

Interview on Fasting

by Paul Washer

Fasting is about driving out other passions and focusing on God, it's not a means of manipulating deity.

Duration: 20:15

Scripture: Esther 4:16, Matthew 4:1

Topics: "Fasting"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the concept of fasting and its purpose in the lives of believers. He emphasizes that fasting should flow out of a lifestyle of prayer and a renewed mind in the word of God. The speaker also highlights the importance of passion and prioritizing the needs of others over personal desires. He cautions against falling into legalism or using fasting as a means to earn something from God. Instead, fasting should be driven by a deep burden for the salvation of loved ones or other pressing needs.

Transcript

Dr. Eddin, we want to welcome to the program today Brother Paul Washer. And what an amazing testimony, what an amazing ministry that Paul Washer has. He was based here at First Baptist Church in Muswell Shoals, Alabama.

But many of you, of course as we talked about yesterday, recognize the name Paul Washer. He's the founder and director of HeartCry Missionary Society, which works with missionary efforts across the world, around the world, everywhere from Eastern Europe, South America to the Middle East. And he's also an itinerant teacher and is preaching and speaking in churches and groups all across America.

But he is based here at First Baptist Muswell Shoals. And, Brother Paul, thanks again for coming on this program with us. Thank you.

We're so thankful that you shared some of your time with us. It's a privilege. I guess we can begin by talking basically about the - we asked Dr. Endy to give us some definitions about fasting.

But what perspective can we put on fasting from the spiritual aspect of it? Well, first of all, from Matthew 6, we realize that in Jesus' teaching, he assumed that his people would do certain acts of piety. One of them was to give to the poor in, I think, Matthew 6, 3. And then it was to pray. He said, when you pray.

And then without changing course, he says, when you fast, in verse 16. So Jesus is assuming that he will have a charitable, praying, fasting people. Now, when we look at fasting, we have to be very, very careful.

An old Bible teacher by the name of Brother Conrad, he told me one time that walking in the truth is like walking on a razor blade. You can fall off either side. And when we come to fasting, like other crucial doctrines, there are great extremes everywhere.

So we have to be very, very careful. We know about Jesus' teaching regarding the Pharisees and their hypocritical use of fasting, that they would put on a gloomy face. They even believed that they would mix up a type of makeup out of ashes and cover their face with it so that people would know that they were fasting.

And one of the most frightening things that Jesus says in the entire Bible, he says regarding them, they will have their reward in full. And an interesting thing, Brother Paul, is that in Lebanon during Ramadan, when we were there, one thing that they would do with each other is stick out their tongue to see if they were fasting or not. And if their tongue was coated with the white buildup and they were fasting, if their tongue was clean, they knew they had broken the fast.

And that was a big deal that they were checking each other to see who was and who was not fasting. Of course, if you weren't fasting, then you were looked down upon. And that just shows us not only the hypocrisy but the absurdity of religion that is not biblical and without God.

So we have to be very, very careful there that we do all things for the glory of God and for the good of others. Amen. Now, when we come to fasting, people always ask me this question.

Well, what is fasting about and how do you know when to fast and why do you fast? Well, first of all, you have to have a correct theology with regard to the sovereignty of God and his lordship over the world. Fasting is not a means of manipulating deity. Good point.

We do not have this old pietistic idea that I'm going to somehow gain favor with God by making myself suffer. Christians suffer. A man who truly walks with God and practices godliness will suffer in this fallen world.

But we're never to. It's never to be a self-inflicted suffering. And so fasting has no purpose such as that.

The best way I can describe fasting and the cause of it is this. It's all about one passion driving out another passion. Let me give you an example.

Let's say that I have desired for three years to go on a vacation with my wife. And we've saved up. We've talked about it just every day.

It's an issue. We've marked off the days on the calendar. And after three years, I'm walking out the door fully excited about this wonderful passion that is going to be fulfilled.

I'm going to go on a vacation with my wife. Right then as I'm getting ready to get in the car, my little boy Ian comes running up to me and grabs his head and says, Daddy, Daddy, my head. And he falls over on the sidewalk.

Now, at that moment, if I'm going to stomp my foot and say, Oh, man, three years now and I can't go on my vacation. No. What's going to happen? I have totally forgotten about the vacation.

I could care less. As a matter of fact, if someone were to mention to me that I've lost my vacation, I would look at them as though they were a monster. Why? The passion that I have for my son and his need has

driven out every thought of every other passion.

That is fasting. Why do we fast? Listen, you can really fall into a legalism on fasting. You can fall into so many errors.

But if you'll just hold what I'm saying regarding passion, it will guard you. And it's this. Let's say that I have a loved one who is lost.

And it seems that every time I preach the gospel, it's a closed door. I'm disturbed about it. God has laid in his own burden on my heart about this person.

