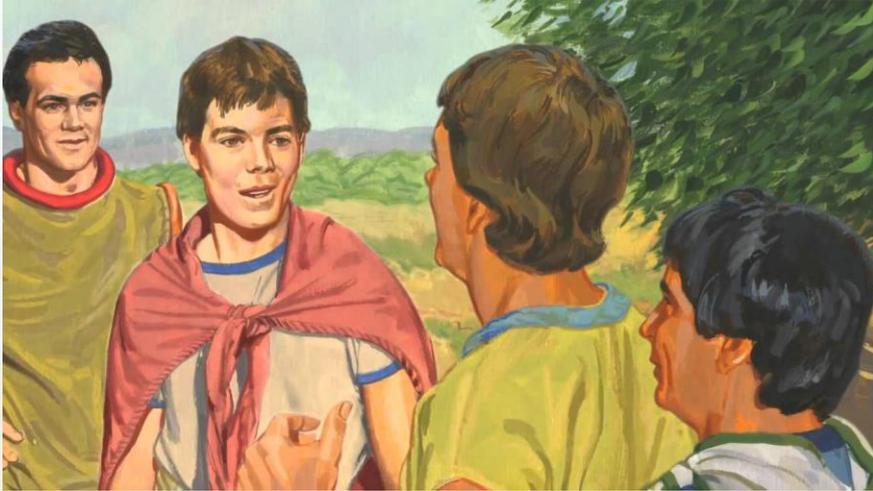


FASTING



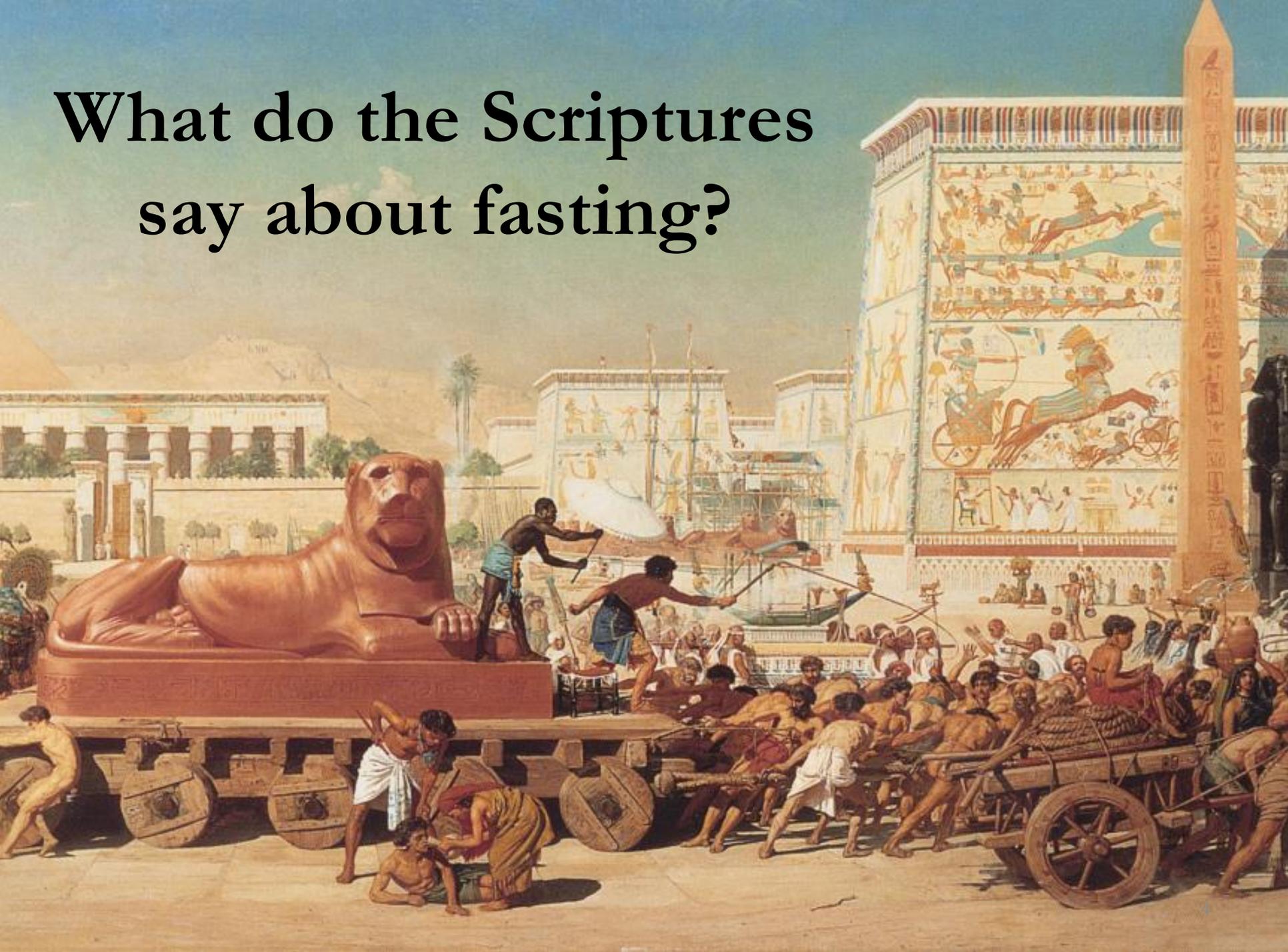
12:1 And now it came to pass that as Alma was journeying from the land of Gideon, southward, away to the land of Manti, behold, to his astonishment, he met the sons of Mosiah, journeying towards the land of Zarahemla. **12:2** Now these sons of Mosiah were with Alma at the time the angel first appeared unto him; therefore Alma did rejoice exceedingly, to see his brethren; **12:3** And what added more to his joy, they were still his brethren in the Lord; yea, and they had waxed strong in the knowledge of the truth; **12:4** For they were men of a sound understanding, and they had **searched the scriptures diligently**, that they might know the word of God. **12:5** But this is not all: they had given themselves **to much prayer, and fasting**, therefore they had the spirit of prophecy, and the spirit of revelation, and when they taught, they taught with power and authority, even as with the power and authority of God. [Alma 12:1-5]



