



Module : Fasting

Session 9 : Apostolic-Prophetic Prayer and Fasting #4

Focus : Principles of Prayerful Fasting from Saul, Cornelius and Peter

So far in this series we have examined the fasting of the following individuals and highlighted key lessons to observe from each:

Case Study 1: Jesus	[Refer to Session 3]
Case Study 2: Daniel	[Refer to Session 4]
Case Study 3: Anna	[Refer to Session 5]
Case Study 4: Hannah	[Refer to Session 5]
Case Study 5: Nehemiah	[Refer to Session 6]
Case Study 6: Ezra	[Refer to Session 7 & 8]

In the present study, we will extrapolate principles and objectives of fasting by examining the fasting of Saul, Cornelius and Peter.

### CASE STUDY 7 : SAUL OF TARSUS FASTED

The Apostle Paul is viewed by many as one of the most strategic apostles ever used by God. He wrote much of the New Testament. The mystery of God, Christ and the Body of Christ was revealed to him, amongst other important spiritual truths and principles by which the present church is meant to operate.

Paul, before the surrender of his life to the Lordship of Christ, was known as Saul of Tarsus. He persecuted the early church with unbridled passion. This he did with intense zeal and fervour. But God's plan for his life was apostleship to His church, especially in the non-Jewish world. Saul was sincerely convinced that his persecution of the church was in fact in God's will and by doing so, he was preserving the religious traditions of the Mosaic Covenant in which he was reared. His boast as a man in the flesh was that he was a 'Pharisee', a Hebrew of the Hebrews, and as concerning the "law", blameless'.

**Phil. 3:4-7** although I myself might have confidence **even in the flesh**. If anyone else has a mind to put **confidence in the flesh**, I far more: circumcised the eighth day, of the nation of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the Law, a Pharisee; **as to zeal, a persecutor of the church**; as to the righteousness which is in the Law, found **blameless**. But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ.

These boasts never facilitated his knowledge of Christ, and he recognised although they were gain to him by natural appraisal, he would gladly set them aside as loss, for the sake of knowing Christ by faith.

He was sincere in his efforts to snuff out 'Christianity', killing and persecuting followers of Christ, referred to as the people of 'Way'. He was sincere, but he was sincerely wrong. In order to re-align him to God's original plan for his life, God had to confront him in a dramatic fashion en route to his murderous mission to Damascus to persecute believers.

### Acts 9:1-6

- 1 Now Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest,
- 2 and asked for letters from him to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way, both men and women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.
- 3 As he was traveling, it happened that he was approaching Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him;
- 4 and he fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?"
- 5 And he said, "Who are You, Lord?" And He said, "I am Jesus whom you are persecuting,
- 6 but get up and enter the city, and it will be told you what you must do.

After Jesus speaks to him, making it plain, that in persecuting the church, he is in essence persecuting HIM, Saul, now blinded, is instructed to go to the city and await further instructions. Here he prays and fasts for three days, not drinking any water, nor taking any food.

**Acts 9:9** And he was three days without sight, and neither ate nor drank

Ananias, a disciple of the Lord living in Damascus, is instructed by God to go to Saul, pray for him to receive his sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit, tell him how he will suffer for the Lord and bear God's name before the Gentiles, Jews and Kings (rulers). This tantamounts to Saul's conversion and an understanding or unveiling of the Apostolic call on his life. From this point onwards he **immediately** proceeds to testify and teach that Jesus is the Christ. His life and purpose is changed and re-ordered forever (See Acts 9:10-22).

**What principles about fasting and its objectives or results can be gleaned from this case study?**

#### **1. Harnessing and Re-Channeling of Sincere Zeal and Desire**

Saul was an extremely zealous persecutor of the church. God simply re-directed this zeal toward him becoming one of the greatest proponents of the church. This was effected within the context of him fasting. Fasting creates the ideal framework within which God may reorder priorities and direct fervent, but misplaced desire toward an endeavour or activity that is squarely in the center of His plan for your life. Zeal without discernment, knowledge or wisdom accomplishes little or nothing at all of God's purposes.

