
Shield of Faith

A Primitive Baptist Publication

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Prayer and Fasting

Long ago, a theologian wrote: "Upon these hang the whole of our outward expression of faith, of hope, and of love: prayer and fasting."

For many, fasting is a radical notion. From the biblical perspective, there is hardly a better way to "taste and see that the Lord is good." Fasting should be a part of the normal maturation of the Christian life in spiritual humility and divine grace.

The Bible tells us that in the past when God's people sought to strengthen their devotional life they fasted and prayed. When they were intent on seeking God's guidance in difficult times, they fasted and prayed (Acts 14:23). When they wanted to express grief—whether over the consequences of their own sins or the sins of others—they fasted and prayed (2 Samuel 1:11-12). When they sought deliverance or protection in times of trouble, they fasted and prayed (2 Chronicles 20:3-4). When they wanted to express repentance and a return to the fold of faith, they fasted and prayed (Joel 2:12). When they wanted to demonstrate humility before the throne of God, they fasted and prayed (Psalm 35:13). When they expressed concern for the ongoing work of the ministry, they fasted and prayed (Daniel 9:3). When they wished to minister to the needs of others, they fasted and prayed (Isaiah 58:6-7). When they sought to overcome temptation and dedicate themselves to holiness, they fasted and prayed (Matthew 4:1-11). When they wanted to express their highest love, honor, worship and praise to the Father, they fasted and prayed.

While he still occupied the White House, Calvin Coolidge wrote:

There are those who suppose that when it comes to matters of religion, we all have the prerogative to pick and choose what we will and will not believe or observe. But according to

the Christian religion, it is God who does the picking and choosing. Our job is simply to submit. Of course, that's the problem, isn't it? It is never simple to simply submit.

Fasting and prayer are not easy. They are not comfortable. They are unlikely to capture the attentions of popular fashion. So, we don't practice them. We pick and choose what we will observe rather than simply submit.

The Hebrew word for *fast* used throughout the Old Testament and the Greek word used throughout the New Testament both literally mean "to cover over or to affix. The idea is not simply to cover over the mouth—and thus to refrain from eating—but to affix the attentions to other matters altogether. It is "to focus on or to fasten on" spiritual matters rather than merely temporal matters. It is "to hold fast" to Christ—and nothing else. It is to abstain from one thing in order to attain to another.

Whenever and wherever it is mentioned in the Bible, the discipline of fasting has a conspicuous role in humbling God's people so that they can concentrate on spiritual things. Mentioned more than seventy-five times in the Bible—more than baptism, the Lord's Supper, witnessing, or tithing—fasting is one of the most basic and essential disciplines of the Christian life.

In our day the idea of fasting seems old-fashioned and ritualistic; but from a biblical perspective it is just a normal aspect of humble faith.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus drives home the importance of normal, regular fasting with a warning, a command, and a promise: "*Moreover when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. {17} But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face; {18} That thou*

appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly." (Matthew 6:16-18)

First, notice that fasting is not an exercise of ritual correctness for those who want to put on holier-than-thou airs. Jesus says that when we fast, we are not to look like it. Fasting is supposed to evoke humility. If we fast for some outward benefits, if we fast for whatever sympathy or recognition we can get, then we have already received our reward in full.

Second, fasting is to be a part of our regular routine. It is to be woven into our normal lifestyles. It is to be fully integrated into our walk with both God and man—with a minimum of disruption.

Third, fasting is Godward in its orientation. Its only audience is Him. Its only intent is Him. Its only object is Him. It is wholly and completely focused on Him. "And thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly"—that is the promise.

Inherent in all three—the warning, the command, and the promise—is the assumption that no matter what, one way or another, the disciples will fast. It is assumed. "When you fast," Jesus said twice; not *if* but *when*.

The Jewish fasts were observed with various degrees of strictness. When the fast lasted only a single day it was the practice to abstain from food of every kind from evening to evening, whereas in the case of private fasts of a more prolonged character it was merely the ordinary food that was abstained from. It was not unusual to put on sackcloth, rend the garments, and scatter ashes over the head.

Mosaic Law prescribed only one public occasion of strict fasting, namely, once a year on the great *Day of Atonement*. This observance seems always to have retained some prominence as "the fast" (Acts 27:9). But as to the nature of the observance we are nowhere expressly informed, excepting that "it shall be a holy

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Prayer and Fasting

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convocation for you" (Lev. 23:27-29).

