

Who Do You Say That I Am?

Seeing and Delighting in Jesus through an Expository
Journey through the **Gospel of Matthew**

84- Hungering for God through Fasting- Part 5
Is Fasting Biblical? Is it Applicable
Under the New Covenant?- Part 3

Church January 28, 2024

Matthew 9:14-17

14 Then the disciples of John came to Him, asking, "Why do we and the Pharisees fast, but Your disciples do not fast?"

15 And Jesus said to them, "The attendants of the bridegroom cannot mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them, can they? But the days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast.

16 But no one puts a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment; for the patch pulls away from the garment, and a worse tear results.

17 Nor do people put new wine into old wineskins; otherwise the wineskins burst, and the wine pours out and the wineskins are ruined; but they put new wine into fresh wineskins, and both are preserved."

*To the Glory of God the Father; God the Son;
and God the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

There is a small but growing Group within the Reformed Camp who believe and teach that Fasting is strictly an Old Covenant "*Means of Grace*" and is no longer needed or valid for Believers living in the "*Abundant Life*" of Jesus Christ. For example, back in 1971- Keith Main wrote a Book, entitled, "*Prayer and Fasting; A Study on the Devotional Life of the Early Church.*" And on page 83- Main wrote,

"The prayer life of the New Testament is a sign of the inbreaking of the Kingdom of God. Fasting is no longer consistent with the joyous and thankful attitude that marks the Fellowship"¹

¹ *Prayer and Fasting; A Study in the Devotional Life of the Early Church*, page 83

But through our Sermon Series on Fasting- we have seen that Main's Statement about Fasting no longer being valid in the New Covenant- is just flat out wrong. Fasting will become *antiquated* on the very Day that Prayer ceases.

Now it is true that the Kingdom of Heaven has *already* come. But that is true in ONLY one sense. And it is also true that we may drink deeply from the chalice of the "*End-Time Glory*" that is manifested in Jesus Christ and by His Spirit. But it is also true that this wonderful Experience is *NOT* so full; and *NOT* so uninterrupted; that *ALL* Aching; and *ALL* Longing; and *ALL* Desiring; are completely overcome.

Even Main himself begins to back off and admit this when he said this on the very next page,

"It is true that the crisis and the tragedy are there as a stark reality. The Kingdom is not fully realized yet. Granted, that the Bridegroom is present and now is not an appropriate time to mourn. Yet this is not entirely so, for we are still in the flesh and weak in faith... Within this 'bitter struggle' the believer, in his devotional life, might conceivably find occasion to fast. It would be only one among many of the ingredients that go to make up the life of the man in Christ"²

... and to that I say, "*Yea, Lord!*"

So, then we MUST say that the current Presence of the Bridegroom through His Spirit in the *absolute* Triumph of both Forgiveness and Fellowship in the New Covenant does *NOT* make Fasting "obsolete". But it absolutely *does* make it "*NEW*". Because the Power and Glory of a Covenant that is infinitely BETTER than the one it replaced- does NOT *eliminate* Fasting all together- but it DOES create a *NEW Way* to Fast as well as a *NEW Reason* to Fast.

So, as Believers in Jesus- we are *totally* content with the New Covenant. We do NOT see that this glorious Covenant can be *improved by anything* we do; or say; or think. For example, we simply CANNOT be any more Forgiven; or be made any more Righteous than the finished Work of Jesus has made us to be. We CANNOT create a *better* Infilling of God the Holy Spirit than that which already exists. And we CANNOT cause Jesus to be *more* of an Intercessor before God than He already is. So, those are NOT Motivations for us to fast in the New Covenant.

The Old Covenant Believers *longed* for things that Jesus has *already* done; and things that we *already* have in abundance under the New Covenant. For example, they lived their *entire* Lives under the auspices of a sacrificial System that could NEVER stop. So, multiplied tens of thousands of animals were

² Ibid p. 84

slaughtered and offered to God by genuine Believers. So, they fasted for that *inferior* System to be made Perfect. Their Forgiveness and Righteousness was “*by Faith*” like ours- but theirs was “by Faith” in a Reality that was NEVER designed to be Permanent while ours has NEVER been Temporary. So, they fasted for the Temporary to be swallowed up by the Permanent.

