



Word to the World  
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**Module** : Fasting

**Session 10** : Apostolic-Prophetic Prayer and Fasting #6

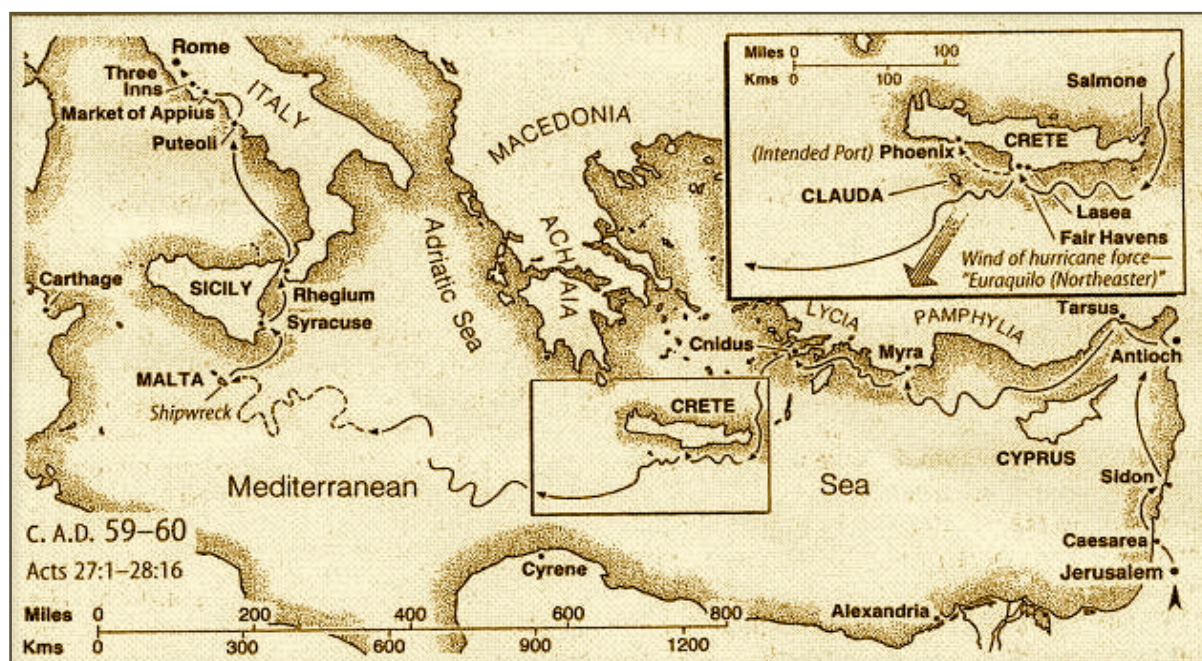
**Focus** : Principles of Fasting from Paul's Ministry

### Case Study 11: Paul and Crew Fast Through a Storm, Euroclydon

At the end of this study, as an addendum, I provide a brief overview of the role fasting played in Paul's life. In this study, we give particular attention to Paul's fast whilst en route via ship to Rome. There are many important spiritual principles contained in this incident relative to fasting and other matters. Whilst the focus of our current series is fasting, we will also give brief note to other issues as well. Please take the time to slowly and meditatively read the account in Acts 27.

