
Systematic fasting

By James Miller

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Eastern Nazarene College

SYSTEMATIC FASTING

BY

JAMES MILLER

(2nd Edition)



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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this little booklet is not merely to be putting another on the market, neither am I sending it forth for the sake of argument, or that I might start a new doctrine or application of the Scriptures on this subject.

But my purpose and desire is that it might be a blessing to our Nazarene people and to the saints of God everywhere. Also, that it might help us to know more how to practice this great truth, and God will in return be pleased to honor it by giving us a greater passion for souls and thereby build up His Church and people spiritually and numerically.

I have been studying, preaching and practicing what I am writing in this booklet for about nine years. Many who have heard the message have asked that I put it in book form. During these years I have searched for a sermon or a book on fasting and have found only one sermon which was preached by John Wesley. More will be said about this sermon in the following pages.

Will you not join with me in prayer that God will be pleased to bless this effort to the upbuilding of His Kingdom and the salvation of the lost?

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SYSTEMATIC FASTING

Listen to these words of a newspaper clipping. They furnish a striking evidence that the outside world is keenly noting that the Church of Jesus Christ is not practicing this great Bible truth as it should. The title of this piece is:

“AND THEY EAT”

“Behold! the lodge lodgeth together and they eat. The club clubbeth together and they eat. The business men take counsel together and they eat. The church hath a social and they eat. The young people’s society elects officers and they eat. And even when the missionary society meeteth together they eat. But this latter is in good cause, because they eat in remembrance of the poor heathen who have not much to eat.

“Behold hath man’s brains gone to his stomach and doth he hold so little regard for intellectual dainties that thou canst not get together a quorum or even a baker’s dozen except thou holdest up the baker’s dainties as a bait?

“Be it true that the day cometh when to get a crowd at a prayer meeting the preacher must hold up a biscuit?

Yea, verily, thou hast heard of the childishness of the world. But behold, it is nigh thee, even at the door. For as one who calleth unto the child and sayeth, ‘Come hither, little one, and I will give thee a stick of candy,’ even so must thou say to his grown-up papa and mamma, ‘Assemble ye together and we will serve refreshments,’ and lo, they come like sheep in a pen.”

“Ain’t it the truth?”

Well we know that no church ever had to hold up a stick of candy or a biscuit to get a crowd as long as they kept the glory of God on their services. I have never found a church that had need of such things as long as the Spirit of God was on the preacher and the church. The most attractive thing in all the world today, that I know anything about, is the fire of the Holy Ghost on an audience and the altar lined with hungry seekers. Hallelujah!

The Bible has lots to say about Fasting. The word "Fast" is used 20 times; "Fasting" 17 times; "Fasted" 13 times; "Fastings" 4 times; "Fastest" one time.

Just here let me call your attention to some scripture on this subject. "Sanctify ye a fast, call a solemn assembly, gather the elders and all the inhabitants of the land into the house of the Lord. . . . Therefore, also now, saith the Lord, Turn ye, even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning. And rend your heart, and not your garments and turn unto the Lord your God. . . . Blow the trumpet in Zion, sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly. . . . Gather the people, sanctify the congregation, assemble the elders, gather the children, and those that suck the breast: Let the bridegroom go forth of his chamber, and the bride out of her closet. . . . Let the Priests, the ministers of the Lord, weep between the porch and the altar, and let them say, Spare thy people, O Lord" (Joel 1:14; 2:12, 13, 15, 16, 17). "So the people of Nineveh believed God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them. For the Word came unto the King of Nineveh and he arose from his throne and he laid his robe from him, and covered him with sackcloth and sat in ashes. . . . And he caused it to be proclaimed and published through Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles, saying, Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste any thing: Let them not feed, nor drink water. . . . But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily unto God; yea, let them turn every one from his evil way, and from the violence that is in their hands," "And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way" (Jonah 3:5-8, 10). And again, "Go gather together all the Jews that are present in Shushan and Fast ye for me and neither eat nor drink three days, night or day: I also and my maidens will fast likewise, and so will I go in unto the King which is not according to the law: and if I perish, I perish" (Esther 4:16).

Now, let us turn to Isaiah the 58th chapter, the eighth verse and the first word in this verse, which we shall use for our text. The word, as you see, is "Then," which means, "At that time" or "after something else has happened," and is used

hundreds or perhaps thousands of times in the Bible. But we select it here because of its connection, as you shall see.

Almost this entire chapter deals with the subject of "Fasting." The first five verses deal with "Hypocritical," or "False Fasting." The sixth and seventh verses deal with the kind of a Fast that "God has chosen." The 8th, 9th, 10th, 11th and 12th verses give us many of the precious promises that are to the faithful Bible fasters. All the promises in the Bible, so far as my knowledge goes, are conditional, which, of course, includes these.

Let us now, briefly as possible, notice the first five verses that deal with the "False fast." First verse: "Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like the trumpet, and shew my people their transgressions, and the house of Jacob their sins." You see the prophet was to "Cry aloud and spare not." He was not to rebuke them for their fasting, but for the motive that was behind their fasting. The motive behind anything is what determines the right or the wrong of it. We may be ever so strict concerning fasting, tithing, and all other things the Bible teaches and yet not be in divine order, as the motive behind the act is what counts with God. The people who fast or tithe with the wrong motive behind it should be rebuked as well as those that do not practice these things at all. Here is one of the great weaknesses of the ministry, in failing to "Cry aloud" against the wrong motives and sins of God's professing people. It takes a lot of courage and backbone to look a professing Christian in the face and say, "Thou art the man" or "Thou art the woman." But as "Watchmen on the walls," we must be faithful to those who come to hear us or have their blood on our hands at the Judgment Bar of God.

Second verse: "Yet they seek me daily, and delight to know my ways, as a nation that did righteousness, and forsook not the ordinance of their God: They ask of me the ordinances of justice; they take delight in approaching to God." This verse reveals that they were formal and sanctimonious. They were trying to act like a people "That did righteousness," that is, making believe they were godly. In this, as in other things that Christians preach and practice, we have to be careful, and prayerful, in order to avoid the form of the thing and

not have any victory or glory. Thank God, when we practice the things of the Bible with the right motive behind them, we have the happy assurance He will be a "Sun and shield, and will give grace and glory, and no good thing will He withhold from them."

