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MINISTRIES INTERNATIONAL

Sermon

Fasting Brings Restoration



Living as Salt and Light
By Derek Prince

In opening my message tonight I want to bring together two themes. The first is one that I brought to you yesterday in connection with Jesus Christ as being the last Adam and the second Man. I pointed out to you that in the divine plan Jesus was the end of one race. He was the last Adam. He took upon Himself the sin, the transgression, the condemnation and the total failure of the Adamic race. And by His atoning death He expiated the guilt of Adam's race, and by His resurrection into newness of life He opened the way for a new race to be brought into being of which He is the Head.

The apostle Peter says, 'We are begotten again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.' As we follow Him through His death and into His resurrection by faith and identification with Him, we become members of this new race.

And I pointed out to you that the new race, the new man, it is called in Ephesians 2, 'One new man.' This new man is destined by God to fulfill the purpose which Adam failed to fulfill. Adam was created in the likeness and image of God to show forth God's likeness to the creation and to exercise God's authority on His behalf. He was created to exercise dominion. He lost his dominion and became a slave when he obeyed the devil rather than God.

Jesus has dealt with that legal issue of Adam's failure and when He came back after the resurrection to His disciples in the 28th chapter of Matthew, He said, 'All authority has been given unto Me. What you lost I have regained. Go ye therefore. Go ye therefore, be the administrators of My authority. Demonstrate My power. Fulfill My purposes. I'm going back to heaven. In My place I'll send you another Comforter, the Holy Spirit, and when you receive Him in His might, under His direction and leadership, you will go forth to accomplish what the first Adam failed. You'll be My visible representatives. You'll be able to say as I said of the Father, 'He that have seen Me have seen the Father.' You will be able to say, 'He that hath seen Me, hath seen Christ.' As I came to do My Father's will, you will go to do My will. As I testified of the Father that it was He dwelling in Me that did the works, you will testify of Me that it is Christ dwelling in Me that does what I do. As I testified of the Father that I speak not my own words but the words that the Father gave Me, you will testify, 'We speak not our own words, but the

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words which Christ gave us.' This is My plan. As My Father sent Me, even so send I you.'

God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing unto them trespasses, and has committed unto us the word or ministry of reconciliation. We are ambassadors for Christ. We are His representatives with special authority, sent forth from heaven's government to accomplish heaven's will.

This is one aspect of what I have to say tonight, and in due course in a few moments, I'm going to try to make it as practical as I can. You know, I've come to one conclusion—if a thing isn't practical, it isn't spiritual. God is not in anything that doesn't work, and anything that God's in, works, and God is the most practical Person in the entire universe. It's a good thing He is.

Secondly, I want to bring to you a thought from the book of Joel, just very briefly, to give you an outline of what I understand to be the theme of the prophet Joel.

Joel, as I understand it, is the prophet, the prophet of this great last-day outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon all flesh. It was from Joel that Peter quoted on the Day of Pentecost. He said, 'This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel,' and he took Joel's prophecy right down to the end time. 'In the last days immediately before the great and notable day of the Lord when the sun shall be turned into darkness, the moon into blood,'—he takes us right down in Joel's prophecy to the close of this age. What descended on the early church was the first rain. What is falling today is the latter rain, immediately prior to the harvest. This is very clear. Dispensationally, I believe there is no problem whatever. It's a crystal clear outline in miniature of church history. Looking back on the nineteenth century we can see that it has been exactly as Joel said it would be, and I am absolutely convinced that we are living in the days of the latter rain, the days of the great outpouring spoken of by the prophet Joel.

But if I'm to sum up in my own way the theme of Joel, I would say it is this: Desolation, followed by restoration, followed by judgment. The scene opens with total desolation, the most total picture of desolation you can conceive. Read it for yourself. There's nothing that hasn't been desolated.

Then there comes in the second chapter the promise: 'I will restore unto you.' And the restoration is effected by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. And then the 3rd chapter, the 14th verse,

> "Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision: for the day of the LORD is near in the valley of decision."

The outpouring of the Spirit brings man face to face with God's judgment. There is no room left for neutrality when the Spirit has been poured out. This is why so many people shun and run away from the moving of the Spirit, because He rules out neutrality. When the Spirit of God really comes to work you have to make a decision, and that's what's going to happen before this age closes. Multitudes, all nations will be brought down into the valley of decision and they will not leave the valley of decision till they have made a decision. The decision is simple: it is for or against Jesus Christ, that's all. There's no neutrality, 'He that is not with Me is against Me,' Jesus said.

Now, in the forefront of Joel's prophecy, if you look again, if this is just an outline, you will see two trees: the vine and the fig tree. There in the forefront of desolation, there in the forefront of restoration, and I have long taken these two trees to be typical of God's two people in the earth. Two people—the vine typifying the church, the fig tree typifying Israel. I believe this links up very clearly with Luke 21:

> "[Consider] the fig tree, and all the trees [Jesus is quoting from Joel the first chapter when He says all the trees of the field]; when they now shoot forth, ye see and know of your own selves that summer is now nigh at hand."