God the Holy Spirit “fell” on Old Covenant Believers- yes, that’s true. But what is *also* true is that He didn’t *remain*- but then “lifted off” from them. So, yes, He came to them- but then He left. So, under the Old Covenant God the Spirit NEVER dwelt permanently in the people or with them! That *continual* indwelling of God the Holy Spirit in Believers is strictly a New Covenant Blessing. So, the Old Covenant Believer saw that at a distance and fasted for it to happen.

And every fiber of the Old Covenant Believer’s Understanding about the Messiah was *always* that He was *going* to come at some point in the Future- while the New Covenant celebrates that Messiah HAS come; that He lived a sinless Life; died as a Propitiation for us; rose from the Dead on the third Day; and He now sits at the Right Hand of the Majesty on High- interceding for us until He comes again! So, ALL their Fasts had to do with Messiah coming the *first* Time.³

And there are many other Examples of how the Fasts of Believers under the Old Covenant were vastly *different* from the Fasts that Believers engage in now- under the New Covenant. For us, then, to fast as they did- would be for us to *deny* that the New Covenant has already come! But what is even *worse*- is that if we fasted today like the Believers who lived under the Old Covenant fasted- we would be denying WHO Jesus is; and ALL that Jesus has done! So, we CANNOT; and we MUST NOT fast like they did or for the Reasons they did. That would *dishonor* our sweet Savior. We CANNOT mourn and long for Jesus to come- because He HAS come! We CANNOT long to be filled with God’s Spirit *continually*- because we already ARE! And we CANNOT desire a Perfect Sacrifice- because we already have one!

So, for New Testament Believers to turn to **Isaiah 58** (simply because that Chapter contains the word, “**Fast**” in it) and use what that dear Prophet wrote for the Old Covenant Believers- as a Guide for *why* and *how* we are supposed to fast today- would be for us to go back in Time; and forget ALL that Jesus is; and ALL that Jesus has done; and ALL that Jesus is doing. And it would be for us to operate as though the New Covenant has not already replaced the Old!

But instead of then coming to the Conclusion that all I just said makes Fasting to be *obsolete*- we should remember what Jesus said in **Matthew 9:15b**:

... the days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast.

³ Until the Resurrection- it was NOT clear to the average Jew that the Messiah would come to the earth twice.

... and so, we have to find a Way to reconcile all of this.

We have to find a Way to be faithful to what Jesus said here- *without* acting and thinking and saying that our Fasts today are no different than the Believers who lived under the Old Covenant.

So, I suggest that we engage in “*New Testament Fasting*” as an Act of Faith. And this Fasting will be an Expression of a type of “*Dissatisfied Contentment*” in the all-Sufficiency of the Person and Work of Jesus Christ. And what I mean by that is that Christians are those who are *entirely* satisfied with all that Jesus has *already* done for us through His Life; Ministry; Death; Resurrection; and ongoing Intercession. And no amount of Fasting will add anything to that. And NOTHING we do; or say; or think; should ever intimate that we are Dissatisfied with any of that. But, dear friends, that is not *ALL* that we are. We are *also* those who are...

... looking for the city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God. (Hebrews 11:10b)

... and we are *also* those who...

... groan, longing to be clothed with our dwelling from heaven (2Corinthians 5:2b)

... and we are *also* those who desire that the ...

17 ...God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him.

18 I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints,

19 and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe. *These are* in accordance with the working of the strength of His might

20 which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly *places*,

21 far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come.

22 And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church,

23 which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all. (Ephesians 1:17b-23)

So, New Testament Fasting does *not* tremble in the Hope of earning *anything* from Christ. It looks *away* from itself to the *final* Payment of the Cross for every Blessing it will ever receive. So, New Testament Fasting is *NOT* merely “*Self-wrought Discipline*” that tries to *deserve* more from God. It is a genuine “Hunger for God” that has been *awakened* by the “Meal” that has *already* been given in, by, and through the Gospel. And that means that New Testament Fasting is actually a “spiritual Feasting” on God- precisely because we have *already* “**tasted and seen that the Lord is Good**” (Psalm 34:8)!

