

November 8, 2009
"FASTING AND PRAYER", *Daily Disciple*, page 321



PSALM

"Restore us, O God of Hosts;
Let your face shine, that we may be saved."
(Psalm 80:7)

MEDITATION

"Were we individually as Nehemiah, to fast, confess, and pray, were we as congregations to proclaim a fast and meet together in the house of God in humble confession and prayer, were we as a people widely scattered abroad to agree to meet in our various houses of worship on the same day with fasting and prayer, were professors of Christianity of the various denominations to do the same—who can tell what floods of glory would roll through our land, through Christendom, throughout the world? God is faithful who has promised."
(Barton W. Stone, *Christian Messenger* [1844], page 159.)

SCRIPTURE

¹ On the twenty-fourth day of the same month, the Israelites gathered together, fasting and wearing sackcloth and having dust on their heads. ² Those of Israelite descent had separated themselves from all foreigners. They stood in their places and confessed their sins and the wickedness of their fathers. ³ They stood where they were and read from the Book of the Law of the LORD their God for a quarter of the day, and spent another quarter in confession and in worshiping the LORD their God.

(Nehemiah 9:1-3))

PRAYER

"Father, help me to learn how to be hungry for you alone. I confess my sins to you and rely on your grace, forgiveness, and glory."

Digging Deeper: Finding out, discussion and sharing

1. This devotional message focuses on spiritual renewal and how to go about that. Read all of Psalm 80 and answer the following questions:
 - a. How does this Psalm begin?
 - b. What would you say is the theme of this Psalm?
 - c. How many times is the phrase "Restore us O Lord" found in this Psalm?
 - d. According to Psalm 80 what has happened to Israel that has made it necessary to plead for God to restore her?
 - e. Verse 18 is a call to revival. In your mind, what place could prayer and fasting play in a call to revival?
2. Barton W. Stone, in his meditation above, focuses on the example of Nehemiah as one who provided leadership from the context of personal confession and revival.
 - a. Why are churches reluctant to proclaim a fast and meet together in the house of God in humble confession and prayer?
 - b. Why do confession, fasting and prayer seem to go together in the same breath?
 - c. Why do you suppose fasting has fallen out of favor in Christianity over the centuries?
3. Nehemiah, like the other prophets, sought to encourage the Jews who were returning to their homeland following captivity. They needed to rebuild the temple and the city, and regain their sense of identity in God's plan for the kingdom.
 - a. Read Nehemiah 1 for the setting of the book.
 - b. When Nehemiah heard how terrible condition the city of Jerusalem was in, what did he do? (Nehemiah 1:4).
 - c. Nehemiah's confessional corporate prayer on behalf of Israel is a classic (1:5-11). How might God's people today benefit from this prayer?
 - d. According to Nehemiah 9:1 what did the Israelites do when they gathered together to show penitent hearts?
4. If my count is correct, "fasting" is referred to in the New Testament thirty (30) times. Eight (8) of those times are AFTER the church began. Look up the following passages and discuss how they effect the life of the church.
 - a. Acts 13:2-3; Acts 14:23; Acts 27:9, 33.
 - b. 2 Corinthians 6:5
 - c. 2 Corinthians 11:27
5. What is the value of prayer and fasting?
6. Have you ever engaged in prayer and fasting? Share with your group that experience and what you learned from it.