The desolation is ending, the harvest is coming. And some years ago God showed me that the restoration of the two trees had begun and was proceeding exactly parallel in time. Just about the time that we begin to hear about the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in this last measure upon the church we hear of the political restoration of Israel, fantastically interesting subject. In 1897, the first Zionist World Conference, Basle, Switzerland—1904 the founder of Zionism, Theodore Hertzel, died. He was called a visionary and a dreamer, but he said, 'Within fifty years what you call a dream will be a fulfilled reality.' And he was right. It took forty-four years from the day of his death for the State of Israel to come into being. And if you care to trace it, you'll see step by step God's two people are being restored—Israel politically and nationally, the church spiritually. God showed me also (I do not want to take time over this) the cause of desolation. When I was meditating one day on the condition of the church, as a matter of fact, I was thinking

particularly of the response that I get to certain kinds of message. For instance, you're witnesses, when I preached on the need for forgiveness at least half the Christians in this room stood up to acknowledge that there was someone they needed to forgive. And I have preached on deliverance in places where three out of four people in a large congregation have indicated that they needed deliverance. Commonly I will get a response of two hundred people out of six hundred. And I have meditated on this and thought to myself, *What can be the truth? Is this the real picture of the church? Is this how things really are in the church? Could it be like that?*

And when I was meditating like that, God said two things to me. He said, 'You've preached about Joel, restoration and so on beginning with desolation.' He said, 'Did you ever stop to think what caused the desolation?' And I said, 'No, but I get it now, an invading army of insects.' And look at it for yourself: the locust, the canker worm, the palmer worm and the caterpillar. And He calls them 'My great army.' And God said to me, I will not say audibly, do not misunderstand me, but very clearly to my mind He said, 'My people have been systematically infiltrated by the forces of the enemy.' And that is the truth. Once you've seen it, it's as clear as can be. The church of Jesus Christ has been systematically invaded and infiltrated by invading armies of evil spirits, and they're entrenched. But when the Holy Spirit comes, they'll have to leave, and praise God, they're on their way out—not happily, not willingly, but they're going.

Then God said one more thing to me. He said, 'You can see how far away My people Israel have been for eighteen centuries from their God-given inheritance.' Well, that's obvious isn't it? You don't have to know much history to know that the Jews have been exiles and wanderers, away from their God given inheritance in the land of Israel for more than eighteen centuries. The Lord said to me, 'In My sight the church has been just as far away spiritually from its inheritance as Israel has politically from their inheritance.' That's the truth. You can see the tremendous distance that Israel has had to go to get back. The church has got just the same to do, and believe me Israel did not get their inheritance back and are not getting their inheritance back without struggle and sacrifice and conflict, and neither will the church. It's a battle.

Now in the light of that, I want to suggest to you that the key word in relationship to the present move of the Holy Spirit is the word *restoration.* The church has had a reformation. It can no longer have a reformation. There's only one thing that will do now—*restoration.* Not man improving and patching up man's methods and systems, but God restoring His divine pattern, purpose and order—the only thing that will do and that's the only thing that God is interested in. I may shock you but I can tell you that God is not interested in reviving any denomination. I don't say that in any sense to be negative or critical, but it just is a fact. In my firm opinion God is not interested. And those people that are seeking to use this outpouring of the Holy Spirit for their own denominational ends, are going to miss the purpose of God entirely. God is restoring the body of Jesus Christ. He is gathering together His scattered sheep from all lands and nations, and He has declared that at the end of this age there shall be one fold and one shepherd. That's the purpose of God.

> "In Genesis 49:10 He said,
> ...unto him [Jesus] shall the gathering of the people be."

We are not going to gather around any human leader, any human setup, any human organization. We're gathering around one person, the head of the church, the Lord Jesus Christ. This is the purpose of God—*restoration.*

Now I have pointed out to you that the Lord Jesus Christ has left us with the authority and with the responsibility to be the executors of His purposes on earth. We are not to sit passively on the sidelines and say, 'Well, God is going to do it.' We are to be intimately involved with the purposes of God. In the Lord's Prayer Jesus taught us to pray, '[Get identified with God's kingdom:] Thy kingdom come [and that's the reason we're here], Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.'

Do you believe that God's will can be done as perfectly on earth as it is in heaven? Apparently, for Jesus said so. But friend, it isn't going to happen without you and me. We are implicated. The responsibility is ours. Jesus, right at the beginning of the Lord's Prayer gets us intimately involved with the business of God's kingdom. *Thy kingdom come.* That means I'm identified with it. *Thy will be done on earth [in me], as it is in heaven.*

Now tonight I want to speak to you about one major means of restoration which God has made available to His people. The means what I'm going to speak about is a subject which very seldom produces *Hallelujahs* or even *Amens* from God's people. You know what it is? Fasting. By fasting, I mean the deliberate abstention for a certain period from normal food for spiritual purposes. Normally speaking, I would say fasting does not mean that you abstain from drink, although this is sometimes the case. Moses twice went without food or drink for forty days. So did Elijah. This,

I would say, is supernatural, and I wouldn't recommend you to attempt it. I would never recommend you to go beyond seventy-two hours without fluids. That's my personal opinion. I know a brother in the Lord that fasted seventeen days without food or water, but on the other hand, unless you're going to move out into a supernatural realm, I wouldn't advise you to do that. Jesus fasted forty days and it says, *He was afterwards hungered.* It doesn't say He was thirsty. The implication is that He did not do without liquid. He did without food.