So, New Testament Fasting illustrates our “*holy Discontentment*” in appreciating that which the Lord Christ has *already* provided; while, at the same Time- *longing* for that which Jesus will bring with Him when He comes the 2nd Time!

And this is *why* the various Warnings from the Apostle Paul in Scripture are *NOT* Objections to Fasting itself. They are Warnings against the *Distortions* that Fasting *might* cause- in *some* people. For example, please look at **1 Timothy 4:1-5** that says:

1 But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons,

2 by means of the hypocrisy of liars seared in their own conscience as with a branding iron,

3 men who forbid marriage and advocate abstaining from foods which God has created to be gratefully shared in by those who believe and know the truth.

4 For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with gratitude;

5 for it is sanctified by means of the word of God and prayer.

Now the phrase, “**men who... advocate abstaining from foods**” in verse 3 *might* have to do with Fasting. But it probably had much *more* to do with people who were teaching New Covenant Believers that they still had to go by the Mosaic dietary Laws- IN ORDER TO BE SAVED- and had NOTHING to do with Fasting.

And that means that Paul’s Teaching about the *overall* “Goodness” of ALL Food; and for the *absolute* Freedom of the New Covenant Believer to fully enjoy *ALL* that God has made (with Prayer and Gratitude)- is *NOT* an inherent Contradiction to Fasting. So, the New Covenant Believer says, “*Yes!*” to what the first Pastor of the Church in Jerusalem wrote in **James 1:17**:

Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow.

So, Fasting is NOT us saying, “No!” to the “Goodness” of all Food or to the Generosity of God in providing it. Rather it is a way of saying- *from time to time*- that having MORE of the Giver through Fasting- is *preferred* to rejoicing over and partaking of His Good Gift of all Food.

For example- if a married Couple *forgoes* sexual Intimacy- *for a season through Fasting and Prayer*- in order to deal with a Problem that is driving them apart- that is certainly NOT a rejection of God’s Gift of Intimacy in Marriage. It is simply saying that being in right Standing with the Giver of Intimacy (that has been negatively affected by the Problem) is more important- *AT THAT TIME*- than rejoicing over the Gift itself.

So, in *that* sense- the “*Temporary Abstaining of Intimacy through Prayer and Fasting*”- would actually be an expression of deep and powerful Love. And to prove that this is so- God the Holy Spirit “moved” on the Apostle Paul to teach married Couples HOW to do that in **1Corinthians 7:1-5**.

So, the New Testament teaches that Food is a wonderful Gift from God. But God *could have* made all Food to be white in color and taste the same. But in His Mercy toward His created people- God made Food itself to have many different Colors and to have many different Flavors. And when you add that with the various spices that God also made- combined with the Knowledge of how to manage the heat as the Food is cooked; combined with the Knowledge of what Foods go with other Foods- you virtually have an *unlimited* amount of very appealing Meals that have a wide variety of Flavors.

And that means that Food does NOT merely exist- but that Food is “Good”. And it also means that ALL Food is “Good”. One area where the New Covenant differs *radically* from the Old is that under the New- every single creature that God made is “clean”; and we are free to eat them- because they have already been sanctified by the Word of God and Prayer.

So, Food is “Good”. But God is “*Better!*” And normally- we meet with God *in* His good Gifts; and we turn every Enjoyment of those Gifts into a Cause for Worship with Thanksgiving. And God is honored; and our Joy is made full!

But from time to time- we need to set *aside* the good Gift of Food in order to assure that our Hearts have not become so enamored with the Goodness of the Gift that we no longer see and savor and celebrate God- rather than just the Food.

Now there are people who believe and teach that since it is almost *impossible* to find Fasting in any of the New Testament Epistles- that this is a Sign that Fasting was an Old Covenant Gift that was made obsolete when the New Covenant was birthed. But even though the word, “*Fast*” is hard to find in the

Epistles- the Concept of bringing our fleshly Bodies under subjection to the Will and Word of God- is taught clearly and repeatedly. And, historically, Fasting has ALWAYS been a part of that Effort.

