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From Feasting to Fasting

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Series: Living Lessons From Proverbs

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I would like to thank you for being here this morning, especially the three of you who were here last week and came back. What an interesting response we've had to last Sunday's lesson on gluttony. I feel just like E. F. Hutton; I walk into a room, and every thing becomes silent, except for the muffled sound of candy wrappers hurriedly prepared for re-entry by the somewhat nervous ex-friends of mine. I went to a banquet this week for a Christian organization, and as I walked from table to table, I noticed that eating turned to food-shuffling as I arrived. (You know what food-shuffling is; it's taking your fork and just moving the vegetables around as though you weren't sure whether to eat them or plant them.) And then as I turned my back, you could hear the gentle clicking of forks meeting teeth in unison. I was told that one of you was leaving the first Sunday School class last week and stopped another on his way into the second, and was overheard to plead, "Don't go in there; run for your life!" Another lovingly stopped my wife after the second Sunday School and said she would like to blow up our house this week, but wanted to be sure which side of the house I would be on, so she could get me. I especially appreciated the suggestion that I fly to Beirut to check out the landmines. I thought that was encouragement. I always knew this was a popular subject, but some people take it better than others. I received a letter from the president of the Cafeteria Owners' Association International, saying they heard the message and knew I must have a headache from such a strenuous study, and they included a package of specially wrapped super Tylenol. Wasn't that nice? (Just kidding, of course.)

Gluttony apparently touches a very sensitive nerve in many Christian lives. Just touching it seems to evoke pain, and the mere thought of another Sunday of it has created the same kind of atmosphere a mother feels on a rainy day. But the key isn't how much it hurts; the key is how lasting is the effect. If we're still eating as much but just enjoying it less, we've missed the

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point. The point is, God wants to give us a greater capacity for spiritual food by teaching us self-control in what we eat and how we eat. Ready or not.

The title is “From Feasting to Fasting.”

I- The Saga of the Stuffed Saint

II- The Road to Moderation: Five things you must control

III- The Spiritually Sensitive Stomach: Going from feasting to fasting.

We’ll take a look at fasting very quickly: The Problem, the Purposes, the Promises, and the Principles.

Gluttony: Just what does this sensitive, unpopular word mean? Well, to glut, remember, is to fill beyond capacity. An oil glut is when we have more oil than we need. A glutton, then, is one who has more food than he needs, but he eats it anyhow. The dictionary calls a glutton anyone who eats or consumes immoderately, but because of the spiritual commands and the scriptural principles involved, a better definition from a Christian perspective would be this: Gluttony, an act of rebellion to the disciplines of God culminating in the loss of self-control. Or, to be simple, it’s the stomach making decisions for the mind.

Gluttony, then, is disobedience to God, because an appetite has gained control of an area of your life intended for God’s control. Last week as we wound our way through the cafeteria lines of life, we recognized that just as Satan tempted Eve, so still he tries to deceive us, encouraging us to taste something we shouldn’t have, or to go beyond the boundaries a loving God has erected for our good.

To prove the point, we went back to Proverbs in the last lesson to see what God’s book of parables and principles had to say about gluttony. We took six passages and when we paraphrased and condensed what it said, you may remember, was this:

Don’t let food control you. God’s man knows when to eat and when to quit. And be extra careful if you’re dining above your means; there are a wealth of pitfalls that await you when you fall prey to rich food at a rich man’s table. Don’t even fellowship with drunkards or gluttons; the path they lead you down leads to poverty by way of drowsiness. Don’t go too heavy on the delicacies of life; they’re to be used in moderation. Too many goodies will make you sick. (That’s what it says!) The portrait is vivid. The man who stuffs himself is exalting himself and

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both are disgusting. In fact, a man who eats too much is one of the four most sickening things in all of the world.

That's what Proverbs has to say about gluttony. So you can see how God feels as He watches His children eat themselves into oblivion. He simply never designed us to be stuffed saints.