Third verse: "Wherefore, have we fasted say they, and thou seest not? Wherefore have we afflicted our soul, and thou takest no knowledge? Behold in the day of your fast ye find pleasure and exact all your labors." We see in this verse they exclaim that they have been fasting and then declared that He hasn't been paying any attention to them. List to God's answer: "Behold, in the day of your fast ye find pleasure, and exact all your labor." He saw their fastings but saw also that they pursued their labor and followed their pleasures as at other times. The thought is simply this: That on fast days we ought to set aside all the work we can, and the pleasures that are legitimate at other times, in order that we might have that much more time to be in prayer and meditation on fast days. One lady told me she was very glad I had preached on fasting as she had so much more time to knit and sew, another said now that she did not have to cook so much she could clean house. The men do as foolishly as the women by doing odd jobs around the house on these days. It is not for this that we fast, but to take the time you would otherwise be eating and visiting, and get alone with God to read, pray and meditate.

Fourth verse: "Behold ye fast for strife and debate, and to smite with the fist of wickedness; ye shall not fast as ye do this day, to make your voice to be heard on high." Here again we notice that God is calling their attention to their mistake, fasting for "Strife and debate." There should be no such spirit or even a thought of strife or debate connected with it. It is not a matter of contesting, struggling, arguing and discussing it, neither should we do it to "Smite with the fist of wickedness." Dr. Adam Clarke says this means like in the time of war, when they declared days of fasting that their country might win. "Ye shall not fast as ye do this day to make your voice to be heard on high." If we fast with the thought in mind of going out to tell to the world all we are doing, this, you see is wrong and Pharisaical.

Fifth verse: "Is it such a fast that I have chosen? A day for a man to afflict his soul? Is it to bow down his head as a bulrush, and spread sackcloth and ashes under him? Wilt thou call this a fast, and acceptable day of the Lord?" We notice here that God is also displeased for one of His children to go around on a fast day in a melancholy way, all bowed down and lamenting what an awful thing it is to fast and what a great sacrifice he is making. This is also Pharisaical and it is unscriptural besides. Rather, let us do what Jesus tells us in Matt. 6:17, 18. "But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head and wash thy face . . . that thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret." We ought to spend the time in prayer that we would have otherwise taken to eat the omitted meal, so that when we appear in public, we will come refreshed and blessed in our souls, rejoicing over the good things of God and full of praise at the great privilege of full salvation. Never appear unto men to fast but only unto Him who seeth in secret. This concludes the first five verses which are dealing with hypocritical fasting, which is, as you see, greatly condemned by God.

Now, in the next two verses we study the kind of a fast that God has chosen. The sixth verse reads: "Is not this the fast that I have chosen? To loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke?" The first thing we notice in this verse is that God has chosen a certain kind of a fast. I know of no plainer statement in the Bible anywhere concerning the things that God wants His children to do than this one concerning the kind of a fast that God has chosen. Not long since, I was to preach in a Preachers' Convention one night. The evening before I was to preach, the District Superintendent preached on "Store-House-Tithing," or "Systematic Tithing" and all the Pastors were there with their "Amens!" and well they should be. Many in the audience were loud with their words of sanction. I, too, joined heartily in the note of freedom and victory there. The next night when I preached on Systematic Fasting, there was hardly a sound, much less an "Amen" in the whole audience from Preacher, or any one else. Why? For the very reason they were not practicing fasting as they were tithing. Why accept the scripture in

Malachi 3:10 on Tithing and not Isaiah 58:6 on fasting? Come on, reader, preachers, one and all, let us accept the "Fast that God has chosen." True, it will mean a little sacrifice, but, it also means results and victory, not only for ourselves, but for others. We can readily see that when the right motive is behind our fasting what it will mean to our loved ones, our friends, and the thousands about us that are bound by "the bands of wickedness." Also, what it will mean to those that are groaning beneath "the heavy burdens" of sin, "oppressed" on every side and "yoked" up with the devil and his followers. Surely this is a description of the multitudes about us. Sin has blasted their hopes, degraded their desires, fired their passions, polluted their influence, stained their character, shattered their intellect, outraged their morality, seared their conscience, blinded their eyes, perverted and cursed their lives, and now seeks eternally to damn their souls. God has told us in His word that if we will but scripturally fast, He will be enabled thereby to break these sin powers from the weary travelers toward eternity. Let us not doubt its efficacy, or criticize it until we have at least given it a fair trial. Fasting enables God to do what otherwise He cannot do.

Turn to the other verse in our consideration of the fast that God has chosen: "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?" This verse means, according to the best commentators, that the money you save from the meals that you would have otherwise eaten, you put aside in a separate fund and out of this fund feed the hungry and clothe the naked. Then we will be included in the number that Jesus referred to when He said: "For I was an hungered and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger and ye took me in. Naked, and ye clothed me; I was sick and ye visited me; I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer Him, saying, Lord, when saw we Thee an hungered and fed Thee, or thirsty and gave Thee drink? When saw we Thee a stranger and took Thee in, or naked and clothed Thee? Or when saw we Thee sick or in prison and came unto Thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them.

Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these, my brethren ye have done it unto me." (Matt. 25:35-40).

Dear reader, do you want to be among the ones that shall hear such words? We are sure you do. Then we will all have to live such lives as He is speaking about in the above Scripture. Jesus is here referring to the great Judgment, when all nations shall be gathered before Him, and He shall divide the "sheep" from the "goats." The sheep are the ones that have lived the above life, the goats are the ones referred to in the rest of the chapter, which clearly states what shall be their end.

Here, then, is where we can all join the "Prayer and Fasting League." You certainly would be clothing the naked and feeding the hungry by sending a part of this money, saved by fasting, to support the Foreign Missionary work, and such an act would be in divine order. In this way every adult, at least, could belong to the Fasting League and thereby solve the missionary needs that are giving us so much concern at the present time. You have, no doubt, read the many pleas for missionary help. We have been told what could be done if only 60,000 Nazarenes would give ten cents a week; how it would be sufficient to meet all the missionary demands. No doubt if the same percentage of members in other churches would give a like amount it would supply all their missionary demands as well. This would, no doubt, be just a small part of what we would have if we would all obey this Scripture. We would have lots left to help the poor and needy in our own community or city. Will we continue to make excuses then (at the Judgment) as we make today for not being able to help the poor and needy?

The money you set aside is not part of your tithe, it is that which you have saved from the sacrificing of your meals. Neither are you to give it out yourself, but rather let it go through the channels of your church. If you give it out yourself it will draw attention to yourself and not to Christ and the church. Can we not in this way humbly keep our right hands from knowing what our left ones are doing?