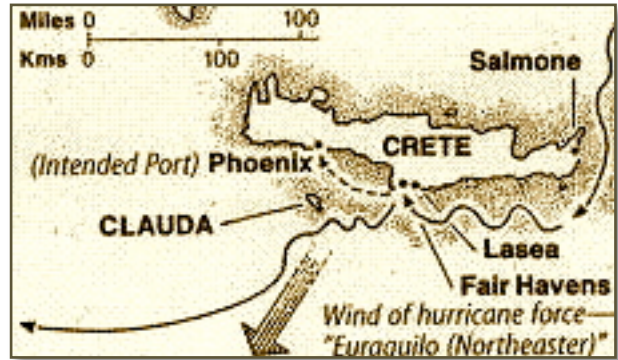
#### Acts 27:1-44

- 1 When it was decided that we would sail for Italy, they proceeded to deliver Paul and some other prisoners to a centurion of the Augustan cohort named Julius.
- 2 And embarking in an Adramyttian ship, which was about to sail to the regions along the coast of Asia, we put out to sea accompanied by Aristarchus, a Macedonian of Thessalonica.
- 3 The next day we put in at Sidon; and Julius treated Paul with consideration and allowed him to go to his friends and receive care.
- 4 From there we put out to sea and sailed under the shelter of Cyprus because the winds were contrary.
- 5 When we had sailed through the sea along the coast of Cilicia and Pamphylia, we landed at Myra in Lycia.
- 6 There the centurion found an Alexandrian ship sailing for Italy, and he put us aboard it.
- 7 When we had sailed slowly for a good many days, and with difficulty had arrived off Cnidus, since the wind did not permit us to go farther, we sailed under the shelter of Crete, off Salmone;
- 8 and with difficulty sailing past it we came to a place called Fair Havens, near which was the city of Lasea.



- 9 When considerable time had passed and the voyage was now dangerous, since even the fast was already over, Paul began to admonish them,

- 10 and said to them, "Men, **I PERCEIVE** that the voyage will certainly be with **damage and great loss**, not only of the cargo and the ship, but also of **our lives**."
- 11 But the centurion was **MORE PERSUADED by the pilot and the captain** of the ship than by what was being said by Paul.
- 12 Because the harbor was not suitable for wintering, **THE MAJORITY REACHED A DECISION to put out to sea from there**, if somehow they could reach Phoenix, a harbor of Crete, facing southwest and northwest, and spend the winter there.
- 13 When a moderate south wind came up, **supposing that they had attained their purpose**, they weighed anchor and began sailing along Crete, close inshore.
- 14 But **before very long** there **rushed down** from the land **a violent wind**, called Euraquilo; (*also called EUROCLYDON*)
- 15 and when the ship was caught in it and could not **face the wind**, we **gave way to it** and let ourselves **be driven along**.
- 16 Running under the shelter of a small island called Claudia, we were scarcely able to get the ship's boat under control.
- 17 After they had hoisted it up, they used supporting cables in undergirding the ship; and fearing that they might run aground on the shallows of Syrtis, they let down the sea anchor and in this way let themselves be driven along.
- 18 The next day as we were being **violently storm-tossed**, they **began to jettison the cargo**;
- 19 and on the third day they threw the ship's tackle overboard with their own hands.
- 20 Since neither **sun nor stars appeared for many days**, and no small storm was assailing us, **from then on all hope of our being saved was gradually abandoned**.
- 21 When they had gone a **long time without food**, then Paul stood up in their midst and said, "Men, **you ought to have followed my advice** and not to have set sail from Crete and incurred this damage and loss.
- 22 Yet now I urge you to **keep up your courage**, for there will be **no loss of life among you**, but only of the ship.
- 23 For this very night an angel of the **God to whom I belong** and **whom I serve** stood before me, saying,
- 24 'Do **not be afraid, Paul**; you must stand before Caesar; and behold, **God has granted you all those who are sailing with you**.'
- 25 Therefore, keep up your courage, men, for I believe God that it will turn out exactly as I have been told.
- 26 But we must **run aground on a certain island**."
- 27 But when the **fourteenth night came**, as we were being driven about in the Adriatic Sea, about midnight the sailors began to surmise that they were approaching some land.
- 28 They took soundings and found it to be twenty fathoms; and a little farther on they took another sounding and found it to be fifteen fathoms.
- 29 Fearing that we might run aground somewhere on the rocks, they cast four anchors from the stern and wished for daybreak.
- 30 But as the sailors were trying to escape from the ship and had let down the ship's boat into the sea, on the pretense of intending to lay out anchors from the bow,
- 31 **Paul said to the centurion and to the soldiers**, "Unless these men remain in the ship, you yourselves cannot be saved."
- 32 Then the soldiers cut away the ropes of the ship's boat and let it fall away.
- 33 Until the day was about to dawn, Paul was encouraging them all to take some food, saying, "**Today is the fourteenth day that you have been constantly watching and going without eating, having taken nothing**."
- 34 Therefore **I encourage you to take some food, for this is for your preservation**, for not a hair from the head of any of you will perish."



