

Foreword

You're holding in your hand a life-changing book. I know that from my own experience. I can vividly recall the day back in the early 1990s. What I thought was just another typical day; I now see was actually the first step on a journey that would take me full circle to where I am today writing this introduction for the Classic Edition of *God's Chosen Fast*.

It was a Monday and I was in the lunchroom at the ministry where I worked in Seattle. A colleague walked into the room and we entered into the predictable greeting like you do with coworkers. I especially respected this man because of the adventurous approach he took in his faith-walk with Christ. My ears perked up when he told me he had just completed a three-day spiritual fast and that he felt energized in his soul and bursting with God's grace.

Oh, I immediately wanted what he had! I had never fasted before. First, I wasn't raised in the church. Second, even though I attended a Spirit-filled liturgical church, I still hadn't been introduced to fasting. I had a vague idea of what it was, but very little knowledge about the biblical practice. So I asked my friend to tell me more about his experience.

We chatted for a few minutes and as we each headed for our offices I told him I wanted to try fasting, but I would

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need to learn more. That's when he said, "I've got a really good book about it and I'll bring it in tomorrow."

That book was *God's Chosen Fast* by Arthur Wallis. I read the book over the week and then embarked on my first fast, which was a three-day water-only, or normal fast. I was pleasantly surprised at how my spirit seemed quickened to the Scriptures. I discovered many things about myself and my relationship with God. It was as if my soul had experienced a renewal and a sense of excitement for the things of God that I had not felt for a long time. I was hooked on fasting!

Now, all these years later, I see that God had a plan awaiting me that I could never have imagined for myself. That first fast led me to many others. Then in 2007, God called me to take another big step. He said, "Start writing about the Daniel Fast," which is a method of extended prayer and partial fasting.

At the time, I thought His instruction was for a one-time writing assignment. But He had much bigger plans. To date, I've written multiple books about the Daniel Fast, more than thirteen million visitors have come to my websites and I'm considered "the Daniel Fast Expert." I have been blessed to guide hundreds of thousands of people from all around the world toward a successful fasting experience. And it all started way back in the 1990s when I read *God's Chosen Fast*, which served as my fasting handbook and inspiration.

Today I'm honored to write the forward to Arthur Wallis' classic that is still as solid and relevant as when he originally penned it in 1968. While the quality of the information

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is still dependable, I consider it even timelier for Christians today. Never before has our culture been so noisy, distracting and challenging. Never before have we been so busy with daily life activities. And never before have followers of Jesus Christ had more difficulty finding time for God, Bible study, prayer and meditation.

Yet fasting is an opportunity to push the pause button and slow down for a brief period of time to draw near to God, to come to Him for critical needs, to discover His wisdom, and to get back in touch with our first love and our life purpose.

God's Chosen Fast continues to serve as the well-researched, biblically based guidebook for anyone wanting to begin fasting or for anyone wanting to learn more about this formidable spiritual discipline that has the power to change your life. As Arthur Wallis shares in the preface, "When exercised with a pure heart and a right motive, fasting may provide us with a key to unlock doors where other keys have failed; a window opening up new horizons in the unseen world; spiritual weapons of God's providing, 'mighty, to the pulling down of strongholds.' May God use this book to awaken many of his people to all the spiritual possibilities latent in the fast that God has chosen."

Again, I can say from my own personal experience that God did indeed use this book to awaken me, and my life was never the same since that first fasting experience.

Arthur Wallis presents this valuable teaching in a way that reminds me of Jesus' words to us in Matthew 11:28-29, "Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me,

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for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.”

With his servant’s heart, Wallis offers an invitation to followers of Christ who are seeking the Lord’s wisdom, intervention, and guidance. We can learn about this powerful spiritual discipline delivered in a loving and caring way. We can discover a path that will lead us to the truth, the way, and the life that promises rest for hungering souls.

Today, the invitation is extended to you. You have a treasure chest available to you that holds gems of wisdom, truth and knowledge that are perhaps unknown to you. However, they are known to your Father. He wants to teach you, lead you, direct you and impart His seeds of truth into your heart. You are invited to enter into the experience of God’s chosen fast that will feed your spirit and challenge you to greater heights and wider discovery.