Now, please, don't start to think in terms of forty days. It's perfectly possible. I have friends who have done it, but I'm not trying to get you to think in those terms. Set yourself a small objective, achieve it, and it's much more satisfying than set yourself a big objective and fail to achieve it. Even to go without two meals can be very, very effective. The main issue about fasting, as with other things that we do for God, is our motive. You can fast forty days for the wrong motives and end up nothing but miserable and skinny.

Now there is a revelation in Scripture of the fast that God has chosen and I'm going to read it to you. It's in the 58th chapter of Isaiah commencing at the 6th verse and reading through the 12th verse. Isaiah 58 commencing at verse 6:

> "Is not this the fast that I have chosen? To loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke? Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh? Then shall thy
> light break forth as the morning, and thine health shall spring forth speedily: and thy righteousness shall go before thee; the glory of the LORD shall be thy rereward. Then shalt thou call, and the LORD shall answer; thou shalt cry, and he shall say, Here I am. If thou take away from the midst of thee the yoke, the putting forth of the finger, and speaking vanity; and if thou draw out thy soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul; then shall thy light rise in obscurity, and thy darkness be as the noon day: and the LORD shall guide thee continually, and satisfy thy soul in drought, and make fat thy bones: and thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not. And they that shall be of thee shall build the old waste places: thou shalt raise up the foundations of many generations; and thou shalt be called, The repairer of the breech, The restorer of paths to dwell in."

First of all, let me point out to you that in the opening verses of that chapter, God sets aside a certain pattern of fasting as being totally ineffective, and it's fasting in which the motives are wrong and the relationships of the people involved are wrong. It's the strife and debate and to smite with the fist of wickedness. It's a mere outward religious ritual, like a man bowing his head like a bulrush and going through certain motions. God says, 'If you want to make your voice heard on high, that's not the way to fast.'

If you're familiar, of course, with the Orthodox Jews, this is a very vivid picture of the Jewish people when they pray. This is in no sense to make fun of them, but it is a fact that they will sit and they will repeat prayers in Hebrew, many of them do not actually understand the words with their understanding, and as they repeat these prayers, they bow to and fro with their head just like a bulrush going to and fro all the time. And God says, 'As far as getting My ear in heaven is concerned, that type of fasting is out. It won't get you anywhere. Your relationships are wrong; your motives a wrong. It's just an outward ordinance, it's a tradition that you've been rooted in, but you're getting nowhere with Me.' Then God begins to speak about the motive and the purpose for the fast that is acceptable to Him and, frankly, when I read the promises that follow I say to myself, 'I want to get in on this.' Let me read some of those promises again. If you don't want these promises, I don't know what you want. Listen:

> "Then [in other words, if you do this,] Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thine health shall spring forth speedily:
> Thy righteousness shall go before thee, the glory of the LORD shall be thy rereward.
> Then shalt thou call, and the LORD shall answer; thou shalt cry, and he shall say, Here

> I am. [God
> at your disposal, what more do you want?] [vs. 11] And the LORD shall guide thee continually, and satisfy thy soul in drought, and make fat thy bones: [Do you want to be guided continually? This is one of the secrets.] and thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not."

Drought will be all around you but you'll have the springing fountains inside all the time. And listen, the 12th verse, this is the key thought:

> "And they that shall be of thee shall build the old waste places: thou shalt raise up the foundations of many generations; and thou shalt be called, The repairer of the breach, The restorer of paths to dwell in."

Notice, here's the one who's going to bring restoration. Here's the one who's going to repair the breech, who's going to make up the defenses that have been broken down around God's vineyard. In Ezekiel the 22nd chapter and the 30th verse God says concerning His people Israel and that time, 'I sought for a man to stand in the hedge and make up the gap for the house of Israel, and I found none. Therefore have I poured out my fury upon them.' God says, 'It's very clear; if I could have found one man, I could have turned away My wrath. One man that would stand in the hedge, make up the gap, be a repairer of the breech, but I couldn't find one.'

But here God says in His Word there is a way in which you can become a repairer of the breech, a restorer of paths to dwelling. You can raise up the foundations of many generations, you can restore the old waste places. When you look at the church of Jesus Christ, it's just as desolate as the land of Israel has been. It's full of old waste places, ruins of many generations. Can they be restored? You know what they said in the days of Nehemiah? 'Can these [this rubble and this mess] ever be made up into a city again?' Well, here's the answer: 'Thou shalt be called the restorer of paths to dwell in, thou shall lay the foundations of many generations.'

It's my personal conviction that every man with a ministry that has made an impact that stretches through generations has been a man of fasting and prayer without exception. It is not within the scope of my message tonight to go through many names. Just let me mention for the sake of the Methodists here.

The early Methodists were people of fasting and prayer. They took it for granted. Wesley states explicitly that he would not ordain a man to the Methodist ministry who would not undertake to fast twice a week, Wednesday and Friday till four o'clock in the afternoon. I'm not saying that that isn't altogether exactly what we need, but I'm just pointing out to you that wherever God's people have known real power, here is one of the secrets—fasting.

Finney went out in the forest and received that glorious experience of conversion, of baptism of the Holy Spirit, was indued with supernatural power. There was conviction where he went. Sinners turned to God and he says in his own autobiography, 'At times I would find myself comparatively empty of this power. I would go out in the woods and spend a day or two in fasting and prayer. The power returned and I was able to move back in my ministry.'

