

tered garden and like a spring of water whose waters fail not. Just think of the numerous health problems which could be overcome through victorious fasting. Also, in verse nine is the promise of an overcoming prayer experience, Thou shalt call and cry unto God and he shall answer, HERE am I. A multitude of people today are in need of some kind of godly intervention and RESTORATION in their lives. Verse twelve promises, "And they that shall be of thee shall build the old waste places; thou shalt raise up the foundations of many generations; and thou shalt be called, the repairer of the breach, the restorer of paths to dwell in."

## SECRET WEAPON

Fasting for religious purposes can involve a nation, church, individual, or other designated group. Generally, a set time and specific purpose is stated. However, in the following text Jesus speaks about a person entering into a time of SECRET fasting. Matthew 6:16-18, "Moreover when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, they have their reward. But thou, when thou fastest; anoint thine head and wash thy face; that thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly." Here, we see that every effort is made to conceal the fact that one is fasting. Jesus refers to certain religious hypocrites who delighted in having others aware that they were fasting. Their reward was in appearing righteous and holy in the sight of men, but their fasting was largely fruitless from God's perspective. In a secret fast one's faith and focus is centrally upon God alone. When such a fast is accomplished with the proper motive of heart, God promises to respond OPENLY. John 4:23 declares that God is looking for those who will worship him in spirit and in truth. A successful secret fast could certainly fulfill this text.

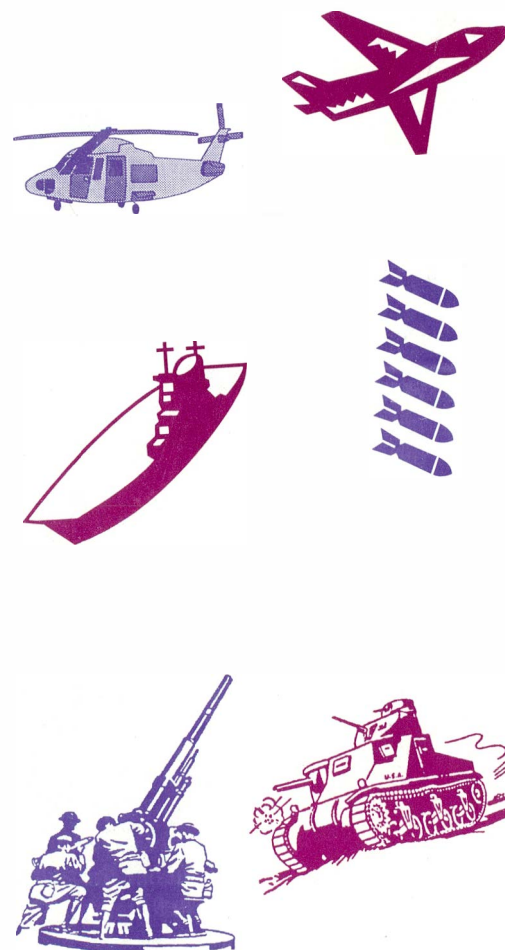
Numerous Bible texts reveal that believers face an intense confrontation and wrestling against Satanic powers of darkness. Psalm 2:2-3 speaks of secret counsel occurring against God and his anointed servants. In Psalm 64:2 David cries out, "Hide me from the secret counsel of the wicked..." When we comprehend the reality of satanic inspired warfare against the lives of believers, it becomes clear why God provides the powerful secret weapon of fasting for his people. In warfare among nations, secret strategy and weaponry is often critical; likewise, in spiritual conflict. We serve a great God who is well able to lead his own to victory. In Job 34:22 the Bible says there is no hidden place of darkness where the workers of iniquity can hide themselves from Almighty God. Psalm 139:12 declares that darkness hides not from him; the darkness and light are the same to him.

Song of Solomon uses a bride and bridegroom analogy to describe God's loving relationship with his people. In Song of Solomon 2:14 the bride is seen ascending up into the secret places of the stairs. Psalm 31:20 speaks of God hiding his own in the secret of his presence. The great promises of Psalm 91 are reserved for the one who dwells in the SECRET place of the MOST HIGH. First Corinthians 2:7 speaks of God's hidden wisdom. Revelation 2:17 promises hidden manna (revelation) to the overcomer. Isaiah 45:3 makes it clear we serve a great God who reserves the hidden riches of secret places for his own. Fasting is one way we enter this realm of victorious living. The end-time prophetic text Joel 2:15 exhorts God's people to SANCIFY OR DEDICATE YOURSELF TO A FAST.