We closed the last lesson by giving you an example of how physical food affects spiritual sensitivity, and we took a journey through the wilderness where God put a whole nation on a diet for forty years that they might come to know that man does not live by bread alone, but rather by feasting on every word their God has spoken.

So now we know what gluttony is, and at least to some degree what gluttony does. The question is how do we regain control of this area of our lives? I believe the key is that word "control". We are to be in control of our appetites in order to be in control of our behavior. That, of course, is what this part of our study in self-control has been all about. In this lesson, in order to bring it into focus in a practical sense, how the self-controlled Christian should behave in the dining rooms of life, I'd like to address five areas of self-control where eating is concerned.

This part of our study is entitled, "The Road to Moderation." The glutton, you may remember, is the one who is immoderate in his eating. The godly man or woman, the self-controlled man or woman, exercises moderation. He is temperate in his eating habits. The word "moderate" means "within reasonable limits; not excessive; not extreme." The word "temperate", meanwhile, means "conscious self-control", and it's listed in Galatians 5 as one of the fruits of the Spirit. One dictionary definition of love quoted this beautiful summary: "Temperance: that greater clearness of head and quicker apprehension which generally accompanies self-restraint in eating and drinking." Isn't that good? Clear heads and clear testimonies mean clear choices where eating and drinking is concerned.

The more Biblical definition then of moderation might be this.

Moderation: continuous constant control of the will to avoid all behavior partaking of food that could be

- (a) damaging to God's temple; or
- (b) damaging to God's testimony.

In other words, if how you eat or what you eat is a stumbling

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block to those who are seeking Christ to gain control of their lives, and who are looking at your life to see His control, then how or what you eat becomes sin. Romans 14 reminds us of this,

You must not, for the sake of food, undo and break down and destroy the work of God!

The right thing to do is to eat no meat or drink no wine [at all] or [do anything else] if it [hurts your brother's conscience or] makes him stumble, or offends or weakens him.

(Romans 14:20a,21 The Amplified Bible)

Now, I realize this passage was referring to eating meat offered to idols, and that's not much of a problem in our generation, but meat becoming an idol is. So I'd like to address very quickly five things we must control if we're to be in control in the kitchen of our lives.

Step 1- The Christian in control has control of how much he eats. Of course, it is obvious, painful, but obvious. We might call it "the sin of the second helping." The primary inference when the word "glutton" is used is the inference that you have simply eaten more than you needed. You had enough. You enjoyed it; but your appetite says, "Hath God said...?" Satan whispers, "Nowhere in my Bible does it say, 'Thou shalt not stuff on mashed potatoes.'" Yes, it does. It just doesn't mention mashed potatoes by name, but God thought we would have enough sense to put it all together. So why not take for the first helping just what you need, what is temperate, what is a controlled decision, and then close the kitchen for repairs. Some people may have to do what I think works, and that is to leave one bite of everything on your plate as an act of self-control. It's a reminder not to ask for seconds because you didn't quite finish what you had in the first place. It is a simple tactic, but if it works, use it. In other words, if you can't stop, don't start. That's the principle. If you can't control the amount you eat, stay away from those all-you-can-eat diet demolition derbies. Just go where there are already pre-selected portions. At least that deprives you of the temptation to become the neighborhood garbage-gobbler and keeps your testimony somewhat intact. Control what you eat is step #1. Anybody still here? Two. Okay.

Step 2- Control your priorities. Reestablish the place of physical food on the ladder of importance in your life. Now listen to me carefully. When was the last time you skipped breakfast to have a quiet time? Let's say you got up late, and you only have

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twenty minutes to either feed your face or feed your spirit. What'll it be? Corinthians or cereal? Ecclesiastes or eggs? Habakkuk or bacon? Obadiah or oatmeal? Prayer and praise or coffee and toast? When was the last time you skipped lunch to meditate on the Word? You say, "Well, I don't have time to memorize and meditate regularly; I'm busy." Well, how many meals do you miss? Paul said,

I buffet my body and bring it under subjection.