So, Paul did NOT teach that because the Old Covenant has been *completely* replaced by the New- that EVERYTHING that was done under the auspices of the Old is no longer valid under the New. For example, the “Moral Law” pertaining to what godly Behavior looks like- is, in many respects, still valid in our Day.

What Paul was against (and what we should be against as well) was people who engage in “*Self-made*” or “*Self-exalting*” Fasting. But because he was against such Examples of spiritual Hypocrisy does NOT make “New Covenant Fasting” in and of itself- *obsolete*. So, for example, Paul was warning that there exists a kind of Fasting where...

... self-made religion and self-abasement and severe treatment of the body, but are of no value against fleshly indulgence. (Colossians 2:23b)

But what Paul was denouncing is “*Willpower Religion*”- the kind of “*godless Stoicism*” or “*gnostic Mysticism*” that even today, attracts undiscerning people to engage in it- for no other Reason than it is “*against the Flesh*”. But God through Paul taught that *those* Exercises that say they are “*pushing the Flesh down*”- actually stir up even *more* sinful Passions in those people- precisely because those Efforts are NOT of God.

But true “New Covenant Fasting” is much different. This infinitely BETTER Way to fast moves from *broken* and *contrite* “*Poverty of Spirit*” to a “*sweet Satisfaction*” in the free Mercy of Jesus Christ to ever *greater* Desires and Enjoyments of God’s *inexhaustible* Grace! Therefore, “New Covenant Fasting” does NOT encourage the sinful Boasting that comes from “*Will- power Religion*”.

Instead, it rests- with childlike Contentment- in the firmly accomplished Justification of God in Christ- while all the while- *continuing* to Long for; and Hunger for *however* much of the Fullness of God is possible in this Life!

So “New Covenant Fasting” is actually the normal and natural *Response* to what Jesus has already done *in* us and *for* us! Therefore- it *cannot* produce the Pride; and the Arrogance; and the Self-Righteousness that *always* comes from those who engage in any kind of “*religious Duty*” or “*Feat of Accomplishment*”. This kind of Fasting simply *rejoices* in the Fruit of being filled with God’s Spirit!

Galatians 5:16-26

16 But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh.

17 For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please.

18 But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law.

19 Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality,

20 idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions,

21 envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,

23 gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

24 Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

25 If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit.

26 Let us not become boastful, challenging one another, envying one another.

Now I suggest to you that verse 17 illustrates the Problem that EVERY saved Believer faces today under the New Covenant.

the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please.

You see, our Souls (Spirit) have experienced the Miracle of the New Birth. And our Souls have also been forgiven and have been made Righteous (Justification); and it is our Souls that were adopted into the Family of God.

But our Flesh did NOT experience any of this Work of Grace through Faith. And that is *why* our Flesh- our “*outer* Tabernacles”- that “house” or “contain” our Souls CANNOT enter into Heaven when we die. All of the fleshly Bodies of even the most- godly of saints die; go to the Ground; decay back into dust; and CANNOT “make the Trip” into Heaven precisely because our human Flesh has NOT been redeemed!

Now many Man-made religions and philosophies teach that the Flesh is “Bad” and the Spirit of Man is “Good”. But ONLY Christianity says that the

Salvation Process is NOT finished until our sinful, fleshly Bodies are *re-united* with our saved Souls at the Resurrection that is yet to happen.

So, even in the case of genuinely saved people who died many hundreds of years ago. The Holy Bible teaches that their redeemed Souls went *immediately* into the Presence of God at Death; while their fleshly Bodies went to the Ground and returned to Dust. And so, even though their Spirits have been in God's Presence for hundreds of years- their Salvation is NOT finished!

And so, at some point in the Future- their now decayed Bodies- that have been in the ground for hundreds of years- will be *instantly* "glorified"; and will be *re-united* with their saved Souls. And it is THEN their Salvation will be finished! So, Christianity is the ONLY Religion that *includes* the Body with the Soul in Salvation!

And so, this is one Reason why Fasting *continues* under the New Covenant- God is very concerned with our Flesh as well as our Spirits. So, look again at the Language of verse 24:

those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

The Apostle was "moved" by God the Holy Spirit to teach that there MUST be *some type* of "ongoing Mechanism" with EVERY Believer that "over-powers"; or "kills"; or "starves" or even "crucifies" our Flesh- so that our redeemed Souls may love and enjoy and obey Jesus Christ.

