

# ***THE PERILS OF THE BRIDEGROOM FAST PT 1***

***FASTING: REWARDS AND PERILS-- DANA CANDLER***

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## **I. THE PERILS OF THE FASTED LIFESTYLE**

- A. Along with the benefits of the Bridegroom fast come the *perils*, both being *part and parcel* of the fasted lifestyle. Though the rewards are truly superior to the difficulties, they do not make obsolete the struggle nor nullify the dangers.
  
- B. Review on the Benefits and Perils of the Fasted Lifestyle:
  - 1. The *perils of fasting* are only real because the benefits are so real. There are so many danger zones on the counterfeit side only because it is so glorious and powerful on the genuine side.
  
  - 2. Whether used for good purposes or bad, the results in the soul are *not neutral* but powerful. It is a potent lifestyle and it strengthens us either for vice or for righteousness.
    - a. The group that killed Jesus fasted two days a week. Though they were people of prayer, fasting and the word, they murdered the Messiah.
  
    - b. Many false religions and occult groups promote the practice of fasting because of its real dimensions of power. They strongly deny their flesh in order to have a greater access to the experience of the spirit realm.
  
  - 3. The benefits of fasting actually far outweigh the dangers. Though the dangers on the counterfeit side are real, the graces gained on the genuine side are exceedingly higher.
  
- C. Understanding the Perils of Fasting
  - 1. If we understand the perils of the fasted lifestyle soundly, we will be equipped with perseverance to endure, escaping the disillusionment of an uninformed abandonment and unforeseen fallout. To be forewarned is to be forearmed.
  
  - 2. The rewards coexist with the burdens of fasting. Yet we can know with assurance that the benefits are far superior to the burdens. The secret of persevering through the struggle is in knowing that the reward is greater.
  
  - 3. The fasted lifestyle is like shark-infested waters and we cannot be ignorant of its dangers. There are both internal struggles and external struggles—spiritual and natural, physical and mental.
  
  - 4. The effects of fasting are not neutral and the consequences are not small—strengthening the human heart for good or for evil.

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- D. Voluntary weakness verses Involuntary Weakness
1. Voluntary Weakness – *fasting*. The call to fasting is the call to enter voluntarily into a realm of weakness that we don't have to enter into if we don't want to. It has to be weakness as prescribed by the Word of God. Some of the monasteries through the dark ages entered into strange kinds of voluntary weakness—beating themselves with whips and wearing painful clothing or objects. Weakness in itself is not enough, it must be weakness as the Word describes.
  2. Involuntary Weakness – *Attack of the enemy, persecution, trials, etc.*
  3. Voluntary and involuntary weaknesses always go together. When we begin to enter into voluntary weakness, it provokes an attack against us from the Enemy. Yet when the enemy attacks us, we respond by fasting again.
- E. The very essence of fasting is a call to voluntary weakness in terms of our natural life and strength. He calls us into this lifestyle of voluntary weakness in the natural that we might receive *divine strength* in the spirit.
1. Though there are many paradoxes in fasting, there is no greater paradox than the paradox of *weakness and strength*.
  2. One of the most dynamic explanations in the Word of God of how the Kingdom operates is when the Lord said to Paul,  
***“My grace [power] is sufficient for you. For My strength is made perfect in weakness. 2 Cor. 12:9***
  3. God's strength is perfected in us when we experience weakness in the flesh. He set up His Kingdom in such a way that the realm of perfected power becomes strongly manifest to us in the context of our weakness.
  4. Though many believers desire God's perfected power, they have a disdain for the realm of weakness. Yet weakness is not optional if we want to touch the perfected strength of God.
  5. The End-Time Church will only be strong in the manifest power of God to the degree that they understand weakness without despising it.
  6. By divine design, fasting is an interruption of our natural strength and this is why it chafes us. The western world hates raw weakness and will do anything but embrace it—allowing God alone to be our Deliver. We long for the encounter but our lifestyles militate against it. Yet this is the place where God's power is perfected and if we're after His fullness, we can't avoid it.

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## **II. PHYSICAL WEAKNESS—PERIL # 1**