**Rom. 10:1,2** Brethren, my heart's desire and my prayer to God for them (*i.e. Israel*) is for their salvation. For I testify about them **that they have a zeal for God, but not in accordance with knowledge.**

How much more powerful is it when passionate zeal is combined with accurate knowledge. There are many who are ardently zealous in holding dogmatically to a point of view or doing spiritual exploits, yet this attitude or activity could be far removed from what God would deem accurate or relevant. Saul was fighting and seeking to destroy the very thing God was trying to build. He was operating contrary to God's will, yet self-deceived that he in fact was doing God a great favour by persecuting the church. This is true of many believers today. They oppose God's move, truth, purpose, methodology, etc. because it challenges longstanding traditions held onto in the mind.

I urge the reader to consider the remote possibility that perhaps you may be convinced that in rejecting something you construe as 'not-God' or false according to your judgement, that in fact you may be dismissing something that is authentically true and in God's will. I have the prophetic sense that God in the present season is redirecting sincere and fervent oppositions to His truth, plans, ways, etc. by some who think they are rightly doing so as an expression of faithfulness to God. Even if you feel you do not fit this category, may I encourage you to consider fasting with this prayerful objective: "Father, channel all my diligence, zeal, passion, etc. toward more accurate and exact expressions of thought, behaviour, function and purpose". This could relate to your life personally, your calling or the corporate purpose of God attendant with your household of faith. Fasting to fine tune your zeal and enthusiasm in spiritual activity is a principle that strongly emerges out from this case study. May we all experience this as we come to sharpness in all we earnestly do for God.

Moses instinctually sought to rescue an Israelite being flogged by an Egyptian (See Exodus 2:11-25). He killed the Egyptian and had to flee for his life. This zeal was within him. It was a reflexive response within him, yet he embarked upon it without being thoroughly prepared by God, and not being informed of God's way or methodology of doing it. After spending 40 years in the wilderness under the fathering of Jethro, and personally encountering the Lord, he returns and is able to deliver, not just one or two Israelites, but the entire nation in one single night. God harnessed his zeal and coupled it with sufficient personal preparation and empowerment and the results were phenomenal. May you experience this too as you seek God by prayerful fasting.

## **2. Illumination to Understand One's Calling and Purpose in Life from a Heavenly/Spiritual Perspective**

Paul was blinded for three days during his fast. This symbolically indicates that his eyes were shut to the natural influences of his day. His eyes were shut naturally so they could be opened spiritually. Adam and Eve's eye of the soul, which God ordained to be shut, was opened when they sinned. They were meant to function being governed by God in and through their spirit, which would lead the soul and then in their bodies live obediently in the earth. An opened eye of their soul now rivalled the God determined leadership of their spirit. They elected to live being led by their natural senses through the soul, rather than by their spirit. This problem persists today. Many are governed by their fallen soul and not by a Word-illuminated spirit. [\[Refer to the audio and PDF downloads of my teaching series 'The Spiritual Man' on my website for a more detailed explanation of this process\]](#)

Fasting humbles the soul. Authoritatively withholding food from the body has the effect of silencing the screams of the flesh. This symbolically is an assertion of the will of the spirit over the will of the soul. When the flesh is subdued under the rule of the spirit, the spirit is more prone to be opened to pick up the frequency of God's voice and direction. Saul's misdirected zeal made him spiritually deaf and blind, so God had to temporarily blind in the natural him so that he could employ greater focus in his spirit to give attention to the things God was saying.

## **3. Developing the Skill of a Listening Ear and Knowing not just the Voice of God, but the God of the Voice.**

On hearing God's voice speak to him, Saul does not recognise it fully, saying, '**Who are You, Lord**'. Implied in Saul's answer is that he has some awareness that it is God speaking to him, because he addresses the source of the voice as 'Lord'. Fasting can facilitate two things, viz. ...

- (1) It can sharpen your spiritual prophetic hearing capacity.