1. **Studying Scriptures**
2. **Prayer**
3. **Fasting**

The word fast is “to abstain from food, beyond the usual time; to omit to take the usual meals, for a time; as, to fast a day or a week; to abstain from food voluntarily, for the mortification of the body or appetites, or as a token of grief, sorrow and affliction.”

What do the Scriptures say about fasting?



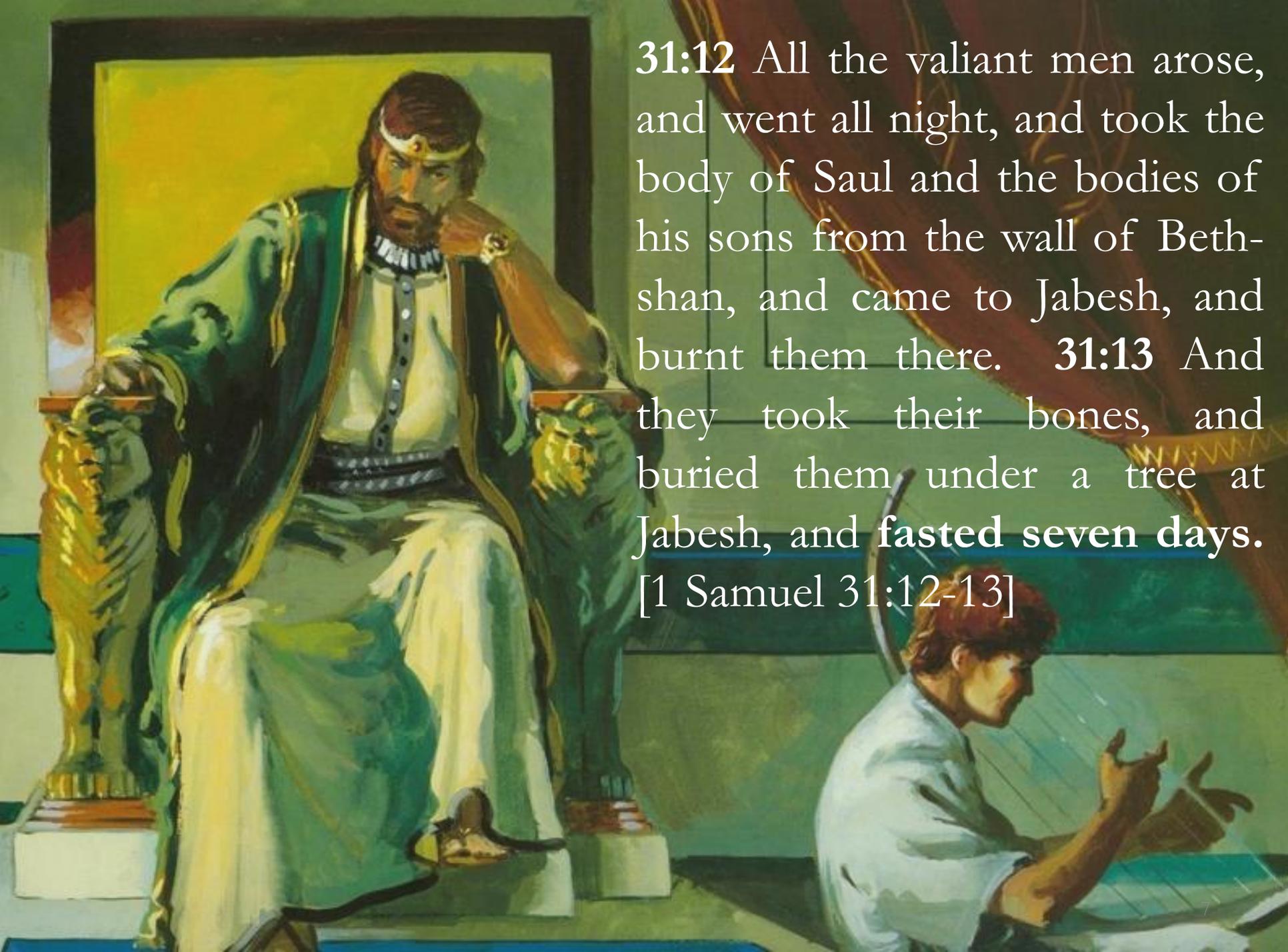
What do the Scriptures say about fasting?