- 35 Having said this, **he took bread** and **gave thanks to God in the presence of all, and he broke it** and began to eat.
- 36 **All of them were encouraged** and they themselves also **took food**.
- 37 All of us in the ship were **two hundred and seventy-six persons**.
- 38 When they had eaten enough, they began to lighten the ship by throwing out the wheat into the sea.
- 39 When day came, they could not recognize the land; but they did observe a bay with a beach, and they resolved to drive the ship onto it if they could.
- 40 And casting off the anchors, they left them in the sea while at the same time they were loosening the ropes of the rudders; and hoisting the foresail to the wind, they were heading for the beach.
- 41 But striking a reef where two seas met, they ran the vessel aground; and the prow stuck fast and remained immovable, but the stern began to be broken up by the force of the waves.
- 42 The **soldiers' plan was to kill the prisoners**, so that none of them would swim away and escape;
- 43 but the centurion, wanting to **bring Paul safely through**, kept them from their intention, and commanded that those who could swim should jump overboard first and get to land,
- 44 and the rest should follow, some on planks, and others on various things **from the ship. And so it happened that they all were brought safely to land.**

Appearing before the Roman Emperor, Caesar in Rome was a key facet of God's plan for Paul. The process to get there, would be one characterised by great trial and suffering. The pathway to destiny is usually fraught with adversities of diverse kinds – ask Joseph, the son of Jacob. The passage by ship to Rome would not be an easy one. Paul, together with the other 275 persons would encounter Euroclydon, a violent and life-threatening tempestuous storm.

### **Matters Which Arise For Our Consideration :**

#### **1. DIVINE PROTECTION AND IMMUNITY IS A BENEFIT OF FASTING**

Right from the start of the journey, it was beset by difficulty and danger (See verses 1-9). 'The fast' referred to in verse nine was the 'day of fasting' Jews usually observed annually on the Day of Atonement. Refer to Session 2 in this series where we discussed this fast. Recall on this day, the priests would atone for the sins of Israel by a series of sacrifices, and God expected of them a fast to humble themselves and so participate with gratitude in receiving their reconciliation to Him.

There is strong suggestion in verse nine of our text that the danger element in the voyage was further heightened by the fact that the fast was over.

**Acts 27:9** When considerable time had passed and the **voyage was now dangerous**, **SINCE even the fast was already over**.

Implied in this, is that fasting conferred a protective mantle upon them. There are many biblical instances where fasting with prayer facilitated Divine protection upon God's people, e.g.

- Ezra's fast for safe passage from Babylon to Jerusalem (Ezra 8).
- Esther's fast for preservation of the Jews (Esther 4:16).
- Jehoshaphat's fast for protection and battle strategy against the people of Moab, Ammon and Mount Seir (Edom) (2 Chron. 20).

In fact in Isaiah 58, Divine protection is one of the blessings promised to those whose fasting is acceptable to God

**Isaiah 58:8d** The glory of the Lord will be your rear guard

**Isaiah 58:11a** “And the Lord will continually guide you, And satisfy your desire in scorched places,  
And give strength to your bones.

Paul and the crew fasted for fourteen days throughout the duration of the storm they would encounter. Amongst other factors, fasting played an important part in facilitating their safe passage.

## 2. **FAILURE TO HEED COUNSEL** (Verse 9-12)

Paul PERCEIVED that continuing with the journey would be perilous, risking loss of not only the ship and its cargo, but their lives too. However, the captain and pilot of the ship, based on their training and experience at sea and probable familiarity with the erratic and volatile behaviour of the seas during this time of year, thought that they should continue sailing on, surmising that they could ‘weather’ or navigate through the ‘storm’ safely.

What did Paul actually perceive? I believe he, by the Spirit, saw that the storm would suddenly intensify to not only unmanageable proportions, but be life-threatening. Paul represents a servant of God, who carries the Word of God. As an apostle, he also represents the apostolic principle. He is also representative of a spiritual father. So his presence on that ship includes all of these representations, viz. that amidst the men on this perilous voyage, is a SERVANT OF GOD, an APOSTLE and SPIRITUAL FATHER who bears THE WORD OF GOD which communicates the mind and will of God. If you have such a calibre of person in your ‘ship’, then you are hugely advantaged above most.

The counsel of the captain and pilot represent **human wisdom or carnal reasoning based on experience and a scientific assessment of the facts**. Many times your spiritual leader, led of the Spirit, may warn you of the error or danger of pursuing a particular course of action or holding onto a specific mindset or point of view. You must trust the voice of God vested in and through your spiritual father when such admonition occurs, especially when it seems to conflict with what your natural appraisal of the facts suggest. Jesus said that His sheep know and hear His voice, and the voice of another (the stranger or hireling) they do not hear. Be careful not to base serious decisions on the counsel or influence of someone who conflicts or contradicts the advice of a godly and Spirit-led spiritual father who is directly accountable to God for your soul.

