

Romans 15:30 *“Now I beg you, brethren, through the Lord Jesus Christ, and through the love of the Spirit, that you strive together with me in prayers to God for me,”* A great Bible teacher named Reuben A. Torrey told a story. He was at a Bible conference and a speaker spoke of the joys of resting in Christ’s finished work and trusting in God’s Sovereignty. That speaker, though, when he said, I challenge anyone here to show me any place in scripture where we are told to wrestle in prayer. Torrey got up as the next speaker and said, let’s turn to Romans 15:30. Remembering this is God’s word, it is like God is begging us to strive together with him in prayer. **“Strive together” = agonizomai = describes the struggle that takes place in an athletic contest, or any other conflict.** We get our word for “AGONIZE” from this Greek word. In Gethsemane, **Luke** says of Jesus, *“and being in “anguish” He prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground.”*

Adrian Roger’s said, **“It’s not the arithmetic of our prayers – how many they are. It’s not the rhetoric of our prayers that count – how eloquent they might be. It’s not the music of our prayers, how sweet they may be. It’s certainly not the geometry of our prayers that count, how long they are. It’s not the logic of our prayer’s – how argumentative they are. Nor is it the method of our prayers – how methodical they are. The thing that determines the effectiveness of our prayers are (1) Faith and (2) Fervency!**

Church family, the thing that is absent in many of our prayers is fervency. I know that it has been lacking in my prayers of late. This scripture has brought me under conviction and I know from experience that I can add something to my prayer life that will help me with both faith and fervency, and that is fasting. It is time for us, as a church family to pray with faith and fervency, so let’s look at first at the ministry of fasting. Second, we shall increase our motivation for fasting. Third, we shall examine some methods of fasting.

I. MINISTRY OF FASTING

A. Definition of Fasting: It is the act of going without food and/or water, or just food, or some other pleasure for the purpose of setting our hearts to seek God. It is not mere dieting for health purposes, although some do fast for health reasons.

B. Jesus expects us to fast: **Matthew 6:16-18** *“Moreover, when you fast, do not be like the hypocrites, with a sad countenance. For they disfigure their faces that they may appear to men to be fasting. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. 17 But you, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, 18 so that you do not appear to men to be fasting, but to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly.”* **Matthew 9:14-15** *“Then the disciples of John came to Him, saying, “Why do we and the Pharisees fast often, but Your disciples do not fast?” 15 And Jesus said to them, “Can the friends of the bridegroom mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? But the days will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them, and then they will fast.”*

C. The early church fasted just as Jesus expected they would: **Acts 14:23** *“So when they had appointed elders in every church, and prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed.”* **(see also 1 Cor.7:5)**

II. MOTIVATION FOR FASTING Why should we fast? What should be our motivation? *“...and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly.”*

A. Our motivation should not be to be seen of men, or to be legalistic, or as an attempt to “buy a blessing”. Not should we be ritualistic about it.

B. Our motivation should be to set our hearts to seek the Lord with all of our heart: **Jeremiah 29:11-13** *“For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope. 12 Then you will call upon Me and go and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. 13 And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart.”* **Zechariah 7:4-5** *“Then the word of the Lord of hosts came to me, saying, 5 “Say to all the people of the land, and to the priests: ‘When you fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh months during those seventy years, did you really fast for Me--for Me?’”*

C. It will strengthen our prayer life:

(1) **It demonstrates to the Lord that we are in earnest – it puts fervency into our prayers!** [Jeremiah 29:11-13](#) *“For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope. 12 Then you will call upon Me and go and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. 13 And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart.”*

(2) **It helps us to bring faith into focus:** It is like a spiritual string around our finger that reminds us to pray, for every time our hunger pains direct us to the food pantry, you remember. Then, instead of eating, you pray.

D. It will subdue the self:

1. **To humble ourselves and to seek guidance:** [Ezra 8:21](#) *“Then I proclaimed a fast there at the river of Ahava, that we might humble ourselves before our God, to seek from Him the right way for us and our little ones and all our possessions.”* Peter tells us in one of his letters that God gives grace to the humble, but resists the proud.

2. **Fasting helps to weed the garden, lest we forget God and the cares of this world choke out the word:** [Deuteronomy 8:11-14](#) *“Beware that you do not forget the Lord your God by not keeping His commandments, His judgments, and His statutes which I command you today, 12 lest--when you have eaten and are full, and have built beautiful houses and dwell in them; 13 and when your herds and your flocks multiply, and your silver and your gold are multiplied, and all that you have is multiplied; 14 when your heart is lifted up, and you forget the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage;”* **Pride, gluttony, and laziness are linked together and was one reason God gave for judging Sodom & Gomorrah:** [Ezekiel 16:49-50](#) *“Look, this was the iniquity of your sister Sodom: She and her daughter had pride, fullness of food, and abundance of idleness; neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy. 50 And they were haughty and committed abomination before Me; therefore I took them away as I saw fit.*

E. It will stay the hand of God’s judgment [Jeremiah 18:7-8](#) *“The instant I speak concerning a nation and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, to pull down, and to destroy it, 8 if that nation against whom I have spoken turns from its evil, I will relent of the disaster that I thought to bring upon it.”* [Jonah 3:5-10](#) *“So the people of Nineveh believed God, proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest to the least of them. 10 Then God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God relented from the disaster that He had said He would bring upon them, and He did not do it.* Jehoshaphat was attacked by Ammonites and Moabites, so he declared a fast and commanded all Judah to seek the Lord. So God heard their prayers and said, *“Do not be afraid nor dismayed because of this great multitude, for the battle is not yours, but God’s.”* ([Jeremiah 20:1-25](#))

F. It will give us victory in our battle over Satan and help us tear down the strongholds of sinful oppression and addictions. [Isaiah 58, the whole chapter](#) This chapter spells out the reasons why we should fast, i.e., to join God in the accomplishment of His work to loose the bonds of wickedness etc. [Mark 9:29](#) *“So He said to them, “This kind can come out by nothing but prayer and fasting.”*

III. METHOD OF FASTING Prayerfully choose the type of fast. We all need water lest we dehydrate. We must avoid extremism. If on medication or sick, consult a doctor first. When you break a fast, do it lightly. We can fast by avoiding certain pleasures that take up so much of our day, like T.V., video games, marital relations for the sake of fasting and prayer.