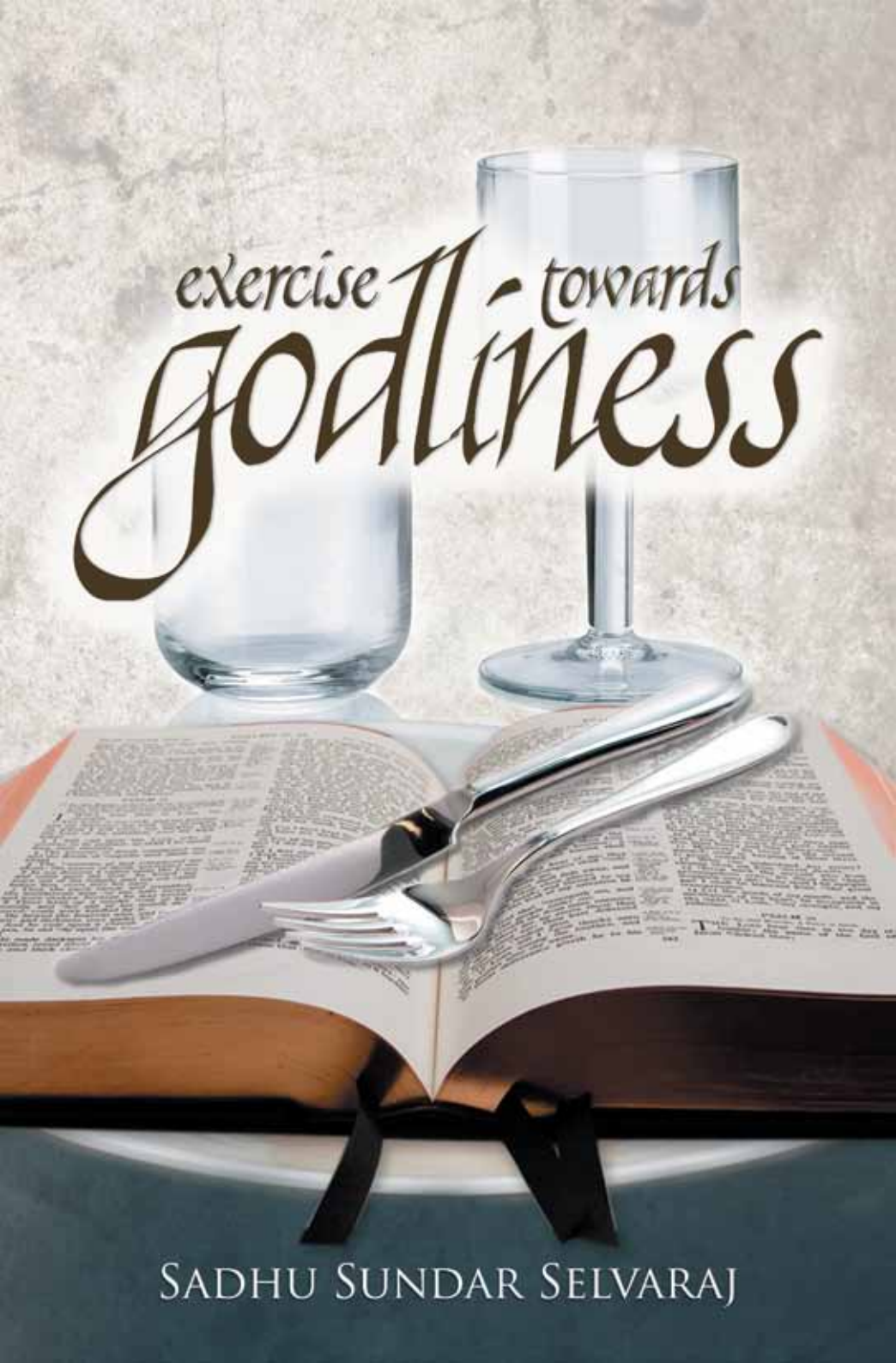
exercise towards godliness



SADHU SUNDAR SELVARAJ

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Dedication

This book is worshipfully dedicated
and all glory, honour and praise is solely given
to the Heavenly Father for His grace and mercy,
to the Lord Jesus Christ for revealing
these precious truths,
and the Holy Spirit for inspiring and teaching
me to write this book

and

To all precious and beloved saints of God
who desire to see breakthroughs in their lives;
need their faith to be strengthen; and
yearn to draw closer to God.

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Chapter 1

Fasting

1 Timothy 4:7,8
7 But reject profane and old wives' fables, and exercise yourself toward godliness.
8 For bodily exercise profits a little, but godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come.

In these scriptures, the apostle Paul talks about the exercise of fasting. Practising this form of exercise will produce true spirituality in you, resulting in godliness in your spirit, soul, and body. Such a spiritual attainment will mean that you become a blessing in this world and in the world to come. Remember one thing well: whatever blessings you get from the world are only in this life. But the true blessings that come from God will bless you in this life and in the world to come. One of the key spiritual exercises in the Christian life is fasting. This discipline is very important but poorly understood in the Christian community. So many Christians neglect to practice it. And because of this, we miss out on many great blessings.

What is fasting? In the Old Testament, the Hebrew word *som* is used for fasting. "Som" means *self-denial*.

In the New Testament, the Greek word *nescia* also means *self-denial*. If you put these two words together, fasting very simply means *abstinence from food or putting away food.* This is what fasting means. Our bodies require food. So when you are denying the body the food it needs, you are engaging in a form of sacrifice.

Genesis Of Fasting

Let me now share some aspects of the history of how fasting came about. Firstly, we note that according to the Old Testament, in the beginning people didn't practice fasting like we do today. But when the people were feeling very sad during times of distress, times of sorrow, and times of broken heartedness, they refrained from food, as they didn't feel like eating.

Old Testament Practice

When you are down, you might feel so sorrowful you won't want to eat. You sit in one corner feeling very sad. You cannot eat. Basic human nature hasn't changed. This was also how our biblical forefathers started on their road to fasting. We find this recorded in the book of 1 Samuel 1:7. Samuel's mother, Hannah, was very sad and she could not eat. Another example comes from one of the most notorious kings of Israel. One night, King Ahab was feeling very sorrowful and distressed (1 Kg. 21:4). So he went without food. When you are very sad, you cannot eat. Fasting is also a natural expression of grief. Your heart is so full of grief you won't have the mood to eat.

In 2 Samuel 3:35, King David fasted over the death of Abner, the top general of the family of King Saul. It started like this: first, David experienced distress; then he felt grief; and finally he was gripped by remorse and anguish towards the sin of murder, even that of an enemy who opposed him so fiercely for so long. When you sin against God, you should feel very remorseful inside your heart. You might feel so broken inside. It is your heart condemning you. You cannot look up to God. You want to look up to God, but your spirit is so broken you aren't able to do so.

Fasting was also a means of returning to God. In Psalm 51:17, fasting becomes an avenue whereby God's anger is diverted from us. A very good example is found in the book of Jonah. The entire nation of Nineveh fasted, from the king all the way down to the animals. Even the cats and the dogs were fasting. Even the little rats didn't get their cheese. Everybody in town was fasting. All were very sad, sitting in their own little corners. When an entire nation prayed, and food was put away in a humbling show of national fasting, God looked down from heaven and His anger was turned away from the people (Jon. 3:4-9).

Early in Israel's history, fasting came to be recognized as an effective tool for prayer. In 2 Samuel 12:15-23, the newborn son of King David was sick unto death. King David fasted and prayed, hoping that his remorseful actions would prove effective in bringing healing to his child. David, the man after God's own heart, apparently believed that fasting played a vital role in the effectiveness of prayer. This then was how fasting came to be practised in the ancient times of the Old Testament.

New Testament Practice

During the New Testament times, fasting was already a widely practised discipline. Before the Lord Jesus Christ began His ministry, He fasted for 40 days (Matt. 4:1-2). The Pharisees and the disciples of John the Baptist were always fasting (Matt. 9:14-15). The Lord Jesus Christ Himself taught His disciples the proper way to fast (Matt. 6:16-18). When the New Testament church was born, the early church practised habitual fasting (Acts 13:1-3; 1 Cor. 7:5).

Early Church Practice

The early church understood the great importance of fasting. Throughout the early centuries of the early church, fasting was a common practice among Christians. The annals of the early church around A.D. 315 inform us that Christian believers fasted twice a week; every Wednesday and every Friday. It was a discipline they were faithfully practising. They also used to fast before Easter for one week, 3 weeks, or 40 days.

From this we understand one thing: fasting is not something new. It is an old but very important practice. The Hindu people practice fasting; the Buddhist people practice fasting. Religious people from almost every faith practice fasting because it's a very important discipline.

The Importance Of Fasting

Why do we need to fast? What is the great importance of fasting? First, we could consider how sin came about. Sin

entered the world as a result of an eating infringement. Now eating is not wrong, but eating something that God had forbidden is.

If you look at the Genesis account, you could surmise that the devil came into the serpent. Now remember one thing: the serpent is not the devil because the serpent was part of the creation of God when He made the earth. Satan was originally an angel of God (Ezek. 28:14). And among all the earthly creatures of God, none was so wise, crafty, and cunning as the serpent. So Satan selected the serpent as his instrument when he wanted to enter into the world to corrupt mankind (Gen. 3:1).

If you are wondering how it was possible, let me remind you of something that happened in the life of our Lord Jesus Christ. Once the Lord Jesus Christ went to a place called Gadarenes where He was met by a man possessed by a legion of demons (Mk. 5). The fearful demons begged the Lord Jesus: *Oh Lord Jesus, please do not send us to hell. Look, Lord Jesus! There is a group of pigs over there. Send us there.* At the Lord's word "Go!," all of the demons went immediately into the pigs. The poor pigs could not stand the demons residing inside them and they all committed suicide by jumping over the cliffs (Mk. 5:13).

So, demon spirits can possess animals. At the Garden of Eden the devil went into a serpent. And the serpent spoke to Eve. The devil through the serpent was trying to make Eve eat the forbidden fruit! (Gen. 3:1-6). That act of eating something forbidden was an act of disobedience to God. And that act of disobedience enslaved humanity to the devil. When you fast, you are humbling your soul, turning yourself back to God. Such an act of humbling breaks the power of the devil over your life.

The Bible tells us that when you fast you are humbling yourself before God: *But as for me, when they were sick, My clothing was sackcloth; I humbled myself with fasting; And my prayer would return to my own heart. I paced about as though he were my friend or brother; I bowed down heavily, as one who mourns for his mother* (Ps. 35:13,14). When the devil tempted Eve to eat the forbidden fruit he caused man to disobey God. The act of disobedience is an act of pride. It's an act that goes against God, an act of rebellion, an act of defiance. It was this sinful act of rebellion that brought about our separation from God. Instead of the Lord God being the Lord over our life the devil became our god. We came into bondage. So, that very act of eating something forbidden imprisoned us. When we put away food and we fast, we humble our soul in submission to God and are not in rebellion against Him. When we do that, the power of the Most High comes upon us. It breaks the power of bondage over our lives, and God becomes our God.

Fasting gives you mastery over the flesh. In Romans chapter 7, verses 18 and 23 we read, there was a law in our body, which is the law of sin in the members of our body. This law will make us sin. Our sinful nature forces us to sin. When you fast, you gain mastery over the flesh. The flesh is no longer the master of itself but a servant submitted to God. That is why the Lord Jesus Christ fasted for 40 days before He began His ministry (Matt. 4:1-11). After the 40 days, the devil came to tempt Him. For 40 days the devil had left Jesus alone and never tempted Him. But when the Lord Jesus became very hungry after the long fast, the devil then made his move and tried to ensnare Him.

Sometimes I watch science documentaries on the Discovery Channel. Once I watched a documentary programme on snakes. There is an amazing variety of snakes in this world. A frog was just sitting on a branch when a snake came along. It approached the frog very slowly. The frog was looking at a fly. The snake was looking at the frog. The frog was very silently waiting for the right time to catch the fly for his supper. As the frog was preying on the fly, the snake was looking on very quietly. The frog finally zapped the fly and was so happily enjoying it. The snake was still looking on, waiting patiently. Suddenly, in a twinkling of an eye, the snake leapt at the frog and swallowed it up in one gulp.

In the same way, the devil waited for 40 days. He waited for the right moment to strike at the Son of the Living God. After fasting for 40 days the Lord Jesus, the Bible says, was very hungry. At the moment of His weakness, the devil came: *Jesus, you have not eaten for 40 days. You are God. Make this stone to become bread, and eat it.* This was how the tempter made his approach. But the Lord Jesus Christ refused to eat. He overcame the temptation and took mastery over the flesh.

This is the great importance of fasting: *Fasting restores your relationship with God for it brings you back into a place of submission to God.* When you fast, you become weak. In your weakness, you will depend on God. You will submit more readily to God. Your soul is humble before God (Ps. 35:13). This posture of dependence, submission, and humility characterized the original relationship between Adam and God before the entrance of sin.

The Purpose Of Fasting

There are in fact many purposes but we are only going to discuss four purposes.

1. *Fasting chastens or disciplines the soul before God.*

> *Psalm 69:10*
> *10 When I wept and chastened my soul with fasting,*
> *That became my reproach.*

You punish the soul because it is now obedient to the devil; you don't want the soul to become obedient to the devil; you want it to be obedient to God. So you fast. You deny the stomach the food that it craves. We are always pampering our bodies with delicious food. When you fast, you are breaking the power of the devil over your soul. You chasten the soul before God. You must learn to deny the soul and not pamper it.

2. Fasting causes the soul to become humble before God.

> *Ezra 8:21*
> *21 Then I proclaimed a fast there at the river of Ahava, that we might humble ourselves before our God, to seek from Him the right way for us and out little ones and all our possessions.*

When the devil tempted Eve to eat the fruit, he told her, You are not lower than God. If you eat the fruit, you will become equal with God. What was the devil provoking in Eve? Clearly it was pride. Pride was the sin that caused the devil to fall. Lucifer was the most beautiful of all of God's angels (Ezek. 28:12-14). During a worship service,

a brother plays the piano, a sister plays the keyboard, another plays the drums, and someone else plays the flute. So much talent is displayed in a variety of musical instruments. There are also lovely sisters who provide the vocal leads for the worship songs. Altogether, so many different people come together to make one worship team. But with regard to Lucifer, all the musical instruments were placed inside him when he was created. When he stretched out his hands, all the musical instruments within him resounded with vibrancy and life. He was an entire orchestra all by himself. When he conducted the worship in heaven, angelic songs and the sweetest music would flow out in every direction. Appearance wise, he was handsome beyond comparison. For all that, it was no wonder the Bible describes him as perfect. However, pride entered into his heart, and he fell. He had said to himself, *I will be greater than God. My throne will be higher than God.* He tried to incite in Eve that same self-elevating attitude: "You are not lower than God. Eat this fruit; you will become equal with God" (Isa. 14:12-14).

Pride will always cause you to fall down. If you walk humbly, you will not sin. If you sin, it's because there is pride somewhere in your life. Pride is the foundation upon which sin is built up. That is why when the Lord Jesus walked on this earth He was one hundred percent humble (Phil. 2:6-8). In fact He was more than one hundred percent humble-and that's why he didn't sin.

3. Fasting to seek the face of God.

> *2 Chronicles 20:3-4*
> *3 And Jehoshaphat feared, and set himself to seek the LORD, and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah.*

> *4 So Judah gathered together to ask help from the LORD; and from all the cities of Judah they came to seek the LORD.*

You humble yourself, put away food, and seek the face and mind of God. Fasting in this manner is very important.

4. Fasting prepares you for spiritual warfare.

> *Matthew 17:21*
> *21 However, this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting.*

If you want to make war with the devil, fasting is the key to your success. Several years ago, I was walking in a small village in South India. I had just finished my ministry in this village and was walking to the next village some 5 kilometers away. As I was walking along, I happened to see a young man sitting by the roadside. He was all dirty and was not wearing any clothes except for his underwear. A huge chain weighed down on his neck, hands, and feet. He was very thin. When I saw him, my heart was so broken. Sometimes, in the villages in India, a person caught stealing would be stripped and treated in this manner by the village people. So I thought this poor man must have done something like that.

I called out to him, Come here, adding, *Don't worry: follow me!* He did so, and followed after me. As we were walking along, I asked, What is your name? He told me his name. After one minute he told me another name. After another minute he told me yet another name. He went on giving me a new name each time, making a total of 33 names in all. I thought to myself, *It must be that in every*

village that he stole from, he used a different name each time. So I told him, Don't sin anymore. We continued walking. Then I asked him, *Where do you live?* He told me the name of one village. Then another. And another. And so on. He named a total of 33 villages. So then I surmised that he had used different names in his stealing career in all the different villages where he had lived. Apparently, he got caught finally. So I told him, That was *all your past life. Now I will set you free. You must be a good man from here on.*

As we were walking further along, he turned around and asked me something in my language. Before I could answer him, he spoke in the Chinese language. Then he spoke in yet another language, using 33 different kinds of languages in all. It would be quite impossible even for a gifted polyglot to speak 33 languages let alone a humble village peasant as this man was. As I stared at him in amazement, the Holy Spirit spoke, *This young man is not a thief. He is possessed with 33 demons. Now I want you to set him free. But these 33 demons will not go away without fasting and praying. So you fast for 3 days and then all the demons will leave* (cp. Matt. 17:14-21). I decided to bring this demonized soul to a pastor I knew who lived in a village along my itinerary. *This is the problem,* I told the pastor. *There are 33 demons inside this boy.* The moment I said those words the pastor's hands and feet started shivering. *Don't worry, I assured the pastor, After 3 days of prayer and fasting by the church, this boy would be totally set free.* And he was.

When you do fasting for spiritual warfare, you are declaring to the devil that he cannot prevail over you, not even with the best of foods.

Methods Of Fasting

How could one fast properly? Many Christians like to fast but don't know how. There are several methods mentioned in the Bible.

1. *Full Fast*: no food and no water. You will find four instances in the Bible where the saints of God went without any food or water.

i. The prophet Moses fasted without food and water for 40 days (Ex. 24:18).
ii. The prophet Elijah fasted without food and water for 40 days (1 Kg. 19:8).
iii. Queen Esther fasted for 3 days without food and water (Est. 4:16).
iv. The Lord Jesus Christ Himself fasted without food and water for 40 days (Matt. 4:2).

Now let me warn you one thing here: According to medical science, the human body can go without food and water for a maximum of 3-7 days. Any period more than that you might run the risk of severe harm, even death. If that is true, how then did Moses, Elijah, and the Lord Jesus fast for 40 days without food and water?

Herein is the mystery: when Moses fasted for 40 days, he did not fast voluntarily. It was the Lord who had called out to him, "Come and see me." Moses headed up the mountain in obedience, and the glory of God engulfed him for 40 days and 40 nights. He saw God face to face. And God spoke with him. Moses didn't realize he spent 40 days and 40 nights in that glory. When he came down the mountain, Joshua may have told him, *You know, you were away for 40 days and 40 nights!*

Elijah was feeling depressed and frightened because Queen Jezebel had wanted to kill him. After scoring a great victory over the prophets of Baal in the name of Jehovah God, he had to run for his dear life when news of the angry queen's evil intentions reached his ears. Overcome by fatigue and hunger, he finally fell into a disquieting sleep. Then an angel came by, *Elijah, get up! Eat this bun and drink this tea.* Elijah complied immediately. This small and simple meal, as it turned out, was no ordinary food. It had come from heaven. It supernaturally strengthened him to walk for 40 days and 40 nights.

Queen Esther, on the other hand, fasted for 3 days and 3 nights when the fate of her people was hanging in the balance. This duration of fasting is quite common, and is safely practised by many believers. But the Lord Jesus, like Moses and Elijah, fasted for 40 days and 40 nights. That kind of protracted fasting has to be divinely commissioned and enabled. When God calls you to a long fast, He will supernaturally take care of you.

About 20 years ago, I was in a small village in South India. The Lord Jesus appeared to me one day and He told me, Fast for 7 days. *Don't eat any food. Don't drink tea or coffee. Just only take one cup of milk a day.* So I obeyed and did not eat any food except for one cup of milk in the evening. I was fasting and praying the whole day. Three days passed by like that. On the fourth day, as I was waiting on God, the Lord Jesus Christ appeared to me in the Spirit. He came and sat beside me, and He began to talk to me. He asked me one question, *Are you hungry?* I said, *Lord Jesus, I am not feeling hungry. How can I feel hungry when You are standing before me?* Then the Lord Jesus said, *I have brought food for you.* When He spoke those words, a plate appeared in His hands. On the plate was delicious food. Like a gentle

loving mother, the Lord Jesus proceeded to scoop up some rice and roll them into a ball with His hands. He looked at me, *Eat this rice*. I immediately responded, *I cannot. I am fasting. How can I eat?* The Lord Jesus smiled at me. Then he said, Eat this, putting the rice ball into my mouth. When I chewed on it, it felt like real food, though I knew it wasn't real food. Bit by bit, in this manner, the Lord Jesus fed me all the food on the plate. Then He said, *Now you sleep and take some rest. I will come and see you tomorrow.*

The next day, the same thing happened: the Lord Jesus again fed me with His own hands. But this time it was a different kind of food. This most touching display of motherly love continued on to the 6th day. I was being fed food by the Lord Jesus Himself (cp. Jn. 21:9-13). The food seemed like real food, but it was food that did not belong to this world. On the 7th day, a letter arrived from a family who were at their wits end: *We are tormented by devils for a long, long time. Please come to help us. If you don't help us, our whole family will commit suicide.* As I was reading the letter, the Lord Jesus appeared before me: *I told you to fast for 7 days so that you could go and fight with this devil. Now you go. I will give you the victory.*

When you are engaged in a total fast, remember this: 3 days is normal for the human body. If you fast for more than 3 days, you put your life in danger. But if the Lord Jesus tells you, "My dear son, my dear daughter, fast for 7 days, fast for 14 days, fast for 21 days, fast for 40 days" - then you must obey Him. He will strengthen you, and you will not die, even if it is a complete fast.

2. *Partial Fast.* In the partial fast, besides taking liquids, you eat only a little solid food, not the usual amount (Dan. 10:3). During the period of fasting, you eat very little

food, and perhaps no meat at all but only some vegetables and soup. You can carry out a partial fast for any length of time.

3. *The Fasted life*. When you keep such a fast, you are fasting all the time. Your entire life is a life of fasting. How is such a fast observed? You refrain from eating things that you like. For example, let's say you like chicken rice very much, and it is your favourite food. Yet you deny yourself from having it. Such a manner of fasting usually also means you eat very little food. If you maintain this kind of minimal diet all throughout your life, you are living a life of fasting, which can open the way to a very blessed life.

When you fast you must pray. If you don't pray your fasting is useless - you are only starving or dieting. If this weren't the case, then all the people in the world who are on a diet can be considered to be fasting. If you fast you must pray (1 Cor. 7:5). Fasting and praying go hand in hand. I always advise Christians not to fast if they are working. They cannot be praying the whole time they are in the office. You could spend your off day fasting and praying. Then it will become very meaningful.

Benefits Of Fasting

1. Fasting improves your physical health.

> *Isaiah 58:8*
> *8 Then your light shall break forth like the morning, Your healing shall spring forth speedily, And your righteousness shall go before you; The glory of the LORD shall be your rear guard.*

When you fast, all the members in your body go through a self-cleansing process. Fasting is a very good natural way to clean the body. When God created man, He planned for him six days of work followed by a day of rest. Why did He ordain a day of rest? Because the body needs it. But think about this: Every single day and night we are eating. We don't give enough rest to our stomach. In fact we often overload the stomach. We eat every moment of the day and night. That is why we get so much sickness. Give your stomach an off day. During the off day, it will clean itself. All the toxins stay trapped in your body system when you are eating all the time. But when you rest one day, all the toxins and the poisons in the system will come out. Your body will then be very, very healthy. No sickness will come to your body; you will be full of strength.

2. Fasting disciplines your body.

> *1 Corinthians 9:27*
> *27 But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.*

Instead of the body causing you to sin by bringing you under its subjection, you must have mastery over it. Remember what I said earlier: fasting humbles the soul before God. If one act of fasting humbles your soul, then the continual practice of fasting will keep your soul throughout your life, humble before God.

3. Fasting increases your spiritual sensitivity.

> *2 Corinthians 4:16*
> *16 Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day.*

When you fast, the outward man-the flesh-dies. But the inner man - the spirit is renewed day by day. When the inner man is renewed, your spiritual perceptivity increases. You become very sensitive to the Holy Spirit. You will be able to see visions. You will be able to hear clearly the voice of God speaking to you.

4. You will receive God's anointing and the impartation of His power.

> *Luke 4:1-2*
> *1 Then Jesus, being filled with the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness,*
> *2 being tempted for forty days by the devil. And in those days He ate nothing, and afterward, when they had ended, He was hungry.*

When the Lord Jesus Christ fasted for 40 days, He was filled with the Holy Spirit. Coming out of the wilderness, He walked in the power of the Holy Spirit. A new anointing is given when you fast. A new power comes inside you. You will feel a greater authority in your spirit.

The Spirit Of Fasting

Why do we fast? To whom are we fasting?