I know of a church where a young inexperienced man took the pastorate after some most able men had failed, and he

brought this church out to be a fine, prosperous, spiritual church, with all indebtedness on the building paid and the membership doubled many times, and he did it all in just a few years. He had five members when he took the work, four women and a man. How did he do it? He spent every Friday night in prayer, though he was working in a factory at that time, he had a revival and caught the vision concerning fasting, and that winter, he and his people, laid aside nearly \$400.00 from their sacrificing of meals. This money was spent clothing the naked and feeding the hungry. This became known over that section of the City and the public began to attend services there, because that sounded to them like what Jesus taught. Yes, dear reader, the scripture still says "Who-so stoppeth his ear at the cry of the poor, he also shall cry himself, but shall not be heard" (Proverbs 21:13). And this is in perfect harmony with the teachings of Jesus concerning the poor and needy.

Now to the text, the first word in this next verse, "Then," which means "at that time" or "after something else has happened." At that time, in this case, is when we are practicing "the fast that God has chosen," but not until then. As we said in the beginning, all promises are conditional, so, when you become a Scriptural FASTER, these beautiful promises in the next four or five verses are yours.

First Promise: "Then shall thy light break forth as the morning." Surely this is in keeping with the words of Jesus in Matthew 5:16. "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father (not you) which is in Heaven." You remember the Pharisees fasted, but they had the wrong motive in it, which is made clear by these words from Jesus: "All their works they do for to be seen of men." Matthew 23:5. There is all the difference in the world between doing a thing that we might be praised and given credit, and doing it for the glory of God, and the salvation of the lost.

I have seen many beautiful electric signs in front of churches (and God forbid that I should speak lightly of them, because I enjoy and appreciate them) but I am convinced that the light of life and character will outshine all the electric displays we can hang out. Yes, this kind of a light will make

bright the path for weary souls to find their way to the Cross where they will find the Author of peace and pardon. Hallelujah to the Lamb! What a wonderful thought and truth that a person and church can so live that their "light shall shine forth as the morning."

Second Promise: "And thine health shall spring forth speedily." This is indeed a wonderful promise to have as yours. Someone asked me if I thought this meant physical healing or did it mean spiritual health? I answered quickly, that I was sure it meant spiritual health, and was just as much convinced that God would honor it for physical health as well. I am sure that every Christian would agree with me quickly when I say if it only meant spiritual health, it surely would be worth it all, as we are seeing so many sickly, deformed Christians, (so called), these days. As much as I appreciate a well strong body, I would rather have a strong, healthy soul than a well, strong body, if I could only have one of the two. I was a wreck physically, as well as all other ways, when I came to Christ, I realized that I had brought most of it on myself by my life of sin and dissipation. Therefore, I was ashamed to ask God to make me well, but bless His dear name, He saw my heart and knew I would only want a well body to wear it out for His glory and the salvation of the lost, and made me well, and now for years I have enjoyed good health, generally speaking. But here is a greater testimony and I say it as humbly as I know how and for His glory; For more than eighteen years, (or ever since the day He saved me) I have walked with Him without a conscious break. How my soul has been lifted and enlarged by taking time daily to talk to Him and letting Him talk to me, reading His word, fasting and obeying Him to the best of my ability and knowledge. One of my co-workers, in a meeting, said to me on a certain occasion, "Don't you think God wants His people to be well people?" I said, "I most assuredly do, and He wants you to be well so much so, He said, if you would practice "The fast He has chosen, He would make you well." This person went on to say that they had a certain affliction and if they did not eat it increased their trouble and pain. Well, I advised them to ask God what they should do and their answer was that God had told them to fast. Then, I said,

"You had better fast if God has told you to." But they refused to do what God said and in a short time the companion of this one had died, and the other was backslidden before the companion died, and so far as I know, is now no more heard of in His work, and is backslidden and lost. I do not mean to say, or infer, it was because they did not fast that all this happened but I do know that a person gets in trouble when they back up on anything that God makes light to them and asks them to do. I prefer to walk in the light of His word and always be clear, then, no matter what happens to me, I will have no regrets or fear at the end of the way. Neither do I want to leave the impression that I believe that it is sinful to take a dose of medicine, or would refuse one myself; my belief has always been that if you are sick and cannot pray the prayer of faith, nor can anyone else get through for you, in prayer, I would advise to get the aid of a doctor as soon as possible. Perhaps it is all summed up in what Uncle Bud Robinson says in this statement: "If we live closer to the drug store than we do the Lord we will go to the drug store first and if we live closer to the Lord, than we do to the drug store, we will go to Him first." Think what we may, He says our health will "Spring forth speedily" and I have proven it now for years that it will.

Third Promise: "Thy righteousness shall go before thee." That is your life shall speak louder than your words. It shall go before you and pave the way for your coming and protect you as well, and they that see it will say, "We will go with you: for we have heard that God is with you" (Zechariah 8:23). I am sure that if God's children would fast and spend that time in prayer and meditation and searching the scriptures, examining themselves, and proving themselves by the Word, they would have fewer inconsistencies, which are among the greatest hindrances to the upbuilding of His kingdom on earth. Yes, it would be easier for them to "Confess their faults, one to another," and "Pray one for another that they might be healed." This would heal over many differences and do away with divisions and trouble and cause our "Righteousness to go before us," which speaks much louder than our preaching and professing.

Fourth Promise: "The Glory of the Lord shall be thy rereward." This word "rereward" means "Backer up." The Glory of God is what we need as individuals and as collective bodies of people to back us up. We must have it to back us up in the pulpit, in the pew, and everywhere we go. The Glory of God can be felt and seen by the outsiders as well as the Christian people. It is attractive and convincing. It will solve the greater part of our problems, no doubt. What is it? It is that something that attracted so many of us to the Holiness Camp Meetings, and Holiness Churches years ago. I don't mean noise or demonstration, necessarily, however there will, no doubt, be plenty of this, but it is that which can be felt, even when it can't be seen or heard.

I know of a certain Nazarene church that was organized with 13 members. They worshipped under a tree for a while, eventually they were able to get a building, then an old church. Some few years had passed and the business men of the City felt that these Nazarenes ought to build a new church that would accommodate the crowds and do justice to what we were preaching. One of the ex-governors of the state lived in that city; when the Pastor visited him and asked him concerning a donation to the building of this new church, he said something like this, "I will make you a little gift of \$1,000.00 to help you build a nice new church, providing it doesn't cause you to lose your chief characteristic." When asked what, in his judgment, was the chief characteristic of this church, he replied, "That something you Nazarenes call Glory." He went on to say further that if a new church would cause them to lose this Glory, they had better stay where they were. He also explained what he meant by "Glory." He said, "It is that something that causes these people to have such love, fellowship and unity with each other." My friend, is not this one of the outstanding needs of God's people today everywhere? When this is missing, Ichabod is written over the door, no matter what else we may do or profess.