Some people regard fasting as a kind of awful specter held in front of them. As far as I'm concerned, I'm so grateful to God that I've discovered a way to get through to God. I'm so glad. The Holy Spirit taught me one lesson about fasting immediately I was saved and baptized in the Holy Spirit. I was in the North African desert, a soldier in the British Army. I didn't have a church. I didn't have a man near me that knew the Lord, I didn't have a minister to go to. I had the Bible and the Holy Spirit. But I, just without planning it, began to fast regularly Wednesday of every week, and in that area (it's a Moslem country), and the Moslems, of course, have a month in the year they call Ramadan, when they fast. They do not eat in the daytime. No orthodox Moslem will eat throughout the month of Ramadan from dawn to sunset, nor will their beasts drink. I've lived in the Sudan, in a strict Moslem area, they would not touch a drop of water and the temperature was often well over a hundred. So the British soldiers, knowing this, used to call Wednesday 'Ramadan,' because I wouldn't eat. Because I didn't do it to be seen in front of them, but when you live in the desert in a truck with eight people and you do everything together—sleep together, eat together and all the rest—if you don't eat you're conspicuous.

Now, do not let me give you the impression that fasting will obtain for you anything that is out of the will of God for you. It will not. If a thing is out of God's will there's no God-given way of getting it. David had a son which was the result of adultery and the son was smitten and sickly and dying, David fasted a week, but the son died. God had said the

son would die, and God—, David couldn't change God's judgment and His word by fasting. So if you want something wrong or out of God's will, fasting will not get it for you.

But there's another side to it. There are things within the will of God which you'll never attain to without fasting. They're there, God offers them you, but the way into them is by fasting and prayer. And in particular I do believe that wherever God's people have gotten far away from their inheritance one essential step back is fasting.

Now I'm going to take a little while to illustrate this out of the Old Testament. Let me turn, first of all, to the book of 1 Samuel, the 31st chapter and the last verse which happens to be the 13th verse, and it says there, and it's speaking of the man of Jabesh Gilead:

> "They took their bones [the bones of Saul and his sons who had been slain in battle by the Philistines], and buried them under a tree at Jabesh, and fasted seven days."

I remember way back in the early 1950s when we had a mission work in London, England, and God showed me that one thing that I had to do to get through to where God wanted me was fasting. And I remember once I set myself a seven day fast. Well, England in November is a pretty chilly, dank place, and I always remind the American people: Remember, the British people, generally speaking, warm their bodies, not their homes. And a few Americans looked at me in astonishment when I said that, but when they came back they said, 'Now we know what you mean.' And I can remember somewhere in late November about halfway through this seven-day fast, my toes were cold, my fingers were cold and I felt just plain miserable. To me it's laughable when I look back, but I really wondered whether I was going to die. And I thought to myself, 'Maybe I've overdone it. Maybe this is fanaticism.' And the devil was right there encouraging me. You know, he's got a lot of warnings against fanaticism. And I had my Bible open in front of me. I was sitting up in bed, not that I'd gone to bed. Don't let me give you that impression. You can go about your daily work. And my eye dropped down and fell on a verse and this was the verse. *They fasted seven days.* And something like heaven's electricity went through my body spontaneously from the crown of my head to the soles of my feet, and I said, 'If they could do it, I can.' And I could, and I did. And you can too, unless you're in some way physically abnormal, not that I'm telling you to do it.

And then the Lord led me to examine this passage, and He showed me that I should consider the difference between the course of events in 1 Samuel and the course of events in 2 Samuel, and if you do you find it's most startling. First Samuel is a downward book. It speaks of disobedience, defeat, division, and disaster. I don't know where those 'd's' came from, but they just came out like that. And that's the summary. At the end, Israel were in the most desperate situation they'd ever been in since the end of the Promised Land. Their anointed king was killed, his sons were killed, their armies were defeated in battle, they were refugees, many of them had fled over east of the Jordan, the Philistines had invaded the land and practically taken it over. And furthermore, the king that was to follow, David, his particular city where he lived, Ziklag, had been invaded by the Amalekites while he was away, burned it, and all his family and all his possessions had been taken away, and David was left without any possessions whatever. Never had Israel been in such a critical position.

Now examine 2 Samuel: it's a book of restoration, reunification, victory and conquest. It's the exact reverse. The whole downward process was reversed and changed, and the change came between the two books. And the Lord said, 'You've got the explanation in the last verse of the first book, the men of Jabesh Gilead 'fasted seven days.' That's what changed the course of events. And when God's people get earnest enough with God to seek Him seriously in fasting, the course of history is always changed.

God's people are here to change history, and if we're not doing it we're failing God. We're the salt of the earth. We're here to have an influence in the earth, a unique influence. And if we're not doing it Jesus says, 'We are salt that has lost its savor, we're thenceforth good for nothing but to be cast out and to be trodden underfoot of men.' And that means you and me. If we're not history-changers, if we don't exercise a vital influence in our community, in our city, in our nation, and in the world, we are salt that has lost its savor. And as I said, I believe the other night, the feet of the men that will trample upon us are not far away. There's about one billion of them ready to do it.