And I may come to the point where I say, it's not that. All right, I'm going to fast two days in order to earn this person's salvation. No, it's I am so concerned about this person.

Food is no longer an issue in my life. I don't care. It's about thinking about the nations where the gospel is not preached.

Now, we have to be careful here. Why? Because we have to trust in the sovereignty of God or we'd lose our mind. That's right.

I mean, there's so many needs out there. But I believe that God can lay burdens on his people to such an extent that their heart is right. It's not that I'm giving up food to earn something.

It's just that this passion is so strong in my heart that even the mention of food seems almost wrong. And so the people who can truly fast are people who truly have a passion for God and the advancement of his kingdom. When we look at it that way, then it doesn't turn into legalism.

Dr. Edney, that's a wonderful perspective, isn't it? It is. And one issue that I have considered during the fast is, you know, when you get a hunger pain, then that's another prompting for prayer and to focus on God and to drive out that issue of hunger. Because, I mean, hunger is not going to supernaturally go away just because we're fasting.

But we can use those bodily feelings to help us focus more on our Lord. You know, that is so true. As a matter of fact, every once in a while, it seems like the Holy Spirit will just bring something to mind that maybe we're off in an area.

And with me, sometimes it's being so busy that, well, I'm not practicing the presence of God. And I will fast sometimes on those days. Why? For that very reason that the doctor said.

When I set aside or separate myself from food, which also means fellowship in our country, every time there's a twinge, every time there's a weakness, I don't know what it is, I can't explain it, but it throws my mind right back into the presence of God. There are so many different reasons in Scripture for fasting, but that is one of, I could say, my favorites. One of the reasons for fasting in my life is that.

Another reason for fasting that people often overlook is preparation and growth in godliness in the sense of seeing yourself as you really are. Let me just give you an example. Let's say that you bump into a Christian in your workplace or something, and you say hi, and they're real quick and irritable with you, and maybe even a little offensive, and they kind of storm down the hallway.

And then a couple hours later, they come back and they say, you know, listen, Mike, I'm not feeling good today. I've got a lot of problems. I've got headaches.

I'm just not myself today. Well, actually, it's just the opposite. They are being their self when they do that.

You see, when we have food and comfort and clothing and everything is going right, we're not seeing a real picture of ourselves. We're seeing a person propped up by all the good things in their life. Now, you take all those things away, and that person becomes irritable, short-tempered, self-centered, everything.

That's the real them. So when we fast, what is a wonderful opportunity in fasting, especially if you're a person who doesn't eat right, because if you don't eat right as a practice of life, then when you fast, it's not starvation, but it's toxins coming out of your body. Good point.

Mike, it's time for a break. Yeah, let's take a quick break, 888-253-9254. Brother Paul Walsh, you're here with us with Dr. Edney and I, and we're going to take a break.

We'll be right back. Stay there. May you never need us, but if you do, take comfort in knowing we're here for you and your family, too.

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Dr. Dan at OnCallRadio.net. You're listening to OnCall with Dr. Dan Edney and our guest today. As we're talking about fasting, our guest here in our studio here at Muscle Shills, Alabama, at First Baptist Church, is Brother Paul Walsh. Dr. Edney, did you have a question you wanted to start off with in this segment? Well, the biggest thing that I wanted to ask Brother Paul was what direction do we have from Scripture in terms of exactly how to accomplish a biblical fast? Good question.

Well, as you know, there isn't a whole lot in Scripture regarding that. The main focus in Scripture, and I noticed that you were discussing about is it wrong to take medicine while you're fasting and things, and the answer, of course, is no, it's not wrong because that's missing the entire point. Right.

The entire point is going back to just this. I have a hunger for God or for the advancement of God's will that is so great it drives out every other hunger. Now, it's only kind of the Pharisee who starts in on talking about technicalities to that.

It is a person who pushes the plate away, maybe pushes even fellowship away and everything just to be alone with God and to deal and wrestle with issues. Now, in my own life, I have found the following things. Number one, I don't really need to be thinking a whole lot about fasting unless I get my eating, the way I eat, biblical.

I need to be very careful about that. I need to realize that food is to be enjoyed, that no food is to be rejected, that if it is received with gratitude, as Paul tells Timothy in 1 Timothy 4. And we've done programs about that before as well. But at the same time, fasting is like knowing God's will.

Knowing God's will flows out of a lifestyle of renewing the mind in the word of God. Fasting flows out of a lifestyle of prayer. And the preparation of it, if I feel like I'm going to go into a long time of fasting, let's say more than a week, be very, very careful with regards to the amount of water I drink.

I want to drink a lot of water. I want to be very careful prior to that time that I eat carefully. I like to try to eat a lot of vegetables and things like that.

After coming out of a fast, you have totally missed the point of coming out of that fast, you run to McDonald's and just commit gluttony. But there's really not a whole lot on exactly how to do it. We see cases where here the Jews are about ready to be destroyed by the evil Haman.