Now you see with me, dear reader, what we have promised to us, even in this one verse, if we will but practice "The Fast that He has chosen?" "Light breaking forth as the morning; Health springing forth speedily; Righteousness going before us, and the Glory of the Lord backing us up." Surely this

combination would cause a person to mount up over every obstacle and come out with a shine and a shout.

Fifth Promise: "Then shalt thou call, and the Lord will answer, thou shalt cry, and He shall say, Here I am." Now read God's word on the other side of it in Proverbs 21:13. "Whoso stoppeth his ear at the cry of the poor, he also shall cry himself, but shall not be heard." How can we turn a deaf ear to the cry of the millions in the foreign land and homeland, and expect God to hear us when we call and cry for help? No doubt disobedience has choked the channels many a time through which help and glory would have otherwise been ours. Thank God for such assurance that He will answer when we call and hear us when we cry and will say here I am. I want to say to the encouragement of the reader that I have stood upon these promises hundreds of times and He has never failed me once. When death has come into our midst; when sickness has laid low one of the family; when the flour barrel was empty; when we run out of meetings; when meetings pulled hard; while digging out and organizing Nazarene Churches from one coast to the other; when misunderstood; when taken advantage of; when put up; when put down; when put in and when put out; Praise to His name, He has never failed me once, and He will not fail you. What a wonderful thing to be able to place your finger on this precious promise and call God's attention to the fact that you are keeping His fast and therefore, this promise is yours. Where is there stronger language in the Bible than these words to the obedient Christian. If time and space would permit I could give at least 100 incidents as illustrations that God has given me because of my faithfulness in Fasting.

Sixth Promise: "Then shall thy light rise in obscurity." No matter how dark the night, thy light shall shine, yea, the darker the night, the brighter it will shine. Have you ever been lost in the night in the country when you could not see your hand before you? How did you feel when suddenly you saw a light in the distance, maybe it was only a lamp light, but your heart leaped with joy as you headed for it. So there will be many hearts leap with joy as they see your light shining out in the darkness of this awful day we are now passing

through. Millions are groping in darkness to Eternity. Who will let their light shine that they might be attracted and turned from the error of their way? Every time I hear a Missionary talk, no matter what field they are from, or how much the sacrifice, I want to pack my grips and bid the home-land good-by. Likewise does my heart burn within me to carry the news and bear the light to the lost millions in the home-land.

A millionaire's wife was saved in my meetings and after she was forgiven, she stood to her feet praising God that she knew her sins were forgiven and she was saved for the first time in her life. Then she sighed and cried and said "My poor mother, my poor father, the millions, the millions." I asked why such words and this was her answer, "My mother and father, like millions of others have gone to church all their lives and never heard enough of God's word preached to even know that they were lost, much less to get them saved." She continued by saying she had done the same thing, but after attending the services at this church for two nights, she realized she was lost. Yes, dear reader, there are millions staggering on in darkness without God. We have the light, let us keep it burning the brightest, that we might lighten the path of the most possible.

Seventh Promise: "Thy darkness be as the noon day." Here is another promise dealing with light and darkness. But this time it is God's light shining in your heart and life in the darkest hours through which you must pass to make it as though it was noon-day. How much Christian people need to know this secret and have this promise as theirs. Surely this was what Job meant and was experiencing when he uttered these words, "Behold, I go forward, but he is not there; and backward but I cannot perceive him: . . . On the left hand, where he doth work, but I cannot behold him: he hideth himself on the right hand, that I cannot see him: . . . But he knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold." Listen, dear reader, how did Job have such faith and confidence that he was God's man and all was going to end well? Hear him again in the next two verses he tells us. "My foot hath held his steps, his way have I kept, and not declined. . . . Neither have I gone back from the commandment of his lips; I have esteemed the words

of his mouth more than my necessary food." So it will be with us when we live likewise. When we esteem the things of God and the needs of our souls more important than even our necessary food. Did you ever hear that verse of song, written by Mrs. Waterman of California, in these words: "Three men were walking on a wall, Feeling, Faith and Fact. When Feeling got an awful fall and Faith was taken back. So close was Faith to Feeling, he stumbled and fell too. But Fact remained, and pulled Faith up, and Faith brought Feeling too"? What a wonderful truth and so few seem to know anything about it. I have never talked to the author of the song, but this is what it means to me. If it is a fact that one day I was saved; and if it is a fact that after that God sanctified me wholly; and if it is a fact that since that time I have never willingly, knowingly, or purposely disobeyed God or failed to walk in what light He has given me, I have just as much religion when I don't feel like I have any as when I feel like I have it all. Surely this is causing "Thy darkness to be as the noon-day." Did you ever to go bed and weep yourself to sleep from joy, feeling that the room was filled with angels, and God Himself was there, and if the devil ever lived you couldn't have told it; then sleep through the night and awaken in the morning feeling like the room was full of devils and if God ever lived you couldn't tell it from the way you felt, then about that time the devil came up and said, "Well, you are backslidden, aren't you?" This thing happened to me one time and I asked the devil this question. "You old devil, how could I backslide while I was asleep?" Yes, thank God, He will make the darkness light before you, if you obey Him and walk in the light of His word.

Eighth Promise: "And the Lord shall guide thee continually." No doubt one of the greatest problems of all Christians is to be able to discern the spirits or to always know whether it is God or the devil that is leading them. Beyond a question of a doubt, at least in my thinking, God's children would be much more able to discern the spirits and know when it is God leading if we would skip more meals and spend this time in prayer, thereby giving him a chance to reveal His will and way to us. It may not always be the most pleasant way humanly speaking but it is always right. I don't sup-

pose Job thought the way he traveled was the most pleasant way to the flesh, but it led to victory in the end. No doubt Joseph felt the thorns along the way that God led him, but it proved to be the best for all concerned in the end. Many characters in both the Old and New Testaments that were guided by the Lord passed through some very rugged places, but it always ended well. Yes, there are many characters outside the Bible that we know and read of that passed through the fire to accomplish that which God purposed in their lives. The way that God may lead you, dear reader, may be laden with many a sharp rock and you may often grow weary on your journey, but be assured of this one thing, it leads to glory in the end if He is guiding you.