Let's turn now to the next tremendous disaster that came upon God's people Israel which was the Babylonian captivity. And let's examine the figures presented to us in Scripture as divine instruments of restoration. And I want to show you that every single one of them practiced fasting. The man that set the process of restoration in motion spiritually was Daniel. And turning to the 9th chapter of Daniel we read these words.

> "In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, of the seed of the Medes, which was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans; in the first year of his reign I Daniel understood by books the number of the years, whereof the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah the prophet, that he would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem."

Through studying the Scriptures, the writings of Jeremiah, Daniel understood out of the Scriptures that the desolations of Jerusalem were to last seventy years and he knew enough to know that the time was nearly finished. What did he do? Did he sit back and say, 'Now, isn't that wonderful? We're soon going to be restored.'

No. He identified himself with God's purpose. You see, a revelation of God's plan is not an excuse for you to do something—, for you to do nothing. It's a challenge for you to participate. Daniel took it that way. He said, 'This is God's purpose. Now I know how to pray. Now I know what to give myself to in prayer—the fulfillment of the divine purpose.' Daniel saw clearly that he was involved in the fulfillment of God's purpose, that he had something to do with the coming of God's kingdom, that he was an instrument by which God's will could be done as perfectly on earth as it was to be done in heaven. And so what did he do? Verse 3,

> "I set my face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes: and I prayed..."

And the answer came: the 23rd verse. We'll not go into that but, without a question, it was the prayer and fasting of Daniel that was the spiritual instrument used of God to set in motion the restoration from the captivity. And the same is true of you and me, dear friend. When we see in the Word of God that God is going to restore, that God is going to move, that God is going to pour out His Spirit, we do not sit back

and say, 'Isn't that wonderful?' We say, 'Now here's the purpose I'm to get identified with. Here's the thing that I'm to give myself to in prayer and fasting and every means that God puts at my disposal. I'm to get identified with God's business.'

We go on to the next great figure in this restoration. The book is named after him: Ezra. And in the 8th chapter of Ezra you'll find a very interesting situation. Ezra had been appointed by the king of Persia to lead back a host of returning exiles and to take back all the sacred vessels to the temple of the Lord. Vessels of gold, unique vessels. Vessels whose value today could not be calculated in hundreds of thousands of dollars. So here was Ezra with the returning company of exiles—men, women and little children—and the most fantastically precious vessels of gold and silver, to take a long journey through rugged country where there were brigands and armed robbers and marauders. How was he to get through safely? What means was he to use? Well, you see that Ezra was confronted with an alternative. He could use the spiritual or he could use the carnal. This is his decision. Ezra the 8th chapter the 21st verse.

> "Then I proclaimed a fast there, at the river of Ahava, that we might afflict ourselves before our God, to seek of him a right way for us, and for our little ones, and for all our substance. For I was ashamed to require of the king a band of soldiers and horsemen to help us against the enemy in the way: because we had spoken unto the king, saying, The hand of our God is upon all them for good that seek him; but his power and his wrath is against all them that forsake him. So we fasted and besought our God for this: and he was entreated of us.
> And it says there in the 31st verse the historical fulfillment,
> Then we departed from the river of Ahava on the twelfth day of the first month, to go unto Jerusalem: and the hand of our God was upon us, and he delivered us from the hand of the enemy, and of such as lay in wait by the way."

Notice, there were plenty of enemies, plenty of people lying in wait, but they were delivered from them. Why? Because they got the victory in the spiritual realm before they started the journey. Ezra had two means. He could have asked of the king a band of soldiers and horsemen to give them a

safe escort. But you see, Ezra had put himself on the spot by his testimony, and this is one of the benefits of testifying, because when you testify you've got to live up to it.

Ezra had told the king, 'You know, we have a God that looks after His servants. He protects us, He watches over us, He keeps us, He's got all power. He's not just a God of the land of Israel or the God of the land of Egypt. He's the God of all lands and all nations, and they're all in His hand and all under His control.'

Then the king said, 'Well, now you take this group of people back.' And Ezra said, 'Could I go to the king and say, 'Would you please give us a band of soldiers and horsemen?' What would have become of my testimony?'

So he had, by his own testimony, he was shut up to the spiritual. What was that? We fasted and prayed and besought our God. And I want to tell you this. When you get the victory in the spiritual, you have the victory, period. That's all that's needed. The spiritual is the decisive in all affairs. The people that know how to intervene in the spiritual are the decisive factor in human affairs, and that's why the church should be the decisive factor because they alone have the means. 'The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but they are mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds.' This is what God has put us here for.

I would say this also just as a testimony, that I never make a major move, major commitment without fasting and prayer. I would be scared to do it. My wife and I have travelled from land to land and continent to continent, and we've taken our little ones with us, literally. And I'm here to testify that the God of Ezra is my God. He hasn't changed. You seek Him in fasting and prayer, He'll watch over you. He'll make a way. He'll protect you and your little ones. It's wonderful.