The Hebrews, in the earlier period of their history, were in the habit of fasting whenever they were in hard and trying circumstances, misfortune, and bereavement, in the prospect of threatened judgments of God, on occasions of falling into grievous sin, or to avert heavy calamity.

In the New Testament the only references to the Jewish fasts are the mention of "the fasts" in Acts 27:9 (generally understood to denote the Day of Atonement) and the allusions to the weekly fasts (Matt. 9:14; Mark 2:18; Luke 5:33; 18:12).

Jesus sternly rebuked the Pharisees for their hypocritical pretenses in the fasts that they observed (Matt. 6:16-18). Prayer and fasting are mentioned (Matt. 17:21; Mark 9:29,) as necessary to cast out certain spirits. Mention is made of fasting in the apostolic church (Acts 13:3; 14:23; 2 Cor. 6:5). In the last passage the apostle probably refers to *voluntary fasting*, as in 2 Cor. 11:27 he makes a distinction between fasting and "hunger and thirst."

After the Jewish custom, fasting was frequently joined with prayer that the mind, unencumbered with earthly matter, might devote itself with less distraction to the contemplation of divine things. As the Pharisees were accustomed to fast on Monday and Thursday, the Christians appointed Wednesday and especially Friday as days of half-fasting or abstinence from flesh in commemoration of the passion and crucifixion of Jesus. They did this with reference to the Lord's words "But the days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast" (Matt. 9:15).

It is interesting to note that Jesus gives no command to fast. As has already been stated, it was assumed that fasting would be a part of Christian life: "Moreover when ye fast," (Matt. 6:16); "when the bridegroom shall be taken from them, and then shall they fast." (Matt. 9:15) There are no rules concerning how often we are to fast, whether the fast is to be total (no food nor drink) or partial (abstaining from food only; abstaining from only certain foods); no instructions are given that tell us how to fast.

The reason that we are not given such information probably lies in the very nature of fasting itself. Is fasting to be a ritual that follows step 1, step 2, and step

3? What is the purpose of Fasting? Is it not to seek God? For fasting to mean anything to us, it must be motivated by the Holy Spirit's giving us a hunger and thirst for God. Doesn't it then follow that we do what is necessary to satisfy the hunger and quench the thirst?

There may be times in our experience when our normal prayer life keeps us in communion with God. There may be other times when we have to add a short period of fasting or a partial fast in order to focus on God. There may be other times in which only long periods of fasting and devoted prayer can lead the hungering soul to feast at God's banqueting table. In short, we do what is necessary to achieve our goal. The fast may be giving up food and drink completely for a short time; it may be giving up food but not drink; it may be giving up only certain food for a time. From all scriptural examples, it seems to be a matter left to the individual believer as led by the Holy Spirit.

It should be noted here that many Christians today have quenched the Spirit and have filled up on the world's "junk food" to the point that the soul's hunger for the Bread of Life is barely felt. They seem satisfied with things as they are. I think we are all that way to some degree. We have all felt some of the spirit of the Laodiceans; we all lean toward lukewarmness. The Laodicean spirit is one that "goeth not out but by prayer and fasting." (Matthew 17:21)

As with any religious practice, there are dangers in fasting, which are clearly noted Scripture. Perhaps the greatest danger is the one most prevalent, the failure to use fasting at all. Scripture is clear that fasting has a place in our lives. Fasting should be used, but it must be used in the right way.

Another danger is that the fast may be regarded as a means of getting things from God (Isa. 58:3). Like prayer, the intent of fasting is not simply to get something from God, nor to change God's mind. The fast is to help us grow closer to God, so that we will know and desire that His will be done.

Fasting may be substituted for the genuine repentance, which issues in amendment of life (Isa. 58:5-7). The Jews of Isaiah's day thought that they could live in sin and still please God by just going through certain rituals. As the Psalmist said, "Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden part thou

shalt make me to know wisdom." (Psalms 51:6) God is not impressed by outward ritual, but is concerned with the change of the inner man.

It may become a mere convention and therefore an end in itself (Zech. 7:5). God asked the Jews concerning all their fasts, "Did ye at all fast unto me, *even to me?*" Their focus was on the ritual, and not on God.

The fast may become an occasion for a parade of religion (Matt. 6:16) and thus finally lead to self-righteousness which is the very opposite of true repentance. The imposition of set days of fasting is perhaps a mistake in this connection since it leads to the formality which empties fasting of its true significance.