(Refer to session 5 in this series available on my website where we demonstrated this truth from examining Anna's fasting and that of the leadership of the Antioch church.)

- (2) It facilitates a more progressive intimate knowing of the God of the voice.

In a time in which everyone is more eager to access God's voice with greater clarity, there exists a strong possibility that the zeal accompanying this noble objective could very well lead to seeking out the voice of God, apart from the God of the voice. Knowing Him is essential to knowing His voice. Jesus said many will be able to even prophesy in His name (an activity which presupposes one has heard from God), yet He will say, "depart from me, I never KNEW you".

Consider how vastly different Ananias' response is to the Lord when he was instructed to go to Saul to pray for him.

**Acts 9:10** Now there was a disciple at Damascus named Ananias; and the Lord said to him in a vision, "Ananias." And he said, "Here I am, Lord"

Ananias knew the Lord and the voice of the Lord and thus he confidently responds, 'HERE AM I LORD', as compared to Saul's, 'WHO ARE YOU LORD?' One answer is a confident assertion and positioning to hear and obey, whilst the other is a question borne out from uncertainty.

Fasting builds confidence to know God more acutely and accurately. From the context of his fast, Saul now would have to get to know God intimately. Part of this demanded a posture of humility on his part. As highly educated and learned in religion as he was, having esteem and respect amongst his contemporaries, he has to humble himself to access God's voice and further instruction to him through what seems like just an ordinary 'disciple' of the Lord (Ananias). He would obviously grow to accessing God's voice for himself later on, but this initial experience with the Divine voice expressed in and through a man sent to him, was a necessary part of this journey. In fasting, God may speak to you through whatever means. Be open to His varied methodologies. Do not let your pride stand in the way. Humility is an essential prerequisite.

#### 4. The Detailed and Confirmed Speaking of the Lord

Today God desires not to speak to you ambiguously or mysteriously in riddles or in blurs, but in clearly distinct and specific terms. May we all experience this clarity of God's voice.

<b>1 Tim. 4:1a</b>	<b><u>nasb</u></b> :	But the Spirit <u>explicitly</u> says that in later times ...
	<b><u>nlt</u></b> :	Now the Holy Spirit <u>tells us clearly that</u> in the last times ...
	<b><u>esv</u></b> :	Now the Spirit <u>expressly says</u> that in later times ...

Whilst in prayerful fasting, God tells Saul that a certain disciple named Ananias would be coming to pray for him. God also tells Ananias that HE has informed Saul of Ananias' coming. Read the Scripture below and note the detail mentioned, viz. names of roads, people, places (city and specific house), specific activity (prayer) and specific results (sight).

**Acts 9:11,12** And the Lord said to him, "Get up and go to the street called Straight, and inquire at the house of Judas for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for he is praying, and he has seen in a vision a man named Ananias come in and lay his hands on him, so that he might regain his sight."

God speaking to two men separately, yet simultaneously. The one who is fasting with prayer is being thrust into his calling and destiny in the Lord. The Scriptures do not mention it, but they probably compared notes afterwards and discover how God confirmed His speaking to both of them by providing each with detailed information about the other. As you fast, expect more specific details as God speaks to you. Open yourself up to God also confirming the specified details in the mouth of another witness – for in the mouth of two or three witness, every word shall be established.

---

## **CASE STUDY 8 : CORNELIUS FASTED**

*(Read Acts chapter 10 before proceeding)*

### **1. Spiritual Upgrade**

Cornelius, an Italian Centurion, was a God-fearing man who prayed always and did many charitable works for the Jews. He was in prayer and fasting for four days, probably in deep desire to get to know God more intimately.