The next great figure in this restoration process is Nehemiah, and when Nehemiah heard of the situation of the city of Jerusalem he says in the first chapter and 4th verse:

> "It came to pass, when I heard these words, that I sat down and wept, and mourned certain days, and fasted, and prayed before the God of heaven,"

We do not need to go into it all. This is just a brief glimpse to show you the place of fasting and prayer in the process of restoration. And then we come to the most outstanding example of the truth that I'm seeking to proclaim possibly anywhere in the Scripture, the story of Esther. Remember, this also is associated with the process of restoration. And in the days of Esther under the Persian Empire a certain man named Haman, who is a type of Satan, the adversary of God's people, procured from the great emperor of Persia an edict by which all the Jews in every province of his kingdom were to be destroyed on a certain day. And I would show you, incidentally, that this all through is a conflict of spirits, because if you study the behavior of Haman you'll find that he cast lots for the right day. In other words, he was seeking his deities, his spirits, to get them on his side to find the right day to destroy Israel. And he came nearer than Adolf Hitler, because there was a decree sent out that all the Jews in the one hundred and twenty-seven provinces of the king of Persia were to be destroyed on a certain day. And when a decree was made by the king of Persia, it could not be undone.

Mordecai, the Jew in the king's gate, heard the decree, went out in the streets and put on sackcloth. And Esther, his niece, the queen, sent to inquire what was the trouble, offered to clothe him. He said, 'Don't offer me your clothing. I'm keeping on sackcloth.' But he sent back a message and he said, 'You are in a unique position. You have the ear of the king. You can go into him and procure from him an edict which will change the destiny of your people.'

And Esther sent back and said, 'But you know the law. Any person that goes into the inner court, into the king's presence without being summoned, unless the king stretches out the golden scepter, it is a sentence of death.' And Mordecai said, 'You haven't any alternative. That's what you're there for.' And Esther said, 'All right. If I perish, I perish. I'm in this thing to live or die.' As Jim quoted this morning, 'They loved not their lives unto the death.' That's the kind of people God is looking for. People that are committed; whether thy live or die isn't important.

Esther said, 'All right. You go and gather all the Jews that are in Shushan and fast for me three days, night and day, seventy-two hours, neither eat nor drink, and I and my maidens will do likewise. And then I will go in unto the king.' And on the fourth day, praise the Lord— She didn't put on sackcloth, friend. No one could enter into the king's gates clothed in sackcloth. She had the victory before she went in. She put on her beautiful garment. She went in as a queen. She had the victory.

The king saw her and his heart was moved towards her and he stretched out the golden scepter and said, 'What wilt thou, Queen Esther. It shall be given unto thee.' And Esther is one of the great types of the church of Jesus Christ, a type for this day. Because if you read the book of Esther,

you'll find that there was another queen. Her name was Vashti, but like the contemporary institutional church, Vashti had her own program. And when the king sent for her and said, 'Now come and show the people that are here feasting, your beauty,' Vashti turned the king's invitation down and said, 'I've got my own banquet.' And that's just like the church. 'Don't interrupt, don't interfere, Lord, just keep Your Holy Spirit away from us. We've got our program.' And the king was extremely angry and he pronounced a judgment that that queen was never again to appear in his presence. And they said, 'You've got to find another queen,' and as a result of this, Esther became queen. She went through a process of preparation, six months with myrrh and six months with bitter with sweet spices. And there'll be a process of preparation for the true bride of Jesus Christ. Some of it will be myrrh (bitterness), and some of it will be sweet spices. But she was absolutely obedient to Hegai, who was a type of the Holy Spirit. She asked nothing but what he gave. She didn't want any extra adornments, no extra carnal attractions, no human program, she went in just the way Hegai said she was equipped. And she became queen.

That's what's happening today. God has rejected Vashti, and He's looking for Esther. That's exactly it today. But friend, I want to point this out to you and it's absolutely up to date, it's absolutely relevant to you and me. With the queen—the position—goes the responsibility. You're the one that can intervene. You're the one that can change history. You're the one that can change the destiny of a nation, and that is true of the true church. The true church is going to be marked by her intervention in history, and it's going to be by fasting and prayer. This is right up to date. You want the position, you want the privileges, then you must accept the responsibilities. They go with it.

That's one thing we learn in Britain. With the position of royalty and the privileges goes the responsibility. And I must say today, we have a queen in Britain who's willing to accept the responsibilities that go with her position. And you do not qualify if you're not prepared to accept the responsibility. That's it.

Let us look quickly right in the book of Joel itself. I said that Joel is the prophet of this latter day, outpouring, this great restoration. But even so, Joel demands of God's people their cooperation. Three times the prophet Joel calls to fasting and prayer. The first chapter and the 14th verse:

> "Sanctify ye a fast, call a solemn assembly.... [The second chapter, verse 12:] Therefore also now, saith the LORD, Turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning: [The 16th verse:] Gather the people, sanctify the congregation, sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly."

Now to me it would be totally illogical to suppose that Joel gives us the preview of the outpouring, but that the methods that he prescribes are out of date. Wouldn't that be absurd? He shows us what God is going to do and he shows us how we are to cooperate with God. The part to be played by God's people is to seek God with fasting and prayer, to rend our hearts and not our garments, to call a solemn assembly. And I would call out to you that the leaders of God's people have a special responsibility. If you read it says, 'the ministers and the elders.' And, friend, if you're a minister or an elder, you're included in that responsibility. It goes with the position. You're to set a pattern for God's people.

And then it says, 'It shall come to pass afterwards.' God has shown us His plan as clearly in Joel as He showed His plan through Jeremiah to Daniel. The responsibility that fell upon Daniel now rests upon you and me. This is God's way.

