayer and tells us how to pray and then beginning in verse 16 he turns to the matter of ~~X~~ fasting. Now to me the significance of this chapter is that Jesus here considers fasting as much a part of the disciple's spiritual exercises as helping others and praying. Now all of us accept the first two, we believe that in good old 1972 a disciple of Jesus ought to practice almsgiving, helping others, meeting the physical and material needs of others. We also believe we ought to engage in prayer. But why is it that we have just kind of skimmed over that third thing that Jesus talks about. And Jesus here is saying that fasting is just as much a part of your spiritual exercise as is praying and almsgiving. Now notice in verse 16, Jesus says "moreover ~~XXXX~~ when - he didn't say if he said "when you 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." But thou, when thou fastest anoint thine head and wash thy face, that thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy father which is in secret and thy father which seest in secret shall reward thee openly." Notice, Jesus expects us to fast. He says, "When you fast", and in addition to that, Jesus says there will be a reward from our heavenly father for fasting. Now again in Matthew chapter 9 verses 14 and 15, Jesus says, first they came to him the disciples of John saying "why do we and the Pharisees fast oft but thy disciples fast not?" And ~~X~~ Jesus said unto them, "Can the children of the ~~XXXXXX~~ bridegroom mourn as long as the bridegroom is ~~XX~~ with them" ? Now notice this next phrase,

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"but the days will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them and then shall they fast." Now the bridegroom has been taken from us and we are awaiting the appearing of Jesus Christ, the bridegroom to come in glory for His bride, and Jesus says, "when the bridegroom is gone ~~X~~ - that's now, in this age - "then shall they fast."

In Luke chapter 2 Anna the prophetess served God day and night with prayers and fasting.

John the Baptist fasted, and even taught his disciples to do so.

Paul the apostle fasted. Listen to Acts chapter 9 and the 9th verse, this is immediately preceding the conversion of Saul, who became the apostle Paul, and he's in damascus and it ~~XXX~~ says in the 19th verse "And he was three days without sight and neither did eat nor drink." In acts chapter 10, Cornelius the centurion was in the midst of a four day fast when God spoke to him.

Acts chapter 13, the church at Antioch ~~XXXXXX~~ practiced fasting, in the second and third verses, "As they ministered to the Lord and fasted the Holy Ghost said, ~~X~~ 'separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ called them. And when they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them, they sent them away."

Now again in chapter 14 vs 23, speaking of Paul ~~XXXXX~~ and Barnabas as they make their missionary journey 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. " And so I think it's clear from these scriptures that fasting is not a practice that is confined to the O.T. but it is also something that is practiced in the N.T. and Jesus expects you and me, expected us rather, to fast just as ~~XXXX~~ much as we would pray and just as we would practice giving alms, meeting the needs of others.

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Well what is fasting anyway? Somebody says well that's easy, it's going hungry. Well, it's really more than ~~XXXX~~ that. The Hebrew word for fasting means to cover the mouth, the Greek words simply means not to eat. But it's not translated not to eat and its not translated to cover the mouth. You can go without eating, and many people do today, they fast for health reason, they fast for -- in order to lose weight, for dieting reasons, now that may be a fast of one sort but it is not a scriptural fast, it is not a Christian fast because to fast, as far as the scriptures is concerned, doesn't mean simply to go without food, but rather it means to go without food for religious reasons. To go without eating for spiritual reasons. Now there are different kinds of fasts revealed in the Bible. There are public fasts, when ~~the~~ king or the prophet would call the nation or the people of God to set aside a day of fasting. The king of Nineveh did that when Jonah went and preached repentance and it was that ~~XXXXXX~~ national call to fasting and ~~xx~~ seeking the Lord in repentance that delivered them from the wrath of God. Do you suppose we 'll ever have a president, a leader in our country who will ever be spiritually sensitive enough to call the country to set aside a day of prayer and fasting. There are public fasts. In Joel the people were called by the prophets of God to proclaim a solemn fast for God to send revival and to grant repentance. Then there are private fasts, this is where you fast individually, all by yourself, you don't let anybody know about it, you don't particularly try to keep it a secret, but ~~x~~ you do not broadcast it. Jesus said you are not to appear unto men to fast. And so there is a private fast. And fasting has different lengths, you can fast for one day, in the scriptures they fasted for three days, for seven days, for 21 days, for 40 days. There's not set length in the scriptures to fast. It all



depends upon the leadership of the Holy Spirit because it says that Jesus was "led of the Spirit in the wilderness to fast for 40 days." And fasting is something that must be led and impressed upon us by the Holy Spirit of God .

