**How to Fast**

*16“And when you fast, do not look gloomy like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces that their fasting may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. 17But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, 18that your fasting may not be seen by others but by your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you. (Matthew 6:16-18)*

Fasting, when done right, is not displayed for people to see.

Greetings dear brothers and sisters in Christ, as we talk today about the right way to fast. The exercise of fasting is a well-known spiritual activity. Its purpose is to focus a human being’s senses on a goal – and in our faith-walk, the goal is one, namely God Himself. Up until the present time, this spiritual activity has formed an important part of the life of the Church, and accordingly, we’re going to talk about what the right way and the right goal is when fasting. Again, fasting, when done right, is not displayed for people to see. Let’s talk about this extremely important stance…

Fasting is beneficial when we do it unto the Lord, and not for any other purpose. As we said, fasting was a spiritual exercise, known in almost every part of the world. God’s people also were well-aware of fasting, and they fasted all day on the Day of Atonement, as well as on New Year’s Day. Pharisees would also fast on Mondays and Thursdays, and what’s more, many people wore sackcloth and would sprinkle ashes on their heads, or even tear their clothes to intensify the feeling of mourning. The hypocrites referred to by Jesus were those that publicly declared their state of fasting with their long faces or disheveled looks. That sadness was often contrived and a superficial expression. It was in this kind of atmosphere that Jesus was rebuking the ostentatious approach to fasting. Of course, this was not pleasing to God, since the people were fasting for their own glory, and thus would not receive any reward from God for their efforts. Hypocrisy in fasting, then, is akin to burning incense in front of the statue of our own reputation as a Christian.

Therefore, though we are called to fast, but it is to be for the Lord, and not to our own glory. The Lord needs to see our faithfulness to Him. It is the Lord that needs to know our sacrifice. It is the Lord who needs to feel our love regarding Him. The rightly done fast, then, corrects our focus and brings it to the Lord’s presence and His work.

Generally, fasting is done along with prayer. Prayer and fasting help each other. Fasting strengthens our faith and devotion, while prayer brings us into the Lord’s presence to receive and know His holiness, faithfulness and power.

So, let’s fast for God’s sake. Let’s live in such a way for the Lord that people do not become aware of every single sacrificial deed that we perform – so that we receive our reward from the God, and not from human beings.

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