If you look for a moment in the 36th chapter of Ezekiel. This is the great restoration chapter for Israel and it's being fulfilled before our eyes today. It's not one bit out of date. And having promised this wonderful restoration (which I'd like to go to in detail but time does not permit), notice what God says. One verse from the end of the chapter. In verse 37, having promised all this:

> "Thus saith the Lord GOD; I will yet for this be enquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them;..."

He's promised to do it, but He says I won't fulfill it completely till they ask Me in prayer. And exactly the same is true of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. God has shown us enough for us to know He's in the outpouring business, but to get it completed we've got to cooperate. Thank God we have. We are important, we're vital. God reckons on us. You talk about the faith that you have in God, but stop one day and think about the faith that God has in you. It will humble you. God counts on you, friend, and He counts on me and I don't want to fail Him.

Now some people could say, and this I'll deal with briefly, 'Well, Brother Prince, all you preach from is from the Old Testament.' It's funny how some people like the Old

Testament when it gives them sugar, but not the other times. But now let me show you that fasting is plainly in the New Testament. The sixth chapter of Matthew is part of the Sermon on the Mount and almost all people agree that the Sermon on the Mount is the charter for all Christians. It's not for a special group, it's not just for evangelists or preachers or some people way out, but this is the pattern of Christian living for all Christians. And in the sixth chapter Jesus says 'when' about three things. He says,

> "*When* ye give alms, *when* ye pray and *when* ye fast."

Now I've been a teacher of English and I know enough to know that there's a difference between the word *when* and the word *if*. If Jesus had said, 'If ye pray, if ye give alms or if ye fast,' He would have left it open as to whether He expected us to do it or not. But by using the word *when*, He settled the question. Do you believe it's scriptural for Christians to give alms? Do you believe it's scriptural for Christians to pray? Then it's just as scriptural for Christians to fast. Exactly the same language is used in all three connections. And Jesus uses it both plural and singular. He says, 'When ye fast, when thou fastest.'

> "In Mark the second chapter, Jesus is asked about fasting. It says in the 18th verse and following: And the disciples of John and of the Pharisees used to fast:"

Fasting has always been practiced by earnest religious people and still is today by Buddhists, Mohammedans, and all sorts of others. And I'll tell you, the fasting religions have got more power than the non-fasting religions. And if we want to have more power than the religions that are opposed to Christianity, we cannot get it without fasting. I've lived in a purely Moslem land during the month of Ramadan, and I'll tell you this. It was as if the heavens were covered over with clouds of darkness. It was if hell was just a step away. You know what generated that power? The fasting of the Moslems. It generates power, friends. It's just a question of what kind of power it generates. If you don't know anything about Islam and Moslems, you might misunderstand me. But let me tell you just one thing, and I do not want to offend anybody, but the god of Islam is the devil, that's what it is. That doesn't mean God doesn't love Moslems, but it's a hellish system.

> "Well now,
> the disciples of John and the Pharisees used to fast: and they come and say unto him, Why do the disciples of John and of the Pharisees fast, but thy disciples fast not? And Jesus said unto them, Can the children of the bride chamber fast, while the bridegroom is with them? as long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast. But the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then shall they fast in those days."

Now this is a little parable. I'll give you my interpretation. You may not agree with me, but as a matter of fact, I don't think there is really any question. When Jesus talks about the bridegroom, He's talking about Himself. When He talks about the children of the bride chamber, He's talking about His disciples. And He says, 'While the bridegroom is with the children of the bride chamber, they cannot fast. So don't expect them to fast,' He says, 'while I am here, personally present upon earth. But the days will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them, and in those days they shall fast.'

Now, as I understand it today, in the period in which you are living, the bridegroom has been taken away from us in personal presence. We are awaiting His return. That means He's not here now. And Jesus said, 'In those days, they, the children of the bride chamber, the disciples of Christ, shall fast.' This is one mark of discipleship—it is fasting. And if you don't do it, you lack one of the God-appointed marks of a disciple of Jesus Christ.

The early church did it frequently and publicly. In the thirteenth chapter of the book of Acts we read this, Acts the 13th chapter:

> "Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon . . ., and Lucius . . ., and Manaen, . . . and Saul. As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, . . ."

They came together collectively. The leaders, the leading ministers of that local congregation in

Antioch sought God in prayer and fasting, and they received a special, divine revelation. The first actual

missionary project that we read about was an answer to the fasting and prayer of the leaders of that church. 'Separate me Barnabas and Saul. I've got a special job for them.'

> "And notice, when they had this revelation they did not immediately act on it. Verse 3: And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away."

Again they fasted and prayed. The first time, they got the revelation. The second time, they got the victory before they sent them out. And that's how it should be in mission work. That's how it should be in the Lord's work. We should have the victory before we go out. We should pray through and fast through and get the victory.