And we see just an immediate, there's not much time for preparation. It's just tell the people to fast. And the crisis is so great, I can just see the Jewish people all over the place just falling to their knees and falling to their faces and fasting.

And we see in cases of Christ just simply going out into the desert, being impelled by the spirit to go out. We don't see a whole lot of preparation. One of the reasons is his lifestyle was biblical.

His lifestyle was biblical. Let me ask you this. When you're fasting, I know people have different ways of fasting perhaps.

Do you take God's word of course? Do you take a journal and write down things that you're praying about? And at what point do you know that it's the time, the point to end the fast? Well, for me, sometimes I fast and I separate some days in which I'm not going to be at the church building. I'm not going to answer the phone. I'm going to be in the word where I'm going to be praying.

That's fine. That doesn't happen much. So sometimes when I know that I'm going to have a very busy day, I will fast so that during all those busy activities, as the doctor said, when that twinge comes, it sets my mind back on what I'm really supposed to do.

I love that point too. That was a great point. And so you have to be very, very careful.

You've got all these people making all these inferences from Scripture about how you're supposed to fast when they're inferences, human inferences and not commands. Very good. It goes back to just a man who says passionately, and how do I know when I need to stop? This is going to sound pretty secular and trite, but basically it's when I want to stop.

Okay. When I feel like it's enough. Again, I'm not trying to earn something from deity.

This is about my passion. This is about I feel like it's settled. I have comfort now.

I have peace, and it's time to go on. I want to make a distinction between, I don't really want to say it this way, but an Old Testament fasting that we see and a New Testament fasting. Realize this.

When we're fasting, this is not a morbid thing. We are fasting in the presence of Christ. How can you not delight? I learned this a long time ago from a fellow in Peru.

He said, your fasting is so morbid, it's a work. He goes, it's not a delight. I began to look at that.

I'm separating from food, and it's not to starve. I'm separating from food because there's something better, and it's Christ. How can it be morbid if it's bringing me into a closer fellowship with him? Your fasting, there should be a sense of joy in it.

Dr. Edney? That's wonderful insight for me. Brother Paul, I know that we're taught by Scripture that we're not to make any big deal about us fasting, and we're not to use the example of the Pharisees, and we're basically just to do it and let it be between ourselves and the Lord. But sometimes there are others that need to know what we're doing, like our wife.

So maybe she's not preparing meals or whoever. Is that a problem? It's not a problem at all. It's a condition of the heart.

Let me give you an example from giving. We need to give so that one hand doesn't know what the other hand is doing. But sometimes I'll come across a young preacher.

He's struggling. He has almost nothing. Now, I could secretly pass him \$20 or something, and that would be good.

But you know what I do sometimes? I'll walk up to him, and I'll hand him a check or I'll hand him some money, and I'll say, this is from me. And I want you to know that because I want you to know as an older preacher, I esteem what God's doing in your life, and I affirm it. So see, it's a condition of the heart.

It's not a thing of... Because you can practice the hiddenness thing in the name of idolatry. Right, that's a good point. It's just, you know, what is the point here? Is it the glory of God and the benefit of others, or is it self-exaltation? And I guess if, you know, sharing with those who are closest to you, then they can support us in prayer as we go through the fast.

My little boys are five and three, and sometimes when Daddy has to separate himself from everything and go out and pray, they've asked their mother, what's Daddy doing? You know, I hope that my little boys will wake up at three in the morning sometime wanting a glass of water and go by my study and see me on my knees weeping. Wow. So it's hiddenness, but you have to be careful about that, too.

Again, are you desiring God's glory and the advancement of his kingdom or your own exaltation? And I think, Dr. Eddy, that takes us back to a word that Brother Paul used earlier, which reminded me of some things, some teachings and a message I've heard from John Piper, and that's the use of the word passion. Absolutely, and that brings a whole different perspective to the whole point of fasting, and that is great encouragement. Well, Brother Paul, we're about out of time in this segment.

We thank you so much. It's ultimately, of course, been a joy and an honor to meet you finally. And to spend some time with you, but we really appreciate you coming on the On Call program today, and we just pray God's continued blessings on your ministry, and we thank you for your faithfulness.

May I say one other thing? Sure, please do. T.W. Hunt, a long-time prayer warrior, told me this one time. Someone asked him, How much did Jesus eat? And this is what he said.

Jesus ate, and he ate, and he ate, until one more bite would have been gluttony. In Christ, we have the perfect example. Amen.

That's great. That is great, absolutely. Well, thank you again so much, Brother Paul.

Let's go ahead and take a break, Stephen. You're listening to the On Call program, 888-253-9254. Dr. Dan at OnCallRadio.net. We'll be right back after this.

Stay there.

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