According to some scholars, the traditional concept of fasting, or in other words abstaining from food, first originated with the Egyptians as a way of mourning their dead. The Scriptures appear to support this idea as well, as neither the Bible, the Book of Mormon, nor the Doctrine and Covenants give an example of the children of Israel fasting before they were brought out of the land of Egypt. Moreover, some of the first instances where we read about the children of Israel fasting are described as being very similar to the Egyptians, meaning that it was a period to go without food and to mourn either the dead or the afflicted.

20:23 (And the children of Israel went up and wept before the Lord until even, and asked counsel of the Lord, saying, Shall I go up again to battle against the children of Benjamin my brother? And the Lord said, Go up against him.) **20:24** And the children of Israel came near against the children of Benjamin the

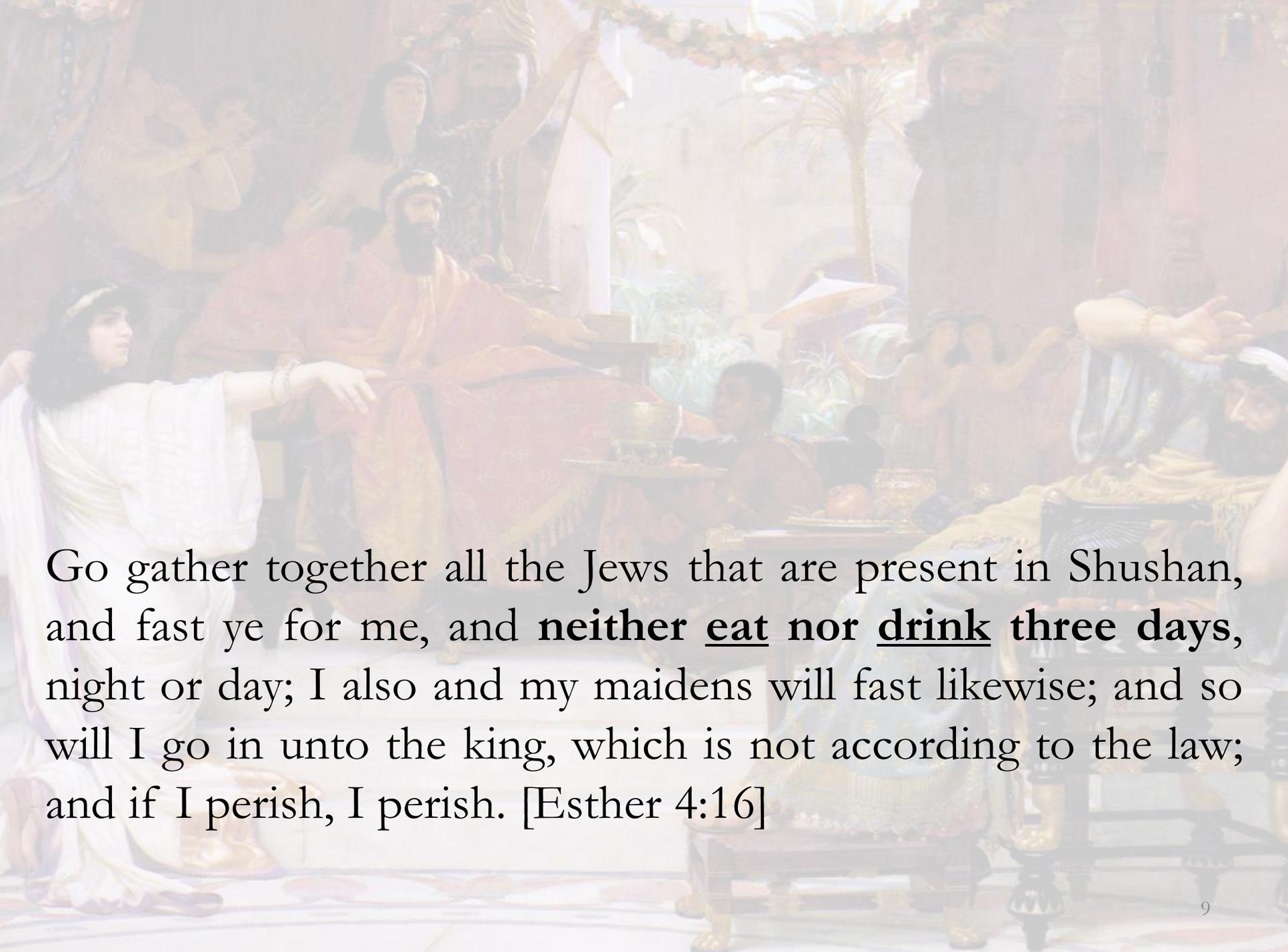


second day. **20:25** And Benjamin went forth against them out of Gibeah the second day, and destroyed down the ground of the children of Israel again eighteen thousand men; all these drew the sword. **20:26** Then all the children of Israel, and all the people, went up, and came unto the house of God, **and wept**, and sat there before the Lord, and **fasted that day until even**, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before the Lord. [Judges 20:23-26]

A painting depicting a scene from the Bible. On the left, a man with a beard and a headband, wearing a green and white robe, sits on a throne. He has a thoughtful expression, resting his chin on his hand. The throne is ornate with golden armrests. In the foreground on the right, a man in a white shirt is kneeling, holding a book and gesturing with his hands as if in prayer or reading. The background is a simple, dark green wall with a red curtain on the right side.