Ninth Promise: "And satisfy thy soul in drought." Yes, thank God, we can have a shower in our soul even when we are compelled to live with a drought all around us. No doubt there are a few of God's children who are compelled to live in communities where there are no churches that preach the whole truth and thereby it would be considered dry, or a time of drought, but, in the midst of all of this God can keep them thriving spiritually. I have experienced this, a little, in my Christian life in a community where I lived for a while and at the church where I did attend services, the pastor would tell the people that my enthusiasm was running away with my head and that some day I would settle down. When I got down to pray they tried to "Amen" me up, and when I got up to testify, they tried to "Amen" me down, but I obeyed God to the best of my knowledge, walked in the light of his word, and He kept me in the midst of the drought. I have seen that pastor a few times since those days and testified to him that my enthusiasm was still running and I was keeping up with it. He seemed to rather compliment me for my courageous spirit and determination. So, be encouraged, dear child of God out there in the plains, or mountains, or community where there are no Holiness churches. God has a way of keeping you saved and going up the shining way if you will but read His word, pray and obey.

Tenth Promise: "And make fat thy bones." Not everyone is desirous of being fat in body. We all know well that not all fat people are necessarily healthy people but in this

case apparently God is wanting us to think of a fat, stout, stalwart person as being the healthy one. Hence, He says, "I will make fat thy bones." So, looking upon this person as one who is a strong, healthy person and not a weak worm of the dust, we are encouraged to try to get more people to become fasters that we might have more giants to fight the battle against sin. I heard of a man who gave a testimony which consisted mostly of the things he couldn't do, and closed his testimony by saying that he was a poor weak worm of the dust, pray for him that he might hold out faithful. But, the next day on the street, while conversing with a man he became angry at something that the man said and put his fist beneath the other man's nose and gave him to understand that he felt like a sack of wild-cats. This kind of people are not God's need, but rather the opposite.

Eleventh Promise: "And thou shalt be like a watered garden." Every one, of course, knows what kind of a garden this would be. It is one that has a good production, no matter how dry it may be all around it. It is one where the owner can go at all times and find eatables fresh and plenty. What a wonderful thing it would be if God's people were such that the weary traveler could come at all times and find plenty of fresh eatables to refresh their hungry souls. Not stale and dry but fresh and juicy. Not what I received forty years ago, or what I had or did away back yonder, but what God is doing for me now, and helping me to do for others. Thank God for watered gardens that are attractive and satisfying.

Twelfth Promise: "And like a spring of water, whose waters fail not." No doubt many who will read these lines remember well when you were on a very tiresome journey and became so thirsty you would have given almost anything for a good cold drink. About this time you saw a small stream of water running down the side of the hill, following this stream, you soon came to a nice bubbling, cold, spring of water. How refreshing and satisfying, and after a few minutes rest and a few drinks from the never failing spring you felt encouraged and believed you could finish the journey. This is the kind of people, and churches, God wants His people and places of worship to be. A place where thirsty sinners can

come and be refreshed, satisfied and encouraged for the rest of the journey through life. How well do I remember the old spring house on Grandfather's farm in the southern hills of Indiana where they kept, between meals, the milk, butter and other eatables. Many a time I visited that place to find satisfaction for my thirst by helping myself to the cold water and buttermilk. So we must be that kind of people and church that the thirsty multitudes will find satisfaction as they enter into our places of worship.

Now, notice the twelfth verse with me. "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."

What a wonderful verse and what a wonderful people we can be as a church, if we will but do His will and practice His Word. "They that shall be of Thee shall build the old waste places." Surely we want our converts to be that kind that will go out over this country and open up the closed churches and start revival fires that will build up the waste places. There are closed churches by the thousands that we can, and must, get into, and fast and pray until God comes. A minister said to me one time in a home missionary meeting that if I would get twelve of his members saved and sanctified he would give them to me with which to start a Nazarene Church. He had brought about three car loads of his members that night. Suffice to say, we organized before we left that city. A Presiding Elder of a certain denomination said to one of our pastors where I held a meeting recently, that they had a number of empty buildings, and if we Nazarenes wanted to put on a meeting in some of them we were welcome to do so, and if we could organize, they would sell the church buildings to us for almost nothing. Yes, we must have young men and women that can, and will, go out and build up the waste places. Notice again, "Thou shalt raise up the foundations of many generations." That is our job, beloved, to raise up again the foundations of many generations. It is a sad fact, never the less it is a fact, that the foundations have been torn down by many and now God is giving us this great privilege of rolling up our sleeves and go-

ing at it to build them up again. "And thou shalt be called, The Repairer of the breach, The restorer of paths to dwell in." Here you see, is our name, or what we are to be called. We have done fine thus far, but we must now go a little deeper and farther. Brother U. E. Harding said one time words about like this, "Between the Nazarenes and the rag-weeds we were going to take the State of Indiana." He meant between this weed (which grows promiscuously in this state) and the Nazarene Churches we would cover the state. This we have done quite well, yet there are many places needing, and asking us to come. It has been said of the Nazarene Church in this state also, that "We were in a meeting, had just closed one, or were getting ready to start one." We must never lose the vision and the evangelistic spirit, this must be said of us everywhere. It can be done, it must be done, it will be done if we will all tithe, fast, pray and obey.

Now, dear reader, you see with me what is promised to the Bible FASTER. Just as much as God has promised, "A blessing that there shall not be room enough to receive it" if we will but be Bible tithers, so He promises to us all we have been trying to tell you about, if we will but be Bible Fasters or practice the "Fast that He has chosen," but, not until "Then," (at that time).

Years ago, after much reading, praying and thinking, I decided that it was God's will and word for Christians to fast. Then I concluded that I would never do much of it unless I did it like I read my Bible, prayed, and tithed, and that was systematically. As I thought on this I naturally wondered what kind of a system would I, or could I adopt. Then I remembered hearing Rev. E. O. Chalfant say something about what John Wesley said concerning the fasting of the Apostles and early Christians, and that it could be found in Mr. Wesley's sermons. I started a search for these sermons and found them, and there I found these words from the lips of this great preacher of the Word concerning fasting. Read them carefully, prayerfully, and with an open honest heart. "It would be easy to show in how many respects the Methodists, in general, are deplorably wanting in the practice of Christian self-denial: from which, indeed, they have been continually frightened by the silly outcries of the Antinomians.