### **John 10:1-5**

- 1 “Truly, truly, I say to you, he who does not enter by the door into the fold of the sheep, but climbs up some other way, he is a **thief and a robber**.
- 2 But he who enters by the **door is a shepherd** of the sheep.
- 3 To him the doorkeeper opens, and the **sheep hear his voice**, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out.
- 4 When he puts forth all his own, he goes ahead of them, and the **sheep follow him** because they **know his voice**.
- 5 **A stranger** they simply **will not follow**, but will **flee from him**, because they do not **know the voice of strangers**.

**Stranger = allotrios = foreign, not akin, hostile**



The thief which comes to rob, steal and destroy (John 10:10) is not a reference to satan, but to false shepherds. The descriptor, 'thief' certainly fits satan, but contextually the thief in John 10 is not a direct reference to him. Jesus said all who came before Him are thieves – a reference to Pharisees and Scribes who parade as shepherds but are not. But also apart from Jesus Himself being the true Shepherd, those He sends as shepherds to shepherd His flock are also true shepherds. Thus, the thieves are those who pose as shepherds but have no oversight over the souls of men, who are intent on supplanting the voice of the true Shepherd (Jesus) and shepherds (spiritual fathers) in the lives of God's people.

In essence, Paul is akin to a shepherd in the ship. In Acts 27:12, the voice of the majority overrode the voice of God in Paul. This is a classic case of democracy supplanting theocracy or patriarchy. The majority view is not necessarily the Divine view. Popular opinion contrary to Divine opinion results in a departure from God's ways and an abortion of His plans. Not because the majority thinks a certain way, does it make it true or correct. In fact, the sway and rule of the 'people' is gaining such impetus within the church today, that we need to displace and neutralise this growing reality. This is akin to 'Amon' or the 'Ammonites' which alludes to a spirit of tribalism based on majority rule. The crowds always choose 'Barabas'.

### 3. THE DECEPTION OF CALM CONDITIONS

For a brief time it seemed as though the decision of the captain, pilot and the 'majority' was actually the right one, as verse thirteen indicates: 'When a moderate south wind came up, supposing that they had attained their purpose, they weighed anchor and began sailing along Crete, close inshore.'

The fact that, based on a particular but inaccurate personal decision, influenced by forces outside of and in contradiction to spiritual and credible spiritual leadership, external conditions in your life seem to be progressing along fairly favourably, does not make the decision accurate. In fact, the favourability of the conditions could lull you into a false notion that in fact you were right after all.

**1 Thess. 5:3a** While they are saying, "Peace and safety!" then destruction will come upon them suddenly ...

The accuracy of our lives is not validated by the pleasantness or otherwise of our external conditions. It is validated by one thing only, viz. the obedience to His Word/Voice. One cannot violate biblical principle and justify it based on the favourability of external conditions (for example, whilst God wants us to prosper, financial prosperity is not a yardstick of righteousness, since the wicked also prosper).

### 4. THE INABILITY TO FACE THE WINDS OF EUROCLYDON

Euroclydon (or in Latin, 'Euroaquilo') is a cyclonic tempestuous northeast wind, which blows in the Mediterranean, mostly in autumn and winter. This surge or gust of wind blows off the mainland continent into the sea. It is the modern 'Gregalia' or 'Gregale' - the gale of Greece or 'Levanter'. 'Greece' represents post-modernism, secularism, humanism, intellectualism and rationalism. These forces/ideologies today are presenting a major challenge to Biblical ways embraced by sons of God. Euroclydon in this context refers to ideological winds of doctrine designed to toss us to and fro and ultimately destroy us, so that we do not arrive at and attain to God's will and purpose in the earth. But the son of Zion will always prevail against the sons of Greece.

**Zech. 9:13** For I will bend Judah as My bow, I will fill the bow with Ephraim. And I will stir up your sons, O Zion, against your sons, O Greece; And I will make you like a warrior's sword.