There are times when fasting may not be appropriate. On one of the occasions that Jesus miraculously fed the multitudes, He said, "I will not send them away fasting, lest they faint in the way." (Matthew 15:32) Travel was difficult, and the disciples would need strength to make the journey. Thus fasting was inappropriate. 1 Samuel 14:24-35 records Saul's ordering a fast at a time when his army needed their strength. His orders caused the army to sin in eating blood.

From these Scriptures we can see that fasting was not intended to rob the body of its strength. It is safe to conclude that fasting should not be used if it is going to harm the body. There are medical conditions that would make a total fast dangerous. However, almost everyone should be able to practice some form of fasting.

In spite of these warnings, Christian history gives ample evidence of the abuse as well as the proper use of fasting. From an early period legalism invaded this biblical and valuable practice, special days and periods being imposed and distinctions made between what might or might not be eaten. In reaction against this perversion, churches have been tempted to remedy the abuse by discontinuing the practice altogether rather than restoring it to its proper use in individual and congregational life. Yet fasting itself is obviously a biblical practice capable of a profitable use. Neglected, misunderstood, misused, fasting is a biblical practice that should be re-examined by the church. In face of corruption, the true aim should be to restore it to its Scriptural setting and purpose.

Bible Quiz

Can you match the food with the consumer?

1. Samson found this in a carcass, Judges 14:8
 2. Gideon brought to an angel, Judges 6:19-20
 3. Jesus ate after he arose, Luke 24:42
 4. Esau sold birthright for, Genesis 25:34
 5. The Israelites remembered, Numbers 11:5
 6. Pharaoh's baker dreamed he carried in a basket, Genesis 40:17
 7. David gave an Egyptian, 1 Samuel 30:11-12
 8. Abraham brought to heavenly visitors, Genesis 18:8
 9. Jael brought to the enemy, Judges 4:18-19
 10. Fruit brought out of the land of Canaan, Numbers 13:23
- a. Raisins
b. Butter
c. Honey
d. Pottage
e. Milk
f. Bakemeats
g. Broth
h. Grapes
i. Fish
j. Melons

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Fall Meeting

Fairview Primitive Baptist Church of Chattanooga, Tennessee, will hold their annual Fall Meeting September 14-16, 2004, the Lord willing. Services are planned for 7:00 PM Eastern Daylight Time each evening.

Elder Don Gilbert, pastor of Tampa Primitive Baptist Church will be the guest minister.

The pastor and members of Fairview church invite you to worship with us during this series of meetings.

For directions or more information, contact the pastor, Elder Greg Phillips at (423) 875-3652 or email at eldphil@bellsouth.net.

THE LAW OF LOVE

By Elder Charles Taylor

"For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serving one another. For all the law is fulfilled in this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (Gal. 5:13,14). Never before the advent of Christ had men been free of bondage in the individual worship of God. "For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love." Paul seems to be saying, "Do not abuse this liberty by imposing that which is not by faith." Circumcision seemed to be the straw of contention among the brethren. This was being imposed upon those who had been set free from the letter of the law. There are many things which, when imposed upon others, bring about division. It would be absurd for Christians to say that unless you pray toward Mecca five times a day, you cannot be a part of the body. This lump (the whole of God's elect) was being divided again by those who were bent on going to the law for justification.

The definition of love (according to Webster), is (1) a strong liking or attachment to someone. (2) a strong liking or interest in something, (3) a strong, usually passionate affection for a person, etc. The Greek word used by Paul is *agapao* denoting affection, benevolence, strong love. John uses the same word in describing the love of God, "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son--" for His people. A strong love! Wherever in Scripture God expresses His relationship to His people in the covenant of grace, this same word *agapao*, or a derivative of the word is used.

When Jesus wept at the tomb of Lazarus the Greek *Phileo* was used by those standing by; "Then said the Jews, Behold how he loved him!" This word carried a somewhat weaker meaning than *agapao* in that *phileo* could never describe in the same sense as God expressing that special love to you and to me.

The power of that love is expressed by Jesus: "Therefore doth my Father love me because I lay down my life, that I might take it again" (John 10:17). Also, "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friend" (John 15:13). The great power of that love broke the barriers of sin and set the captive free. That freedom brought us from the temple sacrifices to the knowledge of the blood sacrifice of Jesus Christ our Lord. Hebrews 10:1 informs us that the law was only a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of those good things. These sacrifices offered year by year continually could never make those who offered the sacrifices perfect.

"Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage" (Gal 5:1). Paul continues in verse 13 by telling us not to use this liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another. He seems to read the fleshy mind of humanity and say, "But if ye bite and devour one another take heed that ye be not consumed one of another." It is said the reason for dying of starvation is that our bodies begin to feed on the inward tissue of the body until it is entirely consumed. When God's people turn to devouring the body, it will soon expire. The apostle Paul looks backward for a moment in Phil. 3:5, 6 by telling us of his zeal under the law. He was of the tribe of Benjamin, circumcised the eighth day, a law abiding Pharisee, he persecuted the Church, blameless as touching the things of the law; but then he turns to us in saying, "But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ" Phil. 3:7). In this law of love for Christ, Paul found peace, joy, and love in the Holy Ghost. Only then could he resolutely say, "I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

In the scope of that liberty there is sufficient width, height, and depth to allow us many closets of joy. (1) It

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Keeping The Heart

Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life. Put away from thee a froward mouth, and perverse lips put far from thee. Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eyelids look straight before thee. Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established. Turn not to the right hand nor to the left: remove thy foot from evil. (Proverbs 4:23-27)

First, I am to consider what the keeping of the heart supposes and imports.

To keep the heart, necessarily supposes a previous work of regeneration, which has set the heart right, by giving it a new spiritual inclination, for as long as the heart is not *set right* by grace as to its habitual frame, no means can *keep it right* with God. Self is the poise of the unrenewed heart, which biases and moves it in all its designs and actions; and as long as it is so, it is impossible that any external means should keep it with God.

Man, originally, was of one constant, uniform frame of spirit, held one straight and even course; not one thought or faculty was disordered; his mind had a perfect knowledge of the requirements of God, his will a perfect compliance therewith; all his appetites and powers stood in a most obedient subordination.

Man, by the apostasy, is become a most disordered and rebellious creature, opposing his Maker, as the *First Cause*, by self-dependence; as the *Chief Good*, by self-love; as the *Highest Lord*, by self-will; and as the *Last End*, by self-seeking. Thus he is quite disordered, and all his actions are irregular. But by regeneration the disordered soul is set right; this great change being, as the Scripture expresses it, the renovation of the soul after the image of God, in which *self-dependence* is removed by faith; *self-love*, by the love of God; *self-will*, by subjection and obedience to the will of God; and *self-seeking* by self-denial. The darkened understanding is illuminated, the refractory will sweetly subdued, the rebellious appetite gradu-

ally conquered. Thus the soul which sin had universally depraved, is by grace restored. This being presupposed, it will not be difficult to apprehend what it is to keep the heart, which is nothing but *the constant care and diligence of such a renewed man to preserve his soul in that holy frame to which grace has raised it*. For though grace has, in a great measure, rectified the soul, and given it an habitual heavenly temper; yet sin often actually discomposes it again; so that even a gracious heart is like a musical instrument, which though it be exactly tuned, a small matter brings it out of tune again; yea, hang it aside but a little, and it will need setting again before another lesson can be played upon it. If gracious hearts are in a desirable frame in one duty, yet how dull, dead, and disordered when they come to another! Therefore every duty needs a particular preparation of the heart. "If thou prepare thine heart and stretch out thine hands toward him," &c. To keep the heart then, is carefully to preserve it from sin, which disorders it; and maintain that spiritual frame which fits it for a life of communion with God. This includes in it six particulars:

1. Frequent observation of the frame of the heart. Carnal and formal persons take no heed to this; they cannot be brought to confer with their own hearts: there are some people who have lived forty or fifty years in the world, and have had scarcely one hour's discourse with their own hearts. It is a hard thing to bring a man and himself together on such business; but saints know those soliloquies to be very salutary. The heathen could say, "the soul is made wise by sitting still in quietness." Though bankrupts care not to look into their accounts, yet upright hearts will know whether they go backward or forward. "I commune with mine own heart," says David. The heart can

never be kept until its case be examined and understood.

2. It includes deep humiliation for heart evils and disorders; thus Hezekiah humbled himself for the pride of his heart. Thus the people were ordered to spread forth their hands to God in prayer, realizing the plague of their own hearts. Upon this account many an upright heart has been laid low before God; 'O *what an heart have I.*' Saints have in their confession pointed at the heart, the pained place: '*Lord, here is the wound.*' It is with the heart well kept, as it is with the eye; if a small dust get into the eye it will never cease twinkling and watering till it has wept it out: So the upright heart cannot be at rest till it has wept out its troubles and poured out its complaints before the Lord.

