

Fasting & Forbidden Foods

Fast- Gk.3522- to *abstain* from food (religiously). Heb.6684- to *cover* over (the mouth).

Old Testament

Moses

Deu 9:18 And I fell down before the LORD, as at the first, forty days and forty nights: I did neither eat bread, nor drink water, because of all your sins which ye sinned, in doing wickedly in the sight of the LORD, to provoke Him to anger. 19 For I was afraid of the anger and hot displeasure, wherewith the LORD was wroth against you to destroy you. But the LORD hearkened unto me at that time also.

- Have you ever heard someone ask “*How can you eat at a time like this?*”? When Moses returned from the presence of God on Mt. Sinai after receiving the commandments on the stone tablets, he found the Israelites consumed in idolatry. After he broke those first tablets he returned to God to receive the second set and once again fasted for another forty days and nights, pleading for his people, Israel. So many times he would plead for their continued existence because of his love for them. But, it seems it was their nature to fall back into the ways of sin thus causing this faithful lawgiver to often mourn, plead and fast for their forgiveness.

Hannah

1Sa 1:1 Now there was a certain man of Ramathaimzophim, of mount Ephraim, and his name *was* Elkanah, the son of Jeroham, the son of Elihu, the son of Tohu, the son of Zuph, an Ephrathite: 2 And he had two wives; the name of the one *was* Hannah, and the name of the other Peninnah: and Peninnah had children, but Hannah had no children. 3 And this man went up out of his city yearly to worship and to sacrifice unto the LORD of hosts in Shiloh. And the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, the priests of the LORD, *were* there. 4 And when the time was that Elkanah offered, he gave to Peninnah his wife, and to all her sons and her daughters, portions: 5 But unto Hannah he gave a worthy portion; for he loved Hannah: but the LORD had shut up her womb. 6 And her adversary also provoked her sore, for to make her fret, because the LORD had shut up her womb. 7 And *as* he did so year by year, when she went up to the house of the LORD, so she provoked her; therefore **she wept**, and **did not eat**. 8 Then said Elkanah her husband to her, Hannah, why weepest thou? and why eatest thou not? and why is thy heart grieved? *am* not I better to thee than ten sons? (*Emp. Added*)

- Do we see how fasting is associated with sorrow? Hannah couldn't eat while her adversary, Penennah, “*provoked her sore*” (v. 6), just as David wept over the death of Abner.

David

2Sa 3:31 And David said to Joab, and to all the people that *were* with him, Rend your clothes, and gird you with sackcloth, and mourn before Abner. And king David *himself* followed the bier. 32 And they buried Abner in Hebron: and the king lifted up his voice, and wept at the grave of Abner; and all the people wept. 33 And the king lamented over Abner, and said, Died Abner as a fool dieth? 34 Thy hands *were* not bound, nor thy feet put into fetters: as a man falleth before wicked men, so fellest thou. And all the people wept again over him. 35 And when all the people came to cause David to eat meat while it was yet day, David sware, saying, So do God to me, and more also, if I taste bread, or ought else, till the sun be down. 36 And all the people took notice *of it*, and it pleased them: as whatsoever the king did pleased all the people. 37 For all the people and all Israel understood that day that it was not

of the king to slay Abner the son of Ner. 38 And the king said unto his servants, Know ye not that there is a prince and a great man fallen this day in Israel? 39 And I *am* this day weak, though anointed king; and these men the sons of Zeruiah *be* too hard for me: the LORD shall reward the doer of evil according to his wickedness.

- Another example of David unable to eat (*fasting*) was when the life of his son conceived in adultery was in peril.

2Sa 12:16 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 (*How often do we give God credit for what we have after having lost something/someone precious to us?*): 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** (*Heb.6684- to cover over [the mouth]*) **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? (*David was showing how serious he was by bypassing the comforts/necessities of life with the hope that God would spare the child. Nothing was ever written that states if we fast, God will give us our requests.*) 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. (*Emp. Added*)

Esther, Mordecai and the Jews

- Haman covertly had King Ahasuerus sign the decree to have all the Jews destroyed because Mordecai, being known to be a Jew, did not bow to Haman's arrogance. Because of King Ahasuerus' foolish decree ("*written among the laws of the Persians and the Medes, that it be not altered*" –*Est 1:19*) that the Jews be destroyed, it would have been difficult for anyone of the children of Israel to eat because of such great sorrow.

