

FASTING AND WORSHIP

Hi, and welcome. Today we'll talk about fasting and how it relates to worship for the people of God.

Scripture

Acts 13:2–3 (ESV)

²While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." ³Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off.

Devotional

Here, we find the church in Antioch fasting in both worship and prayer. How are these things related? In this passage, fasting seems to be a way for the people of God to draw close to God. In the gospel of Matthew, John's disciples come to Jesus with a question on fasting. "Then the disciples of John came to him, saying, 'Why do we and the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not fast?' And Jesus said to them, 'Can the wedding guests mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast.'" (Matthew 9:14-15) John Piper in his book "A Hunger for God" takes this idea and expands on it. He says that fasting for the Christian is done out of a longing for the return of Christ, for the Kingdom of God to be fully manifested on earth, for the will of God to be done on earth as in heaven. It's not so much that fasting from food instantly brings you closer to the Lord, it's a purposeful and intentional way to express your longing for Christ and not looking to satisfy that longing anywhere else. So, of course fasting is worship. Fasting is recognizing God for who he is and trusting him when he says he will keep you and sustain you. The church at Antioch is fasting because the bridegroom has been taken away and they await the wedding supper of the Lamb. And in that fasting, in that worship, they pray to the Lord and he answers them! God gives them yet another taste of the Kingdom of Heaven with his very words, and how would the people respond except for immediate obedience?

Do you long for the Kingdom of God? Do you feel the absence of Christ, the bridegroom? Do you long for the day when Christ will return and bring us into the new heavens and new earth? Then fast to express that longing. Fast as worship to God for what you are sure he has done and are sure he is going to do. "For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. ... And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies." (Romans 8:19,23) So groan with that anticipation. Fast because our future is so good. Fast because God will keep his promises. Fast because nothing will satisfy you outside of the Kingdom of God. Fast in worship.

Prayer

Lord, I can't wait to see you at the end of all things. I can't wait for it. I read your word and I can almost taste it. Yet I must wait on you. Sustain me until that day when every knee will bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. Sustain me until all things are as they should be. Amen.