Now most of the time I even mention this with others who are in the Church and who say they are saved- they have no idea what Paul was talking about here and they do NOT have ANY ongoing Method of feeding their Souls (their Spirits) while crucifying their Flesh- at all. And that is *why* there is so much Carnality and ongoing Sin in the Life of Believers today that simply was NOT nearly as prevalent with Believers of the Past.

You see, our Flesh "feeds" on the things of this Life (ie. Sinful Music; TV; Internet; Friends; Activities; and ungodly Counsel, etc.). And so, the *more* of this fallen World that we engage in- the *stronger* our Flesh will be. And the stronger our Flesh is- the *more* that Temptation will have Victory over us.

But our Souls (our Spirits) "feed" on God and the "Things of the Spirit of God" (ie. the Bible; Prayer; godly Fellowship; Communion; Fasting; Service; and Giving) And the *more* of the Things of the Spirit of God we engage in- the *stronger* our Souls (our Spirits) will be. And the *stronger* our Souls are- the *more* we will have Victory over Temptation.

Now it would be great if we could simply "pull away" from ALL of the Influences of the World- ALL the Time. But we can't do that and be obedient to

other things the Bible commands and expects from us. But what we CAN do; and what we SHOULD do- is to *periodically* “pull aside”- *Temporarily*- and engage God with both Fasting and Prayer. And this will accomplish two things:

1. This WILL *feed* our Souls
2. This WILL *crucify* our Flesh

Now it is true that, during the 2,000- year History of the Church- there have been both Abuses and Excesses of the Effort to “feed the redeemed Souls of saved people” while also “killing or crucifying our Flesh”. And many today shy away from ANY effort to do both of these because of those sinful Abuses and Excesses. But that Fear leaves us in rebellion to the repeated and clear Command of sacred Writ to both feed our souls and starve our Flesh. And so, we dare NOT allow the Sins of the Past to stop us from obeying this important part of our Sanctification. Rather we should emulate what was Good and learn from what was Wrong. And so, there should be SOME Way in which Believers today are *ongoingly* at War against their Flesh and determined that their Souls are growing in Love; Grace; and Obedience.

But because the Apostle Paul understood God’s Grace correctly- he was “free” to Fast; and he was “free” not to Fast.

1Corinthians 6:12-20

12 All things are lawful for me, but not all things are profitable. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be mastered by anything.

13 Food is for the stomach and the stomach is for food, but God will do away with both of them. Yet the body is not for immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord is for the body.

14 Now God has not only raised the Lord, but will also raise us up through His power.

15 Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take away the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? May it never be!

16 Or do you not know that the one who joins himself to a prostitute is one body *with her*? For He says, "THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH.**"**

17 But the one who joins himself to the Lord is one spirit *with Him*.

18 Flee immorality. Every *other* sin that a man commits is outside the body, but the immoral man sins against his own body.

19 Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own?

20 For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body.

And so, the Reason Paul was “free to fast” or “not to fast” was because the “Act” of Fasting was NOT the *essential* Thing. Engaging in Fasting (or *not* engaging in it) TO THE GLORY OF GOD- was ALWAYS the *essential* Thing!

He who observes the day, observes it for the Lord, and he who eats, does so for the Lord, for he gives thanks to God; and he who eats not, for the Lord he does not eat, and gives thanks to God. (Romans 14:6)

Therefore, Fasting gives Glory to God ONLY when it is engaged in as a Gift from God that is focused on Knowing and Enjoying MORE of God! So, God is glorified the BEST in us when we are *pursuing HIM*- in Thought, Word, and Deed. And THAT is when our Delight in Him becomes Full! And we may do this- *not* merely by Eating or Fasting- but by *gratefully* Eating *or gratefully* Fasting.

The many Gifts that God gives were NEVER designed to be an “*End to Themselves*”. And that is *why* we end up in Idolatry when we focus *only* on the good Gifts of God. And that means that Eating is NOT designed by God to fill us up; and to nourish our bodies; and then stop. *All* of God’s Gifts- *including Eating the Food that God provides*- have been designed by God (on purpose) to ALWAYS leave a Hunger for Him- that is *beyond* the Ability of the Gift itself to fulfill! Therefore- periodic Fasting *from* those Gifts puts that wondrous Hunger to rest.