Est 4:1 When Mordecai perceived all that was done, Mordecai rent his clothes, and put on sackcloth with ashes, and went out into the midst of the city, and cried with a loud and a bitter cry; 2 And came even before the king's gate: for none *might* enter into the king's gate clothed with sackcloth. 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. (*Emp. Added*)

Joel

Joel 1:14 Sanctify ye a fast, call a solemn assembly, gather the elders *and* all the inhabitants of the land *into* the house of the LORD your God, and cry unto the LORD,

God takes advantage of this custom by instructing the priests to consecrate a fast as Joel's pestilence was foretold (1:14). This fast was to be part of the lamentation due to the consequences of sin. Still, God was not telling them to observe some facet of the law, for fasting was not, but to execute the quirks of their culture that made abstention from food an expression of sincere sorrow.

Numerous other passages could be cited to indicate that fasting was not a command of the law of Moses, but rather a natural cultural custom derived from the simple fact that "great distress causes loss of appetite."

Jeff Smith- Watchman Magazine-7/1/01

New Testament

- In Matthew 4 Jesus fasted for forty days and nights and was obviously hungry when He was tempted by Satan. This showed that even as "the Son of man" (*Mat 8:20*) He was able to defeat Satan in such a weakened human condition.

Luk 18:9 And He spake this parable unto certain **which trusted in themselves** that they were righteous, and despised others:

Luk 18:10 Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican (*Jew hired by the Romans to collect taxes for Rome.*). 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 humbles himself shall be exalted. (*Emp. Added*)

Fasting had taken on a very public motivation. People fasted to prove their piety to others and impress them with their suffering. Hence, Jesus devotes several precious words in the sermon on the mount to regulating the custom of fasting (Matthew 6:16-18).

Jeff Smith- Watchman Magazine-7/1/01

Mat 6:16 Moreover when ye fast (*Fasting was an accepted practice, not a commanded one.*), 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 (*Fasting is to be between the person practicing it and God!*): and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly. (*Not because they fasted but because God saw their hearts. David's heart wasn't right before God when he had an adulterous relationship with Bathsheba.*) (*Emp. Added*)

- Because fasting was a custom that became a commandment of mere men and thus doctrine*, Jesus used the following statement to help the disciples of John understand when fasting became a natural response to the distress His followers would soon endure.

**Mat 15:9 But in vain they do worship Me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.*

Mat 9:14 Then came to Him the disciples of John, saying, Why do we and the Pharisees fast oft, but thy disciples fast not? 15 And Jesus said unto them, Can the children of the bride chamber **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**. (*Emp. Added*)

- See the connection between sorrow and fasting? Notice again the lack of any type of commandment. John's disciples didn't quite get the true meaning of fasting. The Pharisees did it as an outward show of hypocritical piety, but John fasted because of his understanding of the coming distress that would bring in the new age but not without suffering and pain. And Paul often fasted, even when he had no choice in the matter.

2Co 6:5 In stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labors, in watchings, in fastings;

Act 27:33 And while the day was coming on, Paul besought *them* all to take meat, saying, This day is the fourteenth day that ye have tarried and **continued fasting**, having taken nothing. 34 Wherefore I pray you to take *some* meat: for this is **for your health** (*They needed their strength.*): for there shall not an hair fall from the head of any of you. 35 And when he had thus spoken, he took bread, and gave thanks to God in presence of them all: and when he had broken *it*, he began to eat. 36 Then were they all of **good cheer**, and they also **took some meat**. (*Emp. Added*)

Speaking to husbands and wives concerning their physical relationships.

1Co 7:5 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 incontinency.

