

**Module** : Fasting

**Session 3** : Preparatory For the Spirit's Total Potential Work  
and Power

**Focus** : Fasting and the Holy Spirit



In our previous study we demonstrated from the Scripture how that fasting deals with two great barriers to the Holy Spirit that are erected by man's carnal nature. These are the stubborn self-will of the soul and the insistent, self-gratifying appetites of the body. Fasting builds up one's spirit and allows the soul to be humbled into submission to it, and so the bodily or fleshly domain of our lives are brought into obedience.

In this study we briefly study the effect Jesus' fast had on Him and His public ministry. It is one of many case studies of people who have fasted that we will examine. Being led by the SPIRIT into the wilderness, He fasted for forty days, in which time satan tempted Him to sin in three distinct areas (Read Luke 4). Your spirit is that part of you that the Holy Spirit is at one with; it is the realm that Spirit is compatible with and is able to rule the rest of the man, viz. his soul and body. The Spirit witnesses with our spirits that we are sons of God (Rom.8:16). Our bodies house our spirits and souls, and indeed our bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit, but essentially, the Spirit's place from which He will execute His work effectively in and through us is from the platform of our spirits.

Notice the significant difference in the expressions used by Luke to describe Jesus before and after His fast:

**Before :** Luke 4:1 Jesus being **FULL OF THE HOLY GHOST**

**After :** Luke 4:14 Jesus returned **IN THE POWER OF THE SPIRIT**

The potential of the Spirit's power came to full manifestation in Jesus after He had completed His fast. He shifted from SPIRIT 'FULLNESS' to SPIRIT 'POWER'. What He was FULL of, now became actively expressed in and through Him to carry out His Father's purpose. Also, this was the last phase of His 'preparation' before His public ministry kicked off.

It was not fasting per se that was responsible for Jesus functioning in the fullness of the Spirit's power, but rather the fact that He obeyed God's Word instead of yielding to three temptations of satan designed to challenge and so diminish His identity as God's Son – and thus the attendant power of the Spirit.

It is important for us to understand the role of the Holy Spirit in respect to sonship. I deal with this more thoroughly in my series on Firstborn Sonship, and so will cover it briefly here. The Spirit of God is focused on the development of mature sonship within every son of God. By the Spirit, who is the firstfruits of our total inheritance in the fullness of Deity, we are able to cry "Abba Father".

**Rom 8:15-19**

- 15 For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which **WE CRY** out, **"Abba! Father!"**
- 16 The **Spirit Himself** testifies with **our spirit that we are children** (*teknon*) of God,
- 17 and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with *Him* so that we may also be glorified with *Him*.

**Galatians 4:5-7**

So that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons. **Because you are sons** (*uhios*), God has **sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!"** Therefore you are no longer a slave, but a son; and if a son (*uhios*), then an heir through God.

**Eph 1:13-14**

- 13 In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation—having also believed, **you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise,**
- 14 who is given as a **pledge of our inheritance**, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of His glory

Pledge = ***arrabón*** = Something which stands for part of the price and paid beforehand to confirm the transaction.

**2 Cor. 1:21,22**

- 21 Now He who establishes us with you **in Christ** and anointed us is God,
- 22 who also sealed us and **gave us the Spirit in our hearts as a pledge.**

**2 Cor. 5:4,5**

- 4 For indeed while we are in this tent, we groan, being burdened, because we do not want to be unclothed but to be clothed, so that what is mortal will be swallowed up by life.
- 5 Now He who prepared us for this very purpose is God, who gave to us **the Spirit as a pledge.**

**Rom. 8:22,23**

- 22 For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now.
- 23 And not only this, but also we ourselves, having **the first fruits of the Spirit**, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, **waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons**, the **redemption of our body.**

The Holy Spirit is given as a guarantee or pledge of the fact that the fullness of deity, i.e. Father, Son and Spirit will come to abide within sons of God. Thus the Spirit aims to mature us in our sonship in God. In His bid to do this, He guides the son into complete obedience to God's Word, which biblically, is the means by which the Father and the Son make us their permanent abode or dwelling place.