3. It includes earnest supplication and instant prayer for purifying and rectifying grace when sin has defiled and disordered the heart. "Cleanse thou me from secret faults." "Unite my heart to fear thy name." Saints have always many such petitions before the throne of God's grace; this is the thing which is most pleaded by them with God. When they are praying for outward mercies, perhaps their spirits may be more remiss; but when it comes to the heart's case, they extend their spirits to the utmost, fill their mouths with arguments, weep and make supplication: 'O for a better heart! O for a heart to love God more; to hate sin more; to walk more evenly with God. Lord! deny not to me such a heart, whatever thou deny me: give me a heart to fear thee, to love and delight in thee, if I beg my bread in desolate places.' It is observed of an eminent saint, that when he was confessing sin, he would never give over confessing until he had felt some brokenness of heart for that sin; and when praying for any spiritual mercy, would never give over that suit till he had obtained some relish of that mercy.

4. It includes the imposing of strong engagements upon ourselves to walk more carefully with God, and avoid the occasions whereby the heart may be in-

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Answers to Bible Quiz

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Devotions:

Psalms In Reflection

From the book of the same title by Elder Len Dalton

O come, let us sing unto the LORD: let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation. Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving, and make a joyful noise unto him with psalms. For the LORD is a great God, and a great King above all gods. In his hand are the deep places of the earth: the strength of the hills is his also. The sea is his, and he made it: and his hands formed the dry land. O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the LORD our maker. For he is our God; and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand. To day if ye will hear his voice, Harden not your heart, as in the provocation, and as in the day of temptation in the wilderness: When your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my work. Forty years long was I grieved with this generation, and said, It is a people that do err in their heart, and they have not known my ways: Unto whom I swear in my wrath that they should not enter into my rest. (Psalms 95:1-11)

THE NINETY-FIFTH PSALM

There are eight songs (93 to 100) which constitute the songs of the King. They are arranged according to the needs of the people, and there is a definite connection between them. The 93rd affirms Jehovah's enthronement and government. The 94th expresses the hope of His people even in the midst of circumstances of trial. The six which follow deal with the fact of Jehovah's Kingship in various ways.

The 95th, or the one we are now summarizing, declares Jehovah's supremacy and expresses a note of warning against that which certainly hinders His people from realizing the Rest of His reign. The singer first celebrates His supremacy calling for praise to the King. He is above all other authority, and is the God of all nature. He is also the God of His people; and therefore they should worship in submission and reverence before Him. Then there is a warning note which follows, reminding them of the sins of their fathers which expressed their refusal to bow down in submission to His will. Such a sin excluded them from His Rest, and the children are warned to profit by this ancient story. Certainly such a King demands loyalty, and He also deserves. This loyalty must be expressed in a deeper way than merely in the words of a song; it must be expressed by acts of humble submission to His Government.

As I pondered the lesson about REST to the children of God, my mind quickly turned to Paul's teaching in the third chapter of Hebrews. Strict obedience is essential to the enjoyment of this Rest. There remains a Rest to the people now, but the way of entry is humble obedience to the King Jehovah.

Seeing therefore it remaineth that some must enter therein, and they to whom it was first preached entered not in because of unbelief: (Hebrews 4:6)

Hymns and Hymn Writers

Precious Lord, Take My Hand

Be strong and of a good courage, fear not, nor be afraid of them: for the LORD thy God, he it is that doth go with thee; he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee. (Deuteronomy 31:6)

Some people think this great old gospel song was written by the famous big bandleader Tommy Dorsey. It wasn't; the author was named Thomas Andrew Dorsey, and he was the son of a black revivalist preacher.

Thomas was born in a small town in Georgia in 1899. When he was about eleven, the Dorseys moved to Atlanta where Thomas was quickly enamored with the blues and began playing piano at a vaudeville theater. Later the family moved to Chicago where he attended classes at the College of Composition and Arranging. Soon he was on stage under the name "Georgia Tom," playing barrel-house piano in one of Al Capone's Chicago speakeasies and leading jazz bands.

Thomas was converted at the National Baptist Convention in Chicago in 192 and began writing gospel songs and trying to get them published. It was discouraging at first. He later said, "I borrowed five dollars and sent out 500 copies of my song, 'If You See MY Savior,' to churches throughout the country . . . It was three years before I got a single order. I felt like going back to the blues."

He didn't, and gradually his reputation grew and his work became known.