31:12 All the valiant men arose, and went all night, and took the body of Saul and the bodies of his sons from the wall of Bethshan, and came to Jabesh, and burnt them there. 31:13 And they took their bones, and buried them under a tree at Jabesh, and **fasted seven days.** [1 Samuel 31:12-13]





Go gather together all the Jews that are present in Shushan, and fast ye for me, and **neither eat nor drink three days**, night or day; I also and my maidens will fast likewise; and so will I go in unto the king, which is not according to the law; and if I perish, I perish. [Esther 4:16]

8:21 Then I proclaimed a **fast** there, at the river of Ahava, that we might *afflict ourselves* before our God, to seek of him a right way for us, and for our little ones, and for all our substance, **8:22** For I was ashamed to require of the king a band of soldiers and horsemen to help us against the enemy in the way; because we had spoken unto the king, saying, The hand of our God is upon all them for good that seek him; but his power and his wrath is against all them that forsake him. **8:23** So we **fasted** and besought our God for this; and he was entreated of us. [Ezra 8:21-23]

1:4 And it came to pass, when I heard these words, that I sat down and **wept**, and **mourned** certain days, and **fasted**, and **prayed** before the God of heaven [Nehemiah 1:4]

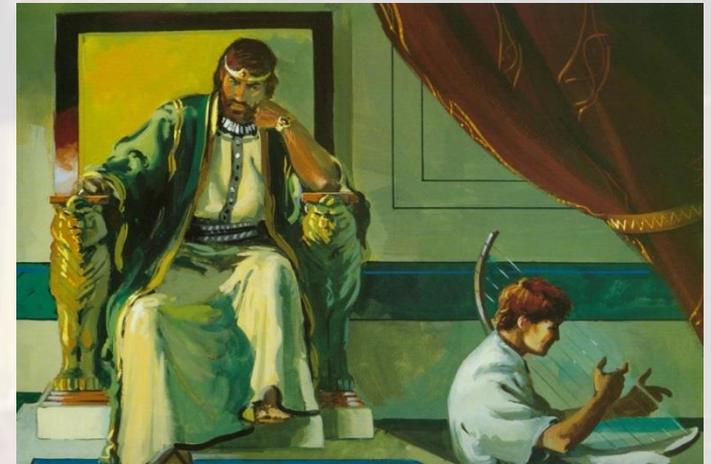
What does God desire?

7:1 And it came to pass in the fourth year of king Darius, that the word of the Lord came unto Zechariah in the fourth day of the ninth month, even in Chisleu; **7:2** When they [the Jews] had sent unto the house of God Sherezer and Regem-melech, and their men, to pray before the Lord, **7:3** And to speak unto the priests which were in the house of the Lord of hosts, and to the prophets, saying, **Should I weep** in the fifth month, separating myself, as **I have done these so many years?**

Continued...

7:4 Then came the word of the Lord of hosts unto me, saying, **7:5** Speak unto all the people of the land, and to the priests, saying, When ye **fasted and mourned** in the fifth and seventh month, even those seventy years, **did ye at all fast unto me, even to me?** **7:6** And when ye did eat, and when ye did drink, did not ye eat for yourselves, and drink for yourselves? [Romans 14:5-9]...**7:8** And the word of the Lord came unto Zechariah, saying, **7:9** Thus speaketh the Lord of hosts, saying, **Execute true judgment, and shew mercy and compassions** every man to his brother; **7:10** And **oppress not** the widow, nor the fatherless, the stranger, nor the poor; and let none of you imagine evil against his brother in your heart. **7:11** But they refused to hearken, and pulled away the shoulder, and stopped their ears, that they should not hear. **7:12** Yea, they made ***their hearts as an adamant stone***, lest they should hear the law, and the words which the Lord of hosts hath sent in his spirit by the former prophets; therefore came a great wrath from the Lord of hosts. [Zechariah 7:1-12]

Wherefore, verily I say unto you, that all things unto me are spiritual, and not at any time have I given unto you a law **which was temporal**, neither any man, nor the children of men; neither Adam your father, whom I created; behold, I gave unto him that he should be an agent unto himself; and I gave unto him commandment, but no temporal commandment gave I unto him; for my commandments are spiritual; they are not natural, nor temporal, neither carnal nor sensual. [DC 28:9]