To instance only in one: While we were at Oxford, the rule of every Methodist was (unless in case of sickness) to fast every Wednesday and Friday in the year, in imitation of the primitive church: for which they had the highest respect. Now this practice of the primitive church was universally allowed. 'Who does not know,' says Epiphanius, an ancient writer, 'that the fast of the fourth and sixth days of the week, (Wednesday and Friday) are observed by the Christians throughout the world?' So they were by the Methodists for several years, by them all, without any exception; but afterwards some in London carried this to excess, and fasted so as to impair their health. It was not long before others made this a pretense for not fasting at all. And I fear there are now thousands of Methodists, so called, both in England and Ireland who, following the same bad example, have entirely left off fasting; who are so far from fasting twice in the week, (as all the stricter Pharisees did) that they do not fast twice in the month. Yea, are there not some of you who do not fast one day from the beginning of the year to the end? But what excuse can there be for this? I do not say for those that call themselves members of the Church of England, but for any who profess to believe the Scripture to be the Word of God? *Since*, according to this, the man that never fasts is no more in the way to Heaven than the man that never prays." Was he right? if so let us all become fasters at once.

After reading these words I did a lot of thinking, meditating and praying. My mind went back over this man's life of usefulness and power, and I thought of how he preached to 32,000 at one time and was able to sway and influence the thousands. I decided if it was good for the Apostles, early Christians and Methodists, which included this wonderful character, it would be good for me. Mr. Wesley explains in another one of his sermons that they did neither eat nor drink anything on these days until after 3 P. M.

I would say just here concerning Mr. Wesley what another said about Charles G. Finney, "Criticise him if you may, but not until you have done greater things than he."

I tried this system of fasting for one year, watched my own experience and the outcome of my meetings in every respect, it seemed to me that everything increased, and intensi-

fied for the good. But, in order that I might not go out preaching something to the public with a question mark attached to it, I then left it off for the following year. By the time this year was up I was convinced that it was the thing to practice and preach to God's people everywhere, and I am now in my ninth year at the job. In this time I have, of course, met many criticisms and differences from God's well meaning people, but, I am more convinced today than ever before that it is pleasing in His sight and pays in every respect for your own personal good, physically, financially and spiritually, and enables you to do more for those depending upon you in every way.

Some one asked me what scriptures I would give from the lips of Jesus concerning fasting, and I referred them to Matthew 9:14 and 15; or Mark 2:18, 19; and also Luke 5:33, 35. Matthew 9:14 and 15 reads, "Then came to him the disciples of John, saying, Why do we and the Pharisees fast oft, but thy disciples fast not? . . . And Jesus said unto them, Can the children of the bridechamber mourn, as long as the bridegroom is with them? but the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken, from them, and then shall they fast." So you see that Jesus makes it very clear that after He has gone away that his followers, or disciples, would fast and according to John Wesley and other writers, they did fast, and it was in imitation of their fasting that the Methodists fasted in the early days, or history of the church. Also, I would like to refer you to Matthew 6:16, 17 and 18. And there it says, "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. . . . But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face: . . . 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.

I might just mention here a few of the differences and objections I have heard to this kind of fasting, hoping that I may be able to help you, dear reader.

The first one is: "I think our bodies need water." I am sure they do, but I decided if I practiced this with the right

motive, God would honor my effort and take care of that. I had two afflictions at the time I made this decision that caused me to need water and need it very much, but both of those afflictions have disappeared. Amen! Many have said that they never heard tell of leaving off the drinking when we fast. If you like they will read your Bible on fasting you will find that, in many places, it speaks of not drinking, as well as eating. This to the average person, is where the real sacrifice comes. The reason we don't feel the effects of fasting so much when we drink is because, what we drink keeps the walls of the stomach from rubbing together and thereby keeps us from having that hungry feeling. Others have said, if they don't drink coffee or tea of the morning they get the headache. Well, my personal opinion is, if it has that kind of a hold on you, it is an evidence that you ought to quit it; there is one sure thing, it isn't helping you in any respect. I have always practiced letting everything alone in the way of eats or drinks that does not have the best effect on my body.

Second objection: "I believe if God wanted us to fast, He would put it on us." I went to four of the best Bible students we have in the Church of the Nazarene and asked them if there was any scripture to back up such a statement, or teach such a thing, and each of them told me, "Not a one." Others have continued this statement or belief by saying, "And if God did put it on you, you would not get hungry." I asked these same four Bible students if they knew of any scripture that taught that one would not get hungry if God put the fast on him, and they all answered that they know of none. The fact of the matter is, as taught by John Wesley, that when we get real interested in any one and pray until the burden comes on us, for them, the natural effect upon our bodies causes us to lose our appetite. This is what is generally termed, "God putting it on us." Fasts were declared by the leaders, so the Bible states.

Third Objection: It is generally worded something like this:

"Men and women that work at hard labor must have something to eat, but if they didn't have any more to do than we preachers who just lay around all day they could do without it too." I am glad to testify just here and say that I have

tried both and have found it much easier on the days that I labored with my hands, than when I am in the midst of revivals and working as a minister. I have performed many different kinds of hard labor in my days and I have never found any thing that taxes the body more than constantly being in evangelistic work, with scarcely a night out of service, preaching and singing, constantly away from home, months at a time, which means, more or less, to be living in a constant strain. This takes vitality and strength of the body as well as the use of the mind. I fear that the trouble is not so much that we need food when we labor with our hands as it is that we are void of the vision that we ought to have concerning the lost millions that Jesus Christ died to save.

Just a few more lines about "Systematic Fasting." Surely we are all agreed that God is a God of system, hence His people should be likewise. I have watched the Christian people through all the years I have been walking with God and the ones that have the greatest depth, and are the most used of God for real substantial good, are the ones that have a system to their lives. The people that do things spasmodically are never the ones that are of the greatest usefulness, according to my observation. We must have a system to our Bible reading, praying, tithing and fasting if we expect to keep the glory on and save the most people possible in our little time of sojourning here. I heard dear old Brother Agnew tell, years ago in the Olivet, Illinois campmeeting, how he had read the Bible through for some forty years, every year. Just then I said, "That is going to be good for me." I have missed only one year since that, and I had a bad nervous break that year and almost made it through at that. Then, he also said that he had prayer an hour a day by the watch for so many years. I also answered in my heart at that time that too is going to be good for Jim Miller. I have never missed very many days since that time and it has been, I think, around twelve or fourteen years. The few days I have missed were when I was out of meetings and trying to get some rest, then didn't spend the whole hour on my knees. I am convinced after these years, that it pays to have a system to your devotional life. Here is an expression from Dr. Chapman that has meant so much to me, "If we live in the

devotional, it will stir the emotional and give us the experimental, and lead us to the practical."