The Bible says: *When you fast, it must be unto the Lord. It must not be a fast that involves acts of self-inflicted mortification* (Zech. 7:5,6). Your heart attitude must be right in the days of fasting. God is further asking us a series of questions in Zechariah 8:19: *When you fast are you joyful? Are you full of gladness? Are you loving truth and peace?* Why must God ask

such questions? It is because when the people were fasting during those days, they put on very long faces. They didn't tidy their hair, and they dressed ugly. They did that to broadcast their solemn ritual: "Look at me! I am fasting!" In reality, they were boasting. That is why the Lord Jesus taught that when you fast, hide it. Let your heart be hidden; let your mind be hidden; don't show anybody that you are fasting. Anoint your head; wash your face; put on some nice clothes; and don't let anyone suspect you are fasting. When your Heavenly Father sees such a heart, He will reward you openly (Matt. 6:16-18).

Once the Lord Jesus shared with me the essence of fasting: *If the soul is not humble, if your heart is not humble, even if you fast for 365 days, it is totally useless.* You can try to be greater than Moses or the Lord Jesus by breaking everybody's record and get your name into the Guinness book of records. God doesn't take notice of that fasting feat and it is not recorded in the books in heaven. The heart, the mind, and the soul must be humble. You live a hidden life. Don't show to anybody that you are fasting. Don't be boastful. When you live that hidden life, your Father in Heaven will reward you openly.

Fasting doesn't change God

Remember this: when you fast, you cannot change God's will. You simply cannot change God's mind because God does not change (Mal. 3:16; Heb. 13:8). His attitude towards you before the fast and after the fast is the same. If God really doesn't change, then how do you address that nagging question concerning Nineveh? God told Jonah, *Go and tell the people in Nineveh-in 40 days they will be destroyed* (Jon. 1:2; 3:4). So what is the will of God? To

destroy Nineveh? Most surely it was God's will to destroy Nineveh, one might insist. For the fact that they were sinful, wicked, and altogether unrighteous. So God, one must conclude, did indeed want to destroy them. Yet when the people fasted, God did not destroy them (Jon. 3:10). Doesn't that show then that fasting changes God's will? Not at all. God spared them in the end because the people of Nineveh repented. Remember this: Fasting changes you. Fasting doesn't change God. Your spirit changes, your soul changes, your attitude changes. Your soul is humbled before God. When you change, just as the people of Nineveh did, you would repent of your wickedness, sinfulness, and unrighteousness. If you are no longer evil, why should God punish you? When you fast, you submit yourself under the divine will of God. The judgement of God was over you. But when you fast in repentance, you come under the grace of God.

Many years ago, I went to a city called *Neyveli* in South India to preach in a Lutheran church for a three-day conference. I was accommodated in the church elder's house. The wife of the elder took great pains to cook a delicious meal for me after the day's meetings because I had fasted the whole day. After dinner that night, I went to my room. After praying I got into the bed. When I looked up, I saw a strange thing. A bunch of green bananas was hanging from the ceiling. What a strange family! Instead of putting the bananas on a plate for me to eat, they hung them up above my head. After my dinner, did they expect me to jump up towards the ceiling and pick a banana for dessert? The first day passed by. The second day passed by. Every day I'd see the bananas up there. On the third day, the bananas were still up there. Only then did it occur to me that something was happening to the bananas. Day by day, the bananas were changing colour, from green to

slight yellow to full yellow. On the fourth day, just before I left their home, I asked the elder's wife, *You know, I've been all over India to so many cities. I have stayed with the richest people and the poorest people. But you are the first person who has treated me so uniquely.* The elder's wife was greatly surprised. She stammered, What are you saying? I said, *Normally people put the bananas on the table for the guest to eat. But you hang your bananas up on the ceiling.* She burst out laughing uncontrollably, blurting, *The bananas are not meant for you.* We put the bananas there to ripen! Back in my hometown some time later, as I was praying, the Lord Jesus Christ said this to me: *Do you remember the bananas? I said, Yes, Lord. He said, In the room that you were in, you did not change—the bananas changed. In the same way, when you fast, I don't change-you change.* Fasting changes you, not God.

Chapter 2

Overcoming Habitual Sins

Many people fast without seemingly getting results. Why? Two primary reasons: one, you're not fasting correctly; two, it is done like a ritual. Moreover, there are some kinds of fasting that are displeasing to God. Because of that, their prayer is not answered, and their fasting becomes totally useless. What are the kinds of fasts that displease God? The prophet Isaiah in chapter 58 gives counsel from the Lord on fasting, *You are fasting and it is not producing results. Why? Your heart is not right. Your heart is wicked. You are not eating food. You go to the temple. You listened to sermons. You prayed. But your heart is not right. You are fighting like dogs. Your heart is so wicked. I reject your fast (v.3-5).* These scriptures may remind you of the times you fasted and the desired results did not come. Isn't it because your heart was not right? But when your heart is right, and you fast according to the perfect will of God, your fast would please God. God will then abundantly bless you.

Verse 6 contains the blueprint of the will of God concerning fasting. *Is this not the fast that I have chosen: To loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, to let the oppressed go free, and that you break every yoke?*

When you fast according to this scripture, your fasting will please the heart of God. And when it pleases the heart of God, you will receive the blessings of God for your fast. We can learn seven different arts of fasting from this scripture. Each one of them applies to a set of specific problems and needs in our lives. When you fast correctly by using the right principle, you will receive the desired result. When your fast pleases God, how will God not bless you?

Verses 8-11 describe the various ways God blesses you when you fast rightly. *Then your light shall break forth like the morning, Your healing shall spring forth speedily, And your righteousness shall go before you; The glory of the LORD shall be your rear guard. Then you shall call, and the LORD will answer; You shall cry, and He will say, 'Here I am.' "If you take away the yoke from your midst, The pointing of the finger, and speaking wickedness, If you extend your soul to the hungry And satisfy the afflicted soul, Then your light shall dawn in the darkness, And your darkness shall be as the noonday. The LORD will guide you continually, And satisfy your soul in drought, And strengthen your bones; You shall be like a watered garden, And like a spring of water whose waters do not fail.*

Fasting is an act of sacrifice. When you sacrifice something to God, God is not unkind not to bless you (Heb. 6:10). When you don't receive the blessings, it is because your sacrifice is not right in the eyes of God. We read in Genesis 4 how Cain and Abel each offers a sacrifice to God. But God says He accepts the sacrifice of Abel but rejects the sacrifice of Cain. Cain becomes very angry. Because God does not accept his sacrifice and does not bless him for the sacrifice. Now let me ask you-did Cain have the right to get angry? Why does God reject Cain's sacrifice? Both brothers offer sacrifices, but why does God

reject Cain's but not Abel's? For one simple reason: Cain offers the wrong sacrifice. For a sin offering, blood must be spilled (Heb. 9:22). Abel slays a goat and offers a blood sacrifice. What about Cain? He offers a vegetable sacrifice. There's no blood in vegetables. His sacrifice does not satisfy its purpose, so God cannot accept it. In the same way, when we offer a sacrifice to God through fasting, we must offer a right fasting sacrifice. Our heart and motives must be right. The mind must be pure. Then our sacrifice will be worthy and acceptable in the eyes of God.

Loose The Bands Of Wickedness

When you fast, fast for bands of wickedness to be loosed. Simply - *fast to overcome habitual sin*. Every one of you will have one kind of habitual sin. You try to overcome it. You try and try but it doesn't work. You go to special meetings. You ask for prayer. It doesn't work. It just doesn't go away. And you're wondering why. This is a wicked bond in your life. It must be let loose. The only way is by fasting.

What are habitual sins? They are practices that have been built up in your life over a long period of time. For example, a young boy of 13 starts smoking. At first, one cigarette, then another, and another. What started out as an occasional habit became a regular habit. Finally it became bondage. Even after becoming a Christian, the urge to smoke is still there. So secretly you continue to smoke. While all the people are praying, you go outside secretly to smoke. And then you come back. And when you come for prayer standing before the pastor, he smells a "holy" sacrifice coming from your mouth. I know this, because some people coming to me for prayer had smoke sacrifices coming from their mouth.

When you fast to loose the bonds of wickedness, you fast to release yourself or others from bondage. This kind of fasting will break the bondage of habitual sin in your life. This kind of sin comes in different forms. To some people it is smoking, to others drinking or sexual sins. To yet others is the addiction to pornographic movies and pictures. To some it is hot-temperedness or lying. There is no end to the problem.

Christians Helpless Victims Of Besetting Sins

A habitual sin is something that binds you so that you are regularly doing it. You need to be set free. If you have this problem, don't accept it as part of your nature. It is not part of your nature - it is bondage. The wicked one has bound you with this bondage. There are many Christians who are under this kind of bondage. They are helpless victims of certain besetting sins. The Bible says to cut yourself loose from all the sins that easily pull you down: *Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us.* (Heb. 12:1). The sins that pull you down are not difficult sins. They are the simple sins and easy sins. They are pulling you down because you have been bound. A chain is under your feet. You are a prisoner. You are habitually enslaved. People who are bound under this kind of bondage are victims. They are enslaved to their sin. They are helpless and broken before God. I know many sincere Christians who don't like their bondage. They want to be set free. But they feel helpless. They feel powerless. They pray very hard. They are very sincere before God. For

two days they will be free from the sin. Then on the third day they will fall into that sin again. Have you experienced that?

Many years ago, I was in an American city called *Philadelphia*. There, a woman came to me for prayer. This woman was a very spirit-filled woman in the church. She spoke and sang marvellously in tongues. God even used her in the gift of prophecy. Everyone thought she was a wonderful Christian. When we were alone, she looked at me. For ten minutes she did not speak. She couldn't look into my eyes. She looked down, and then up again. Her mouth would try to say something, but she would look down again. As this was going on, I understood that there was some deep problem in her life that she was too ashamed to tell me. So I told her, *Sister, don't worry*. Give me your hand. I took her hand and began to pray. As I was praying, the Holy Spirit showed me that she was under the bondage of smoking. But at the same time God showed me her heart. She was struggling hard to break this bondage. She would refrain from smoking for two days. On the third day the temptation would come very strongly and she would fall. And she would cry out to God. She would feel so condemned. Feeling very terribly, she would cry and repent. She would feel so ashamed to pray. These were the struggles going on inside her. The Lord Jesus told me, *Tell my daughter I have not rejected her. I see the struggles. Tell her to fast and pray tonight. Tonight I will set her free.* So I stopped my praying, and I looked at the woman and told her everything the Holy Spirit had showed me. She admitted her struggles and felt very ashamed. I told her, *Sister, look up at me. God doesn't condemn you. God sees your struggles. You don't love this sin, but you feel powerless to overcome it.* When I said that, she broke down and cried like a baby,

because deep in her heart that was her true condition. She didn't love the sin.

Perhaps you are also like that. You don't love the sin, but you feel powerless. You feel your flesh is stronger than your spirit. I told that sister, *Tonight, don't eat. You fast and pray. Tonight the power of God will come down from heaven and it will set you free.* For the first time hope surfaced in her eyes. That evening she did not eat her dinner. She fasted and prayed. She worshipped the Lord and meditated. I had told her, *Frankly tell the Lord one thing. Describe how this bondage came about. Tell Him how you fell into this sin in the first place. Sincerely do this. Tonight is your time of deliverance.* She followed my advice and sincerely cried out to God for several hours. Just before 12 midnight, a powerful presence came down into her bedroom and struck her like lightning. She felt something like an iron chain break apart from over her life. When she got up, she felt totally free and light. That was in 1992, and to my knowledge she has never touched a cigarette again.

When you fast against a habitual sin in your life, the power of God can set you free. Whatever the bondage in your life, whatever the besetting sin, only fasting and prayer can set you free. Don't simply go to any pastor or preacher and ask them to pray. That can help momentarily but it won't work for long because you must deal with the problem before God personally.

Habitual sins are like demons possessing a person. Habitual sins bind you. The Bible gives us a very clear reason how habitual sins enslave us: *Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness?* (Rom. 6:16). You become

the slave of whatever or whomsoever you yield yourself to. If, for example, you yield yourself to the habit of smoking, smoking becomes your master and you become its slave. Only fasting and prayer can break the power of the devil operating in the besetting sin in your life.

Many years ago, a man of God went to Africa to preach. The meeting went for eight days, during which time he was fasting and praying. After the first meeting, a few came to him for prayer. He would lay his hands on them, and the power of God would touch them and set them free. A woman blind in both eyes came forward for prayer. She fell when he laid his hands on her. When she got up, she was not healed, and the meeting ended. She came again on the second day for prayer and was not healed. So this man of God was a little sad. On the third day, the same thing happened. On the fourth day, fifth day, sixth day, and seventh day, the same thing happened. The pastor became very sad. All the people were getting healed, but why not this woman? Finally, on the last day, this woman came forward again. What great faith this woman had! She never lost her courage to believe. She had come forward every day without fail. On this eighth day, the last day of the meeting, the pastor prayed and she fell again. After ten minutes, she got up, and her two eyes were opened. The man of God was very happy. When he went back to his room, he couldn't sleep. He knelt down and prayed, *Jesus, why didn't you heal that woman on the first day? Why did you wait to heal her on the last day?* Then the Lord told him that the woman's problem was not a sickness. There were eight spirits of blindness in her body and there were eight bondages in her body. Each time she came up for prayer, a bondage was broken. One by one all the bondages were broken. Finally, on the last day, the eighth bondage was broken and she was totally healed.

How To Pray Against Habitual Sins?

First, understand your problem. You must understand that this is bondage in your life. Many people have a wrong understanding. They expect God to miraculously change their will. It doesn't happen like that. Let me give you an example. Many parents bring their children to me for prayer. They would tell me their children were rebellious, or that they were not willing to study hard. They thought that if I put my hand on them and prayed, their rebellious and unmotivated children would instantly become compliant and gifted. It doesn't work like that. You aren't a robot because God did not make you one. If you were a robot, God would just hit a remote control, and you would become good just like that. We all would be good everyday. It's not like that. God made us in His own image and in His own likeness. This means we all have a will. God expects you to voluntarily submit your will to Him. You must do it in love. When you do that, you are declaring war on the devil over your life. Remember one thing: when you fast, you submit yourself to God.

Recognize your problem. Understand that you must submit your will to God. You must make a decision that you want deliverance. That is very important. You must make the decision. Let me give you an example from the Gospels. Once the Lord Jesus went to the pool of Bethesda where many sick people are gathered. For 38 years, one man who is there has remained paralysed. The Lord Jesus knows that man needs to be healed. But He asks him one question: *Do you want to be healed?* (Jn. 5:6). Isn't that a silly question to ask a sick person? Why does the Lord Jesus ask it then? Because some people don't really want to

be healed. You must make a decision that you want to be delivered.

Next, you must recognize the external power of the devil that is controlling your life. A besetting sin is not a hereditary problem. It's not because your father is hot-tempered, so you're hot-tempered; your father a smoker, and so you're a smoker; your father a gambler, so you're a gambler; your father a womanizer, so you're a womanizer. It is a family sin that runs deeper. It is the problem of evil spirits in your family. You must recognize this. It is not part of your nature. This is the lie of the devil. His line of reasoning runs like this: Why are you a womanizer? Because your father was a womanizer. Because his father was a womanizer. Because in your family line there was a string of womanizers. Therefore you are also a womanizer-and it is not your fault. This is the devil's lie, like many lies concerning other sins in your life. Reject that lie. Don't accept it. Recognize it is a spiritual bondage over your life. And only believe that only God can set you free. Nobody else can help you. Habitual sins cannot be conquered by self-discipline but by the power of God that comes down from on high when you fast and pray. This is the most important thing you must understand.

Steps During Fast

There are six steps you must follow during fasting and prayer. If you follow them faithfully, this bondage of habitual besetting sin will be broken. No more will you be a slave to this habitual sin. And this wicked habitual sin will not have power over your life.

1. Renounce the control of this sin over your mind.

> *2 Corinthians 11:3*
> *3 But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.*

The devil has very subtly tried to con you into accepting the sin. You believe the lie of the devil. Let me give you one example. When Eve was standing by the tree, very cunningly, the devil aroused her, *Look*. And when she did, the fruit looked so nice. He then coaxed her, *Take and eat,* which she did. Very subtly the devil had deceived her. First, renounce the control of this sin in your mind. After renouncing, pray.

This is how you should pray: I *renounce in Jesus' name this sin over my life*. You must name the sin. Whether it is a sexual sin, a drinking problem, a smoking problem, anger, or whatever, you must say: *I renounce in Jesus' name (the name of the sin) over my life*.

2. Acknowledge that you are self-deceived.

> *1 Corinthians 6:9*
> *9 Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived.*

Do you know how we deceive ourselves? We say to ourselves, *I am very strong spiritually*. *This small sin will not affect me*. Don't play with sin. If you put cotton and fire together, the cotton will catch fire (Prov. 6:27,28). In the same way, when you play with sin, you become a slave

to sin. Several people have come to me and made the confession that they had become addicted to pornography on the Internet. Even many pastors are addicted. I asked one pastor how he became addicted. He said he was just casually browsing to see what it really was. But that one trip caused a fall and resulted in bondage. He became a prisoner.

This is how you should pray: *I acknowledge this sin over my life.*

3. Forgive others.

> *2 Corinthians 2:10,11*
> *10 Now whom you forgive anything, I also forgive. For if indeed I have forgiven anything, I have forgiven that one for your sakes in the presence of Christ,*
> *11 lest Satan should take advantage of us; for we are not ignorant of his devices.*

Whatever evil and harm others have done, forgive them. Perhaps you may be wondering what forgiveness has to do with sin. Unforgiveness often opens the door to the devil. Don't give room for the devil to take advantage of you. If you do not forgive, you give the devil leverage over your life. He will bind you, put sickness on your body, and eventually kill you. Whether or not the harm people did you gives the right to feel angry is not the issue. The most important thing is to not keep unforgiveness in your heart. Unforgiveness will destroy you.

This is how you should pray: *In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ I forgive so-and-so.*

4. Submit your will and body to God.

> *Romans 6:19*
> *19 I speak in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members as slaves of uncleanness, and of lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves of righteousness for holiness.*

Submit every part of your body to the lordship and kingship of the Lord Jesus Christ.

This is how you should pray: *In the name of Jesus Christ, I submit my body to the lordship of Jesus Christ. Come Lord Jesus and be the ruler and Lord over this part of my body.*

5. Accept personal responsibility for your sin.

This is very important. Many people don't understand that they will never be set free as long as they don't admit responsibility. In the book of Genesis we read, after Adam and Eve had sinned against God, they went into hiding (Gen. 3:1-13). God came looking for Adam. Adam was afraid, so he didn't come out from hiding. But at last he said, *I dare not see Your face*. The Lord asked him why not. He said, *I am naked. Who told you that you are naked?* God queried. *Have you eaten the fruit?* Read carefully the conversation. Adam had sinned. Now God asked him a question: *Did you eat the fruit that I told you not to eat?* What should be the answer? No, isn't it? But what did Adam say? *The woman You made and gave to me-she caused me to sin.* God turned to the woman. *Eve, why did you do that?* She was trembling. She didn't know what to do. She turned around. She saw the serpent and she said, *Lord, the serpent that You made caused me to sin.* And God turned to the

serpent. And the serpent didn't know what to do. It turned around to look for the devil but he had already run away. So the serpent couldn't say anything.

Now what were Adam and Eve doing? They were blaming God for their sin. They said, "The woman you made; the serpent you made," which really translates as, *If You didn't make the woman or the serpent, I would not have sinned.* Instead of taking personal responsibility and confessing, "Lord I have sinned," Adam passed the blame to someone else. Whatever the reason you are under bondage, take personal responsibility.

Several years ago, a young Chinese woman called me from Australia. She was going through a serious problem in her life. She told me, *I hate God. I'm very angry with God.* I asked her why she was so angry with God. She said she married a man who had loved her. Afterwards, he stole all her money away and left her destitute. She asked me, *Why did God allow all these problems into my life? God is so cruel.* She told me her story. She had come from a godly Christian family. She fell in love with a married man. When she told me that, I asked her one question, *When you loved this man did you know that he was a married man?* She said, *Yes.* That was her first sin: falling in love with a married man. Because of this illicit relationship, the man divorced his first wife, forsook his two children, and ran away with this girl to Australia. This girl did not tell her parents and their hearts were broken. She was now reaping the effects of her sin. I told her, *You committed this evil in the eyes of God. What right do you have to blame God? You have no right. The problems you are facing now are a result of your own sin in your own life. For this, you must accept personal responsibility.* Don't blame God. Don't blame any other person. You chose to sin. You willed to sin. Humble yourself. Acknowledge your sin. Take responsibility for your own sin.

This is how you should pray: *Lord Jesus, I accept personal responsibility for practising this sin.*

6. Renounce and disown sinful influences in your life.

> *Galatians 5:24*
> *24 And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.*

Crucify your flesh. For example, if you have a drinking problem and you mix with a certain group of friends who drink and who encourage you to drink, renounce those friendships. Disassociate yourself from those kinds of people. If you don't do this, you will always be under bondage.

This is how you should pray: *Lord Jesus, I disown this evil company. I disown watching movies that cause me to sin.*

If you sincerely follow these six steps, and you sincerely fast and pray, I promise you in Jesus' name the power of this habitual sin over your life will be broken.

In conclusion, I will tell you one very important point. If you are going to just fast for one day, don't expect immediate results. If you have been a slave for 30 years, that power won't be broken overnight. Fast repeatedly until you get a breakthrough. Don't give up. Don't get discouraged. Don't feel that it is not working. Don't feel that God is not answering your prayer. Every time you fast, every ounce and trace of bondage is being dug out, bit by bit. So keep on fasting until you get your breakthrough.

Chapter 3

Overcoming Problems

Isaiah 58:6
6 Is this not the fast that I have chosen: To loose the bonds of wickedness, To undo the heavy burdens, To let the oppressed go free, And that you break every yoke?

The second thing mentioned in this scripture is the requirement to **undo the heavy burdens**. Many of us experience heavy burdens. In good times and bad times, we experience burdensome problems in our life. So the second art of fasting is to *fast for problems we face in our lives*. This is the kind of fast that pleases God very much. You are undoing heavy burdens that weigh upon your life, upon your family, upon your friends, upon your relatives, upon your church. Whether individually or in a group, you fast against the problems that you are facing.

In the book of Ezra, we find the priest Ezra facing a problem. How did he solve the problem, which is like a heavy burden upon his head? Yet not only upon his head, but also upon the heads of the whole group that is travelling with him. A group of Jews are travelling back to Jerusalem with Ezra (Ezra 8:21-23). They are going to rebuild the temple walls. This band of Jewish migrants is

carrying a lot of gold, silver, and precious stones. Along the way there are robbers and bandits. Along the way Ezra regrets one thing (v.22). He has not asked the king for a company of soldiers. Ezra's heart is worried, because he is now responsible for everybody travelling with him. You know, when robbers come, they don't just steal your things. If you put up a fight, they kill you.

Once I read in the newspapers in Singapore about an 80 year old Chinese woman who lived all alone in an apartment. One day, two robbers entered her house, but she thought they were her children's friends. These villains tied up this poor and helpless 80 year-old woman and bound her mouth. They ransacked the whole house and found-guess what? $80! When this woman struggled, they took a knife and killed her. When robbers come, they don't just steal your things, they also endanger your life. Ezra knows this, so his heart is burdened. A heavy burden sits on his head. So he calls everybody, *Let us wait here; let us fast.*

For a personal problem, an individual should fast by himself. If it is a group problem, the entire group must fast. So this is the principle you must remember. Suppose there is a problem your entire family is facing. It is not good enough just for the mother or the father to fast. The whole family must fast together. When the church is facing a problem, most of the time we expect the pastor to fast, even though, rightly, the whole church should fast.

Methods To Follow

1. Choose who are to be involved in the fast.

> *Leviticus 23:32*
> *32 "It shall be to you a sabbath of solemn rest, and you shall afflict your souls; on the ninth day of the month at evening, from evening to evening, you shall celebrate your sabbath."*

Remember this one very important point: If you are going to fast for your family, or in your prayer group, or for your church, firstly determine carefully who are to be involved. Let's say it's a family problem. The husband and wife know the problem but not the children. So who should be involved? The husband and the wife should be involved. It is not necessary to involve the children. Why put heavy burdens on little children?

For several years now, we have been doing a television ministry in India. Before we started this ministry, we needed lots of funds. A television ministry is very expensive and we needed to obtain sophisticated equipment, which don't come cheap. The leanest budget I could work out still required about US$500,000. Where do you go for such a large sum of money?-I was only a simple preacher. I took the problem to our staff, *This is a ministry problem, so all of us are involved. From today, we are all going to fast for 40 days*. It was a heavy burden on my head. How do we raise half a million dollars? So the entire staff, all five of us, fasted for 40 days. In the morning, we prayed for one hour. During lunchtime, nobody ate as we prayed for another hour. In the evening, before our staff headed home, we prayed yet again for one hour. Three times a day,

all my staff prayed with me. Every day we cried to God, *O God, you gave us this big work to do-where will we get the money?* God heard our prayer. He began to speak to the hearts of many people and, one by one, they began to give. In two years, we raised all the money. When we pray and fast for our problem, God would certainly hear our prayer.