In August, 1932, while leading music in St. Louis, he was handed a telegram bearing the words, "Your wife just died." He rushed to a phone to call home, but all he could hear over the line was "Nettie is dead! Nettie is dead!" A friend drove him through the night, and he arrived home to learn that his baby boy had also died.

"I began to feel that God had done me an injustice," Thomas later said. "I didn't want to serve Him anymore or write any more gospel songs." But the next Saturday, while alone in a friend's music room, he had a "strange feeling" inside—a sudden calm and a quiet stillness. "As my fingers began to manipulate over the keys, words began to fall in place on the melody like drops of water falling from the crevice of the rock:

*Precious Lord, take my hand
Lead me on, let me stand
I am tired, I am weak, I am worn... "*

Today, Thomas A. Dorsey is remembered as the "Father of Gospel Music" and the author of hundreds of gospel songs including his equally famous, "Peace in the Valley."

The Ten Primitive Persecutions

The First Persecution, Under Nero, A. D. 67

The first persecution of the Church took place in the year 67, under Nero, the sixth emperor of Rome. This monarch reigned for the space of five years, with tolerable credit to himself, but then gave way to the greatest extravagancy of temper, and to the most atrocious barbarities. Among other diabolical whims, he ordered that the city of Rome should be set on fire, which order was executed by his officers, guards, and servants. While the imperial city was in flames, he went up to the tower of Maceanas, played upon his harp, sung the song of the burning of Troy, and openly declared that 'he wished the ruin of all things before his death.'

Besides the noble pile, called the Circus, many other palaces and houses were consumed; several thousands perished in the flames, were smothered in the smoke, or buried beneath the ruins.

This dreadful conflagration continued nine days; when Nero, finding that his conduct was greatly blamed, and a severe odium cast upon him, determined to lay the whole upon the Christians, at once to excuse himself, and have an opportunity of glutting his sight with new cruelties. This was the occasion of the first persecution; and the barbarities exercised on the Christians were such as even excited the commiseration of the Romans themselves. Nero even refined upon cruelty, and contrived all manner of punishments for the Christians that the most infernal imagination could design. In particular, he had some sewed up in skins of wild beasts, and then worried by dogs until they expired; and others dressed in shirts made stiff with wax, fixed to axletrees, and set on fire in his gardens, in order to illuminate them. This persecution was general throughout the whole Roman Empire; but it rather increased than diminished the spirit of Christianity. In the course of it, St. Paul and St. Peter were martyred.

To their names may be added, Eras-

tus, chamberlain of Corinth; Aristarchus, the Macedonian, and Trophimus, an Ephesian, converted by St. Paul, and fellow-laborer with him, Joseph, commonly called Barsabas, and Ananias, bishop of Damascus; each of the Seventy.

The Second Persecution, Under Domitian, A. D. 81

The emperor Domitian, who was naturally inclined to cruelty, first slew his brother, and then raised the second persecution against the Christians.

In his rage he put to death some of the Roman senators, some through malice; and others to confiscate their estates. He then commanded all the lineage of David to be put to death.

Among the numerous martyrs that suffered during this persecution was Simeon, bishop of Jerusalem, who was crucified; and St. John, who was boiled in oil, and afterward banished to Patmos. Flavia, the daughter of a Roman senator, was likewise banished to Pontus; and a law was made, "That no Christian, once brought before the tribunal, should be exempted from punishment without renouncing his religion."

A variety of fabricated tales were, during this reign, composed in order to injure the Christians. Such was the infatuation of the pagans, that, if famine, pestilence, or earthquakes afflicted any of the Roman provinces, it was laid upon the Christians. These persecutions among the Christians increased the number of informers and many, for the sake of gain, swore away the lives of the innocent.

Another hardship was, that, when any Christians were brought before the magistrates, a test oath was proposed, when, if they refused to take it, death was pronounced against them; and if they confessed themselves Christians, the sentence was the same.

The following were the most remarkable among the numerous martyrs who suffered during this persecution. Dionysius, the Areopagite, was an Athenian by birth, and educated in all the useful and ornamental literature of

Greece. He then travelled to Egypt to study astronomy, and made very particular observations on the great and supernatural eclipse, which happened at the time of our Savior's crucifixion.

The sanctity of his conversation and the purity of his manners recommended him so strongly to the Christians in general, that he was appointed bishop of Athens.