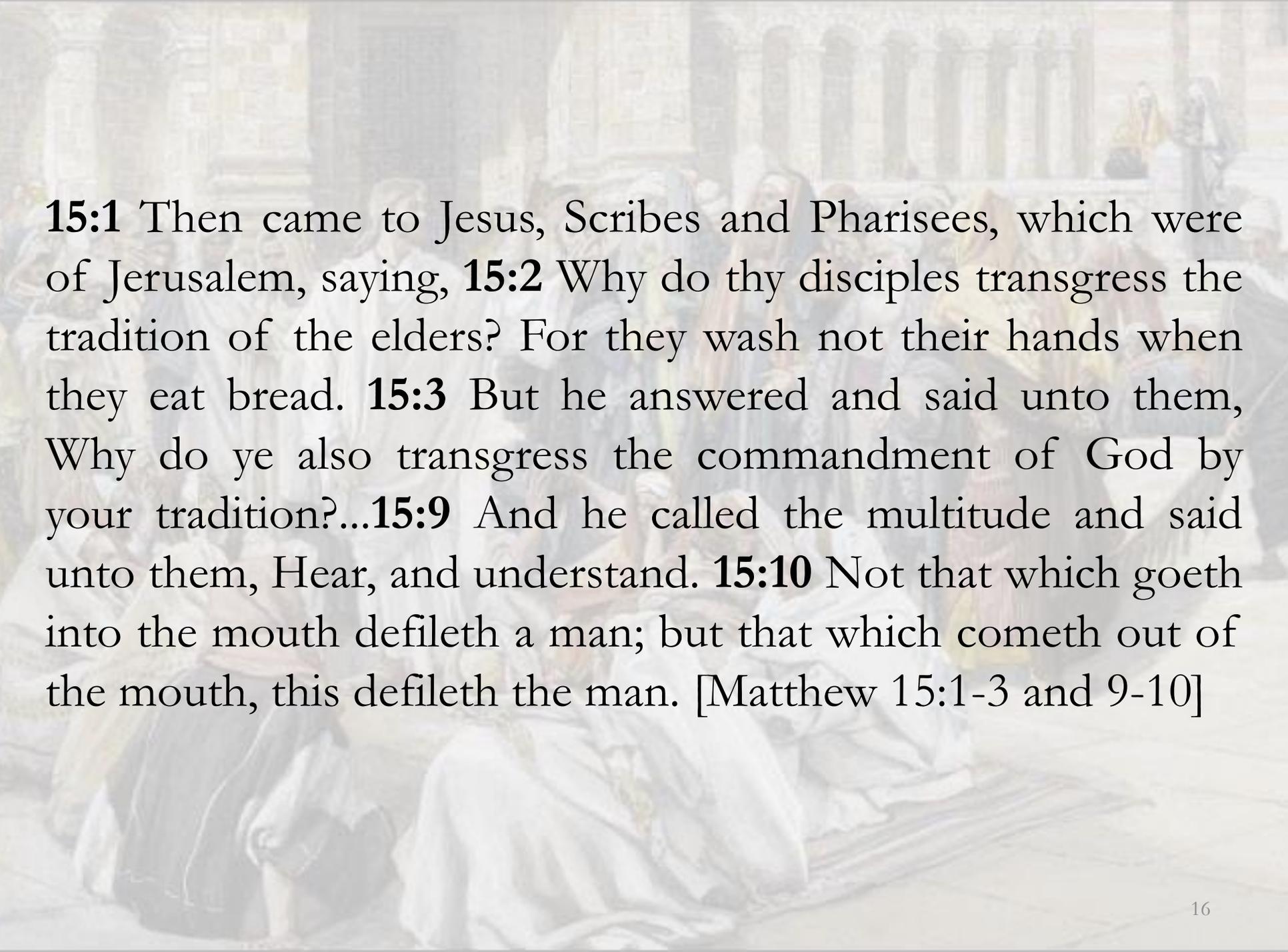




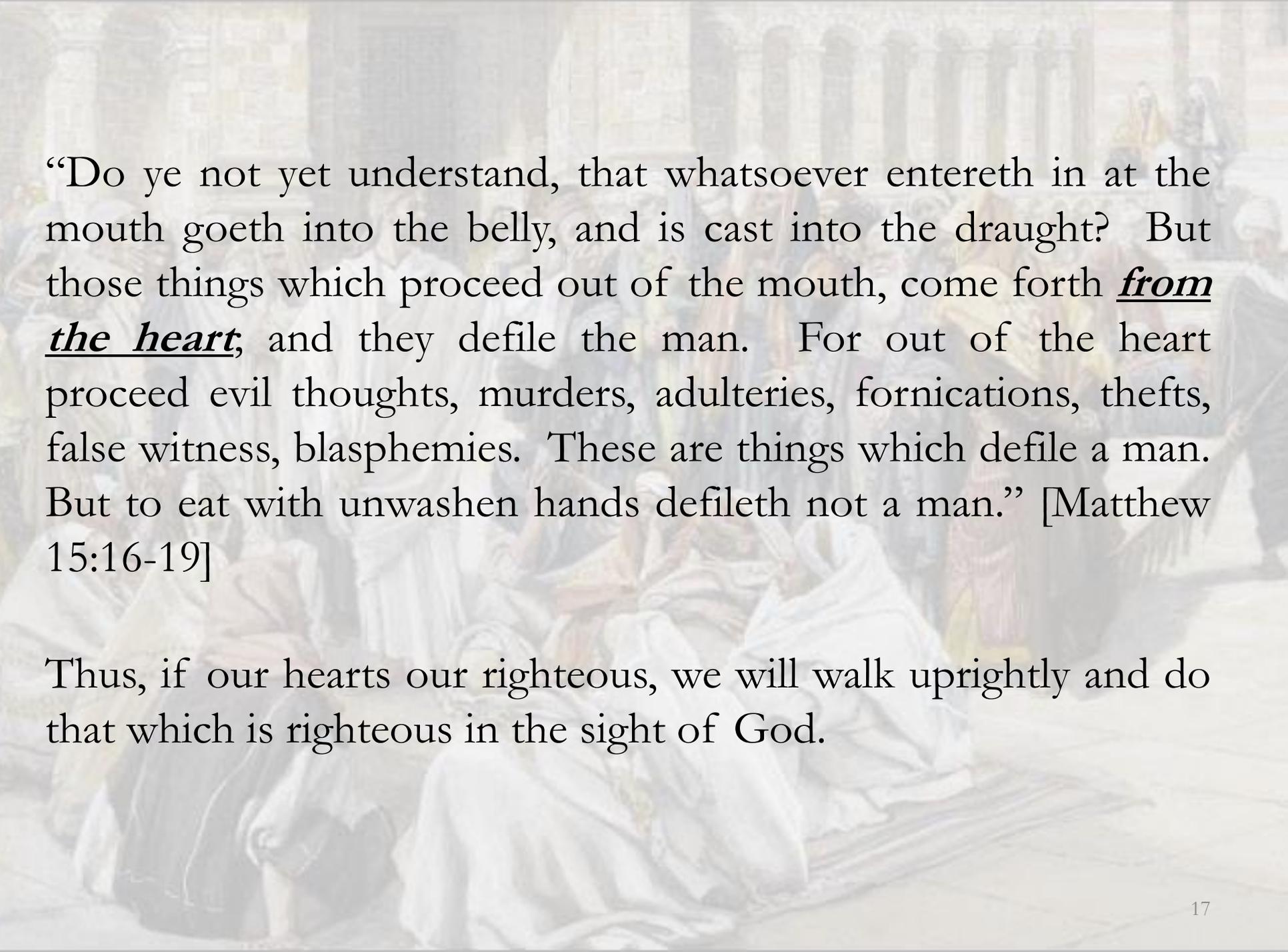
Matthew 15:6 Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition.

TEACHING BY TRADITION





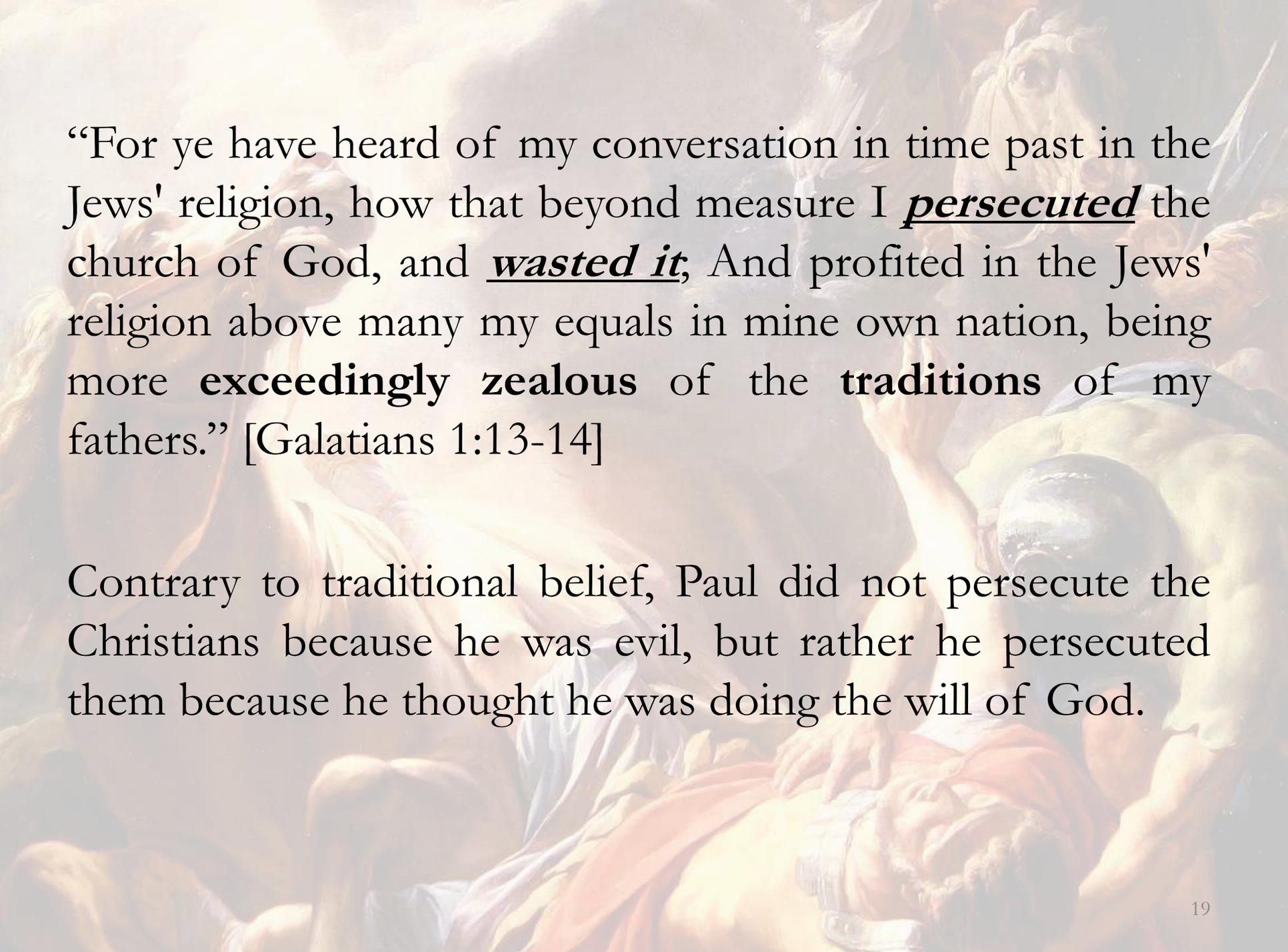
15:1 Then came to Jesus, Scribes and Pharisees, which were of Jerusalem, saying, **15:2** Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? For they wash not their hands when they eat bread. **15:3** But he answered and said unto them, Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition?...**15:9** And he called the multitude and said unto them, Hear, and understand. **15:10** Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man; but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth the man. [Matthew 15:1-3 and 9-10]