**John 14:18-23** "I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. After a little while the world will no longer see Me, but you will see Me; because I live, you will live also. In that day you will

know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you. **He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me; and he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and will disclose Myself to him.**" Judas (not Iscariot) \*said to Him, "Lord, what then has happened that You are going to disclose Yourself to us and not to the world?" Jesus answered and said to him, " **If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our abode with him.**"

The temptations of Jesus in the wilderness are aimed at eroding His identity as God's Son. Each temptation starts as follows "If you are the Son , ...". Just a moment before the temptation in the wilderness, the Father, by a public utterance commended Jesus as His Son, in whom He was pleased (Matthew 3:16-17). Now this very affirmative statement reading Jesus' identity as God's Son was being challenged by an attempt of satan to cause Jesus to act in a manner in contradiction to His recently affirmed sonship in God. Yet, it is inescapable not to note, that all this took place within the context of Jesus actually fasting.

Jesus was tested in all three areas where Eve failed, viz., the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh and the boastful pride of life.

#### **1 John 2:15-17**

- 15 Do **not love the world** nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.
- 16 For all that is in the world, the **lust of the flesh** and the **lust of the eyes** and the **boastful pride of life**, is not from the Father, but is from the world.
- 17 The world is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever.

#### **Eve Failed these Three Tests:**

**Gen. 3:6** When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make one wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate.

Lust of the Flesh	:	"the woman saw that the tree was GOOD FOR FOOD"
Lust of the Eyes	:	"that it was a delight (pleasant) to the EYES"
Pride of Life	:	"a tree was desirable to make one WISE"

#### **Jesus Passed the Three Tests:**

Lust of the Flesh	:	"If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread" ( <b><u>Luke 4:3</u></b> )
Lust of the Eyes	:	"And the devil took him up and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time." ( <b><u>Luke 4:5</u></b> )
Pride of Life	:	"If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here..." ( <b><u>Luke 4:9</u></b> )

Jesus, by the power of the Spirit, demonstrated that indeed He was God's Son, by actually overcoming the temptation to yield to satan's allurements positioned to cause Him to sin. Fasting for Jesus, was thus a

means to amplify His spirit's strength over His fleshly weakness. The Spirit and the flesh are always contrary to each other. The strength of one weakens the other. The realm of the one that is fed and focused on is the one that ascends in dominance over the other one, which is weakened in respect to the former.

The power of the Holy Spirit in the life of Jesus proceeds to the next dimension as He deals with and overcomes His flesh. Thus after the temptation, He returns 'IN THE POWER OF THE SPIRIT'. Again I stress, all of this was **facilitated in the Son of God as He practiced the discipline of fasting**. I personally believe that fasting is preparatory to anyone's desire to function in the fullness of the power of the Holy Ghost in their God-given assignment or ministry in the earth. The flesh is to be held in submission until it is aligned to and then willingly subscribes to the demands of God, so that the fullness of the Spirit's potential work and empowerment is practically realised in the son of God. Fasting aids this.

**Compare the following two passages:**

**Acts 2:16-18** but this is what was spoken of through the prophet Joel: 'And it shall be in the last days, ' God says, 'That I will pour forth of MY Spirit on all mankind; And your sons and your daughters shall prophesy And your young men shall see visions, And your old men shall dream dreams; Even on MY bondslaves, both men and women, I will in those days pour forth of MY Spirit And they shall prophesy.

**Joel 2:28,29** "It will come about after this That I will pour out My Spirit on all mankind; And your sons and daughters will prophesy, Your old men will dream dreams, Your young men will see visions. "Even on the male and female servants I will pour out My Spirit in those days.