The reason why God can bless systematic fasting more than spasmodic is for the same reason He can, and will, bless systematic tithing more than any other kind. Purely and simply because it puts God first. I pay tithe out of the full amount of the offering I get in a meeting even if it takes the rest of it to get to the next place of revival. God honors this and will see to it that I get on somehow. So, likewise, when it comes to systematic fasting. On these two days of each week I don't eat with anyone, whether I am at home or abroad, whether I am in a meeting or out of a meeting, in an Assembly, Preacher's meeting, among strangers or those I know well. I have found it rather hard, humanly speaking, to turn down our officials whom I love so dearly and enjoy sitting at a table and eating and visiting with. When I meet friends that I have not seen for a long time, and when I have been away from home for so long and drop in for just a few days, to say no and refuse to eat either of the first two meals on these two days of the week. But after these many years, I can say, "I have learned by experience" that it pays. You know, dear reader, if you fast only when there are no temptations to hinder you from fasting, you will go through life never knowing the blessing that goes with it, and the good you might have done by practicing it. Yes, this kind of fasting puts God ahead of friends, loved ones, circumstances, appetite and all, and it will be honored by God. Try it before you make your decision otherwise.

Many dear people have asked me "Why these two days in the week." The only answer I can give is just because this was the practice, as we told you before, of the early Christians and Apostles, according to what John Wesley said. I know not why they kept these two days, but since I had to adopt some system, if I was going to practice fasting, I concluded this would be a good one, and if it was good for them, it would be good for me.

I would ask you, dear reader, to do the thing I ask the people to do when I preach to them in person about fasting, and that is: Get down on your knees, look God in the face and ask Him if this is in keeping with His Word, if it is His

will concerning you, and whatever He tells you will be perfectly all right with me.

I do not want to be understood to mean that the only way or time you should fast should be these two days of the week because there are lots of times it takes more than just two meals, two days a week. Personally, I have days of fasting when conditions seem to require them, and it is marvelous what has been accomplished by days of fasting. Not only in my life, but in thousands of others. One of the good pastors on a certain district in the Church of the Nazarene was converted because his Mother spent twenty-two days fasting and praying, and at the time of her fasting, though she knew it not, he was locked in a prison in New York awaiting trial, and already had a life sentence against him in Canada, but when he prayed through and confessed out everything to the authorities, then wrote a letter to the Canadian Government, confessing and telling them what God had done for him, the Canadian Government withdrew the sentence and this, in turn caused the authorities in New York to also cancel the charge against him there. They turned the key and he walked out a free man and is today one of the good pastors of our movement, all because his Mother spent twenty-two days fasting and praying. Some years ago a lady with her family, came twenty-five miles to hear me preach, and that night my subject was "Fasting." I had emphasized this two days a week systematic fasting and at the close of the service her conclusion was, that if two days a week would do all I said, seven days would do more. A very reasonable conclusion. She never ate a bite, or drank a drop for seven days the following week, after she heard the sermon. The result was, as she continued to fast and pray, more or less, God opened the doors of an Episcopal Church in her little town where we Nazarenes were allowed to have services on Sunday afternoon. She realized that this would not last and that if her family was to be saved she must have a Holiness church in her town. Soon her cry was heard by God and He gave her a lot and then the material on the lot, and then men to build the church, and today stands a Nazarene church because one woman fasted and prayed. The last account I heard of her family, they were nearly all saved and in the Kingdom.

As I conversed with Brother Roberts at Pilot Point, Texas, a few years ago concerning the early pioneer work which they did in Texas and Oklahoma, he invariably made mention of how they fasted and prayed for days. Then the fire fell, cowboys and Indians were saved, and the work of God built up in the plains of these states. Praying and trusting that the message has been a blessing to you and will help you to grow to be a greater character and be of more usefulness to the upbuilding of God's kingdom on earth, we close by giving you the list of places where this subject is mentioned in the Bible. You can read and learn lots from these scriptures that we did not have the time or space to try to explain.

SCRIPTURES ON FASTING

Observed on occasions of public calamities, 2 Samuel 1:12; afflictions, Psa. 35:13; Daniel 6:18; private afflictions, 2 Samuel 12:16; approaching danger, Esther 4:16; ordination of ministers, Acts 13:8; 14:23.

Accompanied by prayer, Daniel 9:3; confession of sin 1 Samuel 7:6; Nehemiah 9:1-2; humiliation, Deuteronomy 9:18; Nehemiah 9:1; reading of the Scripture, Jeremiah 36:6.

Habitual: By John's disciples, Matthew 19:4; by Anna, Luke 2:37; by Pharisees, Matthew 9:14; Mark 2:18, Luke 18:12; by Cornelius, Acts 10:30; by Paul 2 Corinthians 6:5; 11:27.

In times of bereavement: of the people of Jabesh-gilead for Saul and his sons, 1 Samuel 31:13; 1 Chronicles 10:12; of David at the time of Saul's death, 2 Samuel 1:12; of his child's sickness, 2 Samuel 12:16, 21-23; of Abner's death, 2 Samuel 3:35.

Prolonged: for three weeks, by Daniel, Daniel 10:2, 3; Forty days, by Moses, Exodus 24:18; 34:28; Deuteronomy 9:9, 18; Elijah, 1 Kings, 19:8; Jesus, Matthew 4:2; Mark 1:12, 13; Luke 4:1, 2.

INSTANCES OF:

Of the Israelites, in the conflict between the other tribes and the tribe of Benjamin, on account of the wrong suffered by a Levite's concubine, Judges 20:26; when they went to Mizpeh for the ark, 1 Samuel 7:6; of David, at the death of Saul, 2 Samuel 1:12; during the sickness of the child born

to him by Bath-sheba, 2 Samuel 12:16-22; while interceding in prayer for his friends, Psalms 35:13; in His zeal for Zion, Psalms, 69:10; in prayer for himself and his adversaries, Psalms 109:4, 24; of Ahab, when Elijah prophesied the destruction of himself and his house, 1 Kings 21:27; with verses 20-29; of Jehoshaphat at the time of the invasion of the confederated armies of the Canaanites and Syrians, 2 Chronicles 20:3; of Ezra on account of the idolatrous marriages of the Jews, Ezra 10:6; of Nehemiah on account of the desolation of Jerusalem and the temple, Nehemiah 1:4; of the Jews when Jeremiah prophesied against Judea and Jerusalem, Jeremiah 36:9; in Babylon, with prayer for Divine deliverance and guidance, Ezra 8:21, 23. Of Darius, when he put Daniel in the lion's den, Daniel 6:18; of Daniel, on account of the captivity of the people, with prayer for their deliverance, Daniel 9:3; at the time of his vision, Daniel, 10:1-3. Ninevites, when Jonah preached to them, Jonah 3:5-10; by Paul, at the time of his conversion, Acts 9:9; of the Disciples, at the time of the consecration of Barnabas and Paul, Acts 13:2, 3; of the consecration of the Elders, Acts 14:23.

