

Daniel 10:3

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

I ate no pleasant bread, neither came flesh nor wine in my mouth, neither did I anoint myself at all, till three whole weeks were fulfilled.

Analysis

Daniel describes his fast: "I ate no pleasant bread, neither came flesh nor wine in my mouth, neither did I anoint myself at all, till three whole weeks were fulfilled." This wasn't total fasting (no food) but partial fasting—abstaining from enjoyable foods and normal comforts. "Pleasant bread" refers to delicacies; avoiding "flesh" and "wine" eliminated protein-rich and celebratory foods; not anointing himself forsook basic cosmetic care (normal in ancient Near East). This voluntary self-denial demonstrated serious spiritual purpose.

The specificity teaches that fasting varies in intensity and form. Daniel didn't cease eating entirely (which would be unsustainable for three weeks) but eliminated pleasures, maintaining only basic sustenance. This practical approach models sustainable spiritual discipline—not extreme asceticism that destroys health, but purposeful self-denial that focuses attention on spiritual matters. Fasting from legitimate pleasures (not sins) creates space for enhanced prayer and spiritual sensitivity.

Biblically, fasting accompanies serious prayer, repentance, or seeking divine guidance. Jesus fasted forty days before ministry (Matthew 4:2), early church fasted when commissioning missionaries (Acts 13:2-3), and Paul fasted during crises (2 Corinthians 11:27). Yet Jesus warned against ostentatious fasting seeking human praise (Matthew 6:16-18). Daniel's private fast, combined with effectual

prayer, demonstrates proper balance—genuine spiritual discipline without religious showmanship.

Historical Context

Ancient Near Eastern mourning practices included fasting, wearing sackcloth, avoiding bathing/anointing, and sitting in ashes. Daniel's modified fast maintained basic health while expressing grief and spiritual intensity. His abstinence during Passover season was particularly significant—foregoing celebratory feast foods to mourn Jerusalem's situation. This self-denial demonstrated priority—spiritual concerns outweighed physical pleasures. His example influenced later Jewish fasting practices and continues guiding Christian spiritual disciplines today.

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. What does Daniel's partial rather than total fast teach us about sustainable spiritual disciplines that maintain health while demonstrating seriousness?
2. How should his private fast—not for human observation but genuine spiritual purpose—shape our approach to disciplines like fasting?
3. In what ways can modern believers practically implement focused seasons of prayer combined with appropriate self-denial?

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weeks	whole
H7620	H3117

Matthew 6:17 (Parallel theme): But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head,
and wash thy face;

Amos 5:11 (Parallel theme): Forasmuch therefore as your treading is upon the poor, and ye take from him burdens of wheat: ye have built houses of hewn stone, but ye shall not dwell in them; ye have planted pleasant vineyards, but ye shall not drink wine of them.

Daniel 11:8 (Parallel theme): And shall also carry captives into Egypt their gods, with their princes, and with their precious vessels of silver and of gold; and he shall continue more years than the king of the north.