(I Corinthians 9:27 paraphrase)

Do you always have time for bedtime snacks, but seldom time for bedtime prayer time? The problem is priorities. God wants you to eat, but if you have to choose on a given day between the food that fills your stomach and the food that fills your spirit, it should be no contest. If your spiritual objectives should be number one on your list of priorities, then that's it; that settles it. You try to do both. You eat in moderation; you feast on the Word. But if you're in a home Bible study group, for instance, and you show up without your assignment "because you didn't have time," you're not being honest with yourself. Chances are you spent fifteen to twenty-one hours of your week feasting with your glassy eyes and feeding your self-centered stomach on the gourmet goodies it desired. If you can't find two hours anyplace else, I'll give you an idea: peek under your plate. There's your missing time. Why don't you write on your calendar for this week this dietary ditty:

Spiritual food is first;
That's my new deal;
And if it's necessary,
I'll even skip a meal.

Control how much you eat; control IF you eat, if when you comes before feeding your life with the Word. Jeremiah gives us God's kind of diet. It says,

Thy Words were found, and I did eat them; and thy Word
was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart.

(Jeremiah 15:16)

My friend, that's the pause that refreshes. That's the real thing.

Step 3- Control your consistency. The stuff-starve syndrome may keep your weight within limits, but it's no help for either

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your temple or your testimony. You know what the stuff-starve syndrome is. It means you eat virtually nothing for days, and then pig out.

1) Your body, the temple of the Spirit, gets totally confused. It goes contract, expand, and contract, expand, starve, stuff. That's not God's way. God's diet in the wilderness was steady, limited portions of what they needed, not what they wanted. The reason, you will remember, was spiritual. The manna was a reminder of the living Word. You can't feast on it and store it up and then go for days without it. It doesn't work. We're to meditate on the Word day and night, consistently, line upon line, precept upon precept, controlled quantities properly digested, continuously partaken. The manna spoiled when they tried to store it up. God wanted them to feed on it and on Him one day at a time.

- 2) So be consistent.
- 3) Develop new limits.
- 4) Reprogram your appetite.

You won't do it by stuffing and starving. God's temple deserves more than that, and so does God's testimony. The unbeliever who joins you for lunch and watches you eat everything but the tablecloth doesn't know you've been on breadcrumbs and water for ten days. So just control the consistency of your eating, and you won't have the testimony of a glutton. Still there?

Step 4- Learn to control your moments of desperation. We have two dogs in our house, a beagle named Daisy, and a lovable mutt named Ralph. Both have horrendous appetites that they got from me. Anyway, at a certain time every evening, Ralph and Daisy have this alarm clock that goes off between their ears. It says, "Doggy treat, doggy treat, doggy treat." They've seen it on television commercials, and they knew it worked. Now they may be placidly asleep or scratching fleas—they do that well—or barking at mysterious enemy intruders, but at 9:31 p.m. (on weekdays at least) this alarm goes off and desperation sets in. Now the difference is in how they respond. Ralph sits up and begs.

Ralph is shaped like a sports car that's been in a wreck. He's low-slung, but his wheels are out-of-line. His stomach comes too close to the floor like his springs have sagged. It's pathetic to watch him sit up. He looks like a beefed-up version of the Leaning Tower of Pisa. You feed Ralph out of sheer pity. You're

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afraid if you don't, he might fall on his face and break something. But Daisy's not a beggar; Daisy's a charger. She knows where we keep the treats, and at 9:31 desperation sets in. She races through the house, heads for the cabinet where these phony-bonies, or whatever we call them, are kept; and hurls herself against the cabinet as though Earl Campbell were on the other side and she was the last linebacker in his way. You see, Ralph we feed out of pity; Daisy we feed out of fear. If it's a ten-cent treat or lose the wall, give the dog her due.