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# SECRET WEAPON

**By Robert Hooley**



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*The Bible reveals there is a SUPER powerful spiritual weapon available to believers which can:*

- \* *Break the bands of wickedness*
- \* *Undo heavy burdens*
- \* *Let the oppressed go free*
- \* *Break every yoke*

*The spiritually powerful weapon which can accomplish these tremendous results is FASTING.*

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The current fulfillment of Bible prophesy declares plainly that we are living in the closing days of this church age. Today, the needs of mankind both within and without the church are immense. God's miraculous help is available. Surely, in this critical period of human history, believers need to be freshly enlightened and challenged with biblical truths about FASTING.

## MEETING GOD'S CONDITIONS

The nation Israel is pictured in Isaiah 58:2 as a very religious people who delighted in approaching God and knowing his ways. Isaiah says they sought God daily. They wanted to be known as a nation that stood for righteousness and forsook not his just ordinances. Times of fasting were common occurrences. However, in verse three we see Israel uttering a complaint, "*Wherefore have we fasted...and thou seest not? Wherefore have we afflicted our soul, and thou takest no knowledge?*" The act of fasting involves abstinence of the normal amount of nourishment to the body. They were doing this, but scripture reveals that abstinence ALONE does not meet God's conditions for a successful fast. The prophet Isaiah was God's spokesman who lifted up his voice like a trumpet revealing the error of their ways.

Isaiah 58 is a preeminent in-depth text on the subject of fasting. We read in verses three and four the responses of Almighty God to their complaint. *IN THE DAY OF YOUR FAST YE FIND PLEASURE, AND EXACT ALL YOUR LABOURS.* It is clear that he also expected a spiritual reverence, a refraining from UNNECESSARY labours and pleasure during the time of fasting. This was especially important when a fast occurred on the Sabbath or other holy day. *BEHOLD YE FAST FOR STRIFE AND DEBATE, AND TO SMITE WITH THE FIST OF WICKEDNESS: YE SHALL NOT FAST AS YE DO THIS DAY TO MAKE YOUR VOICE TO BE HEARD ON HIGH.* The strife in their hearts involved an attitude of pride and ungodly conflict or dissension. The term debate reflects a continuous chiding and unrighteous contending among themselves or with an adversary. A desire to smite with the fist of wickedness was an effort to get their own way even if it meant hurting another. To expect their voices (pleas) to be heard on high by God under such conditions was entirely wrong.

This chapter emphasizes the importance of godly motives in one's heart for successful fasting. God expected them to reflect an unselfishness and genuine care for others. This is clearly revealed in Isaiah 58:7, "*Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? When thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh?*" Verse ten speaks about the need to draw out their souls to the hungry and satisfy the afflicted. Verse thirteen proclaims the ultimate key to a victorious fast: it truly HONOURS God and his purposes. He delights in loosing the bands of wickedness. He wants people set free from enslaving weighty circumstances of evil and wickedness. It is not his desire that people be hurt and weighed down under cruel heavy burdens. It is his will that the oppressed go free. This includes all who are bruised, discouraged, or

crushed under overwhelming circumstances in life. The breaking of every yoke is inclusive of all conditions involving any kind of unjust enslavement.

## GOD'S CHOSEN FAST

The prophet Isaiah describes the kind of fast which God is pleased to honour. He states it is a time for a man or a woman to bow down their head as a bulrush and to spread sackcloth and ashes under them. A bulrush is a weak, porous reed growing in marshy areas. Presenting one's self in this figurative, humble lowly state expresses an utter dependency upon the living God. The spreading of sackcloth and ashes speaks of grief, loss, an acknowledgment of great need accompanied by righteous mourning. In Isaiah 58:5 our Lord asks the following question of his people, "*Wilt thou call this a fast, and an acceptable day to the Lord?*" Undoubtedly, this same important question is being asked of believers in this hour of history. The afflicting of one's self in fasting without accompanying godly motives of heart will prove of little value.

We have previously stated the four primary promises of victory linked to successful fasting (or resulting from successful fasting). Isaiah 58:8-14 highlights some additional blessings God adds to the personal lives of those who truly delight in him. Thy light shall break forth as the morning, it shall rise in obscurity, and thy darkness shall be as the noon day. Here is a direct promise to totally turn around one's difficult circumstances. The Lord says, I will guide thee continually and satisfy thy soul in drought (difficult times). Thy righteousness shall go before thee: the glory of the Lord shall be thy reward (destiny), and thou shalt ride upon the high places of the earth. Verse eight speaks of one's HEALTH springing forth speedily. Verse eleven adds that one's bones will be made strong and thou shalt be as a wa-

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