Nicodemus, a benevolent Christian of some distinction, suffered at Rome during the rage of Domitian's persecution. Protasius and Gervasius were martyred at Milan. Timothy was the celebrated disciple of St. Paul, and bishop of Ephesus, where he zealously governed the Church until A. D. 97. At this period, as the pagans were about to celebrate a feast called Catagogion, Timothy, meeting the procession, severely reproved them for their ridiculous idolatry, which so exasperated the people that they fell upon him with their clubs, and beat him in so dreadful a manner that he expired of the bruises two days after.

The Third Persecution, Under Trajan, A. D. 108

In the third persecution Pliny the Second, a man learned and famous, seeing the lamentable slaughter of Christians, and moved therewith to pity, wrote to Trajan, certifying him that there were many thousands of them daily put to death, of which none did any thing contrary to the Roman laws worthy persecution. "The whole account they gave of their crime or error (whichever it is to be called) amounted only to this--viz. that they were accustomed on a stated day to meet before daylight, and to repeat together a set form of prayer to Christ as a God, and to bind themselves by an obligation--not indeed to commit wickedness; but, on the contrary--never to commit theft, robbery, or adultery, never to falsify their word, never to defraud any man: after which it was their custom to separate, and reassemble to partake in common of a harmless meal."

From *Fox's Book Of Martyrs*

To be continued

Keeping The Heart

(Continued from page 4)

duced to sin. Well advised and deliberate vows are, in some cases, very useful to guard the heart against some special sin. "I have made a covenant with mine eyes," says Job. By this means holy men have overawed their souls, and preserved themselves from defilement.

5. It includes a constant and holy jealousy over our own hearts. Quick sighted self-jealousy is an excellent preservative from sin. He that will keep his heart, must have the eyes of the soul awake and open upon all the disorderly and tumultuous stirrings of his affections; if the affections break loose, and the passions be stirred, the soul must discover it, and suppress them before they get to a height. 'O my soul, dost thou well in this? My tumultuous thoughts and passions, where is your commission?' Happy is the man that thus feareth always. By this fear of the Lord it is that men depart from evil, shake off sloth, and preserve themselves from iniquity. He that will keep his heart must eat and drink with fear, rejoice with fear, and pass the whole time of his sojourning here in fear. All this is little enough to keep the heart from sin.

6. It includes the realizing of God's presence with us and setting the Lord always before us. This the people have found a powerful means of keeping their hearts up right, and awing them from sin. When the eye of our faith is fixed upon the eye of God's omniscience, we dare not let out our thoughts and affections to vanity. Holy Job durst not suffer his heart to yield to an impure, vain thought, and what was it that moved him to so great circumspection? He tells us, "Doth not He see my ways, and count all my steps?"

In such particulars as these do gracious souls express the care they have of their hearts. They are careful to prevent the breaking loose of the corruptions in time of temptation; careful to preserve the sweetness and comfort they have got from God in any duty. This is the work, and of all works in religion it is the most difficult, constant, and important work. It is the hardest work. Heart-work is hard work indeed. To shuffle over religious duties with a loose and heedless spirit, will cost no great pains; but to set thy-

self before the Lord, and tie up thy loose and vain thoughts to a constant and serious attendance upon him; this will cost thee something. To attain a facility and dexterity of language in prayer, and put thy meaning into apt and decent expressions, is easy; but to get thy heart broken for sin, while thou art confessing it; melted with free grace while thou art blessing God for it; to be really ashamed and humbled through the apprehensions of God's infinite holiness, and to keep thy heart in this frame, not only in, but after duty, will surely cost thee some groans and pains of soul. To repress the outward acts of sin, and compose the external part of thy life in a laudable manner, is no great matter; even carnal persons, by the force of common principles, can do this: but to kill the root of corruption within, to set and keep up an holy government over thy thoughts, to have all things lie straight and orderly in the heart, this is not easy.

It is a constant work. The keeping of the heart is a work that is never done till life is ended. There is no time or condition in the life of a Christian which will suffer an intermission of this work. It is in keeping watch over our hearts, as it was in keeping up Moses' hands while Israel and Amalek were fighting. No sooner do the hands of Moses grow heavy and sink down, than Amalek prevails. Intermitting the watch over their own hearts for but a few minutes, cost David and Peter many a sad day and night.

It is the most important business of a Christian's life. Without this we are but formalists in religion: all our professions, gifts and duties signify nothing. "My son, give me thine heart," is God's request. God is pleased to call that a gift which is indeed a debt; he will put this honor upon the creature, to receive it from him in the way of a gift; but if this be not given him, he regards not whatever else you bring to him. There is only so much of worth in what we do, as there is of heart in it. Concerning the heart, God seems to say, as Joseph of Benjamin, "If you bring not Benjamin with you, you shall not see my face."