Now before we get into the purposes of ~~X~~ fasting, I think it would be good for us to just say a word about the different kinds of fast ~~xxxx~~ there are. There is first of all what we might call the extreme fast. This means going without food and water. This is what Paul did for three days in ~~XXXXXX~~ Acts 9:9, he went without food and water. This is what Moses did on Mt. Sinia for forty days he went without food and water, that is an extreme fast, very difficult to do. Then there is the partial fast, this is what Daniel did Daniel chapter 10 verse 3, where it says "he ate no pleasant bread and he didn't drink any wine for 21 days. Now when it says he didn't ~~XX~~ eat any pleasant bread that simply means he didn't have any cake, he didn't any delicacies. HE ate something, he ate a little bit, he ate only what was necessary to sustain him, that is a partial fast. And then there is the normal fast, which simply means going without food, you drink water, perhaps some juice, one day, 21 days, 40 days, the normal fast and this is the fast that is normally pictured and expressed in the word of God. All right, now let's move into this area - why should we fast -- what is the purpose ~~X~~ of fasting? And let me remind you that the purpose of fasting is always spiritual, always spiritual. When God has laid upon my heart, impressed me to fast for spiritual reasons, I've never had any difficulty whatsoever. But I have, at different times, tried to fast for health reasons, just to lose weight,

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it's just almost impossible for me to do that. And to me it is



uncanny the difference. When it's of God, when it's for spiritual reasons, there is absolutely no problem. Absolutely none, but when I do it just to lose weight, it is a battle every moment of the day. I went to the doctor several months ago to get a physical check up and I finally found a doctor that told me what I've been ~~XXXXX~~ wanting to hear all these years. After he finished the physical he said, "Preacher, you're ~~XXXXX~~ not overweight you're just too short." He said, "According to this chart you ought to be 7 ft 5 " tall." And so I've stopped trying to lose weight, I'm just ~~XX~~ trying to stretch now, I'm taking stretching exercises. But when the Spirit of God leads a person to do this it is for spiritual reason. Let me mention three: First of all, the purpose of fasting is for

#### DISCIPLINE - SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINE.

Now let's read some verse, first of all in Psalm 35 and verse 13. David says "But as for me when they were sick, my clothing was ~~XXXXXXXXXXXXX~~ sackcloth: I humbled my soul with fasting; and my prayer returned into mine own bosom." Now notice he humbled his soul with fasting. And it seems, the O.T. indicates that when God first instructed his people to fast, it was for the purpose of afflicting their souls. It was for the purpose of disciplining their lives, spiritual discipline.

All right, another verse: ~~XXXXX~~ Ps. 69:10 David says, "When I wept and chastened my soul with fasting that was to my reproach." And then in Ps. 109 and vs 24 "My knees are weak through fasting and my flesh faileth of fatness." Another verse that reveals the purpose of fasting is for spiritual discipline is Ezra 8:21, <sup>Then</sup> ~~AND~~ I proclaimed a fast there at the river of Ahava, that we might afflict ourselves before our God, to seek of him a right way for us, and for our little ones, and for all our substance." There the primary purpose of fasting was that we might afflict ourselves before the Lord.

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Now the Bible over and over again commands us to humble ourselves before God. I've heard some people pray like this, "Lord, make me humble." I don't think that's a scriptural prayer. I cannot find anywhere in the Bible where it is God's responsibility to humble us. If you'll check it out, you'll always find God is telling us to humble ourselves. And I don't think we ought to ask God to do something that he expects us to do. You know there are two mistakes that we make in Christian living - #1 - We try to do what God says he'll do, and then we try to get God to do what he wants us to do. And God has told us repeatedly to humble ourselves. And nowhere does the Bible say that we are to ask God to humble us. That is not his responsibility. We must humble ourselves and discipline and humbling of ourselves is a very important part of following Jesus. He said if any man will follow me -- let him do what--- deny himself, take up his cross and follow me. And fasting is the perfect expression and the perfect vehicle for humbling ourselves before God. It is the perfect expression of repentance and sorrow before God. Remember, the relationship to the physical and the spiritual -- listen to what God says "When I fed them -- talking about Israel -- I fed to the full then they committed adultery ." And if you'll go back and read the chapter dealing with Sodom and Gomorrah you'll find that a surplus of food, an abundance of food, the abuse of eating was linked with the sin of ~~Sodom~~ Sodom and Gomorrah. And what the Bible is really teaching us here is this, that if you do not learn to master your physical appetite for food, that slavery to the appetite opens the door for Satan to come in and bring you

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to a slavery of spiritual abuse, of spiritual problems. And if God through fasting can enable a person to have victory over his physical appetites, then God can give him victory over his spiritual appetite.

