

## LENT 1

### THE COLLECT

O LORD, who for our sake didst fast forty days and forty nights; Give us grace to use such abstinence, that, our flesh being subdued to the Spirit we may ever obey thy godly motions in righteousness, and true holiness, to thy honour and glory, who livest and reignest with the Father and the Holy Ghost, one God, world without end. Amen.



1. Why do we pray that we may through grace use abstinence?
  - A. That our flesh may be \_\_\_\_\_ to the Spirit (Romans 8:13)
2. When the flesh is brought into subjection to the Spirit, what is the consequence?
  - A. That we ever obey the godly \_\_\_\_\_ of the Holy Spirit, in \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ ( Ephesians 4:24)

### INTRODUCTION.

**What is this season called? Lent.** When did we begin it? Last Wednesday—Ash Wednesday. What is the great duty to which we are called? Repentance. This is a duty for all seasons, but what may be done at any time is often not done at all. So we dwell on it now, that we may do it always. there are some helps, and some evidences of true repentance. These are Lenten duties, see them in St. Matthew 6:1-19. Fasting, Prayer, Almsgiving. We take Fasting first because it is the thought of the Collect this week. Reread the Collect.

What did our Lord do for our sake? He \_\_\_\_\_.  
For how long did He fast? \_\_\_\_\_

**Forty days is the length of the Lenten season.** Remember other periods of forty days connected with sin—the flood, Moses on the mount, Elijah at Horeb, Jonah at Nineveh. How do we make forty days? How long from Ash Wednesday to Easter? Forty-six days. But this includes six Sundays, and Sundays are never fasting days, so there are forty days, without Sundays.

### I. REASONS FOR FASTING.

1. **To follow the example given us:** Our blessed Lord fasted forty days and forty nights. Good men and women fasted. In the Old Testament—Moses, David, Elijah, Esther, Daniel. In the New Testament—Anna, the Early church, St. Paul.

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2. **We are taught to fast** (Joel 2:15, St. Matthew 6:16 &c., and if our Lord taught us how to do a thing, He meant us to do it.
3. **It is good and helpful to fast.** For what does fasting mean? It is denying ourselves. To deny a thing is to say “No” about it. If we learn to say “No” to ourselves in some things which are not really wrong, we shall learn to say “No” when we are tempted to do things which *are* wrong.

## II. RISKS IN FASTING.

1. **Of Hypocrisy.** Doing it to make a show of being good (St. Matthew 6:16)
2. **Of Formality.** Doing it simply as an outward observance; doing it just for a set time, and then going back to self-indulgence (Is. 58:3)
3. **Of Selfishness.** Doing it to get gain. Doing it in a miserly spirit, only to save money. The spirit of meanness (Is. 58:3)
4. **Of Spiritual Pride.** As though there were some special credit or merit in it. As though the very act of fasting made us better than others. Doing it as an end, and not a means.

## III. RULES FOR FASTING.

1. **It should be natural**, *i.e* it should be the expression of our feelings. Just as people who are in great sorrow cannot eat, so the thought of our sins should make us sorry, and then fasting will be the natural outcome. Just as people who are very occupied with some work have not time or thought for food, so being absorbed in prayer or work for God, we think little or nothing for the time about food.
2. **It should be real self-denial.** We give up food and pleasure and the money saved we give to some good. We give up some sleep that we may spend the time in prayer.



## IV. REWARDS OF FASTING.

1. **Spiritual Insight and Guidance.** If our bodies are pampered our spirits will become dull; if our bodies are kept under control our spirits will be quick and alert to hear the voice and see the guidance of God’s Holy Spirit (Is. 58:8-9)
2. **Spiritual Strength.** For ourselves, for self-denial strengthens our wills. for others, for we shall have means in our power to help them. (Is.58:12)
3. **Spiritual Fellowship.** We shall have sympathy with the suffering and needy if we know something of it ourselves; above all, we shall know the fellowship of Christ’s sufferings, and shall learn to love Him more.



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