- A. The first mountain in front of us in the fasted lifestyle is the physical weakness we encounter. We need to be ready for it and warned of it, responding appropriately.
1. Fasting is a call to weakness, not primarily to hunger. Hunger becomes a secondary issue after a little experience. Thus, fasting is primarily an issue of weakness and strength.
  2. When we begin to experience weaknesses in our natural body, we need not be disillusioned. This is part of our voluntary weakness, that we might enter the strength of God.
  3. Accumulation of Weakness - When you embrace fasting as a lifestyle rather than just an occasional event, an accumulated weakness begins to build. Even on the “eat days,” you may experience degrees of physical weakness. Yet, alongside of this weakness accumulation, your spirit resonates more and more.
- B. Physical Symptoms of Fasting – A Part of Weakness of the Flesh
- “My knees are weak through fasting, and my flesh is feeble from lack of fatness.” Ps. 109:4***
1. *Energy Loss* - We lose our ability to do quite as much as the same pace and quality level.
  2. *Head-aches* - These are *temporary* symptoms of the toxins released in our body. As our body adjusts to the fasting (and we change our diet when we’re *not* fasting) the head-aches subside.
  3. *Dizziness* – Often when we rise too fast, we may experience dizziness or lightheadedness. We don’t need to be afraid of this, it is normal in consistent fasting.
  4. *Inner trembling* – At times we will feel an inward weakness and shakiness—a wobbly, unsteady feeling. This too is no cause for alarm.
  5. *Weak legs*
  6. *Weak grip*
  7. *Numbness*
  8. *Irritation to Noise*
  9. *Metabolism Change* – Fasting is not a weight loss program and though you may lose *some* weight during the first several months, your metabolism will eventually slow down as a protective mechanism (from starvation) to your body. If you fast intensely for a few years and then stop, you will not be able to immediately eat like you used to without gaining a lot of weight—it takes a year or two to re-establish your metabolism at where it was before.
  10. *Digestion Disruptions* – Especially in the first few of months, your digestion is disrupted. Eventually, by changing your diet, you will learn to avoid the amount and the types of food that cause this difficulty.
  11. *Irregular sleep* - You need less sleep because of the decrease in energy used for digestion. However, your sleep will tend to be less sound and irregular.

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## **III. MENTAL WEAKNESS—*PERIL # 2***

- A. The second peril to the fasted lifestyle is the toll it takes on us mentally—allowing for the humiliation and embarrassment of mental weakness.
1. *Memory loss* – We forget important details such as peoples names, what was on our to-do list, etc.
  2. *Hard to focus and concentrate* – This is a paradox in that it sharpens your mind in revelation yet weakens it in the natural. You feel dazed, disconnected and distracted in relating to others.
  3. *Difficult to communicate* – Hard to find words.
  4. This mental weakness is a burden. It is a lot less dependable kind of way to live in the natural. This is definitely humbling. Yet when we remember the parallel benefit to this peril, the illumination of the mind by divine revelation, how worth it is this difficulty!

## **IV. EMOTIONAL STRESS—*PERIL # 3***

- A. *Easily annoyed yet deepest spiritual feelings* (Paradox #1) – We find ourselves bugged but anointed. Our emotions are right on the edge, yet we're tender and weeping in the Word. We have a hypersensitivity to Noise and Touch and Activity. Yet at the same time, we're still experiencing deep spiritual feelings.
- B. *Feeling oppressed yet feeling intimacy with God at the same time* (Paradox #2) – At times we feel terribly down in our emotions, yet at the very same time, we feel tenderness toward God. On one hand, we experience the benefit of our emotions being tenderized toward the Lord, and on the other hand, we undergo the struggle of the oppression experienced in our emotions.
- C. *Weakened resolve to accomplish things, yet a strengthened resolve toward God* (Paradox #3) – We find ourselves totally unmotivated to get things done in the natural and yet we have a fiery resolve in our abandonment to God.
- D. *Fasting removes our natural, emotional strength* - By nature, we hide and cover up our emotional weaknesses by the strength of our personalities. Our weaknesses in our personalities are like hidden fault lines beneath the surface. (Fear, anger, rejection, etc.). We can temporarily hold ourselves at bay and act properly with the edge-reducer of food, yet fasting removes the suppression of our weak spots. The props that anesthetize our pain are taken away, and our raw weakness stares us in the face. Typically when this happens, we feel like hypocrites—yet the truth is that we are deeper in God than ever before. The hidden weaknesses that are now glaring at us are not new to God, only to us. And as we learn to bring these fault lines to Him continually, transformation occurs and humility grows.

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## **V. THE FIERCE TEMPTATION TOWARD SPIRITUAL PRIDE—PERIL # 4**

***“Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God. 2 Cor. 7:1***

- A. As Paul exhorts, we need to get free of the defilement of flesh and of spirit. We were born into this defilement in our fallenness, and pride is the premier manifestation. Pride is the number one enemy of the first commandment and the most natural emotion we have—we were born in it. It is a subtle, blinding reality that fiercely tempts us.
- B. Paul the Apostle needed a thorn in his flesh in order to keep him from pride (2 Cor. 12). Because of revelation, he had a tendency to exalt himself.
- C. Without a focused resistance, *fasting feeds our spiritual pride*. Because most don’t respond to the call to fast, it is a premier occasion for pride to manifest. We find ourselves having the desire to be recognized as one uniquely dedicated and close to God. Though we exert much effort to hide our craving for spiritual acknowledgement, the gratification that we feel when we are fasting and we get “caught” proves our need of growth.