On the mission field in East Africa for five years I had practiced fasting with my wife regularly every Thursday. This is not in any sense to boast, but if I can't do it myself I certainly can't preach it to others. When I got to East Africa I was the principal of a school, a college, and I was busy. Busy from 6 A.M. to 10 P.M. every day, Sunday included. And, you know, I decided I was too busy to fast. And after a little while, I found that my spiritual life wasn't what it ought to be. I couldn't put my finger on anything, but it just wasn't the way it should be. And I suddenly thought, *I better not be too busy to fast*. As a matter of fact, to quote John Wesley in his journals, he says this: That if a person once receives the light on fasting and fails to practice it, he will backslide as surely as a person who has the light on prayer and fails to pray. And I can bear witness—he is right. And I went back to my fasting, and I just want to tell you this, that when I left East Africa— Oh, I had made many mistakes, but basically I knew I had accomplished the work for which God sent me there.

And when Paul and Barnabas returned at the end of the fourteenth chapter, it says they returned and gave a report of the work which they had accomplished. They got the job done. And you know what God showed me there in East Africa? He gave it to me in the form of a sentence, 'If you want New Testament results, you've got to use New Testament methods. There's no other way.'

But not merely that, but in the fourteenth chapter of this same book of Acts, the 23rd verse, when they

got together, the little groups of disciples and, as it were, formed them into congregations with their own leaders, appointed elders, it says this:

> "And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord,..."

You notice: in every church they prayed with fasting. This is not just one church. It was a regular practice in every church under the leadership of the apostles. And it should be today. Paul says in 2 Corinthians chapter 6, that in all things he approved himself a minister of God, 'in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities in distresses, in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labours, in watchings, [and] in fastings.' One way that we approve ourselves ministers of God is in fasting.

And in the eleventh chapter of the same second epistle and the 27th verse, speaking about his own personal experience and ministry,

> "In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness."

Notice there's a difference between hunger and thirst and fasting. Hunger and thirst is when you can't eat because you don't have it. But fasting is when you don't eat for spiritual purposes. And Paul said he was in fastings often. It is possible to change history. I am absolutely convinced of that.

At the meetings at which we were in the Tennessee CFO, I took one study to give personal experience of how my prayers had changed history. I don't feel I'm able to do that here, but I just want to tell you I'm not preaching a theory. I'm telling you about something that actually works. It produces results. And I believe God expects us to be history changers. History needs to be changed. The course of events needs to be changed. It can be changed, we can do it. As a Britisher I'll tell you the course of events in the United States of America desperately needs to be changed. And, friends, it can be changed, and you could do it.

If you'll follow the prescription in Joel, get down on your face before God, humble yourself in the dust, rend you heart and not your garment, seek God with all your heart, set aside every material distraction, God will rend the heavens and come down. The mountains will melt at His presence and we shall see a mighty Holy Ghost revival. It's on the program, friends. We're on the winning side. I often tell people, I'm so glad I'm on the God's side because He's gonna win. If I was on the other side I'd change sides, because I don't want to be on the losing side. And if you're

on the other side, my advice to you is change sides and that quickly, too. I'm in no doubt who's going to win. I've got the God of battles on my side. The Lord of Hosts, Almighty God—oh glory to God. It says in Micah, it says:

> "The breaker through has gone up and the king has gone before his people."

That's Jesus Christ. 'The breaker through has gone up,' the way has been opened. All we have to do is follow. The head has gone in front, now it's for the body to follow. Praise the Lord. I feel so good about that. Oh, the Gospel is good news. Let me never fail to emphasize that. It's not a prescription for sitting still and saying, 'I'm sorry, but there's nothing I can do.' You can do something. You can intervene, you can seek God.

> "'Two or three gathered together in My name,' Jesus says, 'I'm in the midst.'
> 'If two of you shall agree touching anything you shall ask it shall be done.'
> 'Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven.'"

There isn't anything left out when you consider those tremendous promises. This is the heart of all power. It's the place of authority, but it's ringed around, as I told you the other night, with right relationships.

Let's move in and do business with God. I think I'm going to challenge you individually tonight. I made a resolution some time ago that I'd never merely teach, because I'd read the book of Acts and I saw that Jesus did and taught. And I've decided that I would do and teach. I'd never be content with a mere religious lecture any longer. And tonight I want to make a very definite practical personal application. Training teachers in East Africa, I taught them never just teach a lesson. Always make an application to see how far your students have understood. Never leave it in the realm of theory. Get it down in practical outworking and I'm going to do that now.

Shall we just pray a moment? I would like everybody reverently bowed in prayer and I'm going to challenge you. You're a Christian. Your land is the United States, a land blessed and favored by God above all nations that I've ever visited, and I've visited many. A land with unique opportunities and unique privileges and unique problems, and I believe you're the salt of this particular part of the earth. You're accountable. And I believe that you can intervene by spiritual means and change what's wrong. Change rulers, change governments, change situations through God and I believe that one major means is fasting. And I wonder how many of you would say, 'God helping me, Brother Prince, I'm going to take time in prayer and fasting for my nation.' Would you raise your hand? Praise God. That's almost everybody here. I'm going to pray for you. Just keep your hand up a moment.

Father, I thank You for everyone that had responded with enthusiasm and obedience. Now I know, Lord, it's not going to be easy. There's going to be tests, there's going to be struggles, but You called us into a realm of conflict and You promised us the victory. And I pray, Lord, for everyone that sits here before You tonight, that You'll open a way, that You'll make it real. You'll teach them out of the Scriptures. You'll show them how to enter into this conflict, how to band together in little groups, be united in the Spirit, press the battle to the gates, and bring about the establishment of God's kingdom. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen. God bless you.

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Sermon

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