Now some of us are Ralphs. Food is always on our minds begging for attention. We have to continually choose whether to feed ourselves or not. But some of us are desperate Daisies. We can last just so long and then we race to the kitchen as though we were about to miss a train, then throw ourselves at the refrigerator or the pantry like there's no tomorrow. We are not just looking for a scoop of ice cream. We down a half-gallon before we come up for air. We don't grab a piece of candy; we grab a sack of candy and gorge ourselves into a stupor. The point is, when you feel desperation coming on and know you're about to hurl yourself at the kitchen cabinet, start praying for restraint. Put handcuffs on your wrists, stuff an old sock in your mouth, do anything, but control your desperation.

A friend told me this story a week or two ago about an incident that had happened to him just a day or two before, and I got his permission to share it since he's out of town. He had been on one of those drink-a-diet meals where you pour all of life's minimum daily requirements into a blender, add water, stir, drink, and pretend you just had a veal outlet with fries. He'd been doing that for several days when one night he awakened late at night and just happened to walk inadvertently into the kitchen. There he just happened on a fresh bag of corn chips, the kind you can't eat just one of, and somehow he ended up in the spare bedroom with the light out, sitting on the bed, stuffing those chips into his mouth like he was stoking a dying furnace. (You know the feeling.) But your sins shall find you out. In walks his teenage son who sees Big Daddy the Dieter now as Harry the Hypocrite, hiding in the dark and devouring this poor unsuspecting bag of dip-chips. Well, his son goes running through the house, wakes up Mommy and tells her what Daddy has just done. My friend's whole testimony of dietary discipline went down the drain. Now what happened? Desperation. He over-suppressed

and overreacted. Learn to control your moments of desperation.

Step 5- We must, if we're to control our gluttony, learn to control our manners. What if Jesus came to your house for dinner today? Can you imagine the Savior slurping His soup? Wiping His mouth with His arm? Grabbing the last roll? Grumbling at having to pass the gravy again? You say, that's blasphemy! No, He lives in you, and He lives in me. How we behave demonstrates how He behaves at the dinner table. We belong to the God who fashioned the petals for every rose, who custom designed every snowflake, who gave every ocean its borders. He's a God of order, a God of neatness, a God of courtesy, a God of sensitivity. Every time we sit down to eat and are crude or rude or come unglued, as the saying goes, we're damaging His name. That's gluttony, too. It's the absence of moderation or discretion that causes another to stumble. You see, Christ lives in us, and when you walk into a restaurant, we ought to be able to spot the Christians by the dignified considerate manner in which they're conducting themselves. Right? Right! And a word to you single guys, learn godly table manners now. Don't expect your sweet young wife someday to have to teach you not to lick your knife, or drink your soup from the bowl like you're in a Tarzan movie. You're supposed to become her spiritual leader. How can she look up to a guy who pretends to be a prince, but eats like an ape? Learning to control your manners is the final step in controlling gluttony.

Christians, we're supposed to eat like the kings and priests that we are, not canines and pigs. The sooner we learn to control how much we eat, what we give up to eat, the evenness with which we eat, the reckless abandon with which we eat, and the godly behavior with which we eat, then the sooner we can within a controlled life intensify the input of that which is spiritual, having brought under God's control another appetite that was quenching His Spirit.

Step 6- Fasting. This is the final phase in the process of conquering gluttony. If controlling our appetites frees us in the spiritual realm to receive greater feasts from God's table, then *the logical end of self-control in this area of our lives is fasting.* Now the dictionary says fasting is "abstaining from all or certain foods, especially as a religious discipline or means of protest." It comes from an Old English root "to hold fast, to observe, to abstain."

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A Bible dictionary will add, however, that Biblical fasting is generally doing without all food and drink for a prescribed period of time. It almost always is an act of reverence for God, denying the physical to better appropriate the spiritual. It was in Scripture, among other things, a means of humbling oneself, of expressing repentance, of gaining God's guidance in times of trouble. Men were warned that fasting without a right attitude was useless. Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Zechariah all said the same thing. The New Testament confirmed its purposes, enlarged our understanding, and further warned us not to be hypocrites in this area. But all of the Scripture confirms that fasting has a place in the life of the Christian. It is not an end within itself; it is a means to an end. The end is a deeper, more powerful walk with God. But perhaps the most graphic portrait of the problems, purposes, and promises of fasting, is given to us in Isaiah chapter 58. If you will turn with me there, we will read that passage and then simply try to break it down for you in closing. Isaiah chapter 58, we'll begin with verse one, and I'll be reading to you from the King James version.

Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and shew thy people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins.

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.

Wherefore have we fasted, say they, and thou seest not? [In other words, why aren't you looking, God? We've been fasting, they say] wherefore have we afflicted our soul, and thou takest no knowledge? Behold, in the day of your fast ye find pleasure, [God says] and exact all your labours.

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.

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 to spread sackcloth and ashes under him? wilt thou call this a fast, and an acceptable day to the Lord?

Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke?

Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou

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bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh?

Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thine health shall spring forth speedily: and thy righteousness shall go before thee; the glory of the Lord shall be thy rereward.

Then shalt thou call, and the Lord shall answer; thou shalt cry, and he shall say, Here I am. If thou take away from the midst of thee the yoke, the putting forth of the finger, and speaking vanity;

And if thou draw out thy soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul; then shall thy light rise in obscurity, and thy darkness be as the noonday:

And the Lord shall guide thee continually, and satisfy thy soul in drought, and make fat thy bones: and thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not.

And they that shall be of thee shall build the old waste places: thou shalt raise up the foundations of many generations; and thou shalt be called, The repairer of the breach, The restorer of paths to dwell in. (Isaiah 58:1-12)

Now we obviously don't have time to do this passage justice this morning, but we do have time to outline it for you so you can meditate on it this week in your own study time, and let God speak to you through His Word on this very crucial issue where self-control is involved. We'll outline it this way: First the problems, then the purposes, and then the promises.

Problem 1: The problems, first of all, are two-fold: hypocrisy and ignorance. The first four verses tell us about the hypocrisy. It indicates that the children of Israel seemed eager to do God's will and were overtly bound to keeping His ordinances, but while they dragged themselves through the letter of the law, they were still oppressing their employees, quarrelling and bickering, even at religious events, and expecting God to overlook it all because they fasted. In other words, they weren't fasting to know God; they were fasting to bribe God. And God, who looks on the heart, knows the difference.

Problem 2: Secondly, they were ignorant. They didn't really understand what fasting was at all. It wasn't just a day to behave like a martyr, God said, to lie on sackcloth and ashes, head

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bowed, face sober, to call attention to your self-denial. Jesus reminded us of that in Matthew chapter 6. They were hypocrites, and they were ignorant. God didn't want them to be either, so He called attention to their hypocrisy and prescribed a cure for their ignorance. He says, "I'll teach you the kind of fast that pleases Me. This is the fast that I have chosen." And in verses 6 and 7 He gives them the purposes for fasting; why fast. Let's look at them very quickly.

Purpose 1: To loose the bands of wickedness and to free us from besetting sins: lust, fear, gluttony, anger. God says one way to see God do spiritual surgery on these chronic heart ailments of ours is to put away the appetites of the flesh for a season, so the Master can operate unhindered. If you've been dealing for years with problems in certain areas of besetting sins, and the struggle goes on; and you pray, and the struggle goes on, God says, "Is not this the fast that I have chosen?" Maybe you need to learn to fast and to pray, and maybe you need to recognize that one of the purposes is to loose the bands of wickedness.

Purpose 2: To undo the heavy burdens, we are to give back to God once and for all those loads we carry that God never intended for us to carry. The fear of the future, the worry about the present, the worry about the sins of the past, self-inflicted burdens God never intended us to have. This is the fast that God has chosen. Can you not get rid of those burdens that weigh you down? Perhaps what you need is a time of prayer and fasting when your heart is open before the Lord and sensitive to the Lord, and you can once and for all give them back to Him.