So, it is misleading- at best- without careful and thorough Qualification- to say (as Keith Main and others say) that

“Paul ... deliberately diverted the disciples’ attention away from fasting and any form of food asceticism and into prayer, service, and toil on behalf of the Kingdom”⁴

I absolutely agree with the *second* part of this Statement. But I categorically reject the *first* part. I would suggest that Paul diverted our Attention TOWARD Fasting- *not* as religious Ritual designed to earn God’s Favor; and also NOT as an “End in Itself”. The Apostle diverted our Attention TOWARD periodic Fasting as a very effective Weapon we can use in the ongoing “Fight of Faith”. And I say that, because when Paul was cataloguing his own personal Trials- he mentioned going without eating- TWICE.

⁴ *Prayer and Fasting: A Study in the Devotional Life of the Early Church*, p. 60

2Corinthians 6:3-10

3 giving no cause for offense in anything, so that the ministry will not be discredited,

4 but in everything commending ourselves as servants of God, in much endurance, in afflictions, in hardships, in distresses,

5 in beatings, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labors, in sleeplessness, in hunger,

6 in purity, in knowledge, in patience, in kindness, in the Holy Spirit, in genuine love,

7 in the word of truth, in the power of God; by the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and the left,

8 by glory and dishonor, by evil report and good report; *regarded* as deceivers and yet true;

9 as unknown yet well-known, as dying yet behold, we live; as punished yet not put to death,

10 as sorrowful yet always rejoicing, as poor yet making many rich, as having nothing yet possessing all things.

... and ...

2Corinthians 11:22-30

22 Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they descendants of Abraham? So am I.

23 Are they servants of Christ? — I speak as if insane — I more so; in far more labors, in far more imprisonments, beaten times without number, often in danger of death.

24 Five times I received from the Jews thirty-nine *lashes*.

25 Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, a night and a day I have spent in the deep.

26 *I have been* on frequent journeys, in dangers from rivers, dangers from robbers, dangers from *my* countrymen, dangers from the Gentiles, dangers in the city, dangers in the wilderness, dangers on the sea, dangers among false brethren;

27 *I have been* in labor and hardship, through many sleepless nights, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure.

28 Apart from *such* external things, there is the daily pressure on me *of* concern for all the churches.

29 Who is weak without my being weak? Who is led into sin without my intense concern?

30 If I have to boast, I will boast of what pertains to my weakness.

Now it is *possible* that, in both of these Accounts, Paul was merely relating his lack of food due to his awful Circumstances- and NOT that God had led him to fast. But *that* Understanding would have been out of Context with what he also said about “**disciplining his body**”:

1 Corinthians 9:23-27

23 I do all things for the sake of the gospel, so that I may become a fellow partaker of it.

24 Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but *only* one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win.

25 Everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. They then *do it* to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable.

26 Therefore I run in such a way, as not without aim; I box in such a way, as not beating the air;

27 but I discipline my body and make it my slave, so that, after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified.

This Passage shows us that the Apostle Paul understood that *some* ascetic discipline was useful as a weapon in the fight of faith and that he personally engaged in it. And he used the rigorous training that athletes who participated in the “**Games**” went through so they could, “**receive the prize**” as an example of how *all* believers are to be focused and disciplined in their daily walk with God.

Again, I am *not* suggesting here that we should all become monks in a monastery. But what I *am* suggesting is that the “pull of the world” on our flesh is so strong and so pervasive that believers need weapons to use in the ongoing battle to “walk by faith and not by sight”. And I am suggesting that- *periodically*- we should *pull away* from the hustle and bustle of our busy lives and *push away* from the table and *turn off* the machines and get alone with God so we can ...

... taste and see that the Lord is good; How blessed is the man who takes refuge in Him! (Psalm 34:8b)

Amen. Let's pray.

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The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen. Be watchful and quicken your pace. Soli Deo Gloria. For the Glory of God alone.