I've know people who for years have tried to quit smoking, and they were never able to stop smoking until first of all they learned to fast and they discipline their appetite for food. X You see the basic appetite of man is God given, it's a good appetite, but we abuse it and if a man can curb and conquer through fasting and through the indwelling spirit the appetite for food, then he is able to conquer and curb other appetites/ I've had testimonies from others who have been bothered all their Christian life by sins of impurity and immorality. And they have tried and tried and tried to get victory in that area of their life but until they learned the practice of fasting, of humbling themselves before God of mastering through the power of God and fasting ~~XXXXXXX~~ the appetite for food, only until then were they able to conquer the habit of impurity and immorality. Now I'm not saying that's the only way a person can conquer spiritual problems, but the Bible does teach there is a very real relationship between the two, so the first purpose of fasting is for discipline. Some of the greatest testimonies I have heard from Christians are those who said, "Preacher, I had a spiritual problem, my life was undisciplined, my Christian life had no discipline, I was not really following Jesus, I was not really living the crucified life and when I began to practice X fasting, somehow God used that means to help me discipline my life and I gained a victory over personal habits and problems that I had never before been able to have in my Christian experience.



All right, the second purpose of fasting is for

SPIRITUAL DEVOTION - devotion, times of devotion when a person wants to get closer with God, when he wants to go deeper into the Word of God. Now as I have studied fasting I have learned that nowhere in the Bible are we commanded ~~to~~ simply to fast. And as you read through it you'll find that fasting is always linked with something else, it's never just fasting all by itself & it is prayer and fasting, it is watching and fasting, it is seeking the Lord and fasting. Listen to what Paul describes in II Cor. chapter 6, he's describing his own ministry, he says in verses 4 and 5, "But in all ~~things~~ things approving ourselves as the ministers of God in much patience in afflictions in necessities in distresses, in strife in imprisonments in tumult, in labors, in watchings, in fastings. "

Again in chapter 11, verse 27, & Paul describing his ministry, "In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness." Now notice how he makes a difference between hungering and thirsting and fasting, they're not the same. In fastings often, in ~~the~~ cold and nakedness. And always fasting is linked with something else. Now why do you suppose that is so? You'll fail if you try to fast and that's all, just fast. Fasting is always linked with prayer, with seeking the Lord, with repentance. And the reason is that fasting provides the perfect atmosphere in which these other spiritual exercises can flourish. A man, if you've never discovered it, you will, a man can pray better when he's fasting. A man can seek the Lord better when he's fasting. A man can study the Word of God and learn the Word of God, and memorize the Word of God, hide it in his heart, easier when he's fasting.



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And the reason that God couples fasting with these other things is that fasting provides ~~XX~~ an atmospher, the perfect environment for these other things to flourish in. In fasting we detach ourselves from the earth, in prayer we attach ourselves to God, and we turn aside from the things of this world and we look to God as our very life, He sustains us and we seek the Lord. There are many scriptures that we could give tonight in which this was true. For instance, Jesus fasted in preparation for his ~~XXXXXX~~ encounter with Satan. If you'll read Daniel chapter 9, you'll see that it's Daniel as he was praying and fasting that God spoke to Him and gave him revelation. It was in Acts chapter 13 and 14, we read aXX moment ago that ~~XX~~ the church at Antioch was led of the Holy Spirit to set aside certain men while they were praying and fasting.

I had a member of my church come to me ~~XXXX~~ just Sunday morning and she ~~XXXX~~ pulled me aside as I was standing ~~X~~ in the foyer ~~XXXXXX~~ after the service, she said, "I just have to tell you about the greatest ~~XXr~~ spiritual experience I've ever had." Now I've known this lady for several years, in my opinion she is one of the most spiritual members in our church, she is a real saint of God, she said, "you know, when you preached about fasting, I just didn't see how fasting could add anything to my devotional life. I just really didn't believe that it was everything you said it was." But she said, "Last Friday God laid on my heart just to fast that day, to fast and pray and to study the Word of God." And tears came to her eyes, ~~XX~~ she said, "I cannot describe it, I can't tell you," she said, "I saw things that I've never seen before, I felt the presence of God that I've never felt before, it was just as though God came upon me." She said, "the greatest spiritual experience I've ever had is last Friday when I got alone with God ~~X~~ in my house and prayed and read the Word of

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and fasted." I ~~XXX~~ said, "I'm not surprised, I told you that God would use it in your devotional life." And so one of the purposes of fasting is for devotional purposes.