While there is no clear command given in the Bible to fast as a religious exercise, it is clear that fasting was practiced by godly people in distress over sin within their own lives or surrounding them. A Bible sanction exists for the individual to choose to fast as he feels it might benefit him. Naturally, many fast almost involuntarily in times of mourning and deep emotional distress. These occasions actually seem to fit the Bible pattern best.

Fasting is a choice left to the individual, having never been legislated in the old or new testaments, although the practice is regulated by both.

Jeff Smith- Watchman Magazine-7/1/01

- Never commanded. Only regulated.

Forbidden foods?

The Catholic organization has routinely over many years commanded abstinence and fasting which at least date back to Pope Nicholas I (858-867). This pope declared abstinence from flesh meat on Fridays. The Catholic organization has many such prohibitions that are imposed on its adherents.

It has become a sad state of affairs when man discounts the knowledge given by God for his own attained knowledge.

Chip Foster- Watchman Magazine-4/14/11

Col 2:14 Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross; (*which included certain meats as being unclean under the Old Covenant*)

Mat 15:16 And Jesus said, Are ye also yet without understanding? 17 Do not ye yet understand, that whatsoever entereth in at the mouth goeth into the belly, and is cast out into the draught? 18 But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart (*Gk.2588- mind*); and they defile the man. 19 For out of the heart (*mind*) proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: 20 These are *the things* which defile a man: but to eat with unwashed hands defileth not a man.

- Even Paul stated that he would not be partial to any type of foods, as were the Israelites in the wilderness when they wanted more than just the manna (*Num 11:6*), because he understood that the purpose for food was/is to sustain us whether we enjoy it or not.

1Co 6:12 All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but I will not be **brought under the power of any**. 13 Meats (*Gk.1033- food*) for the belly, and the belly for meats (*The stomach's purpose is to digest food.*): but God shall destroy both it and them. Now the body is not for fornication, but for the Lord; and the Lord for the body. (*Emp. Added*)

- Notice what Peter was told when dealing with gentiles becoming members of the kingdom. He was taught from a child that there were certain meats that were forbidden, but only to the Jews under the Mosaic law.

Deu 14:2 For thou *art* an holy people unto the LORD thy God, and the LORD hath chosen thee to be a peculiar people unto Himself, above all the nations that *are* upon the earth.

- Here, that knowledge was used to help him understand the difference that came under the New Covenant.

Act 10:15 And the voice *spake* unto him again the second time, What God hath cleansed, *that* call not thou common.

Some things are still on the forbidden list (*from my understanding*).

Act 15:28 For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things; 29 That ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and **from blood**, and **from things strangled** (*were not bled out*), and from fornication: from which if ye keep yourselves, ye shall do well. Fare ye well. (*Emp. Added*)

Lev 17:11 For the life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood *that* maketh an atonement for the soul. 12 Therefore I said unto the children of Israel, No soul of you shall eat blood, neither shall any stranger that sojourneth among you eat blood. 13 And whatsoever man *there be* of the children of Israel, or of the strangers that sojourn among you, which hunteth and catcheth any beast or fowl that may be eaten; he shall even pour out the blood thereof, and cover it with dust. 14 For *it is* the life of all flesh; the blood of it is for the life thereof: therefore I said unto the children of Israel, Ye shall eat the blood of no manner of flesh: for the life of all flesh is the blood thereof: whosoever eateth it shall be cut off.

Deu 12:23 Only be sure that thou eat not the blood: for the blood is the life; and thou mayest not eat the life with the flesh.

- The unclean animals of the Old Covenant (*starting in Gen 7:2*) would be considered clean by the time the New came along. So, from then on there is nothing to be considered un-clean. (*Only we are not to eat the blood of any animal.*) And anyone who would say otherwise doesn't understand the truth as was related through God's inspired men. (*Eating a steak that isn't quite cooked wouldn't be considered eating blood because the beef it came from would have been bled out and not strangled.*)

Col 2:20 Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances, 21 (Touch not; taste not; handle not; 22 Which all are to **perish with the using**;) after the **commandments and doctrines of men**? 23 Which things have indeed a **shew** of wisdom in will worship, and humility, and neglecting of the body; **not in any honour** to the satisfying of the flesh. (*Emp. Added*)

"The false teachers worshiped angels and endured depravation of their body in an effort to control fleshly lusts, but such did not achieve the desired end."