2. Share the problem.

After choosing who are to be involved in the fast, the next thing is share the problem to the group. The problem must be clearly understood by everyone. Then all can agree together with one heart. If the people do not know the problem, they wouldn't know for what they are fasting and praying. Look at verse 21 of Ezra 8. Ezra is telling the people, *Let us fast, and let us seek God's way.* So what is their need? They want to know God's way. Ezra says to them, *This is the one point we are all going to fast and pray. We want to seek God's way. God will show us the right way to walk, so that you and your children and all of us can walk in safety.* Remember this point: When you fast as a group, everybody in the group must know why they are fasting and praying.

3. Fast seriously. Agonize in prayer.

> *Ezra 8:21*
> *21 Then I proclaimed a fast there at the river of Ahava, that we might humble ourselves before our God, to seek from Him the right way for us and our little ones and all our possessions.*

Not just fasting-you agonize in prayer before God. This is why it is very important to choose the right people to fast and pray together. If you pick the wrong people,

instead of fasting and praying, they will be sleeping. Pick the right people. And agonize in prayer. Pray sincerely. Pray seriously. When you do that, you are shaking the throne of God. You are moving the heart of God. Give no rest to God (Isa. 62:1). Keep on moving Him - until you receive your miracle.

In Matthew 11:12, the Lord Jesus says *the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force*. It's the violence of those who are relentless in their faith. Not the violence between husbands and wives. That is wrongful violence. If you are displaying that kind of violence, you are working for the devil. We don't want that kind of violence. But be violent in your heart for good; be violent in your faith. When you are violent in your faith, you will not sit down and rest until you get your answer. You will agonize in prayer. You are fervent in prayer. You will keep on moving the throne of God until God answers. Keep on doing that. I promise you in Jesus' name you will certainly get your miracle. The reason why we are not getting miracles is that we are weaklings when it comes to flexing the muscles of our faith.

4. Fast sincerely before you attempt to solve the problem.

> *Ezra 8:15-20*
> *15 Now I gathered them by the river that flows to Ahava, and we camped there three days. And I looked among the people and the priests, and found none of the sons of Levi there.*
> *16 Then I sent for Eliezer, Ariel, Shemaiah, Elnathan, Jarib, Elnathan, Nathan, Zechariah, and Meshullam, leaders; also for Joiarib and Elnathan, men of understanding.*

17 And I gave them a command for Iddo the chief man at the place Casiphia, and I told them what they should say to Iddo and his brethren the Nethinim at the place Casiphia - that they should bring us servants for the house of our God.
18 Then, by the good hand of our God upon us, they brought us a man of understanding, of the sons of Mahli the son of Levi, the son of Israel, namely Sherebiah, with his sons and brothers, eighteen men;
19 and Hashabiah, and with him Jeshaiah of the sons of Merari, his brothers and their sons, twenty men;
20 also of the Nethinim whom David and the leaders had appointed for the service of the Levites, two hundred and twenty Nethinim. All of them were designated by name.

Ezra has been travelling with a very large company. But at this point he moves ahead with a smaller group. The larger group lags behind, a three-day journey away. If the larger group is with them, they would be in less danger. The only way to solve their problem is to help the larger group come quickly to them. That is the solution. Or that's what the natural mind tells you. Remember this very important point: Although you can think of solutions in the natural to solve your problem, before attempting to find a solution, fast. That's what Ezra does. He tells the advance party, *Let us wait here by the river. Let us fast. Let us fast for three days. Then we will get a perfect solution from God.*

Two things can be observed in these scriptures. *Firstly,* while fasting, Ezra and the group stay put. They just camp in one place. This is what I always say: *When you are fasting, don't work; if you are working, don't fast.* If you are working, your mind is all on your work. You have to go to your

office. You have to get to your college. How can your mind be on the things of God?

Secondly, recognize the fact that you cannot solve your problem before fasting. Don't work the solutions in your mind. If your mind is cramped with so many solutions, you cannot pray. Your mind will be so disturbed it will be all over the place. Many Christians have this problem. When they kneel down to pray, their minds wander everywhere. How do you solve this problem? Before you pray, read the Bible. You might say, *When we are reading the Bible, our mind flies around.* Let me offer another strategy: Before you read the Bible, worship the Lord. When you worship the Lord, your heart lifts up and goes before God. All the hyper-activity in your mind calms down. Follow this up by reading the Word. It will calm your mind down further. At that moment when you and your heart become one, your mind is still. You can then pray sincerely before God.

5. Ask for God's step-by-step guidance.

> *Ezra 8:21*
> *21 Then I proclaimed a fast there at the river of Ahava, that we might humble ourselves before our God, to seek from Him the right way for us and our little ones and all our possessions.*

Ezra tells the people to pray for only one thing: Seek God for the right way. When you are fasting, you ask God to give you guidance one step at a time. Remember one thing, however. God may show you the guidance, but it may not be the complete picture yet. It will come one step at a time. When you take the first step, God shows you the next step. After that comes the third step.

In 1983, God called me to go and evangelize Tibet. That task is my special call. At that time I was very young. I didn't know anything about Tibet. So I made plans to go to Tibet during the winter. That was the most foolish thing to do. From October to April, the whole country is covered with thick snow. It is impossible to travel. I didn't know then. But I had made an elaborate plan to go to Tibet in December. I was praying one day, and the Lord Jesus told me: *You are not ready. Don't go now.* Naturally I was very disappointed. I began to fast. I fasted for 40 days in 1984. During the 40 days, little by little God showed me how to evangelize Tibet. From 1984 to 1986, for two and a half years, I would fast regularly for 40 days. And during those forty days of fasting, the Lord Jesus Christ would always come in the Spirit. He would hold up a large map of Tibet and begin to teach me, showing me the places I should go, and where different Tibetan tribes lived. He taught me the customs and mannerisms of the people, and showed me the evil spirits dominating each place in Tibet.

For two and a half years the Lord Jesus Christ taught me like that. Step by step, guidance came to me. I wrote them all down in my diary. At the end of two and a half years, in the month of April 1986, on the last day of a 40 day fast, the Lord Jesus Christ appeared again to me. He told me, *For two and a half years I have trained you. Now you are ready. Now you can go to Tibet. You will be a strong warrior now, and will overcome all the powers of darkness in that country.* I first went to Tibet in September 1986. From that day till now, I go to Tibet every year, each time with a detailed plan from the Lord. When you fast for your problem, God will show you step-by-step guidance.

Pray for victory

When you pray, pray with faith for victory. Don't approach fasting and prayer with a defeated heart. This is the biggest problem with many, perhaps almost all, Christians. When you pray, you don't pray with faith, for you carry lots of doubt and unbelief in your mind. Don't entertain such thoughts as *Will God answer this prayer? No, He will not answer because I am very bad.* The Bible says very clearly, *Call upon me and I will answer you* (Jer. 33:3). When you call upon God, He hears your prayer. Whether it is a good prayer or stupid prayer, God always hears prayers.

When praying for victory, search the Bible for biblical examples of people who experienced victory over similar problems. Study how they overcame their problems. What solution did God give them to settle their problems? Their solution provides the pattern and principles for your own solution. Biblical solutions are always correct. Many years before Ezra, King Jehoshaphat faced a somewhat similar problem (2 Chr. 20:1-25). Three different armies were coming from three different sides to destroy Israel. In the natural, they faced sure defeat. They didn't know what to do. The burden of the entire nation was upon the king's head. If he were killed, the whole nation would perish. So he must find a solution. His problem was that his army was very weak and small. How were they to fight a much larger army? What should he do? He told Israel: *Let's fast and pray and ask God for a solution.* So everybody fasted. Then God spoke to his prophet Zechariah and told him the solution: *Go and tell the king, this is what they should do; I will give them the solution and victory.* They carried out the plan from God and became more than conquerors. When you sincerely fast and pray over the heavy burdens and problems of your life, God will show you a way out. God will give you a solution.

Steps To Fast

There are five steps in this fasting prayer to lift heavy burdens off your life, your family, and your church.

1. *Get the facts of the problem.* For example, when we wanted to purchase a video camera for our television ministry, we didn't know which to choose from among the many models out there. There were different kinds of models even within the specific categories of church use, home use, and professional use. I got all the brochures and studied every one. Then I sought advice from some engineers. Finally I narrowed down to two models. What was I doing? I was gathering all the facts. I then fasted for three days. I said, *Lord Jesus, these are all the solutions. These are the two models. Of the two, which should I buy?* On the third day, the Lord told me which one to buy. So get all the facts.

2. *Describe the problem to God very accurately.* Both Ezra and Jehoshaphat stated their problems clearly before God. Describe your feelings, especially your fears, to God. Tell him in detail. This is very important. Many Christians don't do this. When they pray, it is like sending a telegram to God. Some people who write to me for prayer go like this: *Please pray for my family.* Pray for what? Is their family sick? Have they no food to eat? Have any members of their family backslidden? Some others write, *Please pray for my job.* What to pray for the job? Are you laid off and need a job? Do you already have a job and you want a promotion? Don't be like sending a telegram in your prayer. Describe in detail to God your problem.

3. *Wait silently on God for an answer.* When you wait on the Lord silently, God will speak to you. He may give a sudden inspiration to your mind. A scripture may flash in your

mind. Or God may speak to you through a vision. The Bible tells us that the Almighty God will give inspiration to the spirit of man (Job 32:8). But in order to get that inspiration, you must silently wait on God. All that is within you must be quiet. If you are making a lot of noise, you cannot hear God speaking to you. After praying, be quiet. You tell the Lord, *Lord, now you speak to me. Give us a solution; give us an answer.* Then be still. Don't say anything. In the stillness and quietness, sometimes the Holy Spirit will speak to you in a still small voice, or a sudden inspiration may come to your mind. A scripture may suddenly flash in your mind, or you may see a vision. God can speak to you in different ways.

4. *When you are praying in a group, ask every person in your group if they heard anything from God.* Anyone may get an answer from God. Remember one thing: when you are praying in a group, the Lord Jesus Christ is in your midst. In Revelation 1:12-13, the apostle John sees the Lord Jesus Christ in the midst of seven lamp stands. Jesus Christ is light. Light goes out from Him to all the seven lamps. In the same manner, when you are praying in a group, the light of this world, the light of glory, the Father of lights, will stand in your midst. From Him light will go to every person in the group. And He will give inspiration, perhaps to each person differently, but for one purpose: the answer to your prayer. Remember this: When you are praying in a group with one purpose in mind, the Lord Jesus Christ may choose to answer that purpose in various ways-but in a manner linked to each individual's particular gifting.

5. *Gather all the words of inspiration from everybody in your group and put them again before the feet of God and pray.* In the book of Revelation you will read that all the 24 elders in heaven carry bowls containing the prayers of saints in

their hands. Those prayers are put into the hands of an angel, who deposit them at the feet of the Lord Jesus Christ (Rev. 5:8; 8:3). When all the prayers are put at His feet, God gives the answer. In the same manner, after you have gathered all the facts and words of inspirations your group received, place them at the feet of God. Everyone in the group should then pray again very sincerely.

6. *Wait again, silently.*

> *Proverbs 4:11-12*
> *11 I have taught you in the way of wisdom; I have led you in right paths.*
> *12 When you walk, your steps will not be hindered, And when you run, you will not stumble.*

And as you are waiting, you will hear a word from the Lord. God will give you a solution. Isaiah 30:21 gives a beautiful example on how God's answer can come: *You shall hear a word behind your ear saying, This is the way: walk in it!* When you wait on the Lord, the word of the Lord will come to you. "This is the solution! This is how you shall do it! Walk in this way!" And you will certainly have the victory.

So this is the prayer that we can fast and pray for our problems. Remember one thing: such fasts to undo the heavy burdens in yourself and in other people are very pleasing to God. If you are not having a problem but your relatives or your neighbours or your friends are having a problem, you fast for them. When you do that, your act of sacrifice will greatly please God. Because you are undoing heavy burdens. When you do something that pleases God, will He not give deliverance? Will He not give a miracle?

Will He not show you a way? So pray sincerely. You will certainly get your victory.

Chapter 4

Revival and Evangelism

Isaiah 58:6
6 Is this not the fast that I have chosen: To loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, to let the oppressed go free, and that you break every yoke?

The third art of fasting in this scripture is *Let the oppressed go free*. The oppressed are those who are in bondage, those who are prisoners, those who are slaves, and those who are blinded. They are people under oppression. They need to be set free. This kind of fasting and prayer is *for revival and evangelism*. You can do this type of fasting and praying for the salvation of your own family, for people to get saved and come join your church, for backsliders to return to God, and also for revival in your village, city, or nation. In the past, mighty revivals have followed such prayer and fasting.

Without fasting, no revival will come. Every time there is a revival, it is because people fasted and prayed. When people fast and pray, the heart of God is moved, and the oppression of the wicked one over the people is broken. The power of God comes down. All bondages are broken. All veils over people's eyes are torn away. The truth can

now be seen. When people can see the truth, they are set free. Before spiritually blind people can see the truth, we need to fast and pray.

Don't just wish that people get saved. We won't see revival by merely wishing. We wish that our family members would get saved. We wish that our church would grow. We wish that crime would disappear from our city. But all your wishes end up like ashes. You are wondering what's wrong with God. Why is God not doing anything? And God is wondering what's wrong with you. So at least you and God have something in common. Both of you are wondering what's wrong with the other.

But let me tell you one thing: Nothing is wrong with God. The whole problem is with us. We are not doing our work properly. In biblical history and in church history, there has never been a revival without fasting and praying. Revival doesn't come automatically. The people of God must desire it. The people of God must pray for it. They must offer a sacrifice. If you don't desire revival with all your heart, if you don't pray for revival with all your heart, revival will never come. Remember one thing: *Revival and times of refreshing come from God.*

In Acts 3:19 the apostle Peter outlines how revival comes: *Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord.* Before times of refreshing can come from the presence of the Lord, you must repent; and before people can repent, the church must pray. If the church doesn't pray, no revival will come. So remember this-If you don't pray for your unsaved parents, your unsaved husband or wife, your unsaved children, if you just hoped for them to get saved, all your life till the second coming of

Christ Jesus you will just hope. It will never happen. If you sincerely pray, you break the power of oppression over your family, over your town, over your city, over your nation. The moment the iron curtains of oppression are broken, showers of revival and blessing will come down. People will be getting saved everywhere, because the spirit of grace is being poured out.

Let me show you another secret in the Bible. In Zechariah 12:10, you will find one very important principle: *And I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication; then they will look on Me whom they pierced. Yes, they will mourn for Him as one mourns for his only son, and grieve for Him as one grieves for a firstborn. What is that Spirit of Grace and Supplications?* It is a manifestation of the working of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit of grace and supplication is one of the seven Spirits of the Holy Spirit. When the church prays, the Holy Spirit pours out the Spirit of supplication in your heart. This is because God knows we do not know how to pray (Romans 8:26).

When you pray, when you agonize, when you fast, when you shake violently the throne of God - the second thing takes place. The Spirit of grace is poured out in the land. When the Spirit of grace is poured out, bondages and oppressions are broken. People will look upon the Messiah and know that He is the Messiah.

Biblical Example

1 Samuel 7:1-7
1 Then the men of Kirjath Jearim came and took the ark of the LORD, and brought it into the house of

Abinadab on the hill, and consecrated Eleazar his son to keep the ark of the LORD.
2 So it was that the ark remained in Kirjath Jearim a long time; it was there twenty years. And all the house of Israel lamented after the LORD.
3 Then Samuel spoke to all the house of Israel, saying, "If you return to the LORD with all your hearts, then put away the foreign gods and the Ashtoreths from among you, and prepare your hearts for the LORD, and serve Him only; and He will deliver you from the hand of the Philistines."
4. So the children of Israel put away the Baals and the Ashtoreths, and served the LORD only.
5. And Samuel said, "Gather all Israel to Mizpah, and I will pray to the LORD for you."
6. So they gathered together at Mizpah, drew water, and poured it out before the LORD. And they fasted that day, and said there, "We have sinned against the LORD." And Samuel judged the children of Israel at Mizpah.
7. Now when the Philistines heard that the children of Israel had gathered together at Mizpah, the lords of the Philistines went up against Israel. And when the children of Israel heard of it, they were afraid of the Philistines.

Samuel was the last prophet, priest, and judge for Israel. The nation of Israel wanted now a king to rule over them. This nation, until now led by the God of Israel, was turning more and more to idolatry. They were forsaking the Lord God of Israel and pursuing all the idols of the land of Canaan. Their hearts had become so cold. God had warned their forefathers to get rid of all the unbelieving people in the Promise Land: *Don't allow anybody to remain*

there. Tear down all their worship places. Did they obey this instruction from God? No, they did not. Instead of chasing out all the Canaanites, they showed them pity and allowed them to live on the outskirts of the land. And they never destroyed their pagan temples. They began to live together. Over a period of time, the Israelite boys married the Canaanite girls. This inter-marriage led to the worship of foreign gods. Over time, their hearts turned away from following the true God to worshiping all kinds of idols.

Israel's heart had become cold. The prophet Samuel told the people that grave danger was coming-the nation was to be destroyed. The only way they could be preserved as a nation was for God to protect them. For God to protect them, they must turn away from all their wicked ways and must repent as a nation. They must fast as a nation. Then God would revive the nation. An Israel in revival would once again become a holy nation for God.

Pre-Fast

In this biblical episode, we learn three major steps of the prayer for revival and evangelism. Before the fast, uncover the bondages and sins that hinder revival from coming. If a person is not getting saved, the church, your city, or your nation is not experiencing revival, discern what the bondages and sins are. Is it sinful habits in a person's life? Are there demonic influences or idol worship? For example, the Hindu people in India, worship a total of 33 million gods. So what is their major problem? Idol worship. The whole nation of India is on her knees before idols.

Firstly, discern what are the bondages, so they can be dealt with. Then people must be made to understand the need for revival. Remember, you must desire revival. You must cry out to God for revival. In 1 Samuel 7:8, *the children of Israel said to Samuel: "Do not cease to cry out to the LORD our God for us, that He may save us from the hand of the Philistines*. They recognized that the enemy was coming to destroy their nation. They wanted to be revived. So they asked for prayer. The whole nation cried out to God. This is the most important thing that must take place before the fast: *Identify the bondages and sins that are preventing revival from coming.* You will be amazed to find out hidden bondages in every town, city, and nation. Each city, each town, each municipality may have been dedicated to its own particular idol. As a result, all kinds of foul and evil spirits rule over their respective districts and territories. The prevailing sin in any place usually reflects the character and activity of its ruling spirits.

Let me give you one example. There are some states in northeast India gripped by adultery and fornication. From father to mother to child, everybody is fornicating. It is not a sin to them. It is second nature to them. Everywhere you go in those states, you encounter this problem. The bondage there is the spirit of adultery. So before revival can come to them, the churches there must fast and pray against the spirit of adultery. When you are fasting and praying, you are binding the strongman. When you bind the strong man, he cannot continue to effectively influence your family members. Neither can he easily go on destroying your city (Matt. 12:29).

Many years ago, I was conducting a meeting in *Taichong*, Taiwan. On the third day of the meeting, a mighty revival broke out. The auditorium was overflowing

with huge crowds. While I was praying for the people, the Lord Jesus told me, *Today, I want to bless their families. Tell them to write down the names of their family members whom they wished to be saved and bring them to the front.* So I relayed the message to all the 500 people present. Everyone wrote down the names of their unsaved loved ones and rushed forward. I said, Okay, let us now all pray. The whole building was reveberating with the cries and the prayers of the people. As I was praying, in a vision I saw a huge monstrous demon came and stood outside the compound. It looked so threatening and angry it was ready to tear all the 500 people and me apart. Tried as it did, the demon could not enter our compound. While we were praying, the fire of God surrounded us. Remember this, when you pray, the fire of God will come down and protect you from all evil. It will surround you like an impregnable wall and no devil can get in.

The Holy Spirit showed me that this demon ruled Taichong as its chief prince. A great blood bath had been planned. When I told all the believers present about this, they all prayed even harder. Was the devil happy now that we knew about his evil plan? Obviously not. He was so furious he started to grind his teeth. The more we prayed, the more ground he lost. Our prayer drove him further and further back. Finally, the victory was ours. I saw God's cloak of protection placed over Taichong. That was the year a strange epidemic hit Taiwan. Little children were dying everywhere-except in Taichong. Not a single child died there because God's great protection was over Taichong. I heard from the pastor who conducted the meeting that the children of the parents who brought their children to Taichong were also kept safe. When you pray, the power of oppression is broken.

The Fast

There are 6 things that you must do during the fast.

1. *Call the whole body of Christ or a group of saints together to pray.* The prophet Samuel said, Gather the whole of Israel together (1 Sam. 7:5). The whole church, the whole group, must be gathered together in prayer. If it is praying for your family salvation, then your own prayer is sufficient. But if you are going to pray for your church, for your town, for your city, for your nation, then gather the whole church to pray. When the early church was persecuted, they did not sit down and cry (Acts 4). Not at all. Instead the whole church fasted and prayed.

2. *Sincerely repent of the sins of the land.* This is very important. You must sincerely repent for the sins of the land (1 Sam. 7:2). In Joel 2, the prophet outlines a very important principle how you should sincerely pray: *"Now, therefore," says the LORD, "Turn to Me with all your heart, With fasting, with weeping, and with mourning." So rend your heart, and not your garments; Return to the LORD your God, For He is gracious and merciful, Slow to anger, and of great kindness; And He relents from doing harm* (Joel 2:12,13).

Don't simply pray asking God to forgive: Tear your heart to pieces; put your mind back on God; weep and wail and mourn before God. When you do that, the heart of God will be moved. Power will come down from on high to break the might of the oppressor. Look at the strong counsel of another scripture: *If my people who are called by my name, if they shall humble themselves, and seek my face, then I will look down from heaven* (2 Chr. 7:14). You must humble yourselves and seek the face of God in sincere

fasting and prayer. You must sincerely repent on behalf of your land.

3. *Separate yourself from secret sins. Return unto the Lord your God. Put away foreign gods from your midst. Prepare yourself unto the Lord* (1 Sam. 7:3). Before you engage in fasting and praying for revival, check your heart and see if there is any secret sin. If there is secret sin in your heart, the blessing of God cannot come down.

In December 2002, about 550 young people came from all over the Himalayas to our annual youth conference in northern India. The third day of the meeting was fasting and prayer day. On that day I prayed for the baptism of the Holy Spirit for the children. From morning to evening, everyone was to fast. They would only eat after the last meeting of that day. After preaching on how they could receive the Holy Spirit, I asked those who wished to receive the Holy Spirit to stand up. About 350 children stood up. I told them, as I always do, that to receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit one must be holy. The Holy Spirit is holy. If you are unholy, He cannot come in. Your heart must be clean; your mind must be clean; your body must be clean. I asked all the children to confess their sins. As I was saying this, the word of Lord came unto me, *There is one young boy in this meeting who has stolen money from his mother before coming to this meeting. Tell him to repent right now. And when he goes back home, he must confess to his mother and return back the money.* It was a small sin but in the eyes of God it was a very big issue. So the boy repented, and everybody-all the 350 kids-received the Holy Spirit.

After the meeting, when all the children went out to have tea, one young boy came to me. He dared not lift up his face to look at me. He said, Uncle, *I am the boy who*

stole my mother's money. Actually I did not mean to steal her money. I had no money to come to this meeting. I told him, *Even though your motive might be good your action was wrong.* I then told him, *God has forgiven you. When you go back home, confess to your mother. If you have no money, I will give you some. Return back what you stole from your mother.* Repent of secret sins; don't keep them in your heart. Ask God to search your heart and see if there is any secret sin that you don't know about. If you ask the Holy Spirit, He will show you.

4. *There must be a corporate national confession of the sin of the land.*

> *1 Samuel 7:6.*
> *6 So they gathered together at Mizpah, drew water, and poured it out before the LORD. And they fasted that day, and said there, "We have sinned against the LORD." And Samuel judged the children of Israel at Mizpah.*

The whole nation of Israel was fasting and praying concerning one point: "Lord, we have sinned against you." Although Samuel was a holy prophet he too prayed in this manner. Even though he did not sin he saw himself as a part of the land of Israel. When you gather together to pray for your nation, you must personally identify with the sin of the land. Take the sin of the land upon your shoulders and cry out to God.

This was also how three holy prophets of God prayed for their nation: *Lord we have sinned. Lord we have sinned* (Neh. 1:4-11; Lam. 5:1-22; Dan. 9:3-19). As they cried out like that the oppression over the land began to be broken loose. Let me tell you this: *Don't pray, Lord, forgive our nation*

for idolatry; don't pray, Lord, India is full of idols; don't pray like that. You must pray, Lord, we have sinned; we have worshipped idols. As believers of Christ, you stand between God and the land. The church is righteous in God's eyes. When you take the sins of the land upon your shoulders, cry out, *Lord we have sinned; we have worshipped idols; we have turned away from you*. Pray like that, for that's how the holy prophets prayed. Even Moses himself fell down often at the feet of God crying thus: *Lord, we have sinned; we are a stiff-necked generation*. Now, Moses was a holy prophet of God. He did not sin but he stood between God and Israel. This then is how you must pray. Identify with the sins of the land. When you do so, your prayers will move the throne of God. He would then release the power from on high to break all oppressions.