I encourage you to accept Jesus’ invitation to “Come to me.” Take that step toward Him and discover what He has for you by opening your heart while fasting.

—Susan Gregory
Author of *The Daniel Fast*

Preface

In a large city I inquired of all the Christian bookstores for some publication on the subject of fasting. They could not suggest a single title. A few days afterward in a health food store in the same city, I picked up a book on health fasting. I soon discovered that there was far more being written on the physical aspect of this subject of fasting by food reformists than on the spiritual aspect by Christian writers. Later I was thankful to come across Gordon Cove's book *Revival Now Through Prayer and Fasting* and a booklet by David Smith, *Some Light on Fasting*, containing helpful teaching and wise counsel. Apart from two or three American publications, there appeared to be nothing else in print.

Having proved the great value and blessing of fasting over many years, I was concerned that so many earnest believers had apparently never given the subject any serious thought. This concern became a constraint within me to share with those who hunger for God's best what the Bible has to say about this spiritual exercise. My aim has been to furnish a handbook that would not only deal with the main passages in the Scripture that touch on the subject, including a biblical index, but to deal as fully as possible with the practical issues involved.

In the section of the book dealing with the physical and practical side, more space has been given to the longer fast,

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as a proper understanding of the physical aspect is so important. This should not lead the reader to suppose that everyone is called to undertake lengthy fasts or that the shorter fast is of comparatively little value. This is by no means the case. Nevertheless, it is helpful for those who practice only the briefest fasting to understand the body's behavior in the longer fast.

Of course, the discussion of this physical side is the province of the physician rather than of the Bible student. Here I must record my indebtedness to the writings of Dr. Otto Buchinger of Germany and Dr. Herbert Shelton of San Antonio, Texas, both experts in the field of therapeutic fasting, as well as to those friends in the medical profession who kindly read the manuscript and carefully vetted what I said on this side of the subject. I am most grateful to them and to others who have offered many helpful suggestions. I am also indebted to the late Professor James Orr for his article on asceticism in *The Protestant Dictionary* and to the author of the article on fasting in Hastings' *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*.

The neglect of truth followed by its rediscovery often results in its overemphasis. I have been aware of this temptation in connection with this subject and have therefore tried to give to this theme the weight that Scripture gives to it. Truth is like a portrait, and to exaggerate one feature is to turn the portrait into a caricature of the truth. The result is that thoughtful people turn from this divinely appointed means of grace as something for the crank or the fanatic.

Fasting is important—more important, perhaps, than many of us have supposed, as I trust this book will reveal.

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For all that, it is not a major biblical doctrine, a foundation stone of the faith, or a panacea for every spiritual ill. Nevertheless, when exercised with a pure heart and a right motive, fasting may provide us with a key to unlock doors where other keys have failed; a window opening up new horizons in the unseen world; a spiritual weapon of God's providing, "mighty . . . to the pulling down of strong holds" (2 Cor. 10:4, KJV). May God use this book to awaken many of His people to all the spiritual possibilities latent in the fast that God has chosen.

Why Fast?

For nearly a century and a half, fasting has been out of vogue, at least in the churches of the West. The very idea of someone actually fasting today seems strange to most twentieth-century Christians. They associate it with medieval Christianity, or perhaps with high-church practice. They may recall that political leaders, like Mahatma Ghandi, have used it as a weapon of passive resistance. As a spiritual exercise, it is confined, they would think, to believers who appear to be a little extreme or fanatical. There are others whose misgivings concern the practical aspect. To them “fasting” and “starving” are synonymous terms, and they fear this practice will have harmful results. Because “no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it” (Eph. 5:29), they oppose fasting almost instinctively. “Do be careful,” they say. “You could seriously impair your health. Living such a busy life, you cannot afford to get run down!”