To describe the outpouring of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost, Peter quotes Joel 2:28. Where Peter says 'in the last days' in Acts 2:16,17, Joel says 'it will come to pass afterwards'. In the book of Joel, the outpouring of the Spirit is described in two phases:

- (i) the former rain;
- (ii) the former and latter rain together (see Joel 2:23).

The Holy Spirit here is symbolised by rain. From this we may infer that the former rain of the Spirit's outpouring marked the beginning of the period called the last days (which began with the ministry of Jesus and Pentecost), while the latter rain of the Spirit marks the period at the close of the last days. We are now living in the period when the last days are drawing to a close.

What will cause the Spirit's outpouring to increase and take the Church from 'fullness of the Spirit' to 'the power of the Spirit'? The answer is mature sonship characterised by absolute obedience (as evidenced by Jesus in Matthew 4). In the three areas in which He was tempted, Jesus overcame and chose to obey the Word of God. The number three denotes completeness. Jesus brought completeness to His obedience and as a result, the operation of the Spirit within Him was accentuated from 'fullness' to practical expression of spiritual 'power' as He set Himself to execute the Father's will for His life/ministry.

**Acts 5:32** And we are witnesses of these things; and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who **OBEY** Him.

**Ezekiel 36:27** I will **put My Spirit within you** and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances.

One of the indicators of maturity in sonship is mastery over sin and carnality (Rev. 21:7; 2 Cor. 6:16,17). Fasting, which depicts mastery over the flesh and a heightening of spirit perception, is one of the great disciplines that God has chosen to facilitate our growth into dominance of natural dictates of our souls and flesh. [Note: We do not overcome to become a mature son; rather we overcome, demonstrating our maturity as a 'huios' (mature) son, connected to, empowered by and reflective of God, our Father.]

Joel said, "it will come to pass afterwards ...". 'Afterwards' means after something has first taken place. In the context of Joel's writings, the precondition for the outpouring of the Spirit was corporate fasting as an outward indication of a yielded and repentant heart. Three times he called the nation to fast:

**Joel 1:14** **Consecrate a fast**, Proclaim a solemn assembly; Gather the elders And all the inhabitants of the land To the house of the Lord your God, And cry out to the Lord.

**Joel 2:12,13** "Yet even now," declares the Lord, "Return to Me with all your heart, And with fasting, weeping and mourning; And rend your heart and not your garments." Now return to the Lord your God, For He is gracious and compassionate, Slow to anger, abounding in lovingkindness And relenting of evil.

**Joel 2:15,16** Blow a trumpet in Zion, Consecrate a fast, proclaim a solemn assembly, Gather the people, sanctify the congregation, Assemble the elders, Gather the children and the nursing infants. Let the bridegroom come out of his room And the bride out of her bridal chamber.

The Apostle Paul receives the baptism of the Holy Ghost after he repents and was fasting for three days (Acts 9). Cornelius fasted for four days and subsequently received salvation through Jesus Christ and the baptism in the Holy Ghost, together with his entire family (Acts 10). Being saved and restored in one's relationship to God, and the baptism in the Holy Ghost, is not conditional upon fasting. In the cases of Paul and Cornelius cited here, baptism was the next logical Holy Spirit experience these individuals were to encounter.

All I am saying is that the Spirits' next intended work and power expression is most facilitated and amplified within the context of fasting, in which there is firstly heightened focus and awareness in the realm of one's spirit, and secondly a silencing of unregenerate soulish or fleshly tendency. As they prayed and fasted, the leaders at the church in Antioch received fresh instruction from the HOLY SPIRIT, whose directive broke open a new realm of apostolic ministry for Paul and Barnabas (Acts 13:1ff).

**Acts 13:1-4a** Now there were at Antioch, in the church that was there, prophets and teachers ... While they were ministering to the Lord and FASTING, the HOLY SPIRIT said, "Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." Then, when they had FASTED and prayed and laid their hands on them, they sent them away. So, being sent out by the HOLY SPIRIT, they went down ....