5. *Pay attention to the prophetic word spoken over your nation*. Before the prophet Samuel was called, there was no prophet in Israel. No one was seeing visions of God and the word of God was rare (1 Sam. 3:1). Samuel came along, and as a holy prophet of God, he spoke the word of God. In the same way, God is still raising up prophets who are His mouthpieces today. What are the prophetic words spoken over your country? What are the prophetic words spoken over your church or over your city? You must pay careful attention to those words. The prophets of God, we mustn't forget, are God's spokesmen. They will tell you what is God's plan. They will reveal how God sees the situation and show you His way. Don't reject the prophetic word. When you receive a prophetic word, you must do three things to undo sin: *repent, pray, and take the appropriate action*.

6. *Make sacrifices*. As they were all fasting and praying, the prophet Samuel offered a lamb sacrifice (1 Sam. 7:9). In the same way, you must offer the proper sacrifice to God. How

can you offer such a sacrifice? We don't offer bulls and goats for sacrifices today. However, you can give offerings to your church so that the work of God can go forth. You are, say, praying for revival and evangelism. So you need to know that for revival to break out, you must conduct gospel meetings everywhere. For that you need money. So you make a sacrifice. You bring your offerings to your church or to a ministry.

Post-Fast

After the fast, watch out for and be attentive over three things.

1. *Understand that there will come a spiritual attack*. Not very good news is it.

> *1 Samuel 7:7*
> *7 Now when the Philistines heard that the children of Israel had gathered together at Mizpah, the lords of the Philistines went up against Israel. And when the children of Israel heard of it, they were afraid of the Philistines.*

After they fasted and prayed, they repented of their sins and cried out sincerely to God. After that they received news that an army was coming to attack them. Remember this-when you go into a fast, it is spiritual warfare. The devil may attack you.

Let me give you another two biblical examples. The angel Gabriel came down from heaven on the day the prophet Daniel was fasting. But as he was on his way

to the prophet another evil angel went to fight with him. For 21 days they fought. The devil didn't want the answer to reach the prophet Daniel. The prophet Daniel fasted, and war broke out in the heavenlies (Dan. 10:1-13). We see another where the Lord Jesus fasted for 40 days (Matt. 4:1-11). The devil came. He attacked the Lord Jesus. In the same way, when you are fasting and praying, the devil will try to come and attack you. It will seem that there are more attacks coming to you when you are fasting. This is actually good news. You are on to something and the devil doesn't like it. But take heart, the devil's attacks cannot touch you. I John 4:4 reminds, *He that is in you is greater than he that is in this world.* The power of God is surrounding you. The devil will try to shake you, frighten you, but the fact is he cannot destroy you.

2. *Pray and fast continually so as to keep the vision for revival alive.* Just one season of fasting and prayer is not enough. Continually sow the seed of fasting and praying. The Word of God counsels to keep breaking up the fallow ground (Jer. 4:3). Each time you fast and pray, you are breaking up the hard ground. Keep on doing it until the favourable season comes from God-until God rains down righteousness (Hos. 10:12).

3. *Look out for revival.*

> *1 Samuel 7:10*
> *10 Now as Samuel was offering up the burnt offering, the Philistines drew near to battle against Israel. But the LORD thundered with a loud thunder upon the Philistines that day, and so confused them that they were over-come before Israel.*

Revival will come and will break out.

Chapter 5

Divine Protection

> *Isaiah 58:8.*
> *8 Then your light shall break forth like the morning, Your healing shall spring forth speedily, And your righteousness shall go before you; The glory of the LORD shall be your rear guard.*

Look at the last part of this verse.

The glory of the Lord shall be your rearguard. The glory of God shall be your protection. This method of fasting and prayer is employed for *divine protection from the evil one.* Let me tell you one absolute truth. The devil is real.

The Bible says: *For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places* (Eph. 6:12). Our warfare is not with flesh and blood, but is against powers of darkness. The spiritual battle begins in the high places and involves rulers of darkness.

Four divisions of demon spirits in the kingdom of devils are mentioned in this verse. Firstly, the *principality;*

secondly, the *powers;* thirdly, the *rulers of darkness;* and fourthly, the *spiritual wickedness in the high places*. Of the four, the most powerful demons come from the last group: spiritual wickedness in the high places. The holiest of Christians, we might say, could only do battle with the spirits of the former three groups. The battle with the fourth group of demonic spirits has to be left to the Lord Jesus Christ.

But remember one thing-the weapons of warfare are not carnal (2 Cor. 10:4). The warfare that we fight is spiritual. Such weapons are more powerful than missiles, more powerful than jet planes. Our spiritual weapon comes from fasting and in prayer. When we don't use our spiritual weapon, we're not able to defeat the devil. The devil, the Bible says, comes and goes like a roaring lion (1 Pe. 5:8). The apostle Paul therefore tells us, *We must not be ignorant of the devil's plan* (2 Cor. 2:11). Don't be ignorant! Don't be foolish! Don't be unintelligent! We must know about the devil's plans and strategies. Although the devil goes about like a roaring lion, let me tell you one good news: This lion is not a real lion.

Six months after I got saved, when I was still very young in the faith, I had a dream one night. In that dream, I was chased by a lion. I wasn't Samson, so I couldn't fight the lion. I ran for my life. As I was running, I saw the Lord Jesus, so I quickly ran and hid behind Him. The lion continued the chase. But three feet from the Lord Jesus it stopped. I hid behind Lord Jesus like a little boy hiding behind his mother, clinging on for safety and assurance. Like the most loving of mothers, the Lord Jesus looked at me, What's the problem? I said, *Lord Jesus, see-there's a lion standing there. Don't you see the lion?*

The Lord Jesus said, *Come and stand beside Me*. I said, *No, there's a lion there*. He said, *Don't worry about the lion. Come and stand beside Me*. Still very scared, I came out and stood beside the Lord Jesus, holding on to him very tightly. At this moment the Lord Jesus told me to get a good look of the lion. So I took a good look of the lion. I was greatly surprised. Instead of a ferocious-looking male lion, I saw a much less fearsome-looking female lion. I stated the fact to the Lord Jesus, and He smiled at me. *Take a good look at all the teeth of this lion*, He said. By now I felt a little bolder, so I immediately took a good look at the lion's teeth. I discovered that the lion had no teeth. I was very happy. The lion had no teeth. All along the Lord Jesus was like a father. At that moment He became like a King. And He told me, *When I died on the cross. I took away every one of the devil's teeth*. The devil has no power. He is a toothless lion (1 Jn. 3:8). That was the first truth that the Lord told me.

The Lord Jesus then told me the second truth: *The devil is not a lion. He is pretending to be like a lion. I'm the real lion of the tribe of Judah. And I am inside you* (Rev. 5:5). Then the Lord Jesus said, Now you command and rebuke this lion. So I rebuked the lion. Immediately it became a little cat, and it ran away. That was the first time the Lord Jesus taught me how the devil scares the children of God - by pretending to be a lion.

The devil is so successful in scaring us and defeating us because we are not using the weapon of our spiritual warfare. We are ignorant of the devil's devices so he has the advantage over us. But now that you understand the truth, he will no longer have any advantage over you. When you bow and pray for divine protection, God would surround you with a wall of fire, and no devil can pass through the wall of fire to hurt you (Zech. 2:5). Believe this, remember

this: Don't be afraid of the devil. He cannot come near you. If he comes near you, it only means one thing: Either you are not living a life of prayer, or you are ignorant about the devil's scheme. But the moment you know about him, he will be afraid of you.

In the Lord's Prayer the Lord Jesus teaches us to pray- *Keep us from all evils* (Matt. 6:13). What does this prayer mean? How different is it to this prayer for protection? That prayer in Matthew 6 is the prayer for daily protection. But this fasting prayer we are examining now pertains to the big crises confronting you, for which you must fast and pray.

When the children of Israel were walking in the wilderness, the presence of God was manifested as a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night (Ex. 13:21). All throughout the forty years in the wilderness, God's presence went with them. In Exodus 14 we see the Egyptian army chasing after them. The pillar of fire then came and stood behind the children of Israel (Ex.14:19). When the presence of God became their rearguard, the glory of God came between them and the Egyptian army. When they were crossing the Red Sea, the pillar of fire stood there all throughout the night, protecting the children of Israel from the Egyptian army. That is what this prayer is about. *This kind of fasting and praying is for divine protection.* When you face a major crisis or danger in your life, fast and pray for divine protection over your family, over your church, and over your nation.

Biblical Example

Esther was a Jewish girl who became the wife of a king (Est. 2:17). But nobody knew she was a Jew. There was a very wicked prime minister called Haman. He hated the Jewish people and was always looking for ways to totally destroy them. Finally he found a way. The king was deceived into signing a law that would get all the Jews in his empire killed. When this news reached Esther's uncle Mordecai, a very loving and godly man, he went and told Esther, *My dear daughter, for such a time as this God has put you in the position as a queen. Now it is your responsibility to protect our people* (Est. 4:14). Esther began to fast and pray for 3 days and 3 nights without food and water (Est. 4:16). As a result of her fast, the entire nation was saved.

Steps To Fast

This method of fasting and prayer can be broken down into 7 steps. You must remember one thing: this kind of fasting and praying pertains to life threatening or grave issues in your family, your church, your city, or your nation.

1. *Find the source of danger.* Remember what the apostle Paul wrote-that we should not be ignorant of the devil's plan. Discern the source from which the danger is coming. Let me share with you another of my personal experiences. In accordance to the word of the Lord that revival was coming to Tibet through fasting and prayer, I went to Tibet 10 times from 1998-2000. In July of 2000, the last prayer journey commanded by the Lord was finally accomplished. When I came back home, one very godly intercessor saw an evil spirit in a vision while praying for me. That demon told

her, *You know that Sadhu thought he had already finished the Tibetan work-now you better watch. I'm going to attack him.* I was used to getting that kind of threat, so I didn't bother much about it. After all, the devil is very good at telling lies. So don't be frightened of his threats.

A month later, when I had forgotten all about the threat, for no apparent reason, the television station in India that was carrying our programme suddenly stopped airing our programme. They didn't give any reason even when I asked them about it. At the same time, all the equipment in our studio was breaking down one by one. Brand new equipment would suddenly fail when it was being switched on. I didn't understand why all this was happening. One intercessor then reminded me that the devil was beginning his attack. I said, *Praise the Lord! Now is the time for war.* I cancelled some meetings, and for 40 days, fasted and prayed against all the works of the devil. Since I was facing an attack from the devil, I needed that kind of protection over our entire ministry that could only come through fasting and prayer. So the first thing is to recognize the source and the danger that you are going to face. Remember the devil is always out there waiting for his opportunity to kill, steal, and destroy (Jn. 10:10).

2. *You must understand the nature of the battle*. When you are praying and fasting for divine protection, the Lord will give you a specific strategy. What does the battle involve? What kind of danger is going to come? How is the devil going to attack you? How many demons are involved? These are some things you must know to wage an effective warfare. In 1984, after I completed a fast, the Lord Jesus told me that a certain family was being attacked by demons. I was to go set them free and was instructed to fast for 7 days and

pray for divine protection. Afterwards, I went to the village to visit with the Christian family, which consists of the husband, his wife, and their newborn baby. I asked about their predicament and they told me that their next-door neighbour was a Hindu priest, whose house was made into a temple of worship for a very fierce god. In the beginning, the Hindu priest and the Christian family were very good friends. But one day the Christian man insulted the Hindu priest's god. The priest got very angry. He said. *How can you insult my god? From today, I'm going to pray and put curses on your life, and make you come and fall down at the feet of my god!*

From that day on, the Christian man couldn't sleep at night - even when he took many sleeping pills. His wife experienced constant body pains from head to toe. And their new born baby would constantly suffer from diarrhoea. The doctor could not find anything wrong. This went on for many months. When they could not take it any longer, they wanted to commit suicide since there was no relief at all. It was at that point in time that they heard about me and wrote me a letter asking for help. After listening to their story, I told them, *You go to bed. Don't worry. I will stay in your house for 3 days. I will fast and pray for you these 3 days. At the end of the third day, you will be totally set free. They were so happy. At last there was hope. They went to sleep. And I knelt down to pray. As I knelt down to pray, I heard the voice of the Lord's Spirit speaking to me: Tonight, at 12 midnight, there will be a battle in the heavenlies. The priest knows that you have come to break the bondage. So tonight the priest will go to the cemetery and he will call all the evil spirits and they will come to kill you. So you just do one thing. You kneel down and lift up your hands and you just praise Jesus.*

Notice one thing the Lord said. First he told me there was going to be a battle. Next He told me what to do. He said, *Don't pray-just lift up your hands and praise Me*. You may recall there is a similar situation in the Bible. At one time the children of Israel were going to war, and Moses put up his hands. When he did so, Israel was prevailing in the war against the Amalekites. When he put down his hands, the Amalekites prevailed. So Aaron and Hur came beside him to hold up his hands (Ex. 17:10-12).

Back to the story of the Indian couple. That night I got up just before midnight. I lifted up my hands and started praising God. The moment I closed my eyes and lifted my hands, my spiritual eyes were opened. I saw the Hindu priest coming out from his house. In his hands he held a long thigh bone. He went to the cemetery, where there were a lot of graves. He went to each tombstone, and hit it with the bone in his hand. The moment he did so, some of the evil spirits were let out. An army of evil spirits was quickly assembled. They looked at the priest and said, *Master, what can we do for you?* He replied, *All of you-go and kill the Sadhu*. Now this was what I saw. At that moment, an angel came down from heaven-a very strong and muscular angel. He was holding his sword as if he was ready to strike down anybody. The angel said to me: *The demonic spirits are gathered there and the army of God is gathered there. Now there is going to be a battle*. After saying that, he flew up, and immediately there was trumpet blast. I saw the two opposing armies collide. The angels had swords in their hands, and-do you know what the demons had in their hands? Broken glass, wooden sticks, all kinds of weapons that the gangsters and the mafias of this world use.

As they were fighting, I was praising the Lord. I looked at my watch and saw that it was 12 midnight. The war in the heavenlies finally ended at 1 am. The angel came down again to tell me that the war was over and the danger passed. He also informed me that the priest would die. From his waist downwards, huge boils would come out of his legs, and he would die a horrible death. That would be a testimony to the whole village that the Lord God is God. Three months later the priest died exactly as was foretold by the angel. Moreover, the Christian family was totally set free from their afflictions. So this is the second principle: understand the nature of your battle. When you set your heart to prayer, the Holy Spirit will inspire your mind. He will show you how the devil is going to come, and what you should do.

3. *Recognize whose authority protects you*. In Esther 4:8, Mordecai tells Queen Esther to go stand before the king. Only the king's authority could protect the Jews. So under whose authority was Queen Esther seeking protection? The King's authority. Who is our authority? The name of Jesus! The Bible says in Jesus' Name you shall cast out demons (Mk. 16:17). In the name of Jesus, all evils will flee (Jas. 4:7). When you fast and pray for divine protection, the Lord Jesus will come and stand in front of you. The God of Israel-He will stand before you and protect you from all the evil that is coming against you (Isa. 59:19).

4. *Fast and pray for divine protection*. That is what Queen Esther did. For three days and nights, the queen fasted, going without eating or drinking (Est. 4:16). So you too fast and pray for divine protection. How long should you fast? It all depends. It can be one day, three days, or even up to seven days. The number of days is not as important as your heart attitude.

5. *Limitation in fasting and praying.* We have been studying of queen Esther fasting and praying. If you fast and pray you will have victory. If that is true why does Queen Esther say, *I will vow and pray, but if I perish, I perish?* Why does she say that if fasting and praying would guarantee divine victory and deliverance? Why must she be so negative? Does it imply that she has no faith? This is a very important principle I'm going to share with you right now: *the limitation in fasting and praying.* I encourage you to read the entire book of Esther, so that you will understand the story.

The king has decreed that all the Jews could be killed on a certain day. Queen Esther's fasting and praying does not effect a change in the king's decree. That's the first thing to note. The next thing is this: Queen Esther's fasting and prayer does not solve the crisis. The decree still stands and the crisis remains. So what is the use of fasting since it does not seem to be effective? The Lord Jesus Christ, we must now state, specializes in performing miracles in impossible and hopeless situations, often in a way we don't expect.

Let me give you two examples.

1. Pursued by the Pharaoh, the children of Israel cried out to God. Moses turned to God. He sent a pillar of fire to stand beside them. I will tell you something here that you may not have thought of before. When the Egyptian army was chasing after the children of Israel, don't you think the fire from the pillar could destroy all of the Egyptian army? If God acted in this miraculous way, it would add little to His reputation. He likes to do better and bigger things. That is God. He continued to lead them towards the sea. When they reached the sea, they could not go forward, they could

not go backward. There was no more hope for the refugees, it seemed.

So Moses went and prayed to the Lord. Do you know what Moses was doing? He was praying and fasting, crying his heart out to God. The Lord answered him by giving him a better plan. He said, *Moses, don't worry. Today, you will see my salvation. These Egyptians you see today, you will see them no more*. God made him stand on a rock and stretch out his hands over the sea. When Moses did so, the sea parted. Let me tell you more about this miracle. Six million people crossed the sea in one night. For this to happen, theologians and archaelogists tell us God had to open the sea five miles wide. The children of Israel were delivered out of an impossible situation by a spectacular miracle of God (Ex. 14).

2. In Daniel 3 we see three Hebrew boys before the fiery furnace. They all had great faith that God would protect them. They did not have the slightest doubt. But the more they spoke out in faith, the more incensed the king became. The heat in the fire was increased until it was seven times hotter. When they looked at the fire, perhaps a little fear arose in their hearts. Yet they kept on saying, *God will protect us!* Did God protect them? No! If God protected them, they would not have been thrown into the fire. So, it seemed God did not protect them. Instead, He forsook them.

The soldiers who carried the boys to the furnace turned into ashes for so hot was the fire. Yet, thrown into the flames, the three Hebrew boys did not die. The Lord Jesus Christ, who kept them safe and untouched, was standing in the furnace with them. In the midst of an impossible situation when even fasting and prayer do not seem to

work, remember one truth: God is able to protect you from all danger. Fasting and praying may seem limited in its reach. It may seem that the answer to what you pray for isn't what you want or expect. But remember one thing: you will not be defeated. The glory of God will protect you from all evil.

6. *To gain more power, ask more people to pray with you.* Queen Esther not only fasted for three days and three nights, but she asked all the Jews to fast with her (Est. 4:16). In corporate prayer there is corporate power. You can pray secretly and experience the glory of God. But when you pray in a group, the glory of God comes abundantly (Eph. 2:20-22).

As I mentioned earlier, in the year 2000 I fasted for 40 days when our ministry came under satanic attack. The attack lasted for 6 months. During that time, all the equipment broke down continuously. Today I would repair something, tomorrow something else would break down. And what we repaired would break down again and again. Right before my eyes the demonic spirits would be walking about-even in bright daylight as though they owned the whole place.

I felt a little helpless. But I did something. I asked two of my close prophet friends to pray and fast with me. They fasted 40 days for me. One of them saw in a vision a very high-level, powerful demon sent out to destroy me. So we got the word out, and three corporate bodies joined together to pray and fast to help to defeat the work of the devil, which took place from July to December 2000. On the 31st of December, while I was fasting and praying for the upcoming year, the moment the clock struck 12 to usher in the New Year, the entire atmosphere in our office

changed suddenly. All the demons that were in my office for the past six months scooted without a moment's notice. At that moment, the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ came down into my office. Four very high-ranking angelic beings came down to my office. Then the Lord told me that the devil had tried to destroy me but He did not allow it. From that moment on, I was also told, there would be a greater level of anointing and breakthrough in my ministry.

7. *Be on guard for any backlash from the devil.* The devil will try to attack you again and again. But remember one thing: he cannot touch you or destroy you. Besides fasting and praying you must put on the armour of God (Eph. 6:13-17). Put on the whole armour of God. Put on the helmet of salvation. Take on the sword of the spirit. Put on the breastplate of righteousness. Put on the belt of truth. Put on the shoes of the preaching of the gospel. If you put on this whole armour of God and you are walking in righteousness and living a clean and holy life of fasting and praying, then no devil can touch you.

And as you are fasting and praying for divine protection, all the angelic forces from heaven will come down and protect you (Ps. 34:7; 91:11). I should also tell you this: As all my staff were together praying one morning during the satanic attacks in 2000, our Administrator saw a huge angel standing at the gate of our office. It was a very tall angel with a long sword in his hand. He was standing guard and protecting our ministry.

Don't fear the devil. When God is for you, nobody can be against you. This method of fasting and praying can be applied in situations of grave danger, where you would need divine protection for you, your family members, and those you love.

CHAPTER 6

Divine Healing

Isaiah 58:8
8 Then your light shall break forth like the morning, Your healing shall spring forth speedily, And your righteousness shall go before you; The glory of the LORD shall be your rear guard.

One of the blessings of fasting is that your health shall blossom. Your healing shall spring forth speedily. You can fast and pray for healing. The Bible says, *I am the Lord who heals all your sicknesses and diseases* (Ex. 15:26). All healing comes from God. It doesn't come from any man. If anybody says he has a healing gift don't believe him. If ten sick people are prayed for, all ten sick people must be healed if somebody says he has the gift of healing. But the reality is, out of ten persons prayed for, perhaps only five are healed. There will always be some people who leave a meeting without getting any healing. I always feel very broken hearted when I return to my room after a ministry session. I would cry out to God, *Lord, why aren't all the people healed?* I don't know why. Only God knows. If I have the gifts of healings then I should be able to heal everybody. But why isn't everyone healed? It proves only one thing: I am not like God who heals; it is only the Lord Jesus who is

the healer. So if you look to the Lord God for your healing, the Lord Jesus can heal you even when nobody is praying for you. So put your eyes on the Lord Jesus Christ. Do not put your faith on man because you will be disappointed. But if you put your eyes on Jesus, He will never ever disappoint you.

We can receive healing in two ways.

1. *Through prayer* (Jas. 5:15).

2. *From the grace and divine health of God*, which always guards you in perfect health.

None of the children of Israel fell sick or became frail in their 40 years in the wilderness (Ps. 105:37). How was it possible except that God supernaturally protected them? God has given many laws in the Bible, including laws pertaining to food. It is written very clearly in the Bible what foods you must not eat. For example, the Bible commands very strictly not to eat blood and fat (Lev. 3:17). Consider what you eat carefully or you may end up eating diseases and sicknesses inherent in some foods. If you follow biblical principles, you will never fall sick. Walking according to the word of God is the best prescription for maintaining good health (Prov. 4:12). Obedience guards our soul and our body, for it becomes medicine and health. Although there is healing through prayer, wouldn't it be better to always stay in good health?

Biblical Example

Daniel 1:3-16
3 Then the king instructed Ashpenaz, the master of his eunuchs, to bring some of the children of Israel and some of the king's descendants and some of the nobles,
4 young men in whom there was no blemish, but good-looking, gifted in all wisdom, possessing knowledge and quick to understand, who had ability to serve in the king's palace, and whom they might teach the language and literature of the Chaldeans.
5 And the king appointed for them a daily provision of the king's delicacies and of the wine which he drank, and three years of training for them, so that at the end of that time they might serve before the king.
6 Now from among those of the sons of Judah were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah.
7 To them the chief of the eunuchs gave names: he gave Daniel the name Belteshazzar; to Hananiah, Shadrach; to Mishael, Meshach; and to Azariah, Abed-Nego.
8 But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's delicacies, nor with the wine which he drank; therefore he requested of the chief of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself.
9 Now God had brought Daniel into the favour and goodwill of the chief of the eunuchs.
10 And the chief of the eunuchs said to Daniel, "I fear my lord the king, who has appointed your food and drink. For why should he see your faces looking worse than the young men who are your age? Then you would endanger my head before the king."

11 So Daniel said to the steward whom the chief of the eunuchs had set over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah.
12 "Please test your servants for ten days, and let them give us vegetables to eat and water to drink.
13 "Then let our appearance be examined before you, and the appearance of the young men who eat the portion of the king's delicacies; and as you see fit, so deal with your servants."
14 So he consented with them in this matter, and tested them ten days.
15 And at the end of ten days their features appeared better and fatter in flesh than all the young men who ate the portion of the king's delicacies.
16 Thus the steward took away their portion of delicacies and the wine that they were to drink, and gave them vegetables.

The king of Babylon takes captives of the people of Israel and tells his ministers, *Select very bright and intelligent young men, and let us train them to become politicians in Babylon.* Daniel and his three friends are selected. The king instructs the overseers, *Give them the same food that I am eating.* Daniel and his friends stood their ground against the king's steward, *Sir, we are Jews. We cannot eat this kind of food.* The steward fires back, *I don't care about that. I have to obey the king. I cannot show favouritism. All of you have to eat the same food. Daniel makes another appeal, At least give us permission to only eat vegetables for ten days. During the ten days, test us. If we fare badly, then we will eat the king's food.* The steward agrees. So Daniel and his three friends begin their vegetable fast for ten days. At the end of the ten days, they are brought out for detailed scrutiny. Daniel and his three friends, who have eaten only vegetables, are stronger,

healthier, and fairer than all the other youngsters who have been eating the king's food.

What is their secret? Is the secret in a vegetarian diet? No! It is in fasting. Daniel and his three friends honored God. They feared God. And they made their fast unto the Lord God. So they received the blessing in Isaiah 58:8 -Your *health shall spring forth speedily*. When you fast and pray for sickness, God will heal you.