“Do ye not yet understand, that whatsoever entereth in at the mouth goeth into the belly, and is cast into the draught? But those things which proceed out of the mouth, come forth from the heart, and they defile the man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies. These are things which defile a man. But to eat with unwashen hands defileth not a man.” [Matthew 15:16-19]

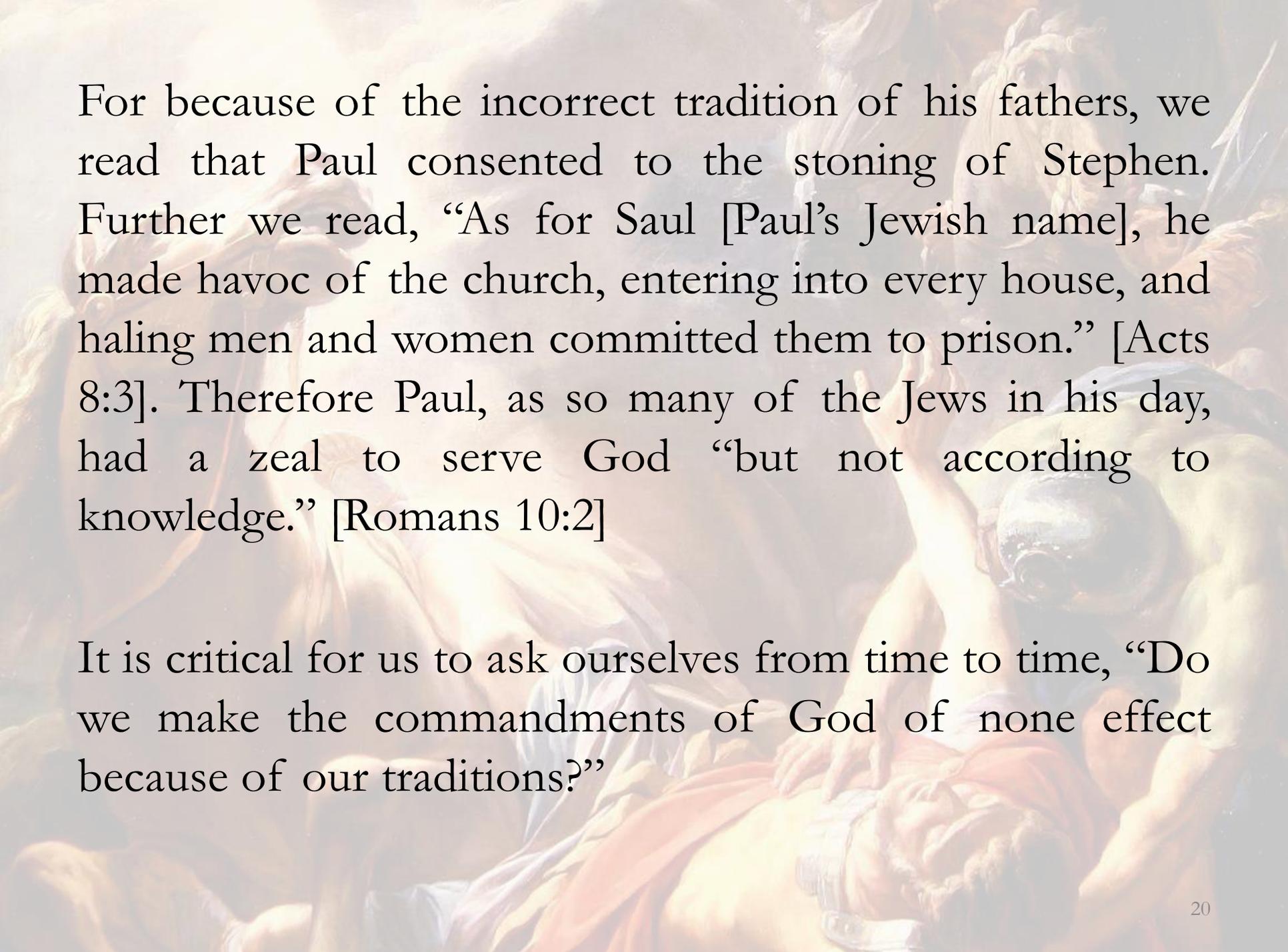
Thus, if our hearts are righteous, we will walk uprightly and do that which is righteous in the sight of God.