Peter too did not eat, and received visions and further understanding from the HOLY SPIRIT concerning ministry to the Gentile, Cornelius.

**Acts 10:19** While Peter was reflecting on the vision, THE SPIRIT SAID to him, "Behold, three men are looking for you.

Fasting sets the stage for greater penetrative access of the Spirit into our lives.

After His fast, Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit and went to Nazareth and on the Sabbath in the Synagogue proclaimed that the Spirit of God is in full operation to empower His mandate in the earth.

**Luke 4:18** "The Spirit of the Lord is upon ME, Because HE anointed ME to preach the gospel to the poor. HE has sent ME to proclaim release to the captives, And recovery of sight to the blind, TO set free those who are oppressed, TO proclaim the favorable year of the Lord."

He embarks upon the execution of His Father's will with confidence and boldness. He lists several outcomes evidencing the Spirit's power on His life. As a result of the Spirit's fullness and power in the sons of God all over the earth, we will see some of the greatest realisations of the will of God being effected.

Take the time to read the book of Joel, particularly chapter 2. Note the outcomes God promises to Israel (and to us His church) when we return to Him in deep humble repentance through fasting. The resultant outpouring of the Spirit brings with it numerous blessings on the nation. Here are some of them hinted at in the verses cited below. Meditate upon them and allow HE, The Spirit of Truth, to reveal to you personally its application on your life.

**Joel 2:14** Who knows whether He will not turn and relent And leave a blessing behind Him, Even a grain offering and a drink offering For the Lord your God.

#### **Joel 2:18-29**

- 18 Then the Lord will be zealous for His land And will have pity on His people.
- 19 The Lord will answer and say to His people, "Behold, I am going to send you grain, new wine and oil, And you will be satisfied in full with them; And I will never again make you a reproach among the nations.
- 20 "But I will remove the northern army far from you, And I will drive it into a parched and desolate land, And its vanguard into the eastern sea, And its rear guard into the western sea. And its stench will arise and its foul smell will come up, For it has done great things."

- 21 **Do not fear**, O land, rejoice and be glad, For the Lord has done great things.
- 22 **Do not fear**, beasts of the field, For the **pastures of the wilderness have turned green, For the tree has borne its fruit, The fig tree and the vine have yielded in full.**
- 23 So rejoice, O sons of Zion, And be glad in the Lord your God; For He has given you the early rain for your vindication. And He has poured down for you the rain, The early and latter rain as before.
- 24 The **threshing floors will be full of grain, And the vats will overflow with the new wine and oil.**
- 25 “Then **I will make up to you for the years** That the swarming locust has eaten, The creeping locust, the stripping locust and the gnawing locust, My great army which I sent among you.
- 26 “You will have **plenty to eat and be satisfied** And **praise the name of the Lord your God, Who has dealt wondrously with you; Then My people will never be put to shame.**
- 27 “Thus you will know that **I am in the midst of Israel**, And that I am the Lord your God, And there is no other; And My **people will never be put to shame.**
- 28 “It will come about after this That **I will pour out My Spirit on all mankind;** And your sons and daughters will prophesy, Your old men will dream dreams, Your young men will see visions. “Even on the male and female servants I will pour out My Spirit in those days.

**Joel 3:1** “ For behold, in those days and at that time, **When I restore the fortunes** of Judah and Jerusalem.”

**Joel 3:18** And in that day The **mountains will drip with sweet wine, And the hills will flow with milk,** And all the **brooks of Judah will flow with water;** And a **spring will go out** from the house of the Lord To water the valley of Shittim.

Consider, as prophetic impression for you reading this note, the following scripture for your life:

**Isaiah 32:15** Until the Spirit is poured out upon us from on high, And the wilderness becomes a fertile field, And the fertile field is considered as a forest.

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**TO BE CONTINUED**

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