Several years ago, one of my sister's friend's baby was very sick. She had just given birth to twin boys. One of the boys was fine but the other had a big hole in his heart. The doctors said he would only live for three days. My sister's friend was a Hindu. But she told my sister her problem. My sister tried to allay her fears, *Don't worry-my brother is a preacher. I will ask him to pray.* So she told me about her friend's dilemma, and we fasted and prayed. As we were all praying, I saw an angel coming down from heaven. In the angel's hand was something that looked like a basket. He took something from the basket that looked like diamond-shape biscuits and threw them down, one, two, and then three. In all, a total of three biscuits were thrown down. Then the angel looked at me, and he smiled. I turned to my sister, *Go and tell your friend that Jesus Christ has already heard the prayer and answered. Her baby will not die*. She went back to her friend with the good news. On the third day, the hole in the boy's heart closed up miraculously without any medical treatment. The doctors were all surprised. Later the mother brought her baby to our church and gave her testimony.

When you fast and pray for sickness, God will heal, whether it be for yourself or somebody else. The principle that I'm going to teach you right now can be applied for yourself or for other people.

Steps To Fast

There are five steps. When you apply these five steps, you will definitely obtain healing.

1) *Make a spiritual commitment to fast and pray.* The Bible says, *But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's delicacies, nor with the wine which he drank; therefore he requested of the chief of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself* (Dan. 1:8).

Daniel made a decision. He made a commitment. When you make a commitment, it must be a serious commitment. You must fast and pray till the healing comes. Don't fast for one day and then stop. Keep fasting and praying until the healing comes.

2) *Food discipline.* Eat proper food. Don't eat junk food. The book of Leviticus gives good counsel on dietary matters. If you follow those principles, you are always eating the right kind of food. When you eat the right kind of food, you will not grow sick. Some men have big tummies. I used to have one much bigger than the one I have now. One day, I met a pastor who used to have a very big tummy. So I queried him, *Pastor, what happened to your tummy?* He replied, *I controlled my diet. I cut down on sugar and rice. And I stopped taking soft drinks.* He followed these three diet disciplines, and all the fat in his body disappeared. I decided to do likewise. For my tea, I used to have two teaspoons of sugar. I cut that down to only half a teaspoon. I also cut my intake of rice from one bowl to half a bowl. After one month of following this strict diet, my body slimmed down to its present size. What I did was simply controlling my diet. Eat the wrong food, your body becomes wrong-in size and in vitality. So be disciplined

with the food you eat. If you do that, you will naturally live a healthy life.

3) *Pray and seek God to see if there is any hidden sin in your life.* Many times, sin is the cause of sickness. In John 5:1-14, the Lord Jesus Christ heals a man paralysed for 38 years. After healing him, the Lord Jesus tells him, *Go and sin no more, if not something worse will come upon you.* What is He telling the man? His sickness has been a result of sin. When the man finally gets his healing after so many years, he is told by the Lord Jesus not to sin anymore. The bible says, *If anybody is sick, ask the elders to pray for you. If you committed any sin, it will be forgiven, and the sicknesses will be healed* (Jas. 5:13-16). Sin and sickness are related. So when you fast and pray, sincerely seek God. Discern if the sickness in your body or in the person you are praying for is related to sin.

If a sickness is the result of sin, it will never leave your body no matter which doctor you go to. Medicine will never cure that kind of sickness because it did not come from germs. If it came from germs, medicine could heal it. But if the sickness is from sin or from the devil, then no medicine can heal you. Many years ago, in the year 1985, one woman came to me for prayer. She was suffering from asthma, and the best doctors in her country could not treat her. Even today there is no cure for asthma, though it can be somewhat controlled in most cases. This woman had very severe asthma and no medicine could control it. The medicine prescribed by the doctors brought adverse side effects to her body. Although small in size like myself, she blew up like a small elephant. She was very sad. She went to preacher after preacher to be prayed for. She would get healed, but after two months her illness would come back again. It went on for a long time like that. So she came to

me for healing. When I prayed for her, she fell down, and she got up healed. After one month the sickness came back again. She pled with me, *Brother, you are not praying strongly. Pray harder, then the sickness will be gone once and for all. So I prayed, Lord, let all the sickness be healed.* She was healed, but after one month all the sickness came back. Again she came to see me. I was very upset-not with the woman, but with her problem. Why was it going and coming like a regular visitor? I was determined to fast and pray for this woman until she was totally healed.

I fasted for three days and prayed fervently. On the third day, the Lord Jesus told me, *The problem with this woman is not sickness but sin. Sin in her life has given birth to asthma.* The Lord told me what was her problem. 25 years ago, something happened in her life. Her husband committed adultery. Her heart was so broken. She was crushed, for she loved her husband like a god. When he committed adultery, she couldn't take it. She did not show her hatred externally, but kept all of her anguish inside. Hurts, bitterness, anger, unforgiveness-these were all stored in her heart. They kept growing for 25 years and bore the fruit of asthma. The Lord Jesus said, *If this woman wants to be healed. Ask her to let the bitterness go. Ask her to confess the anger. Ask her to confess the unforgiveness. When she lets the unforgiveness go, she will automatically be healed.*

I called this woman to tell her I had received the word from the Lord concerning her illness. She came very excitedly to my office. I asked her, *Do you want to be healed? Of course I want,* she answered. *If not why would I come to see you? So I told her, Until you forgive your husband, you will not be healed.* She was taken aback. She kept quiet. I told her, *Let me tell you the secret in your heart.* 25 years ago this incident happened in your life. Is it true? She was so

surprised. She said, *What is in my heart nobody knows. How do you know?* So I told her, *If you don't let the bitterness go, you will not be healed.* The moment I said that, she got so angry. She said, *My husband cheated me. He betrayed me. How can I forgive him? The pain is very deep in my heart. I cannot forgive him.* I told her, *If you don't forgive your husband, you are going to die of asthma and go to the grave. Then what will happen to your two sons?* By the way, her husband had also married the other woman, and the two women were living in the same house. I asked her, *Will the second wife look after your children? If you die, what will happen to your two boys? They will become beggars and orphans. Do you want that?* She remained silent. Finally, she spoke, *What do I do? I told her, Forgive your husband. Release all the hurt and unforgiveness against him in your heart. She told me, I'll try, to which I replied, Don't try. Do it. Otherwise, you will not be healed. I will leave you alone in my office. Cry out to God. Take out all the pain that is in your heart for 25 years and give it to Jesus. Then I'll come and pray for you.*

So I went out and for 20 minutes this woman was crying and crying and crying. 25 years of hurts came out from her heart one by one. She cried out until her whole dress was drenched with tears. *Is your heart clean now?* I asked as I stepped back into my office. She said, *Yes. Are you ready for prayer?* I stretched out my hand to her. As soon as I touched her forehead, she fell to the ground. For 15 minutes, she lay there. When she got up, her heart became truly peaceful for the first time in her life. And she was instantly and totally healed. For the last 19 years the asthma has not returned.

How was that healing made possible? It wasn't because of my prayer. When her sins were forgiven, she was healed. When sin is the cause, first get rid of sin. So when you pray,

seek God if there is sin. If there is, then repentance is the answer. Unless you repent, no sickness will be healed. After helping that woman deal with unforgiveness in her heart, I became very interested about the relationship between sin and sickness. I fasted for one week and asked the Lord Jesus to teach me the relationship between them. During that one week of fasting the Lord Jesus taught me that, many times, sin is the cause of sickness in our bodies. Specifically, the Lord Jesus showed me how, for a woman, harbouring unforgiveness, bitterness, and anger in the heart would give birth to womb and breast-related problems, besides asthma.

After that, I wanted to put this truth to the test. Whenever a woman comes to me for prayer for these kinds of problems, before praying I would ask, Do you have bitterness in your heart? *Do you have unforgiveness in your heart?* Out of ten women, nine will say yes. Some of these women would have things like cancer in the womb, cancer in the uterus, or breast cancer. So, to recapitulate, if you want healing, first your sins must be confessed. You must release from your heart bitterness and unforgiveness and anger. If you don't, the sickness will never go away. It will forever remain in your body until you lose your life.

4) *Yield to God and trust Him completely for the outcome.* The Bible says, *Now a leper came to Him, imploring Him, kneeling down to Him and saying to Him, "If You are willing, You can make me clean." Then Jesus, moved with compassion, stretched out His hand and touched him, and said to him, "I am willing; be cleansed." As soon as He had spoken, immediately the leprosy left him, and he was cleansed* (Mk. 1:40-42). A leper comes before the Lord Jesus, *Lord if you will, you can heal me.* In other words, *Lord if you are willing, you can heal me. I submit to you. I leave the results to you.* When you pray and fast for healing, entrust the Lord with the outcome.

Sometimes the results will not be according to what you think.

The king, Hezekiah, is sick until death, and the prophet Isaiah comes to him: *You are going to die. Set your house in order.* What does the king do? He fasts and prays earnestly and sincerely. So God tells Isaiah, *I have heard the king's prayer. I'm healing him. Go and tell him he will not die and he will live for another 15 years.* Something strange begins to take place. Instead of drawing supernatural power from heaven for his healing work, Isaiah the prophet is instructed by God to put some medicine on the king's body. When the lump of fig leaves is put on the deadly boil on the king's body, Hezekiah quickly recovers (2 Kg. 20:1-17). When you fast and pray for healing, remember one thing: Yield to God and trust Him for the result. Don't carry a preconceived idea how God would heal. God is the healer. He is God.

Once an Indian woman came to me for prayer. She was having a problem in her womb. She had two daughters. The doctor said her womb was all diseased and had to be removed entirely. So she felt very sad. She had come to me for prayer hoping a supernatural power would come down from heaven. When she said she had a womb problem, I asked her, *My dear sister, do you have anger in your heart?* She kept quiet for five minutes. Then she admitted it was so. I then told her, *Unless you get rid of all of it, you won't be healed. The sickness will be there in your body. I will pray for you now to help you to open your heart for forgiveness.* So I prayed for her and sent her home. She had confessed, and had got rid of all the unforgiveness and hurt from her heart. Yet even after doing that, her problem was not solved. She did not get the healing, and was still scheduled for surgery. Now this woman was from a very high-class family. Rich

people are sometimes a bit proud and arrogant. She was like that. When she was in the hospital, God began to convict her of pride and arrogance. So she began to confess them as she was being brought into the operating room.

Before the surgery began, the glory of God surrounded the hospital. The entire operating room was filled with the presence of God and her spiritual eyes were opened. She began praising God. All throughout her surgery, although she was unconscious, her mouth was praising God. Do you know what else was happening? The divine surgeon-the Lord Jesus-was digging His fingers deep into her heart. He took out all the deep roots of bitterness and unforgiveness. When the operation was over, she asked the doctor, *So did you remove all of my womb?'* They said, *No. When we cut you, it was only a small tumor. So we removed the tumor. You did not lose your organ.* This woman received two surgeries-the one divine, the other physical. After the surgery I met with her and I asked her one question, *Are you disappointed that God did not supernaturally heal you? No, she said, because through this way all the bitterness in my heart came out. Now I'm free and my heart is clean.* Remember one thing: your job is to fast and pray sincerely. Don't worry about the results. They can come supernaturally or medically.

5) *Your duty is to pray with faith.* The Bible says, *And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven* (Jas. 5:15).

Whether you are praying for yourself or for someone else, pray with faith. Don't entertain any doubt. Don't entertain unbelief. That is not your problem. Your problem is to pray. It is God's problem to heal. This is the most important point you must understand in your heart. When I stand before the thousands who come for my meetings

to pray for healing, I pray with all faith that everybody will be healed. I don't entertain any unbelief or any doubt that some might not be healed. That is not my problem. My problem is to pray with faith. And the Lord Jesus Christ will honor the prayer of the faith. You must believe and desire to be healed (Jn. 5:6). You must believe and desire to receive blessings from God. When you desire with all your heart, then you will get healed. The results belong to God.

In conclusion let me tell you one other important reason why some people don't get healed. There may be a sin unto death in their life. The bible says, *If anyone sees his brother sinning a sin which does not lead to death, he will ask, and He will give him life for those who commit sin not leading to death. There is sin leading to death. I do not say that he should pray about that* (I Jn. 5:16).

If that is the problem, don't waste your time praying. How will you know whether it is a sin unto death? When you pray and seek God specifically, the Holy Spirit will show you the cause. There were many times when I was praying for people and very clearly the Lord would tell me, *Don't pray for their healing. They have sinned a sin unto death. They will surely die. But pray for their sins to be forgiven, so that their soul may be up in heaven.* The saddest case for me, and which quite broke my heart, involved a 24-year-old man dying of cancer in India. The Lord Jesus told me, *Don't pray for his healing. He has committed a sin unto death. He will surely die. But pray for his forgiveness. Pray for his soul to be forgiven so that he many go to heaven.* I prayed very compassionately for the boy after that. And after my prayer I was assured that God had forgiven him. As I was leaving the hospital, the Holy Spirit said to me, *In one week, the boy will die.* The boy died in one week.

There are some sicknesses unto death. And there are some who don't get healed because of sin in their lives. But whatever it is, God is still a good God. God is still the healer.

CHAPTER 7

Feed the Poor

Isaiah 58:7
7 Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, And that you bring to your house the poor who are cast out; When you see the naked, that you cover him, And not hide yourself from your own flesh?

What is this kind of fasting? It is a very special fast. *It is fasting to help the poor.* Let me tell you one truth. There are many ministries we can do: we can preach the gospel, we can cast out demons, we can heal the sick, and we can serve as missionaries. But there is one ministry that is very close to the heart of God: *helping the poor* (Deu. 15:11).

About 15 years ago, a very holy and saintly prophet was praying and an angel came down from heaven. The angel told him, *The Lord Jesus said, preach the gospel to the poor. Preaching the gospel to the poor not only means just preaching the word but also helping the poor people.* Immediately after delivering the word, the angel disappeared. The man of God called the church elders and told them what the angel said. Immediately they made some plans and took action to help the poor. They adopted some orphans and gave them scholarships to go to school. They bought sewing machines

for destitute widows so that they could sew clothes and earn some money. And they cared for the poor in other ways from that time onwards. This kind of fasting and prayer is a form of denying the self in order to help the poor.

Many years ago, a certain pastor's wife came to me for prayer. She was very broken inside. She was sitting before me crying. She was telling me that nobody in the church loved her. Everybody loved the pastor and cared for the pastor. *Everybody would ask the Pastor if he wanted to drink some water,* she broke down. *Nobody ever asks me if I want to drink some water.* Her husband was sitting beside her. He was also crying. *Don't cry*, I looked into her eyes and held her hand. As I closed my eyes to pray, the Lord Jesus Christ appeared before me: *Lord Jesus, look at the broken heart of this woman.* The eyes of the Lord Jesus are always full of compassion. Like a loving mother, he turned to look at that woman. Then He turned to me. *Tell my daughter: Two years ago, her husband gave her money to buy a new pair of shoes. Her old shoes were broken. She needed new shoes. He gave her some money. She had the money in her hand. At that moment, there was a special appeal for funds made for missions. Although she needed the money, she took the money and put it in the offering bag. Tell her My eyes saw that.* When I told this to the woman, she fell on the floor and she cried. She couldn't quite believe what she heard. Nobody knew that secret-not even her husband. Nobody knew-but God knows! The eyes of the Lord Jesus saw her secret act of loving sacrifice. And He told me what she did was an instance of fasting to help the poor.

Biblical Example

1 Kings 17:8-16
8 Then the word of the LORD came to him, saying,
9 "Arise, go to Zarephath, which belongs to Sidon, and dwell there. See, I have commanded a widow there to provide for you."
10 So he arose and went to Zarephath. And when he came to the gate of the city, indeed a widow was there gathering sticks. And he called to her and said, "Please bring me a little water in a cup, that I may drink."
11 And as she was going to get it, he called to her and said, "Please bring me a morsel of bread in your hand."
12 So she said, "As the LORD your God lives, I do not have bread, only a handful of flour in a bin, and a little oil in a jar; and see, I am gathering a couple of sticks that I may go in and prepare it for myself and my son, that we may eat it, and die."
13 And Elijah said to her, "Do not fear, go and do as you have said, but make me a small cake from it first, and bring it to me; and afterward make some for yourself and your son.
14 "For thus says the LORD God of Israel: 'The bin of flour shall not be used up, nor shall the jar of oil run dry, until the day the LORD sends rain on the earth.'"
15 So she went away and did according to the word of Elijah; and she and he and her household ate for many days.
16 The bin of flour was not used up, nor did the jar of oil run dry, according to the word of the LORD which He spoke by Elijah.

The prophet Elijah has prophesied that there would be a drought for three years. All the rivers in Israel are now dried up. And the Lord tells him, *My son! Arise! Go to Zarephath. I have appointed a widow to take care of you.* Think for a moment now. Why doesn't God send Elijah to a rich man's house? Why doesn't the Lord send him to the house of another prophet? Instead, God chooses a widow. Not just any widow, but an extremely poor widow. Where is the poor widow going to get the extra food to feed another full-grown man?

Sometimes it appears that God's ways are very ridiculous. God tells Elijah, "Go! I have appointed her. I have commanded her." So he goes to the city, and a very poor widow comes walking along looking for sticks to use as fuel. She is a very poor widow. She has no food in the house, only a little flour-enough to make one last loaf of bread for her and her children to eat. There will be no more food. After eating this one meal-their last meal-they will stay in one corner of the house and starve to death. Out from heaven, God sees this widow. He wants to bless her. Remember one thing: *if you ever want God to bless you, you must give freely.* If you don't, you won't receive a blessing. How is God to bless the widow? She must first abide by God's principles. Then she will receive a miracle. So how is she going to do just that? God has a plan: *Elijah, go to Zarephath!*

When Elijah arrives at Zarephath, he sees the widow: *Woman! Give me some water to drink. As the woman reaches for a cup of water, he says, Wait! Water alone is not enough. I've not eaten the whole day. Go home, make some nice bun. She stares at him in bewilderment, You must be joking. You know that I'm going to die. Why are you making fun of me! I only have a little flour-only enough for one meal.* He looks at

her, not bothered by what she is telling him: *Don't worry. First you feed me.* She tells herself, *I'm going to die anyway. Why eat this one meal and then die? Might as well fast this meal and then die.* This widow fasts in order to feed Elijah. As she purposes in her heart to concede to his request, she is summoned once more by the prophet: *Come back! What more does he want?* She puzzles, *I'm already giving all I have. What more is he going to ask? Elijah looks her in the eye: Thus saith the Lord. The oil in the barrel and the flour will never run short in your house.* As it turns out, from that day on, that widow and her family eat and eat and eat. Elijah is well taken care of by the widow. And the widow is well taken care of by God. Unlike the traditional kind of fasting, here you deny yourself even of the very thing you need so as to offer it as a sacrifice to help the poor.

In 1991, I was faced with a very terrible need. Our staff in India had outgrown the small office we were in, and we required a larger space. But we had no money. One day, one widow came to see me for prayer. Poor widow-her husband died when she was very young. Single-handedly, she had brought up four sons. She was a very godly widow. All her sons were grown up and married. But she had a big problem at hand. She was facing a lawsuit on a piece of land she owned. In India, we have a peculiar law. If you rent out a house, and if the tenant lives there for 20 years, that house belongs to the tenant. The lady's tenant had lived in the land for 25 years. According to Indian law, the land could be construed as belonging to him. She could not go to any of the higher courts to fight the case. It was totally impossible. But she wanted the land back to make a house for her youngest son. So she came to me for prayer, *Will I win the case? Please pray.* I looked at her, *My dear sister, there is no use praying. According to the law, you already lost. How to pray? The law is against you.*

She looked at me with a very pathetic look. Only women can have that kind of a look. With a very sad look on her face, she said, *Sadhuji, if you pray, God will hear your prayer and He will change the law. And I will get the land back.* I told her, "It's illegal!" In my mind I was thinking, *How could God overrule the laws of the land?* Nonetheless, I said, *Okay, come; kneel down; we'll pray.* The moment I closed my eyes to pray a scripture came to me: *God is the God of the fatherless and He is an avenger of the widows* (Ps. 68:5). So I prayed: *Lord Jesus, the law says like this, but Your word says you will fight for the widows. Therefore, fight with the judge, Lord. Fight for this widow. You are the great lawyer. Fight for the widow!* When I finished praying, the Lord Jesus told me, *Tell the widow she will win this case.* Not only was she surprised, I was surprised. But it was my duty to just pass the message. So I told the widow, *Don't fear, don't worry-you will get your land.* She could hardly contain her joy as she breathed her parting words: *I knew if I come to you, you will certainly pray, and I will get my miracle.*

When she got home, a little doubt entered her heart. So she prayed, Y*our servant told me I would get the land. If I get the land, I make a promise. When I make a house, I will make one room and give it to his ministry.* I didn't know about the promise she made, and she didn't know that I had need of a bigger place for our ministry. Six months later, she won the court case. It was a great miracle. The judge totally bypassed the law and granted the verdict in her favour. All the lawyers couldn't understand this. They told this woman either the judge was mad or she had truly received a miracle.

The widow made a house, and she kept her promise. She prepared a room, and then invited me over to bless and dedicate her house. When I went into the house, she

took me to every room. After seeing everything, I dedicated the house. Before I left, she said, *Please come here-look at this room. Nice? She gleamed. Very nice,* I replied. *Take the key,* she said, *This is yours.* Only then did she tell me about her promise. I said, *I cannot accept this. This is your son's house-how can I accept this?* She said, *No, no, no, this is for you!* I said, *No!* She said *No? I said, No!* This exchange went on for a very long time. I then prayed to seek God's mind on this matter. As I was praying, I was also hearing another prayer. It was the widow praying, *Lord Jesus, tell him to take the house!* As I was praying, the Lord Jesus told me something. He didn't say to take the house or not take the house. He told me that as long as I stayed in this house, He would bless this widow like how He blessed the widow of Zarephath.

I then accepted her offer. That was in 1992. Today, after 13 years, the widow is still experiencing miracle after miracle. She would always tell everybody it is because Sadhu is staying in her house that God has blessed her home. You won't believe this: for example, all other homes in her area would not have water due to scarcity of water. But her house would have water. God is a good God. You see, because she gave, God blessed her. Helping others is something very dear to God. When you fast to help others-especially to help the poor-you are pleasing the heart of God very much. In Deuteronomy 14:28-29 and 15:7-11, The Lord God told Moses to divide the land among the twelve tribes when they go into the Promised Land and to always remember the poor. Take care of the poor (Deu. 14:28,29; 15:11). Don't forget the poor. Once upon a time, God reminds the nation of Israel, they too have been slaves and sojourners in Egypt. Remember that. So always help the poor.

Think for a moment. When your children have any need, they would turn to you-their father and their mother. If an orphan has a need, whom will he or she turn to? A wife who has a need can turn to her husband and he would take care of her. But in the case of a widow-who would help her? No one would care about the widow. Relatives don't care; society doesn't care. So who would help such a one? This is why the eyes of the Lord look most compassionately towards widows and orphans. This is why when you help the poor, you please the heart of God very much.

Once the Lord Jesus Christ had been preaching for three days (Jn. 6:9-13). 5000 men (when the Bible uses the word "men," it means married men) plus their wives and children were present. Let's suppose each family had two children. 5,000 families with two children per family total 10,000 children. So about 20,000 people were gathered together to listen to the Lord for three days. The Lord Jesus looked at His disciples, *I don't want to send them away on an empty stomach, for they will faint. Give them food to eat.* They didn't have food. One boy was sitting there. Before coming to this meeting his mother had given him a small basket. In his lunchbox were five barley loaves and two small fishes. The mother's words were clear: *Remember, my son, eat little by little, and don't eat when the Lord Jesus is preaching. Listen very carefully. When they have breaks, then you eat. Yes, mama,* the boy had promised his mother. Three days later, he overheard the conversation between the Lord Jesus and His disciples.

Andrew! Andrew! the little boy tugged at the sleeves of one of the Lord Jesus' disciples. Andrew looked down: *What?* The boy opened the basket in his lap and reveals its contents. Andrew took a good look, *Oh, okay, thank you very much.* He turned to the Lord Jesus. *There is a little*

boy here. He has five loaves and two small fishes. These five loaves and two fishes were meant to be the boy's lunch. His mother prepared them for him and nobody else. When he gave them away, what did he do? He was fasting. He denied himself the food meant for him. When he gave his own food away, the Lord Jesus performed a great miracle. The whole multitude had all that they could eat and there were leftovers - 12 basketful. And the boy himself feasted on many more loaves than the 5 loves his mother prepared for him. Instead of only two fishes, he enjoyed as many as he desired from the blessing hands of the Lord Jesus. Fasting-denying oneself to feed or help the poor, to clothe the naked, and to take care of homeless people - is very close to the heart of God.

Church History Examples

From its earliest beginnings in the first century till now, the church has always felt that it is her responsibility to look after the poor. The early church in the New Testament supported poor people (Acts 11:28-30; 2 Cor. 9:1-7; Gal. 2:10). They collected offerings from the church for two mission purposes: helping the poor and assisting the needy during a time of drought or famine. Why must the church help others? It is because of the blessings that she has received from God.

