

IN THE HOME



VI

In the Home

OUR purpose in this discussion of fasting is twofold: First, to prevent others from monopolizing that which is always ours. And secondly, to lay before our people a means of edification which can be to our spiritual enrichment.

That fasting is also for us can hardly be denied. The testimony of Scripture is clear. Therefore we ought not to identify fasting with Roman Catholicism. Such a view is evidence of three errors: biased reading of the Word, ignorance of the practices of our forefathers, and lack, of earnestness in the pursuit of a godly life.

Who can read the words of Jesus with unbiased mind and yet deny that Jesus placed fasting alongside of alms-giving and prayer in the godly life? He tore away the pharisaical externals, but not for a moment did He condemn fasting or make light of it.

And who, knowing the history of the church, can say that the Reformation discarded fasting with other errors? Merely the reading of *Calvin's Institutes* will convince to the contrary.

As to the earnest pursuit of a godly life—in the face of all that is written of Christian mysticism, and the witness of sincere children of God today, we cannot well close our eyes to the spiritual blessings derived from the practice of fasting.

THE PRACTICE OF GODLINESS



When we err in these three, we weaken our own position, particularly so since the Roman Catholic church holds to the truth which we are neglecting.

Moreover, has there ever been a time when Paul's lament was more true? "Whose god is the belly; of whom I tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ!"

The preparation of foods has become a fine art. Living is becoming more and more luxurious, with ever increasing demands.

In former ages there was feasting and banqueting but such luxuries were the *exception*. Simplicity was the rule.

Today, with our standards of living rising higher and higher, there are comparatively few who have not a "good" lite. "Good living" has become the common ideal; men work and connive toward that goal.

Have we forgotten that supremacy of the physical impedes spiritual growth? That this catering to the desire for comforts and luxuries is detrimental to spiritual life?

What about the influence of such luxurious living upon our children?

And we ourselves are not immune!

Luxurious living is one of the chief causes of our failure to exert Christian influence.

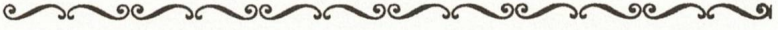
Should we then despise fasting? What about Paul's injunction, "Bringing the flesh into subjection"?

Let the reader answer for himself, according to his own conscience.

But if personal experience gives one a right to recommend, we are constrained to witness to a hidden power there.

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Though the state cannot proclaim a day of fasting and the church does not, there can nevertheless be fasting in the home, in the family.

What would this involve?

We shall not lay down rules, but merely attempt to make a few helpful suggestions, in accordance with the manner in which our forefathers observed such an occasion.

When there appears to be need of such a special day of prayer and fasting, let the father, as head of the house, prepare the family beforehand—explaining the reason for it, making clear what is the blessing desired, and instructing in true humility and confession of sin.

The day itself should begin with the gathering of the family for prayer and the reading of an appropriate portion of Scripture, in all of which the father should lead. Then all the members should be urged to private meditation and prayer, with confession of sin.

Later in the day there should be another period of united confession and prayer. And throughout the day the spirit of humble contrition should prevail in the heart and in the activities of each member of the family.

In distinction from a Thanksgiving day, which should be characterized by singing and holy joy, the day of prayer and fasting should be one of solemnity and a sorrowing for sin.

Only let us not forget Jesus' exhortation, that we fast not to be seen of men but to be "seen of Him who seeth in secret and who shall reward openly."

And may God grant that thus many of us may be led into the blessedness of richer and fuller godly living.