All right, now the last purpose, and probably the most important purpose, as far as we're concerned in this matter of intercessory praying,

#### FOR THE PURPOSE OF SPIRITUAL DELIVERANCE

For our own personal deliverance. You need deliverance, it may be that God will want to use fasting as a part of your spiritual deliverance. Now we're going to read a few verses of Scriptures, first of all in Ezra ch. 8 v. 21, we read that a moment ago, we ~~XXXXX~~ want to read on a little bit farther, it says in Ezra chapter 8, v 21" Then I proclaimed a fast there at the river of Ahava, that we might afflict ourselves before our God, to seek of him a right way for us, and for our little ones, and for all our substance." Now notice the next verse: "For I was ashamed to require of the king a band of soldiers and horsemen to help us ~~XX~~ against the enemy in the way: because we had spoken unto the king saying, The hand of our God is upon all them for good that seek him, but his power and his wrath ~~XXX~~ is against all them that forsake him." That's a tremendous verse, Ezra said that when they were making their trek out of captivity, that the enemies were waiting for them and they were in danger of being destroyed. Ezra said I was ~~X~~ ashamed to go back to the king and say, "Hey, King, help us, we're in trouble." Because when they got ready to leave the king offered to send chariots and some soldiers with them and Ezra stuck out his neck and bragged and he said, "Don't ~~X~~ need anything that you've got, our God is with us and His power is upon all them that fear Him, and He will deliver us."

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And so now ~~NXXXXXX~~ here they are up against the enemy, and they're scared to death and Ezra says I'm ashamed to go back to that king and say, "Hey, will you help us?" And so do you know what he did? In order to gain the deliverance ~~XXXX~~ for the people he proclaimed a fast, and ~~XX~~ it says in verse 23, "so we fasted and besought our God for this and he was entreated of us."

The same thing is true in the book of Esther, you remember the occasion was the Jewish nation was about to be totally annihilated and Mordecai came to Esther and said, "You need to go to the king and plead for the life of our nation." And Esther was afraid but she decided she would try something. And so ~~XX~~ in verse 16 of Esther 4, she says, "Go gather together all the Jews that are present in Shushan, and fast ye for me, and neither eat nor drink three days, ~~XX~~ 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." And it was after that period of fasting that Esther went in and made the plea she delivered to the nation of Israel. Now notices there you can fast for other people, she said, "you gather all the Jews that are around and you have them to fast for me." And I'll fast and all my maidens will fast and then we'll do that thing which may cost me my life, but if I perish, I perish." Fasting for the purpose of deliverance. We referred a moment to ago to the instance of Nineveh, when Jonah went to that city and preached repentance and told them that God was going to destroy them and the Bible says, "the king proclaimed a fast" and the Bible says that "when God their works he repented of the evil he had intended to do." You read Joel chapter 1, Joel chapter 2, and you'll find there ~~X~~ that the people fasted, that God might send revival.

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Now I want to tell you ~~XXXXXX~~ what when you get real serious about this matter of seeing revival in your ~~X~~ life and in the lives of others, and in the life of your nation, God is going to call people to turn aside for fasting. And revival in the Bible is inevitably linked with prayer and fasting.

Now, one other thing before we close, you can fast for the deliverance of others, and I have come to believe from the teaching of the word of God and from my own experience that there are some people and there are some situations in which deliverance cannot be gained apart from prayer and fasting. I can't explain it, I don't try to explain it, but I just know that there are and have always ~~XXXXX~~ existed, those spiritual problems and situations in which deliverance cannot be affected apart from prayer and fasting. Fasting for the deliverance of others. We're going to read just two or three verses. First of all in Deut. chapter 9, verse 18, notice what Moses says, ~~X~~ this is after the people have committed their sin of idolatry, "And I fell down before the Lord as at the first 40 days and 40 nights I did ~~XXXXX~~ neither eat bread nor drink water because of all your sins which you sinned ~~XXXX~~, in doing wickedly in the sight of the Lord, to provoke him to anger." Moses said, "I went to God and for 40 days and 40 nights I fasted -- why? because of your sin that I might intercede ~~XX~~ for you, and all of us know the result of that intercession, coupled with fasting, God heard, the people were delivered.