In the Middle East, a Euroclydon is a gust (surge) of wind that comes from nowhere. The winds usually come up with great suddenness, transforming a calm sea into one of absolute terror within seconds. Winds suddenly get stronger, the waves rise up, and many ships are sunk as a result. Euroclydon means '**VIOLENT AGITATION**'.

All of a sudden, a violent wind blew from the land and being unable to FACE IT, they gave way to it and allowed the ship to be driven by it (see Acts 27:14,15). They were helpless. Now the storm determined their course. At times the trials of life, rather than the will of God, seem to be dictating the direction of our lives. Even though this situation in Acts 27 was as a result of their refusal to obey godly counsel, at the end of it all, God used this storm to teach them submission to His Word vested in and through His chosen servant, and when this was reinstated into their mentalities, the will of the Lord thrived for all concerned.

Euroclydon cannot neutralize God's purposes, nor will it not destroy your destiny! Is your life being violently assailed and agitated by the tempestuous winds of trial? Has your level of suffering reached typhonic or hurricane proportions? Do you feel like you won't make it and will certainly suffer shipwreck of your life's purpose, vocation, marriage or ministry? Well there is hope! Paul at sea, against all odds, not only survived Euroclydon, but this storm literally catapulted him into a place of authority within his sphere and also fast-tracked the pace at which God's will for his life played out. The same can hold true for you and I.

## 5. THEY FASTED

That Paul and the crew on the ship fasted is evidenced by the fact that they did not eat throughout this ordeal, which lasted fourteen days. This was not because there was no food available, for on the 14<sup>th</sup> day, Paul encouraged them all to eat.

**Acts 27:21** When they had gone a long time without food, ...

### **Acts 27:33-35**

- 33 Until the day was about to dawn, Paul was encouraging them all to take some food, saying, "Today is the fourteenth day that you have been constantly watching and going without eating, having taken nothing."
- 34 Therefore I encourage you to take some food, for this is for your preservation, for not a hair from the head of any of you will perish."
- 35 Having said this, he took bread and gave thanks to God in the presence of all, and he broke it and began to eat.

One cannot dismiss the fact that they fasted as they endured through this life-threatening ordeal. There are many instances in scripture where people sought God with fervent prayer and focused fasting that HE would protect and preserve their lives and His purposes attendant with them. In a time of personal crisis, it is fitting to fast for preservation of God's purpose for your life. Be of good courage. God is faithful to bring you through, so long as you are bent on pursuing and fulfilling His plans.

## 6. SAIL THROUGH YOUR STORM

In **Mark 4:35-41** Jesus rebuked a raging storm, because His disciples were fearful, and this lacked faith. In fact, He seemingly had no intention of speaking to the storm because it did not, by His estimation, pose a threat to His life or destiny. He calmed the storm for the sake of His disciples who were wracked by fear. Before Jesus spoke "Peace, be still" to the storm, He first slept in the storm. If you cannot sleep in the storm, you cannot speak to the storm. The ability to rest in the storm is authorisation to command peace to the storm. If your storm causes fear in you, it neutralises your authority to address it.

So ... R E S T ! .... Then ... C O M M A N D !

**But** not all storms are meant to be calmed. There are some storms you cannot decree, "Peace be still". Some storms you are going to have to simply sail through successfully. If your 'ship and cargo' are destroyed, your life and purpose will be preserved. So sail on, but as you do so, observe biblical principles of endurance, faith, trust, honour for spiritual fatherhood and obedience to God's Word.

**Isaiah 43:1,2** But now, thus says the Lord, your Creator, O Jacob, And He who formed you, O Israel, "Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name; you are Mine! **"When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; And through the rivers, they will not overflow you.** When you walk through the fire, you will not be scorched, Nor will the flame burn you.

**Ps. 66:10-12** For You have tried us, O God; You have refined us as silver is refined. You brought us into the net; You laid an oppressive burden upon our loins. You made men ride over our heads; **We went through fire and through water, Yet You brought us out into a place of abundance.**

## 7. DIVINE PURPOSE AND DESTINY PROTECTS YOU

God sent an angel to Paul to assure him that he would not die, because HE MUST APPEAR BEFORE CAESAR. What is the lesson to be learned here? God's will for Paul included him preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom in Rome. This was clearly told to him in Acts 23.