It is God who blesses you with wealth (Deu. 8:18; 15:6). And the wealth that you receive, you do not keep just for yourself. If you do, you become a stagnant pool of lifeless water. If you share it, you become a spring of living fountain. In Israel, as we know, is a sea called the Dead Sea. Anything that drops into that sea cannot sink

but will always float. If you jump into the Dead Sea, don't bother with a life vest-you will not sink. Even if the devil tries to drown you in it, you can look at him and smile because you cannot drown. Because, one, there is a heavy mineral content in the sea. And, two, there is an inlet but no outlet, so more and more minerals get trapped in there. What gets in stays in. No living thing survives there. Everything dies. Christians can become like that. If you receive and don't give, you will become like that. But if you receive and you give, you are like a stream of living waters, full of life, bubbling with good, clean, drinkable water. When you receive something, don't just keep it to yourself-share it freely with others. Many churches I know have become big commercial banks. The tithes and the offerings people give should not become money that remains in the church locked in fixed deposits. Such financial resources are not supposed to stay inside but get out to further God's purposes. If churches lock their financial resources behind locks and vaults, they become like the Dead Sea.

The wealth that you have comes from God (Hos. 2:8). It is not yours. God has given every bit of it to you, so you must be a good trustee. You must use it wisely. In days past, there were Christian monks who lived in monasteries who only ate one meal a day. They lived very frugally so that as much funds as possible could be sent out to the mission field. They were fasting and saving the money to help the poor.

Last year there was a great need in our ministry. I needed US$100,000 for our television ministry. I wrote a letter to all our praying friends on our mailing list. Christmas was coming, and it was the time to give gifts to everybody. But let's pause to think for a moment. Why do you give gifts among yourselves? Consider this universal

custom. If I invite you to my birthday, would you come empty-handed? If you come to my birthday party, would I give you a gift or would you give me a gift? You give me a gift of course. If it is the birthday of the Lord Jesus Christ, to whom would you give a gift? *Jesus*-right? Then why do Christians give gifts among themselves? It is Jesus Christ's birthday-why are we giving gifts among ourselves? You see, this is a wrong practice in our Christian lives. You should bring a gift and give it to the Lord Jesus at Christmas if there is any gift giving at all.

So I wrote this letter: "Give a gift to Jesus. Whatever amount you can give, you can give." And we sent this letter to everybody on our mailing list. Some people gave a little, some more. One month ago, a woman wrote me a letter. Inside the envelope was a small golden ring. She said, *When I saw your letter, I wanted to give. But I have no money. I'm very poor. I don't know what to give you.* I have no money to give you. So she knelt down and she cried to the Lord: *This TV programme is such a blessing to me. I like to support it, but I have no money.* One week later, her one-year-old son was having his birthday. The boy's uncle sent him a gold ring. When the woman took the ring and was about to put it on her son, she remembered the birthday gift for Jesus. She immediately sat down and wrote me this letter, *Brother, instead of giving it to my baby, I give this ring to Baby Jesus.* See what that woman did? She fasted. She denied herself the joy of placing this ring on her own son in order to give to the works of God. This act is called fasting.

In India, Christian women carry out such a practice: When they scoop out one cup of rice to cook for the family, they would grab a fistful of rice and deposit it into another jug. They would do that each and every day. At the end of the month, they bring their jugs of rice to the church and

give them as offerings. The church will then auction the rice and use the money raised to help the poor. This act is fasting. When you fast, you deny yourself to help the poor.

How To Fast?

How do you actually fast to help the poor?

1. Examine your heart attitude. It must be right. Your heart must really want to help and bless the poor. The Bible says, *He who helps the poor lends to the Lord* (Prov. 19:17). When you give food to a hungry person to eat, you are lending to the Lord. When you give a cloak to a naked person to put on, you are lending to the Lord. When you're helping a homeless to have a shelter, you are lending to the Lord. And he who lends to the Lord, the Lord will certainly repay.

Let me tell you one very moving story that happened in 1986. I went to Tibet for ministry and had very little money. After completing the ministry in Tibet, I came to Nepal. From there I had to go to eastern India for another two months of ministry. So I carefully calculated the money that I would need. I had just enough money to take a bus to go to the pastor's house. For two days I had eaten nothing. My stomach was hungry. The bus was travelling for seventeen hours. Beside me was a Tibetan monk. He had plenty of food to eat. Throughout the journey he was always munching something. The bus was travelling the whole night. After another 6 gruelling hours it finally stopped at a village for food. I stepped off to get some food to eat. Approaching a shopkeeper, I asked how much one place of rice would cost. I recounted all the money in my

pocket. Conclusion: I could not afford to eat the rice. So I drank water, and filled my stomach up like a camel. I sat down and prayed, Lord Jesus, *I'm very hungry-but I have no money for food.*

At this stop, this Tibetan monk was having a great meal. Even as he re-entered the bus, he was eating something. The bus started moving. Along the way, in the middle of the night, I fell into a dream. In the dream, I saw one small boy selling tea. He was shouting, *Tea! Tea! Tea!* So I thought in my heart, *Oh, Lord Jesus! How nice if I could have a cup of tea!* When I thought like that, this boy pushed a cup towards me: Take, drink! I said, No. He said, Drink! When he was doing that, I felt somebody nudging me. I opened my eyes and saw the Tibetan monk looking right at me. He was holding a cup of tea: *Take, drink*. I was so shocked. I don't know whether it was a dream or it was real. The monk said, *Come on, drink,* and I drank. I was happy and thanked the Lord. In my empty stomach, that hot tea felt so comforting and delicious. Now who was that person? A total stranger - a Tibetan Buddhist monk. I was poor. And he helped me.

14 years later, I was in a bus coming from Nepal. Sitting next to me was that same monk. I was shocked. I recognised him but he didn't recognise me. This time, he had a financial need and I helped him out. I was so happy. God gave me an opportunity to help him back. You see, he who lends to the poor, he who gives to the poor, he lends to God. And God will bless him back. Always remember one thing: wealth and riches come from God (Deu. 8:18; Hos. 2:8). They don't belong to you. Don't hold greedily on to wealth. If you do, you will die in your greed. The money won't be a blessing to you, and it won't be a blessing to others, but it will be stolen from you.

2. *Deny yourself.*

> *Mark 10:21*
> *21 Then Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, "One thing you lack: Go your way, sell whatever you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, take up the cross, and follow Me."*

Deny yourself and help the poor. Give liberally to your church. Give liberally to missions. When you do that, your treasures will be great in heaven. There is a certain family in USA whom I know. The husband has got a very good job, but they are also missionaries. One day, their children gave them money to buy new carpets as their old carpets were coming apart. Just at that time, they received a letter from a missionary who ran an orphanage in Romania. There was no food in the orphanage. All the children were very hungry and suffering. Can you guess what the woman did? The money that her children gave her for the carpet she immediately sent to Romania. She told her husband, *Well, nobody visits our home anyway-a new carpet is not important.* So what did this woman do? They were fasting the carpet-fasting and denying themselves a need so as to help the poor.

One day as I was praying for this family, I saw a vision of a beautiful house in heaven, and the Lord Jesus was looking at me. He said, *Come here; take a good look at this house.* So I went to stand beside the Lord Jesus Christ looking at this beautiful house. Every layer of this house was built with precious stones. The Lord Jesus told me that house belonged to that woman. I asked Him, *Why are there so many different layers of precious stones?* He replied,

pointing to a particular stone, *This stone is the gift that she sent to Romania. This stone is the one she sent there.* When you fast, when you deny yourself, when you give to the poor, your sacrifice is transformed into precious stones up in heaven (cp. Matt. 6:20).

3. Live a simple life.

> *Philippians 4:12*
> *12 I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.*

Live a simple life. Sometimes I get the opportunity to visit my mother. She and my father live alone together. My sisters and brother are all married. They have their own homes. My parents are getting old. They survive on my father's pension. My mother is used to cooking very simply: One rice, one curry, and perhaps one vegetable. Once, I asked my mother, *Why do you always cook so simply like this?* She said, *There's only two of us-why cook so many dishes?* I went into their bedroom and spotted a little can. On it was written, *Offering for the church.* So I asked my mother, *What is this?* She said when she went to the market, if she wanted to buy two vegetables, she would buy only one vegetable. The money for the other vegetable she would put into the can. At the end of the month, she would bring the can to the church. The church would use this money to feed the widows and orphans and send some of it to needy missionaries. Live simply. You don't have to live luxuriously. Remember one thing: Our life on this earth is not permanent. It is temporary! All the riches of this world will perish. Whatever property you have will all one day be

gone! All your luxury will be gone! You can't bring all that into heaven. There is only one thing, however, that you can bring into the next life: true riches in Christ Jesus.

4. Identify yourself with the sufferings of others.

> *2 Corinthians 8:9*
> *9 For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich.*

This scripture reminds us that Jesus Christ became poor so that we may become rich. *Mother Theresa* was a godly woman who lived in India for more than 50 years. When she was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize she travelled to Norway to receive the award. Upon arrival, and learning that a dinner was planned in her honour, she immediately requested that it be cancelled. The chairman was so surprised: *Mother, why do you want us to do that?* She asked him*, How much would you spend for the dinner?* When he told her the huge sum, she said, *Give me that money. I can use the money to help the poor in India.* The chairman was so touched he told all the people who were gathered. When they heard that, they all stood up and applauded strongly. And then what happened? One woman wrote a cheque for $10,000. She came up to the stage, put it at the feet of Mother Theresa. Another woman walked up. Another man walked up. One by one by one they walked up. Hundreds of people walked up. And they all laid their love gifts at her feet. More than one million dollars were given to her. How did she get all this money? This is the secret: Instead of enjoying the dinner for herself, Mother Theresa fasted the dinner. As a result, God blessed her, and others through her.

5. *Do not keep treasures to yourself.*

> *James 5:2-3*
> *2 Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten.*
> *3 Your gold and silver are corroded, and their corrosion will be a witness against you and will eat your flesh like fire. You have heaped up treasure in the last days.*

When you give away your wealth, you will save up treasures up in heaven. When we were starting the television ministry, we had a budget of half a million dollars but were not getting any offerings. The whole world particularly Asia was in the middle of a bad economic crisis at that time and funds were limited. I fasted and prayed for 40 days. I cried out to Lord, *Lord Jesus, You put such a heavy burden on my head! To obey your will I need so much money. Where am I going to find it?* For 40 days and 40 nights, I was fasting and crying out to the Lord. One day, I received a cheque for US$100,000 out of the blue. I was shocked. In my entire life I had never ever received such a huge amount. I wondered, *Who is this man?* I did not really know him. So I told my secretary to find out who this giver was. She managed to do so, and I invited him and his wife to my office for dinner. I was curious about one thing, so over dinner I asked him one question: *Do you know why I invited you for dinner? I have one question to ask you. You do not know me very well. Only once someone introduced you to me. You know, I stay far away from rich people. One, rich people are very arrogant. Two, if preachers like me hang around rich people, other people may think that it is only for money. And three, you cannot buy a prophet with money. Just because you give me money, I cannot speak nice words to you. That I will never do. I will rather reject your money and tell you what God says than*

accept your money and compromise. This I will never do. So I asked him, *What made you send this US$100,000?* He told me they had received a small property at about the time he received my newsletter about the TV ministry. As he was reading the newsletter, he heard the Lord telling him and impressing on his heart to give a portion of the money to this ministry. So he decided to do so instead of keeping the wealth to himself. If you care for the poor, give to the storehouses of God. Give to missions.

A Prayer of Blessing

Now I'm going to teach you a prayer to pray. You can only pray this prayer if you want to help the poor. Whenever you are going to do this kind of fasting, pray this prayer. If you pray this prayer, the hand of the Lord will stretch out to bless you. There is a prayer in the Bible for those who pray to fast and help the poor.

> *Deuteronomy 26:12-19*
> *12 "When you have finished laying aside all the tithe of your increase in the third year-the year of tithing-and have given it to the Levite, the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, so that they may eat within your gates and be filled,*
> *13 "then you shall say before the LORD your God:" I have removed the holy tithe from my house, and also have given them to the Levite, the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, according to all Your commandments which You have commanded me; I have not transgressed Your commandments, nor have I forgotten them.*
> *14 'I have not eaten any of it when in mourning, nor have I removed any of it for an unclean use, nor given*

any of it for the dead. I have obeyed the voice of the LORD my God, and have done according to all that You have commanded me.
15 'Look down from Your holy habitation, from heaven, and bless Your people Israel and the land which You have given us, just as You swore to our fathers, "a land flowing with milk and honey."'
16 "This day the LORD your God commands you to observe these statutes and judgments; therefore you shall be careful to observe them with all your heart and with all your soul.
17 "Today you have proclaimed the LORD to be your God, and that you will walk in His ways and keep His statutes, His commandments, and His judgments, and that you will obey His voice.
18 "Also today the LORD has proclaimed you to be His special people, just as He promised you, that you should keep all His commandments,
19 "and that He will set you high above all nations which He has made, in praise, in name, and in honor, and that you may be a holy people to the LORD your God, just as He has spoken."

Each time you do this kind of fasting, you pray this prayer. I promise you in Jesus' name God will bless you according to all the blessings in that scripture.

In conclusion, it is a great thing to help the poor-the poor in the natural, and the poor in the spirit for the salvation for their souls. Helping the materially poor, in particular, is a noble act in the eyes of God. You touch the very heart of God. When you touch the heart of God, He will be so happy. And He will stretch out His hand and bless you. This is the fasting to help the poor.

CHAPTER 8

Breaking Fears and Depression

Isaiah 58:6
6 Is this not the fast that I have chosen: To loose the bonds of wickedness, To undo the heavy burdens, To let the oppressed go free, And that you break every yoke?

This fast will enable you to break every yoke when you fast and pray. There are yokes of fears and depression over your mind. There is also the yoke of negative emotions, which manifests itself in the multiple forms of fears, sadness, depressions, mental agonies, loneliness, and all kinds of negative mental emotions. To some, they may seem natural and something you just have to live with. However, if you don't deal with such negative emotions immediately, they swell bigger and bigger, growing from a little pond into a mighty ocean. If you keep dwelling on them, soon enough they will suck you under like unforgiving quicksand. People who get drowned in depression find it very, very difficult to come out of it.

Do you know what's a yoke? It is a long wooden frame that is put on the neck of a cow. It enables the cow to pull the cart. But the yoke sits heavily on the neck of the poor cow. If you look at the cow closely, you will find that its

white neck is bruised and blackened. Sometimes the skin is torn and deep scars mark the neck of this poor animal. The same thing happens in your mind. The mind becomes bruised, made all the worse by scars of fears, depression, and mental agonies. God wants you to be set free. And the only way to be set free is to fast and pray. The anointing that comes down from heaven when you fast and pray will break the yoke (Isa. 10:27).

Biblical Example

For many years, Elijah, the mighty prophet of God, was fasting and praying in the wilderness. When the time came for him to appear before the people, the Lord told him, *Now go and present yourself before King Ahab* (1 Kg. 18:1). At that time there was a great sin of idolatry in Israel. Jezebel introduced idol worship to the people of Israel, and her husband King Ahab went along with it. Not only that, Jezebel anointed and retained 850 prophets in her palace to worship and serve idols (1 Kg. 18:19). God finally sent Elijah on a mission to destroy the idol worship. There was one word from Elijah to all Israel: *Today, you have to choose whom you would want to follow. If all these idols are the true gods, follow them. But if they are not the true gods, then you must follow the one and only true, living God. Do you all agree?* Who could disagree with such a fair proposition-especially when there would be a spectacular display of power between gods?

Elijah summoned all the 850 prophets serving Baal to Mt. Carmel. On that mountain, a decisive battle was going to take place. The challenge was laid down: *Now here's a bullock. Take this bullock. Cut it to pieces and offer to your gods. The God who answers by fire we will all worship Him.*

Everybody agreed: *Good idea! Excellent idea! Brilliant Elijah!* The prophets of Baal carefully cut the bullock to small little cubes. Then they began to supplicate their gods in frenzied praise and worship: *O Baal, come*. From morning till evening, no matter how hard they cried out, Baal did not come down. Idols are gods that have ears but they cannot hear. They have eyes but cannot see. They have hands but cannot bless. They have legs but cannot walk.

The prophets of Baal cried and cried, but their gods did not come down. All this time Elijah was sitting on the ground. Perhaps he was even lying on the grass, looking up to the sky for Baal to come down. When Baal still didn't show, he told them, *Hey, you are not praying loud enough. Pray louder-because your god cannot hear carefully. He has a hearing problem* (1 Kg. 18:27). This made them even more angry-and more desperate, so much so that they even cut themselves. Yet Baal still did not come down.

Finally Elijah told them, *My turn now; everybody move; stand to one side.* He took one big bull, cut it into twelve pieces. Why twelve pieces? They represent the twelve tribes of Israel. He was offering the bull as a sin offering for the sins that Israel had committed in worshipping idols. Elijah is seeking God's forgiveness for their idolatry. There were twelve stones that made up the altar for the burnt sacrifice. These twelve stones symbolized the covenant relationship between God and Israel. In effect, Elijah was telling God this: *O Lord God, remember You have a covenant relationship with Israel!* Elijah also took twelve buckets of water and poured them on the sacrifice. Why did he do that? It is because water was used to cleanse and sanctify (Ezek. 36:25). The number 12 in the Bible signifies divine government. In the 12 stones, 12 pieces of meat, and 12 buckets of water, Elijah was making a statement: he

was appealing to the goodness of God. He was asking forgiveness for Israel so that their hearts might turn back to God. Afterwards, he prayed: *O Lord God of Israel, I have done all things according to Your Word* (1 Kg. 18:36).

The words of his prayer suggest one thing: when Elijah was fasting and praying, it must have been God had shown him what to do when he battled the prophets of Baal. When you fast and pray, the Holy Spirit will guide your heart and teach you how to pray (Rom. 8:26). So the counsel had come from God, and Elijah boldly prayed: *I have done according to Your Word. Now God, answer by fire so that all Israel may know that you are God and there's no other god beside You.* At that moment, a ball of fire came down from heaven and it consumed the bull and dried up all the water. God accepted the sacrifice. When all Israel saw that, they bowed down and worshipped the one true and living God (1 Kg. 18:39).

Elijah now turned to all the 850 prophets. He told the Israelites, *Seize all the prophets of Baal. Don't let anyone escape!* They complied readily, and Elijah slew them all (1 Kg. 18:40). King Ahab was watching all this. Fear and trembling came into his heart. Even he repented. The news reached Queen Jezebel and she was so angry with Elijah. She was angry for two reasons. She was angry with her prophets because they couldn't call fire from heaven and were utterly defeated by one man. And she was incensed with Elijah for killing her prophets. So she sent an army to capture Elijah and kill him. Elijah heard this news, and ran for his life. This mighty prophet of God who called down fire from heaven, who fearlessly slaughtered the 850 false prophets, is now running for his dear life (1 Kg. 19:3). Had he forgotten who he was? This mighty prophet of God was drowning in despair.

Elijah was quite destroyed in heart and mind. The fear for his life plunged him into the slough of despondency. Unable to deal with the insurmountable duress he felt in his heart, he began to pray and ask to die: *Lord, take away my life; no use living anymore!* (1 Kg. 19:4) Have you ever prayed like this? At some point in life, many Christians pray like this.

I want to show you one secret right now. In Revelation 2 and 3, we meet seven churches in Asia-seven churches with seven different kinds of problems. Some of them have the very worst sinners in the eyes of God. Out of the seven churches, only one church is right in the eyes of God. But to each church, the Lord gives a specific message. After telling the church of Ephesus all her problems (2:1-7), the Lord tells in verse 7, *To him who overcomes, I will give you the right to eat the tree of life.* To the church in Smyrna (2:8-11), the Lord Jesus also says, *To him who overcomes*, (11). Likewise, to the third church, Pergamum (2:12-17), and down the list from Thyatira (2:18-29), Sardis (3:1-6), Philadelphia (3:7-13) to the seventh church, Laodicea (3:14-19), the Lord Jesus concludes by saying, *To him who overcomes*. Seven times the Lord Jesus says, *If you overcome, you shall enter into My kingdom.* Overcome what? Overcome the obstacles in this earth. No praying for a short cut, *Lord, take me home.* Don't pray that prayer. It will never be answered. Even if such a prayer were answered, according to Revelation 2 and 3, you have not overcome. If you have not overcome, you will not get all the blessings in heaven. You will not be dressed in white. You will not be able to eat the fruit from the tree of life. You will not be able to put on the overcomer's crown of victory. The gown, the fruit, and the crown are the three primary rewards waiting for God's saints in heaven.

The Holy Bible tells us that in Christ Jesus we are more than conquerors (Rom. 8:37). *He that is in you is greater than he that is in this world* means the Lord Jesus, who is inside you, enables you to be more than a conqueror over all the negative emotions you might have in this world (1 Jn. 4:4). Whatever problems you encounter in this world-good, bad or ugly-you have the power to overcome them. The problems cannot overcome you. You have power over them. If you pray, "Lord, take my life away-better to die," then you are a defeated Christian. You're a hopeless Christian. You're not a fighter. You're a loser. You're a coward. No loser wins the crown. The apostle Paul says, *I have fought a good fight. I have overcome* (1 Tim. 4:8). Notice what he says: "I have fought." If you read the life of the apostle Paul, you will realize that he went through worse problems than what you are going through (cp. 2 Cor. 11:23-28). He went through such problems because he chose to serve the Lord. By choosing to serve God, he went through untold agonies and untold persecutions. Never, never, never did he pray, "Lord, take me away!" The passion in him of overcoming every hurdle and challenge prevented him from praying like that. So he became one of God's distinguished overcomers.

Now compare that to the Elijah before his "still, small voice" encounter with God-the man who called down fire from heaven, the man who killed 850 false prophets. How could one idol-crazy woman compare with 850 false prophets? Elijah didn't even have to be in close proximity to her. From Mount Carmel, the mighty prophet of God could have let loose his holy breath and blasted Jezebel into oblivion. Instead, nestled in the comforts of her palace, Jezebel blew some hot air of vengeance and Elijah scuttled away like a frightened chicken. Why did Elijah flee? He let fear overcome him, sinking him into deep despair. That

was his problem: *Fear.* Fear opened the door for the devil to attack him and put a bondage over his mind. The devil's only strong weapon is fear. He shoots fear arrows at you. Fear enters into your mind. Faith departs from your heart. Your eyes cannot look at faith. They are blinded, because there is a strong bondage of fear over your mind. Your heart will only meditate fear.

This was Elijah's dilemma. He sank under the weight of despondency. He wanted to starve to death, after walking for one entire day into the wilderness (1 Kg. 19:4). When he reached a certain desert place, he just sat there waiting, and hoping, for death to come. What Elijah did-starving to death-is a curious form of "negative fasting." Instead of craving death by starvation, Elijah could have overcome his fear by fasting and praying. He would have totally defeated Jezebel there and then, and probably bring about her earlier demise. He did not do that.

But let's look at the goodness of God. Many times, God manifested His power and presence to encourage Elijah. Elijah saw the glory. He saw the power of God and heard the voice of God talking to him. Yet the downcast prophet chose to stay discouraged (1 Kg. 19:11-14).

Broken spirit is unbearable

The Bible says, *Who can bear a broken spirit?* (Prov. 18:14). The prophet Elijah's spirit was so broken. His despair was quite inconsolable. His depression was great. His loneliness was great. His sadness overcame him. His mental agony imprisoned him. He became a virtual prisoner of all his negative emotions. Like Elijah, we also fall into the same pit. If you are going through depression, despondency, or despair, reflect how you fell into it, so you may better be able to come out of it.

How did Elijah fall into such a pit? Elijah was, firstly, overly self-confident. He had too much self-confidence and became prideful and boastful. You may be surprised how a prophet of God could have this kind of spirit inside him. Look at 1 Kings 19: 10: So he said, *"I have been very zealous for the LORD God of hosts; for the children of Israel have forsaken Your covenant, torn down Your altars, and killed Your prophets with the sword. I alone am left; and they seek to take my life."*

There, the prophet Elijah revealed his heart to God. In the revelation of his heart, you will find pride, self-reliance, and boastfulness. Elijah had a serious flaw inside him: he was very proud, boastful, and overly confident in himself. This weakness caused him to fall into a pit of despair. And when he fell, he opened his heart to a host of negative emotions. The first of such emotions was fear. His thinking was attacked, and a mental bondage settled over his heart. That mental bondage led to depression. The more he felt depressed the more he wallowed in self-pity.

People who feel sorry for themselves also have this problem. They are depressed. Their minds are under bondage. The only way to help such people, or perhaps yourself, is to fast and pray to break this yoke.

The symptoms of a broken spirit

> *Psalm 69:20*
> *20 Reproach has broken my heart, And I am full of heaviness; I looked for someone to take pity, but there was none; And for comforters, but I found none.*

The psalmist is saying that people who have this problem will look for others to pity and comfort them.