UNCLASSIFIED SCRIPTURES RELATING TO:

Ezra 8:21-23; Psalms 35:13; Psalms 69:10; Isaiah 58th chapter; Jeremiah 14:12; Daniel 10:2; Joel 1:14; Joel 2:12; Zechariah 7:5; Zechariah 8:19; Matthew 6:16; Matthew 9:14, 15; Matthew 17:21; Acts 27:9, 33, 34; 1 Corinthians 7:5.

Fasting

Nehemiah 9:1
 Esther 4:3
 Psalms 35:13
 Psalms 69:10
 Psalms 109:24
 Jeremiah 36:6
 Daniel 6:18
 Daniel 9:3
 Joel 2:12
 Matthew 15:32
 Matthew 17:21
 Mark 8:3

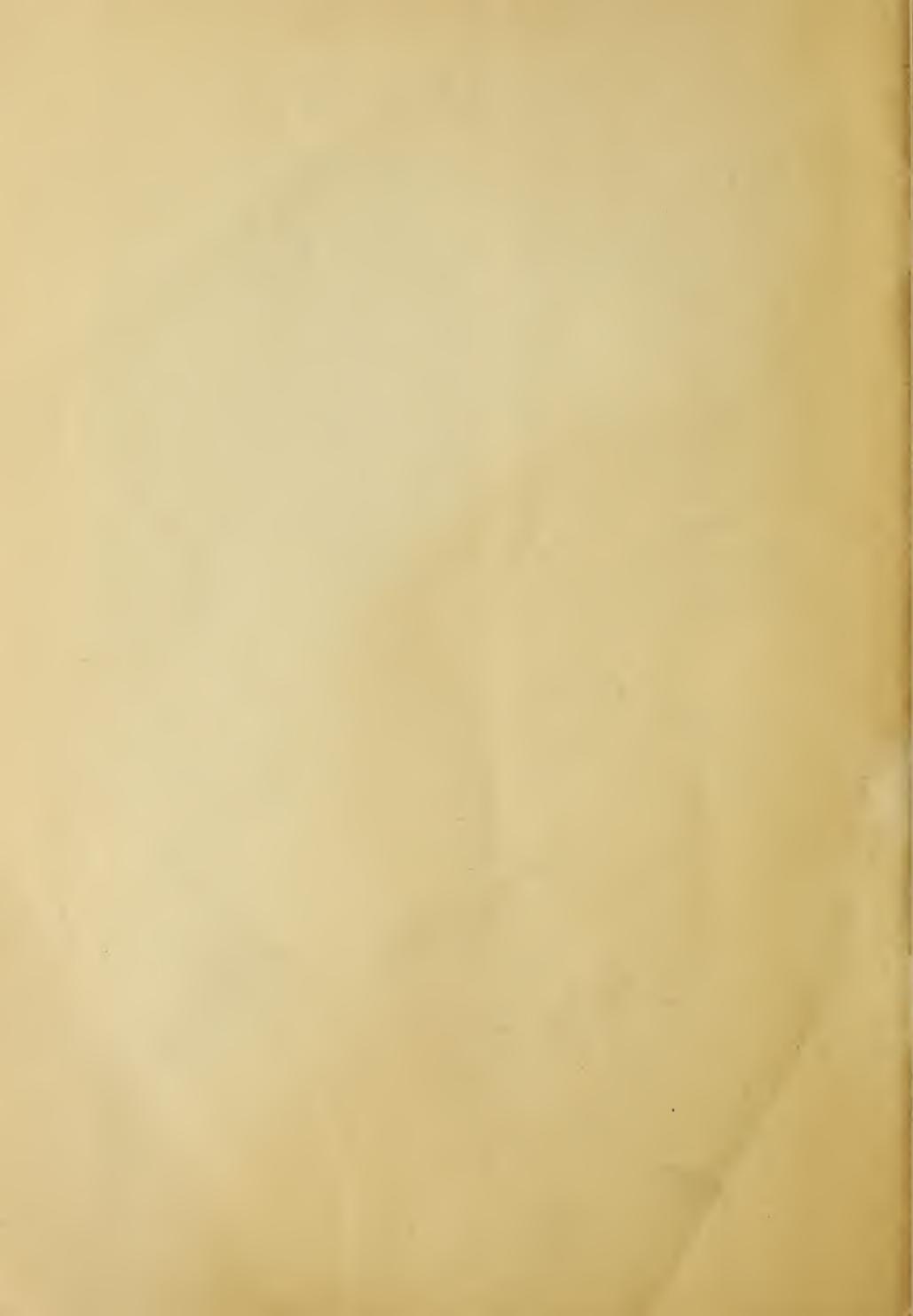
Mark 9:29
 Acts 10:30
 Acts 14:23
 Acts 27:33
 1 Corinthians 7:5

Fast

2 Samuel 2:16
 1 Kings 21:9-12
 2 Chronicles 20:3
 Ezra 8:21
 Isaiah 58:3, 5, 6.
 Jeremiah 36:9
 Joel 1:14

Joel 2:15
Jonah 3:5
Zechariah 8:19
Acts 27:9 (verb)
2 Samuel 12:21, 23
Esther 4:16
Isaiah 58:4
Jeremiah 14:12
Zechariah 7:5
Matthew 6:16, 18
Matthew 9:14, 15
Mark 2:18, 19
Luke 5:33-35
Luke 18:12
Fasted
Judges 20:26
1 Samuel 7:6
1 Samuel 31:13

1 Chronicles 10:12
2 Samuel 1:12
2 Samuel 12:16, 22
1 Kings 21:27
Ezra 8:23
Nehemiah 1:4
Isaiah 58:3
Zechariah 7:5
Matthew 4:2
Acts 13:2, 3
Fastings
Esther 9:31
Luke 2:37
2 Corinthians 6:5
2 Corinthians 11:27
Fastest
Matthew 6:17



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