Let me read just one other verse regarding this fasting for the deliverance of others. In Nehemiah chapter 1 "And it came to pass when I heard these words that I sat down and wept and mourned certain days and fasted and prayed before the God of heaven. " And here's what he prayed: "Let thine ear now be attentive and thine eyes opened



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that thou mayest hear the prayer of thy servant which I pray before thee now day and night for the children of Israel ~~X~~ thy servant and confess the sins of the children of Israel which we have sinned against thee, ~~X~~ both I and my father's house have sinned." And you know, preachers have always said you ought not to confess the sins of other people, but here is an instance where a man did confess the sins of others to God. As he interceded for them with fasting. He went before God ~~XXXXXX~~ in intercession and fasting to effect the deliverance of his people. And when we've come to this matter of interceding for the salvation and the deliverance of other people, it's probably that God is going to lead those who are in tune and who are familiar and who are willing, God is going to lead some to pray and intercede and to fast.

Now let me just close with two or three suggestions about this matter of fasting. It must be of God -- I know what some of you may be thinking, well fasting is so legalistic and you're talking about something that it would be very easy to become just a ritual and just something legalistic, Friends, that's true about everything we do ~~X~~ in Christianity. Prayer can become just a ritual, but you don't stop praying because of that. ~~XXX~~ Coming to church can be just a ritual, but you don't stop coming because of that. ~~X~~ Let me ask you a question and you answer honestly in your heart - Some of you reject the idea of fasting, do you reject it tonight in your heart because you do not believe the Bible teaches it or because you just don't want to do it? Is it because you and I are not willing to make that small sacrifice, is that the really the determining factor in our closing our minds to this matter of ~~XXXX~~ fasting?

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that a great many people in the congregation close their minds to it the very moment I start. And in personal conversation with some of these I can discern ~~XXXXXX~~ the reasons are not ~~XXXXXX~~ biblical but spiritual. And are you closing your mind tonight to fasting for ~~XXXX~~ biblical reasons because you're not ~~X~~ convinced out of the word of God that it really is taught there? Are because you just don't want to get that involved? Fasting, if you're going to fast must be ~~XX~~ led of the Spirit of God. The Bible doesn't lay down in the N.T. any certain day, any certain time, any certain length -- let me suggest you do this: #1 -- You pray about it, you ask the Lord to talk to you about fasting. You ask the Lord just to impress ~~XX~~ upon you if He ever wants you to fast. And you just commit to the Lord, "I am willing to fast if You want me to." And it may be that God will come to you one day and all of a sudden there will come to you an awareness that you ought to fast. It may be a problem in the home, it may be a spiritual problem in your own personal life. And ~~XXXX~~ suddenly there is just placed upon you a need to pray and fast about this matter. All right, when that comes, then you set aside a day to fast. Start with just one day, it's good to begin at 6 P.M. in the evening and go to 6 P.M. the next day. Or you can start early in the morning and go to the next morning. But the Hebrews, their day started at 6 PM in the evening and went to 6 PM the next evening -- that's a good time to start. Don't eat any food, just drink water. Just drink water for one day. Go about your normal business, some people think I can't fast because I have to go to work, I have to go to school. No. Jesus said, "when you fast don't appear unto men to fast, you don't have to go off to the mountain somewhere to fast, you go to work, Jesus said you

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comb your hair, brush your teeth, put on your tie, wash your face, do not appear unto men to fast. You go about your daily business, your daily routine.

The next suggestion is ~~XX~~ -- Be careful that you don't just fast. You pray and fast, you read the word of God and fast. Take a passage of Scripture that you've been wanting to memorize. Fill your mind with the Word of God. What ~~XX~~ about when I start getting hungry? The great thing about fasting is every hunger pang is a call to prayer. Every time you begin to feel hungry, you begin to pray. Whatever God lays upon your heart and you begin to read the word of God. And by the way, let me just mention that the first day, the first two or three days, you'll feel real hunger, but you're not really hungry. You say, "Oh, I feel hunger pangs in my stomach," ~~XXXXX~~ Those are not hunger pangs, that is your stomach shrinking. Real hunger does not set in until 38 or 40 days after you've had nothing to eat. This is why the Bible says that Jesus fasted for 40 days and "afterward he was hungry." You see the body can live off its stored up energy for 38 to 40 days. And what you feel the first two or three days is not real hunger, it's just your stomach shrinking. Your stomach is in the habit of being fed at a certain time and it's just complaining, that's all. It's not real hunger. And after about two or three days, after the third day you will more than likely not feel any hunger whatsoever. Most ~~X~~ people if they go three days they could go seven days, ten days, 15 days. But start with a day, and then go three days, do your business, your daily business, but remember to pray and fast, to pray. Every time that you feel hungry, realize that your whole body is interceding. Whatever problem you're