They won't be looking for people to help them to overcome their problem. They are hungering for words such as *O you poor thing, Don't cry: Jesus Christ will help you, Everybody has problems, or Don't worry; don't cry; we are all with you.* People who have self-pity look for others to pity them. They look for others to pamper them. They are like little babies who want attention. A baby knows how to cry for attention. When the mother picks her up, she will settle down and become quiet, and might even betray a smile of contentment. Many Christians are like that-little babies. They cry, Pastor, pastor, and the poor pastor will have to visit them. And then the pastor coos, *Oh, don't cry; big babies don't cry; Papa pastor is here.* These are the symptoms of people in depression, symptoms of people who are broken in the spirit. Such individuals carry a negative self-image. Their low self-image makes them feel rejected all the time. That is their biggest problem. They are under mental bondage. The yoke of depression is on their necks. When the yoke weighs heavily upon them, they end up with a negative self-image and constantly feel rejected.

Can God help you?

If you have this problem this study will show you the way out. If you know other people who have such a problem, you can help them also through fasting and praying. Can God help such people? How can such people be helped? What solution is there for them? How can they be set free? Only one way: Run to God. Only God can help you. Psychologists cannot help you. Psychiatrists cannot treat you. Doctors cannot give you anti-depression pills and solve your problem. Your problem is not in the flesh. It's in the spirit. When your problem is in the spirit, how can anti-depression pills help you? They simply cannot help you. Medicine cannot help you. Only God can help you.

1. *Don't run away from God. Run to God!* Note Elijah's mistake and learn from it. Instead of running to God, he ran far away from God. He walked into a desert. People who have this problem stop attending church and stop praying. They are in no mood for anything. They don't want to talk to the pastor. They walk about feeling rejected. The truth is, the more you run away, the stronger the bondage over your life, the more a prisoner of negativity you become, and the lower you sink emotionally. That is a grave mistake. Don't run away from God. Run to God.

2. *God will send His angels to help you.* Elijah was in the wilderness. He wanted to starve himself to death. Some people pray, "Lord, I want to die. Take me home." If God were to answer such a prayer, He might have answered Elijah's prayer as well. But what did God do? God sent an angel (1 Kg. 19:5-7). Two times the angel of the Lord came and brought food to him: *Elijah, you are very weak. Come on; get up; eat this cake. This is specially made at the bakery in heaven. The finest bread-delicious cakes with some raisins on it.* Never, never pray to die like Elijah did. Don't be a loser. You should be an overcomer. God fed Elijah. And God will send messengers into your life to set you free.

God will strengthen you with His word, and will show you a way out from His word (Isa. 30:21). When you run to God, the presence of God will come down from heaven to surround you. And the presence of God will lift you up. God came and asked him, *Elijah, what are you doing here?* See, God came and encouraged him (1 Kg. 19:9). The Bible says, God will heal the brokenhearted. To those who are of contrite spirit, He is very near to them (Ps. 4:8; 34:18). His presence is near you. Don't run away from God because He is the only one who can help you. He is the only one who can set you free. He is the only one who can break

those iron bondages of depression over your life. Run to Him. When you run to God, He will send His messenger to encourage you. He Himself will come to encourage you.

3. *You must choose with all your heart to want to be set free.* Even when God sent His angels to feed him, even when the presence of God came down, Elijah did not want to be set free (1 Kg. 19:11-14). He kept dwelling on the subject of his self-pity. Because of that error, he was not set free. Don't make the mistake like Elijah. With all your heart, with all your mind, with all your strength, with all that's within you-choose and desire earnestly to be set free. The moment you choose absolute freedom from your bondage you have taken the first step to overcome.

How To Fast?

There are 7 steps on how to fast and pray to break fear and depression.

1. Come to a place where you can meet God.

> *1 Kings 19:8*
> *8 So he arose, and ate and drank; and he went in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights as far as Horeb, the mountain of God.*

Elijah stood up, began his journey, and fasted and prayed for 40 days and 40 nights. He went to Mt. Horeb, also called Mt. Sinai, the holy mountain of God to meet God. So, go to a place where you can meet God. It can be a private room where you can fast and pray alone. In Mt. Sinai, where God first met Moses, God came down as fire on a burning bush (Ex. 3:1-4). All the people in that area,

even though they were not following the true God, knew in their hearts that Mount Sinai was a holy mountain.

2. Fast and pray in order to hear God.

> *1 Kings 19:9*
> *9 And there he went into a cave, and spent the night in that place; and behold, the word of the LORD came to him, and He said to him, "What are you doing here, Elijah?"*

God spoke to Elijah and asked one question, "Elijah, what are you doing here?" At that, Elijah poured out his heart to God. He was a picture of self-pity as he complained before God: *Oh, You know, I am the only one left. Everyone has forsaken You. I am the only one righteous man left standing* (1 Kg. 19:10). By saying this, Elijah was hoping for God to say, *Oh, you poor thing, Oh My holy servant-how righteous you are. I am so proud of you, Elijah! And he was hoping God to say, Don't worry, Elijah, I will take care of Jezebel. That same fire that came down to consume the sacrifice-right now, in this place, give a command, and I will send fire down to Jezebel's palace.* Elijah might have harboured these thoughts in his heart, hoping for God to dote on him. Depressed people crave sympathy. They have little or no hope for the future. They cannot see beyond their problems. They are spiritually shortsighted.

3. *Depressed people need positive thinking to help them out of their mental bondage.*

And the right kind of positive thinking can only come from the Word of God. Only the Word of God is filled with divinely - given principles and examples of positive thinking.

4. God will speak to you.

When you are fasting and praying, when you are sincerely crying out to God, God will speak to you. God can talk to you in an audible voice or God can talk to you from the Bible. God spoke to Elijah and the first question that God asked him was this: "Elijah, what are you doing here?" What was actually God asking him? *Elijah, you are my prophet. You shouldn't be here. This is not the place for you to be here. You are My servant. You are supposed to be serving Me there. What are you doing here? You are in the wrong place. You should not be sinking in despair. You should not have allowed depression to come into you.*

5. *Don't pray like this: 'Lord, remove the depression. Lord, remove the sadness. Remove the loneliness. Remove this bondage.'*

God won't answer such a prayer. Instead of praying "God, remove this or that" break the bondage over your mind in the Name of Jesus. The Lord Jesus says, *In My Name, you shall cast out demons* (Mk. 16:17). It is the spirit of fear that is binding you. So, in the Name of Jesus, cast out the spirit of fear. Cast out the spirit of depression. Break its power and the bondage is broken. Let me give you one example. Once the apostle Paul was facing some problems and he prayed, *Lord, remove this thorn from my life.* Three times he prayed this prayer (2 Cor. 12:7,8). God did not answer his prayer. Answering that prayer would in principle be like answering the "Take my life away" prayer of Elijah. Don't pray like that. Break the bondage. Be an overcomer.

6. *Pray in tongues.*

> *Jude 20*
> *20 But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit*

Praying in tongues is a powerful spiritual weapon. When you pray in tongues, you are stirring your inner man, your spirit. When you stir up your spirit, the depression begins to dissipate, bit by bit. Your fear gets smaller and smaller. And your faith gets stronger and stronger. Keep on praying continually in unknown tongues. Maybe you have seen this sight. When water is poured on a dog, it would shake itself rigorously from side to side to get rid of the water. When you pray in tongues, that is what you are doing. You are shaking the bondage off you. No dog with a bit of common sense will allow water to remain on its body. Only stupid dogs do that. So far I have never seen any stupid dog. Have you? So learn from the dog. Shake the fear away. Shake the depression away. Don't sit down and cry. Don't wallow in the pool of despair. Don't feel sorry for yourself. Don't sink into the pit of self-pity.

7. *Put on the mind of Christ by meditating the Word of God.*

> *Isaiah 55:6-9*
> *6 Seek the LORD while He may be found, Call upon Him while He is near.*
> *7 Let the wicked forsake his way, And the unrighteous man his thoughts; Let him return to the LORD, And He will have mercy on him; And to our God, For He will abundantly pardon.*
> *8 "For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways," says the LORD.*

> *9 "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways, And My thoughts than your thoughts."*

Your thoughts are depression. God's thoughts are hope. Your thoughts are fear. God's thoughts are faith. When you mediate God's word, the mind of Christ will come upon you. Hope will replace despair. Faith will replace fear. Let me give you two examples. In 1 Kings 19:10, we see how Elijah felt so sorry for himself. But even when God's word came to him, he did not receive it into his heart and soul. Instead, he sank deeper into self-pity. But consider the apostle Paul. An enemy was assaulting him, yet this was what the Lord told him, *I will not answer your prayer but I will give you a more powerful weapon: My grace, which is sufficient for thee* (2 Cor. 12:7-10). The apostle Paul received the word deep into his spirit. That word brought faith to his mind and he overcame the darkness brought by his dilemma. All the obstacles in the apostle Paul's life were overcome by the testimony of the Word of God.

When you understand the Word of God, and when the Word of God rules your mind, pessimism and negative thinking will be transformed into new, positive vision. When you fast and pray, keep at it until the anointing breaks the yoke. The first stroke of the axe will not fell the tree. You have to keep on cutting, sawing, hacking, and chopping. Eventually, the whole tree will come down. In the same way, Isaiah 10:27 reminds, when you keep on fasting regularly, the anointing will come down. The glory of God will come down. And it will break the yoke and you will be totally set free. When you fast and pray, God will heal your broken heart.

When you fast and pray, when you wait on God, you will be strengthened in your inner man. Your mind will be renewed. You will receive a new vision-and new strength to overcome all the works of the enemy in your life. When that happens, all the yokes of bondage on your mind will be totally broken. Fast and pray to break mental bondages on your mind so as to get rid of depression, negative emotions, fears, loneliness, and sadness.

CHAPTER 9

Revival for Ministry

Isaiah 58:8
8 Then your light shall break forth like the morning, Your healing shall spring forth speedily, And your righteousness shall go before you; The glory of the LORD shall be your rear guard.

When you fast, your light shall break forth. What is that? *You shall receive understanding, wisdom and knowledge*. In short, it is fasting for the ministry. It is very, very important to fast for the ministry that God has given to you. If you want to know what kind of ministry you should do or God's specific will for your ministry, this is the kind of fasting and praying you need to do. There are so many ministers today who are no longer in the ministry. It is because they do not know the will of God for their lives. Many Christians reason it like this when it comes to ministers who quit: It probably was never God's will for them to be in the ministry in the first place; they thought it was a good vocation and jumped in; they applied for so many other jobs but never got an answer; somebody told them the reason they were not getting jobs was probably because God wanted them to be in the ministry.

Let me tell you one thing: God is a wise God, full of wisdom, knowledge, and understanding. He can speak to you clearly. He doesn't have to do this through indirect ways. Remember one thing: only the enemy comes through the back door. God comes through the front door (Jn. 10:1,2). When God wants to show you what His will is, why must He confuse you? When you fast and pray for your ministry, God will give you clear insight and understanding. Sincerely seek God's will for your ministry. Many people pray like this, *Lord, I like to serve you; I like to do something for you.* Don't pray like this. That is a wrong prayer. Rather, pray like this, *Here I am Lord-what would you like me to do for you?* You see, when you pray, "Lord, I like to do something for You," you put yourself in the place of God, making Him your slave. That is wrong. You must pray, *Lord, here am I, send me. Here am I, what would You want me to do for You?* This manner of praying implies you are humbling yourself as a servant should, and you are acknowledging that God is your Master. Then the Master-the Lord of the Harvest-will direct you where to go, what to do, and show you clearly God's plan for your life.

King David had a great desire to build God a temple. Whose desire was it? Was it God's desire? No, it was King David's desire. So he went into the worship tent and prayed, *Lord God, I want to build a beautiful temple for you. I feel very sorry for you God. God was probably wondering, Why are you sorry?* Sometimes when we pray, all of heaven laughs at us. All the angels-even God Himself-can get quite amused when we pray. Out of His goodness, God nevertheless blesses us. King David might have prayed, *I live in a solid mansion but look at You, O God-only a little flimsy tabernacle. I feel so sorry for You. All this while God is sitting in His glorious throne listening to the prayer. O, this foolish boy, God muses. He doesn't even know what kind of house I have. King David*

prayed on, O my poor God, I feel so sorry for you. Every night when I sleep on my golden bed and look at the roof of my house-at all the golden chandeliers hanging from it-I feel so sorry for You. O God, You only have a bamboo roof, only a tabernacle constructed out of tents. O God, I like to do something for You. Can I? To this came this reply, *My son David, I appreciate your kindness in wanting to build Me a house. But you don't know this one thing. I don't want you to do it. It is not My will. I have chosen another man for the task* (1 Kg. 5:5).

It was King David's desire to do the job. But God gave that call to his son Solomon. So, don't pray, *Lord, I like to serve You.* God probably does not need the kind of services you are offering Him. Rather pray like this: *What would You want me to do for You, God?* God only calls a man whom He has carefully selected. Then He carefully prepares that man for the work prepared for him. I tell you one more truth. Just going to a seminary for 3-4 years doesn't qualify you to stand in the pulpit to preach. To stand in the pulpit to preach, you don't need a degree in Theology, no matter how useful it is. The most important qualification is that you must know God. You must know the mind of God. That is the most important qualification. A Bachelor degree, a Master degree, a Doctor of Divinity-perhaps even a Doctor of Reverence or Doctor of His Holiness, if ever there were such a degree-is totally useless when a preacher does not really know God. All this education is good but don't forget that kind of qualification is only on paper. I am not saying that going to seminary is useless. I am saying that you must know God. Know Him with your heart (cp. Jn. 5:39; Lk. 24:27).

There was once a mighty man of God in China called *John Sung*. John was a brilliant scientist. He received a doctorate in Chemistry in the US. He was such a brilliant

scientist that top universities in America wanted him to join their faculty. He was fasting and praying sincerely about his future work as a professor for several days. One day, the Lord Jesus Christ came into his room: *My son John, it is not My will for you to be a professor. Your parents dedicated you to me when you were a small baby. You belong to Me. The university doesn't own you. I own you. Come and follow me*. He was so happy and so excited. At this time, John Sung was enrolled in a Christian seminary. He was so excited that God came to speak to him that, on the very next morning, he went and told all his professors about his encounter with the Lord Jesus. They looked at him with shocking disbelief: *John, you have been studying theological books too much. You need rest. Your mind is very tired*. John was then put in a mental hospital and made a virtual prisoner for 90 days. For what reason? For the fact that he insisted he saw the Lord Jesus. Isn't that amusing?

John was utterly broken. He prayed, *Lord, why did this happen to me?* During the 90 days, the Lord appeared to him every day in the hospital and taught him the Bible. He read through the Bible 40 times over, from Genesis to Revelation. And it wasn't simply straight reading, but meditating the Bible scripture by scripture. Moreover, during those 90 days, the Lord revealed to him very clearly God's call for his life phase by phase. His ministry would last for 15 years and they were to be composed of 5 cycles of 3 years each. Everything that the Lord revealed to him-to the last detail-came to pass exactly. So from John Sung's experience we can learn not to pray, *Lord, I want to serve you. Pray, Lord, what is Thy will for me? What do You want me to do for You? What is the purpose You created me for?*

If you don't pray and seek God, you are taking a great risk and will face great danger. The devil will try to deceive

you. He will come to give you ideas. He would show you good plans, perhaps even speak through some people. Let's consider an example. The Lord Jesus Christ was in the wilderness fasting and at the end of 40 days the devil came to tempt Him. First the devil told Him to change stones into bread, using the preface "If you are the Son of God." Doesn't the Lord Jesus know He was the Son of God? Notice what was the devil suggesting by his querying approach? He was trying to arouse feelings of doubt in the Lord Jesus about Himself as the Son of God. Sometimes when you go through difficulties in your ministry, the devil comes along: *Are you really sure you are called to the ministry?* He makes you doubt your call. When you give in to doubt, you probably do not really know your call. If you know your call, there is no problem. Nobody can shake you. You will remain strong. The Lord Jesus knew who He was. He didn't need the devil to come and tell Him, "Are you the Son of God?" Even though bound in human form, the Lord Jesus knew He was the Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End. He was one with the Father. He knew who He was. He didn't need the devil to remind Him of anything. That is the first thing you must know: your calling. That is why fasting and praying for your ministry is very, very important. When you know your call, no devil can shake you.

Let me give you a personal example. God called me to the ministry when I was 17 years old. One day, by then I was 18, the word of the Lord came to me: I am calling you to be single for Me. I am addressed by most people, as you might know, by the title Sadhu. This is actually a title that indicates a holy calling. Individuals called to be Sadhus are dressed in saffron robes and don't get married. No family. No property. No possession. This is the calling of the Sadhu. So I know my call very well.

A few years later in 1989, however, two prophets gave me some words of prophecy: *Brother, God is now going to change your ministry. You will get married and have a family. Then you will be an apostle travelling to all the five continents of the world*. What the first prophet said didn't bother me. But when the second prophet said the same thing, I was a little bit shaken. The reason was because these two ministers were prophets of God. If I didn't recognize these two as prophets I would have brushed their words aside, as I had done with many before who had come with such similar prophetic words. But these two were considered prophets, so how could they be wrong?

I was shaken up a little bit. Fears entered my mind. O, what if I married the wrong woman? Then I would serve her, cook for her, wash clothes for her, as is the fate of so many poor husbands. All such kinds of fear came into my mind. So I began to fast and pray. For 3 days, I lost all peace. My mind was so troubled. See how the devil was coming to shake me up? For three days I fasted and prayed: *Lord Jesus, what happened to the call? How come You suddenly changed?* How could You change? On the third day, as I was praying, a powerful glory of God surrounded me. And the Lord Jesus stood before me and said, *I am a covenant-keeping God. I changed not* (Ps. 89:34). The moment the Lord Jesus said that, all my fears went away. All the bondages that the devil was trying to put on my mind broke loose. So, when God calls you, it is a true call. It doesn't change.

Let's return to the temptation in the wilderness. After failing to thwart the Lord Jesus the first time around, the devil then brought Him to a high mountain and showed Him all the glory of this world. He said, *Jesus, look at these. All this is mine. I will give it to You. You have come into this world for this purpose. I will give it all to You. All You have to*

do is one thing. You don't have to suffer, don't have to die on the cross. I will give it all to You. Just bow down and worship me. Inheriting the riches and glories of this world was not the call of God upon the Lord Jesus. What was His call? Psalm 22 and Isaiah 53 describe it well. The Messiah is called to undergo great suffering (Ps. 22; Isa. 53). But what was the devil doing? He was attempting to show the Lord Jesus a short cut to glory. Don't go this way. Go that way. I give it all to you. Instant success in the ministry is not from God. It is from the devil. The ways of God are accessed through a small and narrow path. The ways of the devil are situated on a broad and wide path (Matt. 7:13,14). That which comes easily is not from God. It comes from the devil. Be careful. If you walk in it, the devil will destroy you. So many ministers and believers who enter into the ministry are destroyed like that. So you must fast and pray and seek the will of God. Seek the mind of God. God will show you His plan. Only when God shows you His plan can you then build your ministry. Only then is your ministry a house built upon solid rock, and nothing can shake it (Matt. 7:24,25). The devil will try. He would huff and puff. Yet he would not be able to even wiggle one little stone from its firm foundation.

Biblical Example

When Saul was going about vehemently putting believers into prison, he had a dramatic encounter with the Lord Jesus Christ. In that encounter, Saul received his call. Saul became Paul. What did he do after that? He fasted and prayed for three days and three nights (Acts 9:9). He was fasting so as to know the perfect will of God. At the end of his fast, a man called Ananias came to see him. God showed

Ananias the ministry that Paul was going to do (vv.15-16). After laying hands on Paul, Ananias prayed for the baptism of the Holy Spirit to come upon Paul. Then Ananias probably prophesied: *Paul, this is how God is going to use you. This is how God is going to bless you.* Paul now knew his true calling. From that moment on, and all throughout his life, the perfect plan of God was his guiding compass.

Fasting and praying for your ministry is extremely important. Many ministers are in the wrong place in their ministry because they have not sought God's will. They face one failure after another. Why is it? Simply because they are in the wrong place. If God did not call you to be a pastor, don't be a pastor. Don't become a pastor just because it is a popular thing to be a pastor. If you do that, you are making a terrible mistake. If God did not call you to be a teacher of the word, don't teach the word. You can share the word, but don't fashion yourself as a teacher of the word. If you aren't called to be a prophet, don't go around telling people that you are a prophet. The prophet, it is true, has the gift of prophecy. However, a believer who has the gift of prophecy is not automatically a prophet. They are two different things. The ministry of a prophet is different from the gift of prophecy. So it doesn't mean you are a prophet just because you prophesied. Don't go round ordering people what to do. You are not a prophet. If you do that, you are walking on a dangerous path and it will destroy you. You might also end up destroying others.

Now, here is where intercessors need to be take note carefully. Intercessors are not prophets but prophets are intercessors. Although intercessors aren't prophets, God may reveal something prophetic to them when they pray. If, as an intercessor, God shows you something, how should you handle it? The correct thing is to bring that revelation

to your pastor and submit to him. Don't order your pastor to act according to the revelation you received. Submit it to your pastor, and let him decide how to deal with it. This is where many intercessors make the mistake, which sometimes results in church splits. They gather a group who uphold strongly their interpretation of their revelation and become sectarian. Be careful, the devil can manipulate you just as handily as the Holy Spirit can inspire you. But how do you differentiate between a manipulation and an inspiration? The fruit of the Spirit is love. The fruit of the Spirit is humility. If there is no humility in your life, something is wrong. If a person claims that he saw the Lord Jesus, he must manifest a dramatic change in his life for the better.

When Saul saw the Lord Jesus, his life turned around. He was totally transformed. Saul became Paul. His attitude changed, his heart changed, his mind changed, his desires changed-he became a humble servant of God. Consider Moses. He saw God in the burning bush. His life was totally changed from that point on. The Bible avers that Moses was the humblest man upon the face of the earth (Deu. 34:10). The once proud prince of Egypt became a lowly shepherd and wanderer. Look at all the twelve apostles. When they saw the resurrected Lord Jesus Christ, their lives dramatically changed. The apostle Thomas did not believe that the Lord Jesus arose from the dead. But when he saw the resurrected Christ, his life dramatically changed. As a result of that encounter, Thomas went to India to preach the gospel, and died there after years of ministry. When you encounter the Lord Jesus, your life will change-dramatically change. Meekness and humility would be the most telling aspect of this changed life. If you don't have these in your life, something is wrong. Something is seriously wrong.

Let me give you two biblical examples about ministers fasting and praying for their ministry.

1. When God commanded Moses to build the tabernacle, He instructed that the priests were to be set apart for sanctification. Before the priests could begin their ministry, they were commanded to fast and pray for 7 days (Lev. 8).

2. Moses himself was commanded by God to fast and pray for 40 days and 40 nights. And during the season of fasting and praying, every detail of the plan for the construction of the tabernacle was shown to him (Ex. 24:31). Beloved pastors and ministers, don't try to build your church on your own wisdom. If you do that, it will fail. If you fast and pray, God will show you the plan.

Several years ago, one pastor came to see me for prayer. His church was not growing. It was stagnant. They had the same 120 believers for 10 years and he badly wanted to do something about it. At that time in Toronto, Canada, there was a revival going on. There was another revival in Pensacola, Florida. This pastor decided to go to Toronto and Pensacola to learn the secret of successful church growth. So he said, *Please bless me*. After kneeling down, we started praying. As we were praying, I saw the Lord Jesus standing between us. The Lord told me, *Tell him not to go Toronto or Pensacola. Fast and pray at My feet and I will give him a plan to grow his church. Toronto is successful because I gave them the plan for Toronto. Pensacola is successful because I gave them the plan for Pensacola. The plans for Toronto and Pensacola will not work for this pastor because I did not ask him to duplicate their work*. I immediately relayed what the Lord told me to the pastor. When he stood up from prayer, he said, *Thank you, Brother, for the prayer. Tomorrow, I am going to Toronto. I will see you after I come back*. I was shocked, to say the least.

So this pastor went to Toronto, and then to Pensacola, and when he got back, he implemented the principles of revival he learned there. 100% failure-that's what he ended up with. That was not God's will for his church. When you try to build your church on another's success, it will fail 100%.

God has a unique calling for every individual. You must pray and seek God's will and plan. If you try to duplicate what has been given to another, you will fail. When one word comes from the throne of God for you, that living word is specifically for you. When it enters into your spirit, it makes you strong and bold, like an indomitable lion. You will run with the vision. You will fly with the vision. You will walk and you will not faint. And the vision will never die. The passion will never die. It will be like a fierce burning flame, an ever-burning living flame in you. But if another person tries to take your word for himself, he will not have the living flame.

How To Fast?

When you fast, observe four things:

1. *Find a secluded spot*. Move away from crowds. Be in a quiet place where you will not be disturbed. No telephones; no TV; no newspapers; no wives; no husbands; no children; no church; nobody. Lock yourself away and just pray. In the Bible we read of three men of God-Moses (Ex. 24:12-18), the Lord Jesus (Matt. 4:1,2), the apostle Paul (Gal. 1:17,18) -went into the wilderness to pray for their ministry.

2. *Spend lots of time worshipping the Lord and meditating the Word of God*. The prophets, the teachers, and the elders at Antioch ministered unto the Lord through fasting

(Acts 13:2). Ministering unto the Lord means worshipping the Lord. Meditate the Word of God (Jos. 1:8). When you mediate the Word of God, God will speak to you.