***“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. Matt. 6:16***

- 1. This proneness towards pride requires a focused resistance in our spiritual life, asking the Lord to continually rid us of any of its residue.
  - 2. Fasting in its rightful role presses us into humility rather than pride. It exposes our prideful proneness and causes us to cleave to God as our only source of Strength amidst our great weakness and brokenness.
- D. *Elitism* is one of the powerful manifestations of spiritual pride we face in fasting. We experience hidden feelings of superiority towards others. Elitism is part of broken human nature—a fierce temptation to pride. On the other side of brokenness is graphic inferiority yet this too is pride and self-focused.
- 1. We all love to feel superior no matter what category it’s in—whether prayer and fasting, revelation, mystical information, preaching abilities, evangelism, musical abilities, etc.—anything that allows us to feel a bit superior. Fasting fiercely looses this inner dragon—this filthiness of spirit—on the inside of us.
  - 2. We find ourselves thinking we are better than others and disgusted that they aren’t doing it as we are. The right response, the one God is looking for, is that we would be grateful for the way He has convinced us of something we did not used to be convinced of. *We* are not responsible for our dedication in fasting—*God’s grace* is. Instead of being annoyed at others, we want to be grateful for the grace moving on our hearts, making what used to seem crazy seem so *wise*. Instead of growing in contempt for others, we must grow in gratitude towards God.

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E. *Confidence in the Flesh* is yet another manifestation of pride. We experience this temptation toward false confidence in fasting, assured that God likes us more because of our self denial.

***“Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as being of ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God.” 2 Cor. 3:5***

1. By nature we put confidence in our flesh and when we are not fasting before a Bridegroom God—this confidence is strengthened. We do not fast to motivate God, but because we already know His delight and out of our love to feel what He feels, we fast to enlarge our capacity.
2. The spirit of religion tries to choke our hearts, causing us to feel more confident before God while fasting. Thus, when we’re fasting, we worship Him with greater assurance, yet when we don’t fast, or when we stumble, we shrink back in shame. The truth is that our confidence before Him is only because of His desire for us. He was slain because He possessed so much jealous love over us.
3. This proneness of thinking we are more desirable to God because of our spiritual denial is the essence of dead religion. Our self-denial bolsters our confidence in our flesh and we think God is moved more, yet this lie must be rooted out. Our confidence can ever only be in God and His redemption.

***“Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, “God I thank You that I am not like other men—extortioners, unjust, or even as this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess. And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, “God be merciful to me, a sinner!” I tell you this man went to his house justified and not the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.” Lk. 18: 10 – 14***

4. There are two great enemies in the grace of God—the destructiveness of self-indulgence and the destructiveness of religious self-denial. Though there are more perils in self-indulgence than in abstinence, the perils of fasting come when our focus is not on a God of love, a God of burning affections. The Bridegroom fast leads us into confidence into His burning heart, not in our flesh—an essential deliverance from this fourth peril.
5. *“I fear there may be some among us whose gifts the Bridegroom does not accept because they lack the fragrance of lilies; for if my fasting reflects my own self-will, it will not be acceptable to him, and he will find no fragrance in my fasting, since its odor is not that of the lily of obedience, but the weed of self-will.” Bernard of Clairvaux*

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F. Another Face of Spiritual Pride is in an *Unholy Confidence to Judge People*

***“Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather resolve this, not to be a stumbling block or a cause to fall in our brother’s way.” Rom. 14:13***

1. Fasting provides a tremendous open door for religious arrogance—an unholy confidence to judge others. Without a purposeful resistance, we will unknowingly forge a negative assessment over others. The Pharisees killed the Messiah with an emboldened religious deception.
2. Some who have tenaciously given themselves to prayer and fasting are the angriest judgmental people, with so much boldness to write off and judge others.
3. Paul warned the early church against the spiritual pride related to self denial. They had confidence in their self-denial in an inappropriate way. They kept all their rules of “Do not taste, touch or handle,” and Paul said in essence, “Why do you subject yourselves to your own regulations and rules that you yourself have created—finding confidence in these lists? These things have an appearance of wisdom, in self-imposed religion, false humility and neglect of the body, but are of no value against indulgence in the flesh.” He exposed their false humility and self promotion before God and man. (Col. 2:20 - 23)
4. Paul goes on to explain that what changes the chemistry of the heart, actually allowing for overcoming indulgence of the flesh, is that we’re raised up with Christ (3:1-3). The beauty of our life is hidden in Christ and we can’t make sense of the full dignity and wisdom of what we’re doing. Our confidence is that we have access to the beauty realm of God.
5. This spiritual pride, brought about by the heeding of self-imposed religion, causes an unholy confidence to judge others. Entirely focused in the realm of man’s ability to produce and attain, it places judgment on those who aren’t measuring up to status quo.
6. We must beware of magnifying ourselves in the very act of denying ourselves. It’s not about our lists and how we might further deny our flesh—it’s about whatever helps move us into the realm of God’s desire and beauty.