

*UNTO THE LORD FAST**SEVEN DAY FAST**APRIL 15TH, 2024**DAY 2**MARK GODLEWSKI*

Fasting's Purification Process

Fasting kills off evil desires. In Romans 8:13 (ESV) we read, "if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body you will live." In Galatians 5 we find out the Holy Spirit that dwells within believers wants to live for God, but for most of our lives we find ourselves prone to obey our natural flesh which is against God and even hostile to God as stated in Romans 8:7. Our flesh wants to live for and please itself while our spirits want to live for and please God. There is war going on within us. Matthew 26:41 (NIV) reads, "Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak."

The word of God has good news for us. We can re-train our flesh to more naturally obey the Holy Spirit dwelling within our spirit. How are we to do this re-training? The answer is by "putting to death the deeds of our body." In the Greek, the word Thanatos means to kill, to mortify or to make dead. How do we do this to those fleshly desires - this killing them off? We need to cut off their supply of nourishment in order to make them wither and die. We must make them dead in order for the spirit to reign and have control. Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 9:27 (NKJV) "I discipline my body and bring it into subjection." The Greek reads, I pummel my body and make it my slave. This is warfare and the enemy is living inside us.

If we are thinking this sounds a little too radical, then we must consider the alternative course of action - living a life that consists of our fleshly desires ruling and reigning over us, making us their slaves. Galatians 5:19-21 (ESV) reads, "Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of rage, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies and things like these. I warn you as I have warned you before, that those who do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God."

At this point you may be wondering, how will fasting help me put to death my fleshly desires? In this manner, when we fast we train ourselves to say no to one of our most basic and powerful appetites, our appetite for food. Simply stated, if we can learn to gain control over this basic fundamental desire for food (one we confront several times a day), we can learn to master our other appetites. When we learn to say no to our cravings for food, our other appetites will be much easier to master. Our cravings for food being our strongest appetite, our lesser desires will become mastered more easily. Fasting is a powerful weapon in our battle to gain mastery over the flesh making it submit to the spirit. Once we master our flesh by the discipline of fasting it loses its control over us. It stops being an automatic default reaction and we break this cycle in our lives, becoming free to live unto God.

Fasting weakens greatly our inclination to rely on satisfying our natural appetites. It quiets those appetites and increases our appetites for the things of the Spirit. When we begin to purify our appetites, the voice of God becomes clearer. A transformation takes place and our spirit takes the place of ascendancy above our natural fleshly appetites. It becomes easier to recognize and see where and how God is working. As we are fasting we become more sensitive. It becomes more natural to live, move and perceive in the realm of the Spirit. Our flesh becomes restrained and no longer “clouds” our spiritual perceptions.

Scripture teaches us that it is necessary to deny ourselves, take up our cross in order to follow Jesus, Mt. 16:24. Catering to our flesh to make it feel comfortable, supplying it with the comforts of life and “feeling good” should not be our primary goal. Fasting attacks the feel good culture of this age - it reveals to us just how much we rely on our creature comforts to satisfy the self-life. It brings an abrupt awakening to how much we actually engage ourselves in pampering our flesh and satisfying its appetites. When we deny our bodies food our appetites demand we pay them attention. When we don't alleviate the fleshly appetites with food or fleshly entertainment, the turmoil within our souls is revealed. Often times Christians are under the delusion that they are mightily abandoned to the Lord, not realizing how much strength their appetites hold over them. Fasting reveals the true reality of our spiritual strength to master our self-life, what the measure of our strength actually is. The more we respond to and comfort our flesh, the more we diminish our capacity to hear from God. We rely on outside stimulants to try and calm the cravings of the fleshly appetites, in order to comfort our soulish desires. Fasting and prayer separates us from all the background noise that conceals the reality of our true spiritual state. It is only when we have a great dissatisfaction with our current state of affairs that the will to submit to the discipline of fasting becomes strong within us. This is what allows the Holy Spirit to expose those things we falsely cling to and the ungodly attractions we see revealed within us. Only the deep craving for intimacy with our Lord can convince us to willingly undergo the discipline that puts us in this situation where the shortcomings of our flesh are revealed. In the end, fasting is an actual cry out “reveal what you must reveal in me God. Do whatever you must do to cleanse my heart, silence my flesh and draw me close to you”