3. *Submit yourself to God and yield yourself to the will of God.* Submit to God your likes and dislikes. Don't put before God what you like to do in the ministry or what you don't like to do in the ministry. Throw away all that. Submit your spirit, soul, and body to God. Your mind must only have one thought: what God wants you to do for Him.

4. *Seek God with all your heart.* Pray sincerely with all your heart. The Bible says, *When you seek God with all your heart, God will visit you. And you will find God* (Jer. 29:13).

5. *Wait on God*. After worshipping and meditating the Word of God in a quiet location, submit your will to God. Seek His thoughts in prayer, and wait on Him. The Bible says, *I will wait upon the Lord; I will stand before God to listen to what He will speak to me* (Hab. 2:1). When the Lord appeared to him, what did Samuel say? *Speak, Lord, your servant shall hear* (1 Sam. 3:10).

If you do these five things, God will show you what His perfect will for you is, whether it is for you to become a pastor or an evangelist or something else.

When I was a new believer, I was attending the Methodist church. My pastor liked me very much because I was a leader for the youth group and was very zealous. He had plans to send me to the Methodist seminary, to be trained to become a pastor. When he told my parents about this they were so happy. They pictured in their minds my wearing a black jacket and a stiff white collar and looking very dignified. When the pastor first broached

the matter with me, my immediate response was, *That is a great idea, Pastor!* I wanted so much to accept what my pastor said lock, stock, and barrel. One morning, a month later, I sincerely prayed and sought God in the wee hours of the morning for His perfect will. Getting on my knees at 2 a.m., I turned earnestly to God: *What is your will, Lord? Shall I go to the seminary?* At 5 o'clock in the morning, an angel who was gloriously bright came down from heaven into my room with a message: *The will of the Lord is not for you to be a pastor. The will of the Lord is for you to be an evangelist and God will take you to many, many places.* When this word came to me, my heart was finally much settled. My pastor, on the other hand, was very upset with me. He thought I was being rebellious. But today, after more than 25 years of service, the fruit of my ministry is a proof that I have obeyed God. I don't have to brat to people about my ministry. The fruit speaks for itself that I have followed the word of the Lord correctly.

How does God speak to us?

When you fast and pray, God can speak to you through visions and dreams. Or He may send a prophet to prophesy to you. He will show you a place to go, or perhaps how to start a work or how to continue with it. But take note of this: God's plans will not be revealed to you all at once but one step at a time. He would expect you to obey every step. So fast continuously, and with every step, fast and pray. All God's plan will eventually be revealed to you-step by step.

Finally-and this is most important: *Knowing God's will would enable you to remain steadfast and faithful. The apostle Paul declares, I was not disobedient to that heavenly vision* (Acts 26:19). How was he able to say so as boldly as that? Only because he knew clearly God's will. He had God's

plan. When you have the word and plan of the Lord and pursue it, you will never, never get discouraged. Problems will come. The devil will shake you. People will betray you. Your heart, however, will remain steadfast. You would know deep inside, beyond any shadow of doubt, that you have been called by the Almighty God. Not a single doubt will come into your heart.

Be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might (Eph. 6:10). The only way for that to happen is through fasting and praying. All ministers, especially, must regularly fast and pray so as to have strength for the ministry. If you don't do that as a minister, I tell you this today: two things will happen to you. *Firstly*, you will suffer a burnout. *Secondly*, you will die physically before your time. I am not frightening you but I am telling you the truth. These two things can take place. To avoid these two things, practice what is written in Isaiah 40:31: *But those who wait on the LORD Shall renew their strength; They shall mount up with wings like eagles, They shall run and not be weary, They shall walk and not faint.*

Wait on the Lord. You shall most certainly be renewed inside you. You shall lift up your wings and fly like the eagle. You shall walk and run, and never, never get discouraged. You will grow continuously in your spiritual stature. And your ministry will continue to expand because the Lord Your God will be with you.

CHAPTER 10

Wisdom and Revelation

One aspect of fasting and prayer is asking for Wisdom and Understanding relating to matters beyond those of everyday living. For matters regarding day-to-day living, you don't need to fast and pray for wisdom and understanding. If you want wisdom for your everyday life, the Bible says, *This Book of the Law shall not depart out from your mouth; but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it: for then you shall make your way prosperous, and then you shall have good success* (Jos. 1:8).

We should first of all tackle the most popular reading of this scripture: Getting loads of financial blessings from God. Isn't this, therefore, the justification for preaching the prosperity gospel? Fortunately no, because this is a wrong reading of the text. The prosperity that is promised, contrary to popular belief, is not about money. It is about good success *in all things that you put your hand to do*. To think that prosperity equals dollars and cents shows that our understanding has been corrupted. Understood rightly, prosperity means that all the works of your hand will be fruitful. The translation in the *Amplified Bible* aptly highlights the basis of true biblical prosperity: *You shall have wisdom*. In other words, *you shall be wise in all the affairs*

of your life. If you want wisdom and understanding for everyday life, simply get into the habit of meditating on the word of God day and night.

But we need a different level of wisdom and understanding for areas of our life that reach deep into our relationship with God, thereby fulfilling the rich purposes of His calling. Specifically, we need to fast and pray for such a spirit of wisdom and understanding in three crucial areas of our life: walking with God, doing the works of God, and, most importantly, knowing God's mind and will.

Wisdom And Understanding Calls For You

God is willing and ready to impart wisdom and understanding to you. In fact wisdom and understanding, personified in Scripture, are constantly searching for you. The Bible declares, *Does not wisdom cry out? And understanding lift up her voice?* (Prov. 8:1) Wisdom and Understanding, as one voice, are calling out to you: "Please come—don't be foolish, don't be ignorant." God is desirous of making Himself known to you. He wants to equip you well to do His work. It is never the will of God that those who come and serve Him are marked by ignorance and folly. Foolish people are totally useless in kingdom work. You might have gasped at what I just said, for didn't God choose the foolish people of this world to confront the wise (1 Cor. 1:27)? Yes, God chooses the foolish things of this world. But He fills them with His spirit of wisdom and understanding. He equips them to do His work by His power, so His servants, foolish in themselves, cannot claim the glory. God's servants will give all glory to God because

it is not their education, their efforts, nor anything in themselves that enables them to do all the things of God. I am a living example of that: God has chosen as foolish a person as myself, equipped me with the spirit of wisdom and revelation, so all the glory of all the works of the ministry I have done so far belongs entirely to God.

Definitions

Let me give some definitions of wisdom and understanding so we can chew on them like strong meat and grow in our knowledge of their spiritual importance.

1. **Wisdom** in the Hebrew is called *chokmah*, meaning *technical skills or technical ability or special ability in fashioning something. It suggests the ability to make the right choices at the right time.*

2. **Understanding** in the Hebrew language is *ra'ha*, meaning *to see, to perceive, to gain understanding.*

3. **Wisdom** in the Greek is *Sophia,* meaning *an insight into the true nature of things.*

4. The word "understanding" is closely related to the word "wisdom." In Greek, **understanding** is *phronesis,* implying *the ability to discern modes of action.*

With these definitions in mind, wisdom and understanding can be conceived in the following terms: *Wisdom enables us to comprehend something; understanding then gives us the ability to translate this something into a set of working knowledge.* In simpler terms, we could say wisdom is passive and understanding is active. Wisdom comprehends something in a single moment. But it takes some time for

understanding to articulate and then make it applicable through a set of working knowledge.

Wisdom and understanding work hand in hand to give you a complete grasp and knowledge of anything. Wisdom alone is insufficient. You must have understanding. Only then would you know how to apply the knowledge that God has given you. If you don't have understanding, you are just like a robot. Or you are a computer, housed with all manner of information, but only as smart as the hand that moves the mouse.

How can we gain wisdom and understanding?

Wisdom and Understanding says, *I love those who love me and those who seek me diligently shall find me* (Prov. 8:17). If you want this Wisdom and Understanding, you must first have love and desire for wisdom and for understanding. Forget not the important counsel of this scriptural twin: *those who seek early and diligently shall find me.* With regard to wisdom and understanding, therefore, there's the seeking part, the praying part, and the waiting part—and those who seek shall find. Scripture does not say, "Those who wish to have me." In contemporary charismatic Christianity, this needs to be emphasized. Many of us just kind of wish—we wish we could see the Lord Jesus; we wish to hear the voice of God. We "wish" for this, and we "wish" for that. Only wizards and wistful dreamers wish for this and that. I am amazed and mystified when I hear Christians doing that. The Lord Jesus says, *Seek and you will find; knock and it will be opened; ask and it will be given to you* (Matt. 7:7). In the Greek language, the words "seek" and "find" are in the present continuous tense, which essentially means, *keep on asking and it will be given you, keep on seeking and you will find it, keep on knocking (reverently) and the door will be opened*

to you (AMP). Our problem is we stop halfway or stop one day before the answer comes. This is our problem: we don't wait—no matter how long it takes—until the answer comes.

My book *Prayer Secrets In the Tabernacle* resulted from a revelation I received in the year 1991 during 40 days of fasting in the USA. On the 37th day of the fast, the Lord Jesus supernaturally visited me. The Ark of the Covenant appeared before me just three feet away. From between the cherubim a voice spoke, *Read Exodus 30*. I quickly turned to that chapter in the Bible. After reading about the altar of incense and the ingredients needed to make the incense in that passage, I returned my gaze to the Ark, *What about this chapter?* The voice replied, *When God commanded Moses to build the tabernacle, there were six furniture in the tabernacle: the altar for burnt sacrifice, the laver of washing, a candlestick, a table of show bread, an altar of incense, and the Ark of the Covenant.* Six furniture are kept in three compartments in the tabernacle. On the Day of Atonement, the high priest goes from furniture to furniture and finally stands before the Almighty God, before the Ark of the Covenant. The Ark of the Covenant is the sixth piece of the furniture. There is, however, a seventh element in the Ark of God—the Shekinah Glory of God. The high priest sees the Shekinah Glory of God face to face. And God speaks to the high priest face to face. *Each furniture piece*, the Lord explained, *represents an aspect of prayer. If a believer would follow the six steps of prayer, they would come finally before the Ark of the Covenant.* What does the Ark of the Covenant represent? Waiting on God. When you practice diligently the six steps, at the seventh step, your eyes will open to see the Lord Jesus Christ and your ears open to hear Him.

It was during the course of this revelation that the Lord Jesus Christ made a startling statement which went deep

into my heart. I have never forgotten it all these years, but have always emphasized what He said: *My desire to manifest Myself to My people is greater than their desire to see Me.* This is the real reason why God told Moses to build the tabernacle: *Make me a tabernacle that I may dwell among them* (Ex. 25:8). The people did not wish for God to dwell among them. But God desired to dwell among the people. So when the Lord said this, I asked Him a question: *Lord, if that is true, why then all your people who desire to see you are not able to see you?* This is what the Lord said, *They are not seeking and asking and finding; most importantly, they are not waiting.*

There are certain equations in the spiritual realm, you could say. These are the spiritual laws God has established. They are all there for you. God has never withheld any blessing from His children. The Bible says we have been blessed with *all spiritual blessings* (Eph. 1:3). Not just one or two blessings. All spiritual blessings includes the ability to see the Lord Jesus Christ face to face. It also includes the ability to hear the voice of Lord Jesus face to face.

When I was a young believer, and before I had a breakthrough in the spiritual realm, I used to pray every day like this: *Lord Jesus—what kind of child am I to you if I don't see my Father's face. If you don't know who your father is in the world, there is a word for that. People call you 'bastard.'* So, little child as I was, I told the Lord, *I am a bastard if I cannot see you.* Every day I prayed this. The Lord Jesus may have thought: This boy is right: let Me do something for him. One day as I was praying the Lord Jesus appeared before me. From that moment on, my spiritual eyes were permanently opened. When I close my eyes to pray, I always see the Lord Jesus Christ (Ps. 16:8). Before that, there was a lot of knocking, seeking, and asking. Remember this phrase—please do not forget it: *A visitation*

must be translated into a habitation. Don't be satisfied with a visitation. Visitation comes and goes and is for everybody, even the Hindus and Muslims. In our crusades in India, the non-Christians more readily see the Lord Jesus Christ than the Christians. Many Hindus have seen the Lord Jesus. When I pointed to where the Lord Jesus was standing to heal a person, many Hindus would literally see the Lord Jesus exactly where my finger was pointing. This gift had been given to them to support their faith.

In June of 2004, I was in *Jakarta*, the capital city of Indonesia. In the Sunday service I was praying for the sick and describing what I was seeing in the spiritual realm—the Lord Jesus walking about and healing the people. There was one man in the meeting, not a real believer yet, and he had brought his little boy, who was suffering from a brain tumor. His spiritual eyes were opened. He saw everything that I was describing by my spiritual eyes. He saw with his spiritual eyes the Lord Jesus walking to heal every person I pointed out. This dimension of faith the Lord gives relates to supernatural visitation. But it is the desire of God that His children aren't just visitors. Are you not a member of the family of God? If you are a member of the family of God you are not a visitor but a resident. A resident has habitation rights. He has the right to abide in his place of residency for any length of time. To abide in the supernatural realm all the time, you need to seek, find, and knock.

To reiterate, to get wisdom, we need to fast and pray. Let me give you an example from the Book of Daniel: *In all matters of wisdom and understanding about which the king enquired them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers who were in all his realm* (Dan. 1:20). How did Daniel and his three friends become ten

times wiser? Verses 5 to 15 tell us they were entitled to eat the rich food of the king, which included all the unclean food mentioned in Leviticus chapter 11. Any godly Jew would never touch that kind of food. Daniel and his three friends, being godly Jews, very politely told the captain of the young boys they could not eat this food. In response to the captain's protest, they said, *Put us to the test by allowing us to eat only vegetables. If we are no better at the end of ten days, then we will eat all the pork, frogs, and snakes that the king gives*. So they were put on a vegetarian diet. The Bible tells us that God gave the youths *knowledge and skill in all literature and wisdom and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams* (Dan. 1:17). They received all these blessings from their God because they honored Him more than the pleasures of food. They put away unclean food for the fear of God and they fasted and prayed. So God honored and blessed them for their heart, which was right before Him. They fasted, prayed, and sought God to vindicate them. And God did so by blessing them with wisdom.

Look at Daniel 1:17 again: "God gave them knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom; and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams." You not only should see visions and dreams, you must understand them. What is the use of receiving visions and dreams if you don't understand them? When he speaks to us, the true God of revelation will also give us understanding. When understanding does not come immediately, wait for it. You don't run around sharing wisdom without understanding. Wisdom and Understanding are twin sisters in the Bible and they go hand in hand.

God's Plan For Nations

One of the aspects of fasting and prayer for wisdom and understanding is to know God's purposes for your nation, your country, your church, and your city. I set my face unto the Lord God, the prophet Daniel declared, *to make request by prayer and supplications with fasting, sackcloth and ashes* (Dan. 9:3). As he was fasting and praying, seeking God for understanding and wisdom, the angel Gabriel was sent to him with a revelation to give him just that—wisdom to comprehend the vision and understanding to grasp what the vision meant (Dan. 9:20).

The Bible says: *In those days I Daniel was mourning three full weeks. I ate no pleasant food, no came meat nor wine came into my mouth, nor did I, anoint myself at all, till three whole weeks were fulfilled* (Dan. 10:2,3). After fasting and praying for the 21 days, the angel Gabriel came and gave him wisdom and understanding concerning God's purposes for Israel. Wisdom enabled him to see the vision; wisdom also enabled him to see the angel Gabriel and two other saints who were gathered there with Gabriel. Wisdom allowed him to see and comprehend what he saw. Wisdom, as its definition implies, gives you insight into the true nature of things. But you need understanding to make sense of what you are seeing. For example, what does an eagle in your dream mean? There are many books that try to interpret visions and dreams. However, spiritual things can only be spiritually discerned and not through a set of formulas (1 Cor. 2:13). Spiritually, an ***eagle*** represents a *prophet*. In the Bible, the eagle represents *God* (Ex. 19:4) *Lord Jesus* (Hos. 8:1). Yet it also represents a *believer* (Isa. 40:31); *riches* (Prov. 23:5); *cherubim* (Ezek. 1:10) and an *eagle* (Job. 39:27) itself. So there are several possible representations for an eagle. In a dream where you see an

eagle, which of these is the eagle symbolizing? Another word with several possible allusions is the word "thief": a *man* as thief (Ex. 22:2) the *devil*, who "steals, kills, and destroys" (Jn. 10:10); and the *Lord Jesus* Himself, "the thief in the night" (Rev. 16:15). Never, therefore, be stuck with just a stereotypical interpretation.

Works Of The Ministry

To do the works of ministry you need wisdom and understanding. This is where many sincere people who feel the call of God in their lives are missing the mark. They run to this and that prophet asking for the third, fourth, fifth confirmation. I always wonder why. You run to every person under the sun except to the living God who called you. We prophesy in part, we know in part (1 Cor. 13:9). But if you come to the living God, He will show you all things in His right time. When God gave the blueprint for building the tabernacle, Moses was at a loss how he was to do it (Ex. 31:1-6). God told him not to worry. This man *Bezaleel*, God said, *I have filled him with the spirit of wisdom and understanding, which would equip him with the knowledge to help in the project.* This is the beauty of serving by the enabling Spirit of God. The prophet Moses alone saw the six tabernacle furniture. Bezaleel did not see them. So how was he going to know how to do build them even if Moses were to describe to him as best as he could? It would have been very difficult for him to comprehend because such things had not existed before. But the Spirit of wisdom and understanding enabled him to understand how to fashion the furniture exactly as Moses described them. When you fast and pray for your ministry and life, the spirit of wisdom and understanding will come and will teach you what to do.

When I first sought direction for my ministry I fasted for 40 days. During the 40 days of my fast, the Lord spoke to me very clearly about my specific call. What I have done and all the nations I have visited to this very day were all revealed to me that day in January of 1984. Whenever I receive an invitation from a country already shown to me, I know this is a place I have to go. If an invitation does not fit what God already showed me, I would reject it. If the invitation is persisted, I would pray and ask God about it. When the Lord called me to do the TV ministry, I knew nuts about it. The only TV ministry I knew was to sit in front of the TV with the remote control in my hands and pressing the buttons. By that definition, I suppose we all are doing the TV ministry. Anyway, to set up an entire department of mind-boggling, state of the art equipment was beyond my ability. The Lord God, however, mercifully and graciously blessed me with the spirit of wisdom and understanding. He equips me in marvellous ways. When, say, shooting a drama, the moment I touch the script I will immediately know how to direct and produce the whole drama. How it works I don't know but it works. It always greatly humbles me, driving me back to the feet of God, giving Him all the glory, praise, and honor.

To Walk With God

We should pray and fast for the wisdom and understanding to seek God's will and to walk with God. This is the most important part, for it has to do with the specific tools you need for such a journey. Don't run around the world with just one word from God. For example, let's say you are called to India: one huge country, with more than 20 states, 14 national languages, more than 1400 other languages,

and so many people groups. If the word you received is *India*, you should pray and ask God where in India: *North,* south, east, or west? If God says North, there are still at least 10 states in north India to pick from. Keep on fasting and praying. A further revelation, say, *Sikkim*, would be given. Now tell God that in Sikkim there are so many people groups, so which group does He want you to work with? Keep on praying. If God then shows you *Lepcha*, the original tribal people of the state of Sikkim, you have narrowed down your search to one people group. Only now can you zero in and concentrate on your specific work.

We have to be praying, fasting, and seeking until we know absolutely what to do. When you fast and pray and get the answer from God yourself, the one great benefit is when the tempest arises, when persecution comes, you will not become weak or fearful. Through thick and thin, you will stay and toil on—even give up your life—if you know first-hand God has called you there. Do you know why the apostles of biblical days and the missionaries of ancient times were able to shake up entire nations? Because when God sent them somewhere, they went with a "do-and-die" attitude. They either succeed or fail. No such thing as catching the first flight out.

In the year 1983, I came across a book called *The Believers Authority* by the late *Rev. Kenneth Hagin*. The first chapter was devoted to a certain prayer every believer could make. Brother Hagin shared how he prayed this prayer and his spiritual eyes were opened, enabling him to have a marvellous walk with God. It really intrigued me. I thought—if it could work for a white man, it could work for an Indian because Brother Hagin used the prayer from the Bible. The Bible does not belong to the white man. It comes from the living God. When this thought

gripped my heart. I decided to do exactly what Brother Hagin had done. I read through the entire chapter very carefully to understand the principles. Principles, I might add, can be followed but not methods. Methods vary according to personalities. Principles, on the other hand, remain constant. Principles can be copied and applied across the board—across nations, across cultures, across class structures. Methods cannot. What works in India may not work in America. What works for me may not work for you. But the same principles can work for everybody. Any principle can be adapted to your lifestyle and your personality to work for you.

The prayer Brother Hagin used comes from Ephesians 1:17-21 and 3:16-19. So I wrote down these scriptures on a piece of paper and personalized them into a prayer for myself, carrying it in my pocket all the time. In my morning prayers and night prayers, in every waking moment, every three minutes of free time I could find, I would go to one corner, kneel down, take out this paper, and pray as sincerely as I could. This went on for weeks. One day, as I was praying this prayer a brilliant light flashed in my mind, and along with it an understanding that after 124 days I would get this gift. Why 124 days? I don't know. That was the impression given to me. So I kept on praying. On August 24, 1983, I was at a prayer meeting in South India. Suddenly my spiritual eyes were opened. I saw a vision of the Lord Jesus agonizing in pain on the cross. For twenty minutes I saw this vision. I saw the cross from different angels: left, right, front, back, and from the top. Tears gushed up from the bottom of my heart through my eyes for the whole twenty minutes. Then the vision ended and the tears subsided. From that day on, my spiritual eyes stayed opened. That night, when I went to my diary, I counted the days. It was exactly the

124th day after I received that foreknowledge. From that day onwards, whenever I am praying I would see the Lord Jesus Christ stand by my right side. He would tell me about people, about their problems, what their prayers are, and how to pray for them. This is the working of Wisdom and Revelation. When they come, you receive an abundance of vision and revelation.

In conclusion, let's ask some important questions. So what then should you do? How should you pray? How should you seek? To answer these questions let us read from Proverbs 8:34: *Blessed is the man who listens to me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors*. If you want to walk with God, and not just a casual walk but a real and intimate walk—the one great enemy you must crucify is time. Take it and zap it in a microwave oven if you must. The other enemy you crucify is your phone. These two enemies will come between you and your God and rob you from walking with God.

So, practise these fasts and you shall have marvellous victories in your life.

May We Hear From You

Dear friends, we believe this book has been a blessing and challenge to you. Millions of people from around the world have been blessed by Brother Sadhu's messages on books, CDs and DVDs. We believe that even now you have been blessed by this book. Why don't you take a minute and write to tell us how you have been blessed by this book.

If you would like Brother Sadhu to pray for your needs, write to him today. He will personally read your letter and pray for you with much compassion beseeching the Lord Jesus Christ to bless, comfort and grant the miracles you need.

If you would like to know more about the ministry of Sadhu Sundar Selvaraj and receive our free quarterly newsletter "Healing Love", feel free to write us. We will send you one immediately and you, too, can uphold Sadhu and this worldwide ministry in your intercessory prayers.

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Do You Need Prayer ?

Oh, that one might plead for a man with God, as a man pleads for his neighbor! (Job 16:21). Again I say to you that if two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven (Matt. 18:19).

Brother Sadhu, please uphold me before the throne of God and agree in prayer with me for

_____

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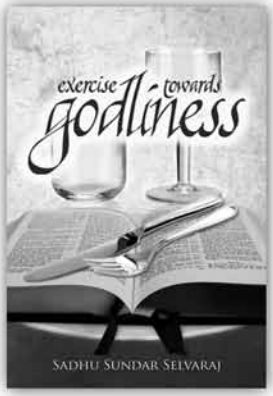

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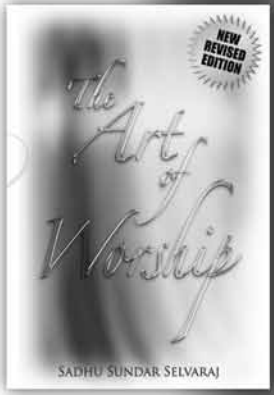

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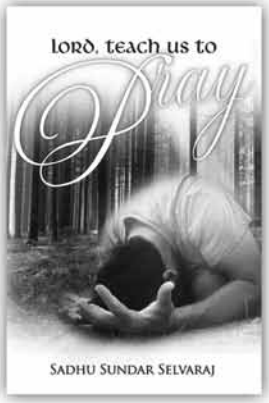

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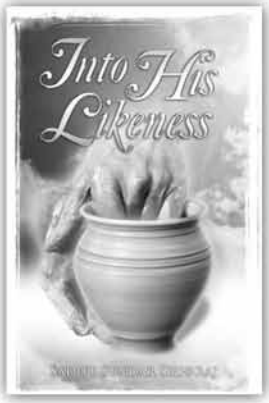

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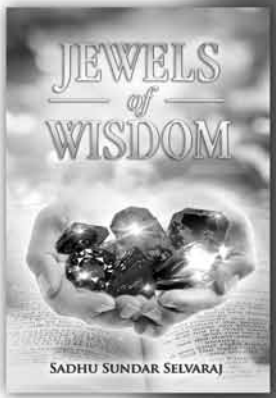

JEWELS OF WISDOM

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