**Acts 23:11** But on the night immediately following, the Lord stood at his side and said, "Take courage; for as you have solemnly witnessed to My cause at Jerusalem, **so you must witness at Rome also.**"

Paul, now en route to Rome on this treacherous journey, was a man governed by Divine purpose. Purpose protected him. I personally believe Paul fasted here more so that his life be preserved, not for its own sake, but more importantly so that God's purposes will triumph for Rome. When you live your life with the express desire to fulfill God's will and plan for your life, then no danger can threaten this. Any life threatening scenario would be the permittance of the Lord to bring you to a place of greater internal resolve as to the certainty of God's will being done, or fuel greater intimacy and trust in the Lord, or even (as in Paul's case) convince others that indeed you have a valid calling as God's servant.

## 8. PROXIMITY TO SPIRITUAL FATHERING

An angel assured Paul that he would not die but also that everyone else with him on the ship would be preserved. The guaranteed expression of the protection of God on Paul's life also ensured this would be extended to all on the ship.

### Acts 27:24-25

24 'Do not be afraid, Paul; you must stand before Caesar; and behold, God has granted you all those who are sailing with you.'

25 Therefore, keep up your courage, men, for I believe God that it will turn out exactly as I have been told.

Paul's presence on the ship was the security the other 275 persons on the ship needed. He had significant purposes attending his life. Never underestimate how your proximity to a spiritual leader who is pure, credible, a true spiritual father, and has significant Divine purpose can ensure your own personal welfare. During the days of Samuel, God's hand was against the Philistines all the days of his natural life (1 Samuel 7:13). While he lived, Israel enjoyed immunity. God's protective mantle over the nation flowed in and through his ordained servant positioned as a leader/father over them. The twelve disciples were appointed by Jesus 'TO BE WITH HIM' (Mark 3:14). Maintain closeness to your spiritual leader, for in close following, demonstrated by the constant hearing of and obedience to the Word released, you enjoy protection, preservation and immunity. It was only after Paul would leave the Ephesian elders, that 'wolves' and false teachers would arise to attack the Ephesus church (Acts 20:29). So long as Paul was present, they enjoyed immunity.

Submission to a man of God whose life is pure and governed by strategic Divine purpose will confer immunity on those submitted to him. But there must be heightened regard for and willing submission to the Word of God he carries. It is not so much the person who confers immunity, but the GRACE of God vested in and through the WORD OF GOD that is released to you through the person. This is the protective mechanism. But you cannot receive the Word without also embracing the messenger of the Word. Your hearing and obedience to this Word is your protection.

Be faithful and loyal to your spiritual leader and do not simply connect for personal benefit and then when you have extracted what you desire, you switch loyalties to another one. The prisoners on this ship, when given opportunity, would soon board another ship, leaving Paul. This is a symbolic picture of people who parasitically feed off the grace from their spiritual leader/father and then easily disconnect for non-substantial reasons.

*Dr Sagie Govender, an Apostle of Christ from Durban, South Africa, shared the following thoughts concerning the symbolic interpretation of the number 276, the number of persons on that ship: God was going to protect all of them because of Paul. 276 people in the ship – all were saved. 276 = 6X46 (6 = flesh; 46 = number of Adam; number of human chromosomes).*

*This 276 company enjoyed grace, prophetic grace – but they never connected to grace. This is a large group in the house. No-one said, "Thank you." They disappeared; 3 months later they got on to another ship and they continued to prison. Some people just connect to you for their felt need.*

Isaiah 4:1 *For seven women will take hold of one man in that day, saying, "We will eat our own bread and wear our own clothes, only let us be called by your name; take away our reproach"*

*Seven women going after one man – they wear their own mantle; all they want is his name. Some people want validation by association.*



## 9. GREATER REGARD FOR AND SUBMISSION TO THE GOD-ORDAINED LEADER IN YOUR LIFE

When Paul assured them that their lives will not be lost because there was significant Divine purpose attendant with his life, it not only placated the fears of the men, but also elevated Paul and the Word he carried into a place of greater honour and regard in their minds. Sometimes, only personal calamity makes you appreciate the value of the treasure of grace vested in and through your spiritual leader.