**Acts 10:30a**     And Cornelius said, Four days ago I was fasting until this hour; and at the ninth hour I prayed in my house ... (KJV)

His prayer and almsgiving came up before God as a memorial. A memorial is something which holds another in remembrance. Cornelius' prayers (with fasting) and financial giving forever held God in remembrance of him. Indeed, prayerful fasting does recruit the attention of God. God institutes a set of processes that are designed to bring Cornelius into an experience of personal salvation, Holy Ghost baptism and water baptism. This represents spiritual upgrade, development and maturation. Prayerful fasting always positions one to be catapulted into the most relevant dealings of God with the earth. For Cornelius, it was salvation. From his answer to the angel who appeared to him, viz. "What is it Lord?", it seems Cornelius had an active relationship with God. But he still had to experience salvation as a result of the finished work of Jesus Christ on the Cross – something that Peter would proclaim to him and his household.

What is the next spiritual elevation for you? Only you can answer this. May I suggest that if you are sensing that you are on the verge of being ushered into a new realm of maturity in spiritual things or your relationship with God, that you set yourself aside to fast and pray and prepare the context for a giant leap forward.

### **2. The Detailed and Confirmed Speaking of the Lord**

Again we see in this example of Cornelius' fast that God speaks in highly detailed and clearly specific terms as he did to Ananias and Saul. We see also the speaking of the Lord confirmed.

**Acts 10:5**     Now dispatch some men to Joppa and send for a man named Simon, who is also called Peter; he is staying with a tanner named Simon, whose house is by the sea.

### **3. Encounters and Connections With the Apostolic (sent ones) or Those Especially Prepared by the Lord to Minister to Us.**

Cornelius is instructed to send his servants to the house of Simon, the Tanner, to ask the Apostle Peter to come back with them to his house. Peter is key to Cornelius' spiritual upgrade. As you fast, may I encourage you to trust God not only for upgrade in the Spirit from where you are to the next level, but also that God would 'SEND' strategic persons if necessary to facilitate your spiritual migration. As you would later see, God had to really challenge and alter Peter's mentality in reference to the Gentiles in order to get him to get to Cornelius' house. As Cornelius servants entered the city, God started certain processes in the Apostle Peter in order to prepare him to obediently go to Cornelius' house. This is very similar to God simultaneously preparing Saul and Ananias as we discussed earlier. Here, Cornelius and Peter are being divinely engaged. One's man's fasting and prayer activated this. Your fasting too, can activate a set of divine processes in yourself and simultaneously in others whom God has specified to come alongside you to aid your entry into a place of greater spiritual accuracy.

Aside: Note Ananias was SENT to Saul; Peter was SENT to Cornelius. The word 'sent' has reference to the 'Apostolic', since the word apostle means 'sent'. The apostolic also relates to that which most authentic and accurate expression of belief, behaviour and function. Thus, fasting activates an apostolic visitation that serves to bring authenticity, accuracy and progression in spiritual things. This is a powerful motivation with which to fast.

---

## **CASE STUDY 9 : PETER FASTED**

### **1. Re-Configuration of Mindset**

The bible does not definitively state that Peter fasted as God prepared him to go the house of Cornelius.

**Acts 9:9a-10** ... Peter went up on the housetop about the sixth hour to pray. But he became hungry and was desiring to eat; but while they were making preparations, he fell into a trance

Peter did not eat – and whilst fasting is not mentioned, we assume it as such although he was simply waiting for the necessary preparations to be made for his meal. Whatever the case is, the point is he was not eating, which is an expression or image of fasting. But he was certainly in prayer.

Peter falls into a trance and sees in a vision 'unclean animals' by Jewish standards, that God instructs to kill and eat. He desists from obeying this instruction for it conflicted with his knowledge of Jewish dietary customs entrenched in the Law of Moses. The vision appears three times and then God tells him not to regard as 'unclean' that which HE has sanctified as 'clean'. After he exits his trance, he deeply thinks on this vision and the Spirit starts speaking to him, explaining to him that men from Cornelius' household are downstairs looking for him. The unclean animals in his vision were Gentile nations, represented now by Cornelius and his household. Peter obeys, proceeds toward Cornelius' house and powerfully shares a message concerning Jesus Christ. The whole household is saved, baptised in the Holy Ghost and in water. Peter would confess that God is truly no respecter of persons.

