

Introduction:

- I trust you're receiving communion daily and taking advantage of the devotionals on Freedom's FB page or our website under the 'Grow' tab.
- *A little humor before we start such a serious subject as fasting: A child asked his father, "How were people born?" So his father said, "Adam and Eve made babies, then their babies became adults and made babies, and so on." The child then went to his mother, asked her the same question and she told him, "We were monkeys then we evolved to become like we are now." The child ran back to his father and said, "You lied to me!" His father replied, "No, your mom was talking about her side of the family."*
- *"And when you fast, do not look gloomy like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces that their fasting may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, that your fasting may not be seen by others but by your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you."* (Matthew 6:16-18, ESV)
- The Bible is filled with people who fasted: Moses, David, Elijah, Esther, Daniel, Anna, the apostle Paul, the Elders at Antioch, and Jesus started His ministry with forty days of fasting. In history: Martin Luther, John Wesley, Jonathan Edwards, David Brainerd, Charles Finney, the Moravians and more.
- It was John Wesley who said, *"Some have exalted religious fasting beyond all scripture and reason; and others have utterly disregarded it."*

I. A Look At Fasting

- A. What is fasting? The Theological Dictionary of the New Testament (TDNT) defines fasting as: Greek - *nestis* - means "one who has not eaten," "who is empty," then "who fasts." *Nēsteúō* means "to be without food or hungry," but mostly "to fast." The noun *nēsteía* means "suffering hunger," usually "fasting." Therefore fasting is abstaining from food for spiritual purposes. "Biblical fasting always centers on spiritual purposes." Richard Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*.
1. This tells me that fasting has to do with food, not TV, music, social media.
 2. Those are a forms of self denial, which are good to deny, but fasting has to do with not eating. If you go for an annual check up, the doctor will not ask you to fast FB before giving blood.
- B. Why do people not fast?
1. We are not taught to fast. They don't fast because temple of the Golden Arches or the temple of the Red Rooster abounds on every corner. Jesus addressed fasting on several occasions. He started His ministry with 40 days of fasting.
 2. We are fed a constant barrage of three meals a day and the need for a hearty breakfast, a healthy lunch and a succulent dinner; and, oh, multiple snacks in between to sustain us. These are driven by marketing pitches.

3. We do not understand the spiritual benefits/discipline of fasting.
- C. What are the lengths of fasts found in the Bible?
 1. 40 day - Jesus and Moses - just water.
 2. 21 days - Daniel. Dan 10:3 no meat, wine, or delicacies.
 3. Seven Day - 1 Sam 31:13 At Saul and Jonathons burial.
 4. Three Day - Esther 4:16
 5. One Day - -Judges 20:26
- D. What are types of fasts?
 1. Liquids - water.
 2. Daniel fast - no meats and sweets. *"I ate no delicacies, no meat or wine entered my mouth, nor did I anoint myself at all, for the full three weeks."* (Daniel 10:3, ESV)
 3. Partial fast - Fast a meal, fast deserts.
- E. Thoughts
 1. I have to eat with medication. Then eat. Just don't eat like you were at a buffet.
 2. What if I eat? Keep going. Don't quit. You have not failed God.
 3. "You always schedule fast during my birthday, our anniversary." If you want to celebrate then celebrate! This fast is not a law to be followed it is a desire to be positioned to encounter God.

II. When Jesus Repeats Himself Listen

- A. When Jesus repeats himself it must be important.
 1. *"You have heard but I say"* - found in chapter 5 was about having a right heart before God. Because a right heart produces right behavior by design. Jesus is making adjustments.
 2. *"When you give,... when you pray,... when you fast... don't be like the hypocrites."* in chapter 6, Jesus leads us in how actual spiritual disciplines are to be practice. The three he mentions are: giving, praying, and fasting. He is directing the people to understand what 'righteous' religious practices look like.
 - a) giving deals with possessions...don't let your left hand know what your right hand is doing.
 - b) praying deals with relationship with Father
 - c) fasting deals with appetites
- B. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus is after the heart of the people not the behavior! When you get the heart the behavior will follow. When the heart is right the actions will then be of a righteousness that exceeds the religious people who have right behavior but wrong heart..
 1. Jesus does not want the people to practice religious behaviors that draw attention to themselves. Those who do such practices he calls 'hypocrites'. They are actors and not the 'real deal.' Ie. Mask/actor covering who he really is.
 2. The hypocrite is concerned in how he looks by putting on a front for the external to be seen.