Pauls' breaking of bread with them was more than a breaking of their fast so that they could be nourished. It symbolically represented the attainment of the outcome of their fast. Bread is symbolic of God's Word. Man does not live by bread alone but by every Word that proceeds out from the mouth of God. After His resurrection, Jesus was 'KNOWN' or revealed to his two disciples only after He BROKE BREAD (Luke 24). The breaking and sharing of God's Word always reveals Christ. Paul breaking the bread with them also revealed to them who Paul was in the Spirit – a true apostle and servant of Christ. The servant of Christ shares Christ by breaking the Word of God<sup>1</sup>.

The King James Version of the Bible indicates that they also ate meat.

**Acts 27:33-36** And while the day was coming on, Paul besought them all to take meat, saying, This day is the fourteenth day that ye have tarried and continued fasting, having taken nothing. Wherefore I pray you to take some meat: for this is for your health: for there shall not an hair fall from the head of any of you. And when he had thus spoken, he took bread, and gave thanks to God in presence of them all: and when he had broken it, he began to eat. Then were they all of good cheer, and they ALSO took some meat. (KJV)

'Strong meat' depicts a mature Word designed for the mature son of God (Hebrews 5:14); it is contrasted to milk, alluding to a spiritual diet for the immature in Christ. 'Bread' depicts the food of daily sustenance. The men ate bread and meat. The food they ate was to serve AS THEIR PRESERVATION. The men needed sufficient strength so that they would be well nourished to be able to swim to the land. Although the angel clearly told Paul that he and the men would be saved, eating the food (WORD) that Paul served would be an essential requirement. The doctrine you feed off from your spiritual father in the Lord is intended for your preservation through the storms of life. Apart from forming the stature of Christ within you, it will also serve as nourishment for you that has the effect of keeping you buoyant in trials and also serves to safely and successfully fuel your movement to your destiny in God.

## 10. BROTHERS IN TRIBULATION

Luke and Aristarchus accompanied Paul on this voyage. Luke wrote the book of Acts and writes in the plural in Acts 27, using the pronoun, 'we'.

**Acts 27:1,2** When it was decided that WE would sail for Italy, ... And embarking in an Adramyttian ship, ..., we put out to sea accompanied by Aristarchus, a Macedonian of Thessalonica.

Paul was a prisoner of Rome. It is admirable and commendable of Luke and Aristarchus, his brothers in the Lord, and probably spiritual sons to Paul, to accompany him on this voyage. They were not just a source of

<sup>1</sup> [For a thorough explanation of this principle, refer to my teaching series, THE PRIMACY OF THE WORD, available freely on my website in audio and text formats. Here are direct links : <http://www.randolphbarnwell.com/audios.html>; <http://www.randolphbarnwell.com/topical.html>]

support to Paul, but fully identified with him in his trial and difficulty. They were in John's words, 'brothers in tribulation'.

**Rev. 1:9a** I, John, *your brother* and fellow partaker *in the tribulation* and kingdom ...

We must stand with each other in our trials. We must appreciate those who have stood with us in our darkest times. This is true brotherhood. There are 'brothers', but there are 'brothers in tribulation'. Jesus commended His disciples in having stood with Him in His trials.

**Luke 22:28** You are those who have stood by Me in My trials.

Why not send a THANK YOU note to everyone who has ever encouraged, counselled, and especially prayed for you through seasons of suffering or personal difficulty. These are your 'brothers in tribulation.' This should also inspire you to stand with and pray for others going through tough times personally.

Fasting together with or fasting with someone else in mind for their breakthrough is something we need to do more. Esther requested the Jews to observe a three-day fast **FOR her and WITH her**.

**Esther 4:16** "Go, assemble all the Jews who are found in Susa, and **FAST FOR ME**; do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. **I AND MY MAIDENS WILL ALSO FAST** in the same way. And thus I will go in to the king, which is not according to the law; and if I perish, I perish."

Standing with, praying for and fasting for/with your spiritual leadership is commendable, especially during seasons of their deepest, darkest hour of trial and tribulation.

## **CONCLUSION:**

We learn from this account that our fasting privately and corporately can result in the following:

- Physical Protection
- Preservation of Life
- Preservation of Destiny
- Esteem and Honour for Spiritual Leadership
- Obedience to the Advice of Spiritual Leadership
- Support for others in their times of great trial

**An Aside:** Consider how Jonah disobediently boarded the wrong ship towards Tarshish, instead of the one toward Nineveh, to which he was sent. God sent a storm to correct this situation and get His servant back on the course of doing His will. In this case, the men of the ship threw him overboard. A servant of God pursuing the wrong purpose can jeopardise the welfare of all with him. Firstly, every servant of God must ensure he is on the right course (purpose) in the right ship. Secondly, those with him must be convinced of the same.