Purpose 3: To let the oppressed go free and break every yoke. I think this is perhaps the most important phrase in this whole passage. In other words, it is the pulling down of spiritual strongholds. It cannot be done with casual prayer. Satanic walls encompassing areas of your life, holding you captive, will not be moved with light artillery. It takes the nuclear explosion of God's intervention to tear them down and set you free. Fasting is one of the ingredients that goes into the explosive of transformation.

Purpose 4: To give you a ministry, to meet the needs of people, to deal thy bread to the hungry, to open your home to the homeless, cover the naked, open your heart to your own family's needs. In other words, it frees us to minister to the physical needs that are all around us. Those who are suffering are always

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primary in the plan of God, but we get pious, self-centered, too spiritually minded to be of any earthly good. And so we miss part of the ministry that Jesus left us to do, to care for the hungry, to care for the homeless, to care for the destitute, even those, yea, especially those of our own household, of our own fellowship. God says we lose the vision. Fasting helps to restore it. So the problems are hypocrisy and ignorance. The purposes are to set us free—free from besetting sins, from unnecessary burdens, from spiritual strongholds, from spiritual blindness to meet the needs of people. Ah, but what are the promises? These are some of the neatest promises ever given to any of us in Scripture, and they're all wrapped up in one package. Listen carefully.

Promise 1: Then shall thy light break forth as the morning. Suddenly there's a light at the end of the tunnel, a way out of the hopelessness and the helplessness that has engulfed you. God turns on the light in your life and what seemed to be bleak and dark has hope and purpose. It's the beginning.

Promise 2: Thine health shall spring forth speedily. The NIV says "healing will quickly appear." God will bring healing into your life, physical healing, spiritual healing, emotional healing, in areas where sin and bondage to sin were the cause of your health to fail.

Promise 3: Thy righteousness shall go before thee. One translation says, "The righteousness who is God shall lead thee." Jesus is our righteousness, and He will go before you, it says, and clear the way through those unknown, uncharted paths. We don't have to fear anymore; we don't know what tomorrow holds. We're fearful, but this is the fast that I have chosen, God has said, and My righteousness will go before you and open the doors. I love.

Promise 4: The glory of the Lord shall be your reward. Your rearguard it says the New International. God's glory will protect you from behind you, is the way Kenneth Taylor paraphrased it. In other words, God will not only clear the brush in front of your life so you'll see where you're going, but He will come along behind you and pick up the pieces and even make your mistakes turn out for His glory. For His glory will go behind you, completing the task. What a promise!

Promise 5: Answered prayer.

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Then shalt thou call, and the Lord will answer. And thou shalt cry, and He shall say, Here I am. (verse 9a)

The channel of communication between us and God sometimes becomes crusted with disobedience and neglect. Fasting is one of God's electronic cleaning marvels. It purifies the connections, removes the crust, restores communication.

Promise 6 is found in verse 10. It says

...your light will rise in obscurity, your darkness will be as noonday.

From out of nowhere, God will make your life rise up as a beacon to lead others to safety. You'll have a ministry, not because you planned it, but because the holiness in your life demands it. Others come looking for the light they see glowing in you. Is not this the fast that I have chosen? God said. This is why this is the promise.

Promise 7:

And the Lord shall guide you continually. (verse 11a)

You'll have the discernment to make godly choices because your spirit will be so in tune with God's Spirit that you will know what He wants you to do, and do it.

Promise 8 is found in verse 11b:

And (the Lord shall) satisfy thy soul in drought, and make fast thy bones, and thou shalt be like a watered garden, like a spring of water whose waters fail not.

What a promise! When the hard times come, your life won't dry up with the circumstances of life. You'll be like an oasis in the desert, a watered garden, an endless stream. You'll have the mind of God.

Promise 9 is found in verse 12:

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

You and your sons will have an unshakeable heritage. You'll be remembered as one who returns to the principles of God's Word and rebuilt the temples of broken lives.

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Promise 10:

Then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord, and I'll cause you to ride on the high places of the earth.