3. Jesus is looking at the heart, and wants the people to know that what God sees in secret He rewards. Those who put on the show for men have already received their reward. (Paid in full, nothing more to be expected.)
 4. Jesus does not have an issue with people doing these disciplines. Rather, He expects them to do them, He wants them to be done but with a right understanding/right heart.
- C. And Father who sees in everything (including what is done in secret) will reward you openly.
1. Reward you 'openly' - *phaneros* can also be translated as visible, reveal,
 2. The hypocrite hides his face but God visibly reveals Himself in reward to the one fasting, the one giving, and the one praying.
 3. When God reveals himself the Word become clear. You see God in it.
 4. When God reveals himself your dreams speak to you.
 5. When God reveals himself ministry to others flows easily. God is visible.

III. All Eyes On Jesus - Roar Lion of Judah Roar!

- A. Almost all fasts involve humbling ourselves and repentance.
1. Humility says, "It is not about me but about you, O' God!"
 2. John the Baptist said it well, "He must become greater and I must become lesser."
 3. When I humble myself, I am putting God where He needs to be
 - a) Lord of my life.
 - b) IE. Like Anna in Luke 2:37 I must be worshiping and fasting! When I am living that way my Eyes Are On Jesus! He is at the center of my life!
 - c) When I am fasting I am expressing my submission to God. *"A fast is not necessarily something we offer God, but it assists us in offering ourselves."*
unknown.
- B. I fast to both create a hunger for God and to satisfy my hunger for God.
1. Mt 9:15 *"When Bridegroom is away then they will fast."* John Piper writes in his book, A Hunger for God, "If you don't feel strong desires for the manifestation of the glory of God, it is not because you have drunk deeply and are satisfied. It is because you have nibbled so long at the table of the world. Your soul is stuffed with small things, and there is no room for the great. God did not create you for this. There is an appetite for God. And it can be awakened. I invite you to turn from the dulling effects of food and the dangers of idolatry, and to say with some simple fast 'This much, O God, I want you.'
 2. You know that those 12 apostle who had been with Jesus wanted to badly be with Him now. ...Then they will fast! Some of you have never been so touched by God as to desire more.
- C. I fast to encounter God.
1. Moses fasted before receiving the commandments. Ex 34:28

2. Daniel fasted before receiving his visions. 9:3 Notice that they fasted before receiving an encounter with God.
3. Lion of the Tribe of Judah - Roar Lion of Judah Roar! As you daily received communion see the Lamb! As you fast through out the day encounter the Lion of the tribe of Judah.
 - a) Gen 49:8-12. Jacob prophesies that the scepter will never depart from the Lion of Judah. He was speaking to Judah his son. Judah was also David's tribe.
 - b) *"And one of the elders said to me, "Weep no more; behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered, so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals.""* (Revelation 5:5, ESV)
 - c) Four reasons from Gen 49:8-12 to encounter the Lion of Judah.
 - (1) You brothers will praise you. They will acknowledge your authority.
"Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." (Philippians 2:9-11, ESV)
 - (2) Your hand shall be on the neck of your enemies! *"Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death."* (1 Corinthians 15:24-26, ESV)
 - (3) The Scepter will not depart from Judah! *"Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever.""* (Revelation 11:15, ESV)
 - (4) He has washed His garments in wine. The Lion, before he could become the Lion became a Lamb. So that we might have part with Him. *"knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot."* (1 Peter 1:18-19, ESV)

Conclusion:

- All Eyes on Jesus - Roar Lion of Judah Roar!