Gary Hampton

1Ti 4:1 Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; 2 Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron; 3 Forbidding to marry (*Monks, Essenes, Catholic priests*), and commanding to abstain from meats (*Seventh Day Adventists with abstaining from pork, Catholics with fish Fridays*), which God hath created **to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth**. 4 For every creature of God is good, and **nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving**: 5 For it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer. (*Emp. Added*)

- In the beginning man was not to eat flesh, but...

Gen 1:29 And God said, Behold, I have given you **every herb** bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and **every tree**, in the which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it **shall be for meat** (*Heb.402- food*). (*Emp. Added*)

...after the flood when Noah and his family exited the ark things changed.

Gen 9:3 **Every moving thing that liveth** shall be meat (*Heb.402- food*) for you; **even as** the green herb have I given you **all things**. (*Emp. Added*)

From these passages we learn a simple lesson that self-imposed religion such as abstaining from foods is useless, of no value, and are from the deceiving doctrines of man. What is the purpose of these doctrines other than to enslave its adherents to the will of others?

Chip Foster- Watchman Magazine-4/14/11

1Co 8:4 As concerning therefore the eating of those things that are offered in sacrifice unto idols, we know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that *there* is none other God but one. 5 For though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, (as there be gods many, and lords many,) 6 But to us *there is but* one God, the Father, of Whom *are* all things, and

we in Him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by Whom *are* all things, and we by Him. 7 Howbeit *there* is not in every man that knowledge: for some with conscience of the idol unto this hour eat *it* as a thing offered unto an idol; and their conscience being weak is defiled. 8 But meat commended us not to God: for neither, if we eat, are we the better; neither, if we eat not, are we the worse. 9 But take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumblingblock to them that are weak. 10 For if any man see thee which hast knowledge sit at meat in the idol's temple, shall not the conscience of him which is weak be emboldened to eat those things which are offered to idols; 11 And through thy knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died? 12 But when ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ. 13 Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend.

Rom 14:1 Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, *but* not to doubtful disputations. 2 For one believeth that he may eat all things: another, who is weak, eateth herbs. 3 Let not him that eateth (*meat*) despise him that eateth not; and let not him which eateth not judge him that eateth: for God hath received him.

As a part of the Gentile's idolatrous worship practices the eating of these meats was a continuation of the sacrifice that was made at their temples. If a weak brother or sister in Christ saw another eating such meat they might consider it as a part of idol worship, not being able to discern that it was just meat fit to consume for the nourishment of the body.

1Co 8:8 But meat commended us not to God: for neither, if we eat, are we the better; neither, if we eat not, are we the worse.

Many have decided that they must make decision for the masses because they really know what is best. Whether it is a principal usurping the authority and responsibility of the parents or a pope, or any religious leader, demanding adherence to man-made traditions and regulations over the simple teaching of the Gospel; we must read and apply the Bible in our lives, be the Christian example for those around us, and teach others of the folly of following man over obedience to God.

What can I eat? Anything I want within the confines of the doctrine of Christ, with thankfulness, ignoring the edicts and bulls of man; not craving more, being a glutton, and not wasting out of abundance.

Chip Foster- Watchman Magazine-4/14/11

- Bottom line; you can fast if you want to for religious reasons but it should not be a test of fellowship for your brethren.

Rom 14:17 For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.

- If you are not part of that kingdom (*the church*), you can be by...

Hear: Romans 10:17 ... "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."

Believe: Heb 11:6 ... "for he that commeth to God must believe that He is"...

Repent: Lk 13:3 ... "except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish."

Confess: Mat 10:32 "Whosoever shall confess Me before men, him will I confess before My Father which is in Heaven."

Be baptized: Acts 22:16 "And now why tarriest thou? Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord."

Remain faithful: Rom 6:4 ..."even so we also should walk in newness of life."

Charli Yana
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