God will be central in all you do so God will bless all you do. Is that the kind of life you long for? One of victory, one of ministry, one of growth, one of fruitfulness? These things are not the result of fasting. These things are the result of Jesus Christ reigning unhindered on the throne of your life. But what this passage is saying, I believe, is this: How can Jesus reign unhindered to do these things in us if the appetites that hold us captive still vie for control of the throne? He can't. So we must, if need be, starve those appetites, lay them aside to free us to receive God's spiritual best. And God has provided a vehicle for us to do that. He's called it fasting. He's called us to consider this spiritual discipline as a necessary ingredient to spiritual transformation.

Throughout Scripture the principles are enumerated. We haven't time to go into them, only to mention them.

Principle 1- God isn't moved by fasting that is not accompanied by repentance. (Luke 18:12)

Principle 2- Fasting is a natural spiritual exercise. Jesus said, "When you fast"...not if, but when. (Matthew 6:16)

Principle 3- Fasting is a part of continuous worship. Remember the woman in Luke 2, verse 37.

Principle 4- Fasting is often a forerunner of spiritual revelation. (Acts 10:30)

Principle 5- Fasting is always to be done privately and cheerfully. (Matthew 6: 17,18)

Principle 6- Fasting may cause you ridicule if others know it. (Psalm 69:10)

Principle 7- Fasting for your enemies pleases the heart of God. (Psalm 35:13)

Principle 8- Fasting often precedes a new assignment. (Acts 13:14)

There are many more, but the keys are these, in closing. Fasting is the natural result of a life that has brought gluttony under control. It's not the extreme discipline of a fanatic; it's the natural result of God's control in the normal Christian life.

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Secondly, fasting done in the Spirit and motivated by the Spirit along with a pure heart sets God's man or God's woman free to enjoy the spiritual treasures God has been waiting to release into his custody all along. Fortunately, God hasn't made a law to observe, but a privilege to enjoy.

Some of you may decide to fast weekly; others only before major decisions or in the midst of major crises. Some of you may fast for days; others only for hours; some only for a meal; some not at all. Some may totally abstain from all food, and others with physical problems may only be able to abstain from most foods. God isn't keeping a scorecard. You are simply entering into this world of His richer treasures through fasting. If you've not done so before, with a desire to know His will for you, you begin prayerfully, you begin gradually. Consult a Christian doctor if your health may not allow it. God made you; He understands. The key is to explore this treasure house of self-control, because within its gates lie gems of power, and thus we have come the gamut of it all, from feasting to fasting, from self-indulgence to self-control, from seeing our lives move to the whim of our appetites to seeing our appetites firmly under the grasp of the Holy Spirit. From feasting to fasting. A journey from the mediocrity that man calls normal to the spiritual heights that God calls normal. It's a journey we'd best take, if we'd take God's best. Let me close with this.

FROM FEASTING TO FASTING

From feasting unto fasting,
That's God's commitment call.
He's yearning for our selfish hearts
To yield to Him our all.

To start, He longs for us to give
Our eating back to Him.
To learn all forms of gluttony are
Needless forms of sin.

We're to watch how much we eat—
Stuffed saints we're not to be.
And if a need arises,
Skip a meal occasionally.

We're to keep consistency in
How we learn to eat;
“Stuff-and-starve” experience will
Leave us in defeat.

And to be God's example,
We must not desperate be.
We must not cry or lose control
When scrumptious food we see.

And we must have good manners.
A world that longs to trust
Is viewing our behavior
And seeing Christ in us.

Then the joy of fasting—
That's God's eventual plan.
The final step of self-control
That demonstrates God's man.

Victory, power, ministries—
All are promised for the Christian
Who by faith receives what
Fasting holds in store.

Feasting unto fasting:
So we can but receive
The depth of spiritual riches
God wants us to achieve.

We know what God is after
As we watch His plan unfold.
He wants our lives to demonstrate
A life that's self-controlled.

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