Why such attitudes to a practice that is so obviously scriptural? One answer is that fasting was one of the dominant features of an asceticism that began to appear in the

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postapostolic age and became extreme in form as well as widespread in influence in medieval times. The pendulum began to swing the other way as people revolted against anything that savored of asceticism. The church today is still suffering from that reaction. We have not yet recovered the spiritual balance of New Testament Christianity.

The writer heard an able Bible teacher give a thought-provoking address on the reply our Lord gave to a question about fasting. It was that occasion when He said that the wedding guests would not fast until the Bridegroom was taken from them. All that the speaker said was most helpful, but he did not once touch upon the subject of fasting or indicate whether it had any place in the economy of the Christian life today.

When our minds are conditioned by prejudice or paralyzed by traditional views, we may face a truth in Scripture again and again without its ever touching us. Our spiritual inhibition concerning that truth permits us to see but not to perceive. The truth lies dormant within, mentally apprehended but not spiritually applied. This is particularly true in relation to fasting.

When, however, such a truth is first ignited by the Holy Spirit, there is immediate conflict in the minds of most people. The truth of the Bible has suddenly become "alive and powerful," and there is an assault upon our traditional attitudes and prejudices.

The outcome of the struggle reveals whether or not we are open to receive and obey fresh light about God and so grow in the knowledge of the truth. This book is intended to face us with the question of whether we are prepared to

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bring our present attitude about the subject of fasting (or our lack of one) to the acid test of God's Word and then "live according to scripture" (1 Cor. 4:6).¹ Most of the references to fasting in the Bible are dealt with at some point in this book. It may surprise the reader, as it certainly did the writer, to find that Scripture has so much to teach us by example and by precept about the value of this practice. There are warnings too, for fasting has its dangers, and we have tried to point these out.

Among great Bible saints who fasted were Moses the lawgiver, David the king, Elijah the prophet, and Daniel the seer. In the New Testament we have the example of our Lord as well as of His apostles. Fasting clearly had its place in the life of the early churches. Nor was this biblical practice confined to men, for we find the names of Hannah in the Old Testament and Anna in the New Testament in the ranks of the intercessors who fasted as well as prayed.

Some of the great saints of church history have practiced fasting and testified to its value, among them the great Reformers, such as Luther, Calvin and Knox. The custom has not been confined to any theological school. Here we find Jonathan Edwards the Calvinist joining hands with John Wesley the Arminian, and David Brainerd having fellowship with Charles Finney.

These names represent great scholars and preachers, ministers and missionaries, revivalists and evangelists. We may find on the fasting list the names of Pastor Hsi of China and Pastor Blumhardt of Germany, whom God used in their respective spheres a century ago for the deliverance of those bound by Satan. Time would fail us to mention

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the growing number whom God is raising up and using in the same ministry today through prayer and fasting.

The doings of the great can scarcely be hidden. They are barely cold in their graves before their biographers are ferreting out their journals and private diaries. But only the opening of heaven's records in that day will reveal the numbers of anonymous saints who had no diaries and no biographers but who prayed with fasting to the God who sees in secret. They too shall surely shine among the galaxy of these illustrious saints, "like the stars for ever and ever."

In New Testament times fasting was a channel of power. As spirituality waned and worldliness flourished in the churches, the power and gifts of the Spirit were withdrawn. With the loss of that inward power, men could only cling to what they had left: its outward accompaniment. More and more emphasis was placed upon the outward act of fasting, though bereft of the inward spirit that alone could give it value. Asceticism became the mark of piety and spirituality. Paul's prediction about "having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power" (2 Tim. 3:5) was being fulfilled.

But, God be praised, a new day is dawning, and a new thirst for the Spirit is beginning to awaken the slumbering church. It is a day of spiritual renewal. There are searchings and inquirings, burdens and longings on every hand. The heart cry of the church is ascending to heaven. The Spirit of God is stirring. What is all this but the first birth pangs of the new age that is soon to be born? God is determined to have a glorious church without spot or wrinkle, a bride fit for His beloved Son. It is the conviction of the

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writer that, in the travail that will bring to birth, we shall rediscover one of the lost secrets of the early church: the power that is released through the truly biblical practice of fasting unto God.