[See 'ADDENDUM' overleaf for an overview of Paul's Fasting]

## ADDENDUM: Overview of Paul's Fasting

### Paul Included Fasting in the List of Ways He Approved or Commended Himself as a Minister of God

Paul argues that one of the ways in which he 'approved' (KJV) or 'commended' himself as a minister of God was through his frequent fasting.

#### 2 Cor. 6:3-10

- 3 Giving no cause for offense in anything, so that the ministry will not be discredited,
- 4 but in everything commending ourselves as servants of God, in much endurance, in afflictions, in hardships, in distresses,
- 5 in beatings, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labors, in sleeplessness, **in hunger (fastings : KJV)**,
- 6 in purity, in knowledge, in patience, in kindness, in the Holy Spirit, in genuine love,
- 7 in the word of truth, in the power of God; by the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and the left,
- 8 by glory and dishonor, by evil report and good report; regarded as deceivers and yet true;
- 9 as unknown yet well-known, as dying yet behold, we live; as punished yet not put to death,
- 10 as sorrowful yet always rejoicing, as poor yet making many rich, as having nothing yet possessing all things

**Commending = sunistao =** to set together, to introduce, to exhibit, to stand near, to constitute, to recommend to favourable attention; to place in a striking point of view, to have been permanently framed.

This list is such a far cry from criteria that the present postmodern church upholds as qualifications for authentic servants of God. May more truly 'COMMENDED' servants of Christ arise.

For all his life, fasting played an integral role in the spiritual life of Paul.

### As a Pharisee Prior to His Conversion, He Fasted:

Before his encounter with the Lord, Paul functioned as a dedicated Pharisee. The most serious and self-righteous of the Pharisees fasted twice a week. No doubt, Paul, a self-confessed 'Pharisee' (Phil 3:5), would have done so too.

Matt. 9:14 Then the disciples of John came to him, saying, "Why do we and the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not fast?" And Jesus said to them, "Can the wedding guests mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast."

Luke 18:11,12 The Pharisee stood and was praying this to himself: 'God, I thank You that I am not like other people: swindlers, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I pay tithes of all that I get

At Paul's (then called Saul) Conversion and initial entrance into the Kingdom of God, he fasted for three days. We discussed this in our previous session.

After His Conversion, Throughout His Life and Ministry as an authentic apostle of God he regularly practised the discipline of fasting. It was core to his entire disposition.

## He Fasted Along with Other Members of the Leadership of the Church at Antioch

**Acts 13:1-2a** Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, **and Saul. As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted,** ...

[Refer to session number five where we discussed this issue.]

## He Fasted at His Public Sending off Into Apostolic Ministry

**Acts 13:2-3** As **they ministered to the Lord, and fasted,** the Holy Ghost said, Separate me **Barnabas and Saul** for the work whereunto I have called them. And when they had **fasted and prayed,** and laid their hands on them, they **SENT** them away

## He Practised Fasting as a Vital Part of the Ordination of Leaders into Ministry Function

See Acts 13 quoted above. Note that after Barnabas and Saul were set apart for apostolic work, the leaders seemingly continued their fast and immersed themselves in strong prayer as they commended them to the Lord for their mission.

Barnabas and Saul (Paul) also prayed with fasting when they ordained elders of churches.

**Acts 14:23** And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had **prayed with fasting,** they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed.

Paul fasted **OFTEN**. So should **ALL OF US**. This is especially important for **MINISTERS OF CHRIST**.

### 2 Cor. 11:22-29

- 22 Are they Hebrews? so am I. Are they Israelites? so am I. Are they the seed of Abraham? so am I.
- 23 **Are they MINISTERS OF CHRIST?** (I speak as a fool) **I am more;** in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft.
- 24 Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one.
- 25 Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep;
- 26 In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren;
- 27 In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, **IN FASTING OFTEN,** in cold and nakedness.
- 28 Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches.

Paul represents the spirit and nature of apostolic ministry. Apostolic ministry, apart from being highly revelational, must also be strong in fervent prayer and regular fasting.

TO BE CONTINUED

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