John Flavel in *Keeping the Heart*

THE LAW OF LOVE

(Continued from page 3)

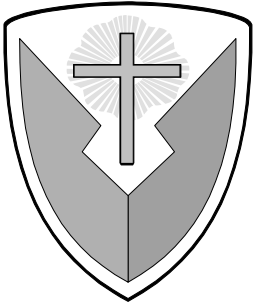
allows us to be all things to all men in the bounds of love. (2) We can walk in the world without being a part of the world. (3) It makes us love our brothers and sisters as our own self. (4) Jesus stands out as being altogether lovely. (5) We see Him as Saviour, Lord, and King (6) We have the keys to the Kingdom which unlocks the doors of great knowledge in Christ Jesus, along with great treasures in which to rejoice with our brothers and sisters in Christ.

Do you question the results? We need not desert the great truths of God's Grace! We just need to begin sharing these great truths with those who know not the truth and worship according to their own ability instead of pure grace. Let us be positive and throw off the cloak of negativism. Let us say, from this day forward I am going to use the law of the liberty of love. In so doing we will grow up into Christ who is the head of the Church.

The Example Of Christ

One Christian who is meek, humble, kind, patient, and useful unto all; that condescends to the ignorance, weaknesses and infirmities of others; that passeth by provocations, injuries, contempt, with patience and with silence, unless where the glory and truth of God call for a just vindication; that pitieth all sorts of men in their failings and miscarriages, who is free from jealousies and evil surmises; that loveth what is good in all men, and all men even wherein they are not good, nor do good,-doth more express the virtues and excellencies of Christ than thousands can do with the most magnificent works of piety or charity, where this frame is wanting in them. For men to pretend to follow the example of Christ, and in the meantime to be proud, wrathful, envious, bitterly zealous, calling for fire from heaven to destroy men, or fetching it themselves from hell, is to cry, "Hail unto him," and to crucify him afresh unto their power.

John Owen in *The Person of Christ*



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And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works, Hebrews 10:24

How To Be Hungry

Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings, As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby: If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious. (1 Peter 2:1-3)

PETER is speaking in his first epistle (2:1-3) of the divine imperative which must be obeyed if we as Christians expect to have a real hunger for God's Word. The words "laying aside" are in the Greek, not a command, but a past once-for-all action. The idea is, "having laid aside once for all." It is the God-expected action of every believer. Until he has made a complete break with all sin in his life, he cannot expect to have a hunger for the Word of God. The reason for this is that he has filled his heart with the husks of the world. This not only destroys his appetite but perverts his taste. Peter here gives us the reason why so many children of God have so little hunger for the Word.

The Greek word translated "guile" means "to catch with bait." We are not to be crafty, sly, underhanded persons, but above-board, open, sincere, accomplishing our purposes by fair means. "Hypocrisies" is from a Greek word used in the first century of one who impersonates another. How we saints sometimes play the part of something that we are not. Our faces should be open, free from deception, shining with the beauty of the Lord Jesus. A mask of deception hides Him. "Evil speakings" is literally, "speaking down" another person, that is, slan-

dering him. The words "as new-born babes," describe the spiritual status of those to whom Peter is writing. The idea is, "as just-born babes, they should have an intense hunger for the Word of God." The word "desire" is emphatic in the Greek, referring to an intense desire.

"Sincere" is from the Greek word for "guile," with the Greek letter Alpha prefixed, which negates its meaning. The idea is "unadulterated." God's Word is not like so many human teachings, adulterated with some ulterior motive, but pure, unadulterated, its only purpose that of blessing the one who puts his faith in it. The words "of the word" are from an adjective in the Greek, meaning literally "spiritual." "Grow" is literally, "be nourished up." The best Greek texts add to verse two the words, "and thus make progress in your salvation."

"If so be," does not imply a doubt but a fulfilled condition. These saints had found the Lord gracious. The word "gracious" is from a Greek word found also in Luke 5:39 where it is translated "better." Literally it means "excellent." The translation reads: "Therefore, now that you have laid aside once for all every kind of wickedness and every kind of trickery, also hypocrisies, and envies, and all kinds of slanders, as just born infants, long for with an intense yearning the spiritual unadulterated milk, in order that by it you might be nourished up and thus make progress in your salvation, in view of the fact that you tasted for yourselves and have found that the Lord is excellent."

Kenneth S. Wuest in *Wuest's Word Studies*

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