Had Peter not obeyed, he would have forfeited the privilege of being used by God to usher in the first group of Gentiles into the Kingdom after the cross. His prior theological knowledge of Levitical dietary law potentially presented a great hindrance to him embracing a move of God that was in its incipient stages but would grow in great momentum. Within the context of fasting, God had to reconfigure and re-orientate his thinking to embrace the Gentiles also as heirs of salvation, just as much as the Jews were. This was a very significant mind-altering process concerning a very KEY matter in that time.

In each epoch of time, there are some strategic and very seriously significant shifts of God that occur. Usually prior notions as to what would constitute the will of God pose a great obstacle in our minds to fully following through with what God may be leading us into as a brand new development or embracing of some fresh revelation. In these times I would suggest two things. Firstly, a season of fasting in which we become prepared to allow the Lord to adjust our thinking if need be, and secondly, intense meditation on the issues at play (as Peter did – see Acts 10:17). These two suggestions provided the ideal environment in which the Spirit of the Lord guided Peter to a place of obedience.

## **2. Bold Action Never Before Contemplated**

As Peter meditated on the vision he had and what it could mean, the Spirit spoke to him indicating that the men from Cornelius' household were below at the door and that he should accompany them WITHOUT MISGIVING (Acts 10:20). No doubt or hesitation was to impede his resolve to obey God's voice. During a fast, God, in leading you to do something, which before you would be reluctant to pursue, can infuse confidence in you to proceed without misgiving or unbelief.

When Peter entered Cornelius' household he remarked as follows, ...

**Acts 10:28** And he said to them, "You yourselves know how unlawful it is for a man who is a Jew to associate with a foreigner or to visit him; and yet God has shown me that I should not call any man unholy or unclean.

The resultant obedient action borne out from Peter's prayerful fasting was the execution of God's will - ministering His Word in an environment that he previously would not have even entertained as a remote possibility. Divine direction given in prayerful fasting has the potential to not only drastically alter one's ministry emphasis, purpose and function, but also change the context in which these find expression.

## **3. Strategic or Key People Coming into the Kingdom**

Cornelius was a Roman Centurion, having at least one hundred soldiers under his command. He is thus a man of great influence. It was probable that after his experience of salvation and baptism in the Holy Ghost, that God would have used him in a significant way to share His word and the gospel. No doubt, many would have been ushered into the Kingdom. I believe that part of our objective in seeking God by prayerful fasting that emerges **from this case study**, has got to be the salvation of men and women of influence, who would then be able to be instrumental in a host of others coming into the Kingdom.

Bear in mind too, that Cornelius had gathered MANY PEOPLE into his house before Peter arrived (Acts 10:24,27). These were his close friends and relatives. So already we have an indication of his measure of influence.

### **3. Dreams, Visions and Trances**

God's speaks to us PRIMARILY through His Word. But He may also choose to speak to us through other means like dreams, visions and trances. His speaking through all of these means must be confirmed and validated by His Word. I have experienced that in prolonged fasts, these means of Divine communication are usually accentuated. So do not discount them. Obviously, great discernment must be exercised as to, for example, if a dream is spiritual or natural.

[TO BE CONTINUED]

May great grace and peace abound to you as we seek God with fervent prayerful fasting.

Randolph Barnwell

#### **Stay in Touch with us via Social Networks and my Website:**

Connect with and 'follow' Randolph Barnwell personally via Facebook or Twitter to receive regular inspirational & encouraging short posts and tweets highlighting key life principles from God's Word. You may also freely download notes and audio files of each session from [www.randolphbarnwell.com](http://www.randolphbarnwell.com). Additional materials on various topics are also available for download here. Visit & 'like' 'GATE MINISTRIES Durban Central' Facebook page OR 'follow' Gate Ministries Durban Central on Twitter and keep informed as to themes that will be taught each week. To receive our free bible study notes, ensure you are on our email distribution list – send a request to [info@gatedc.co.za](mailto:info@gatedc.co.za). Enquiries: [randolph@gatedc.co.za](mailto:randolph@gatedc.co.za) or [info@gatedc.co.za](mailto:info@gatedc.co.za).