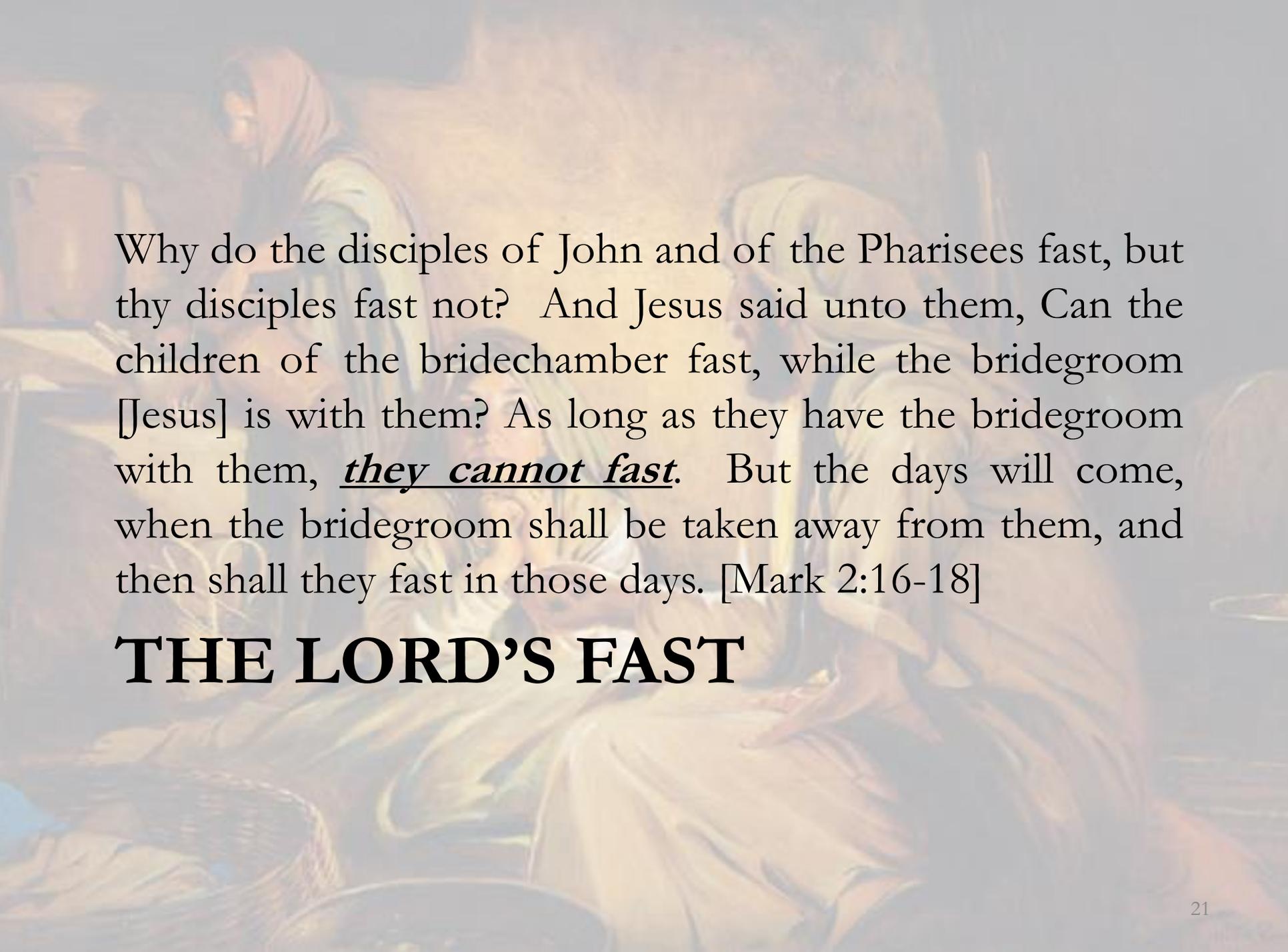
“For ye have heard of my conversation in time past in the Jews' religion, how that beyond measure I **persecuted** the church of God, and **wasted it**, And profited in the Jews' religion above many my equals in mine own nation, being more **exceedingly zealous** of the **traditions** of my fathers.” [Galatians 1:13-14]

Contrary to traditional belief, Paul did not persecute the Christians because he was evil, but rather he persecuted them because he thought he was doing the will of God.



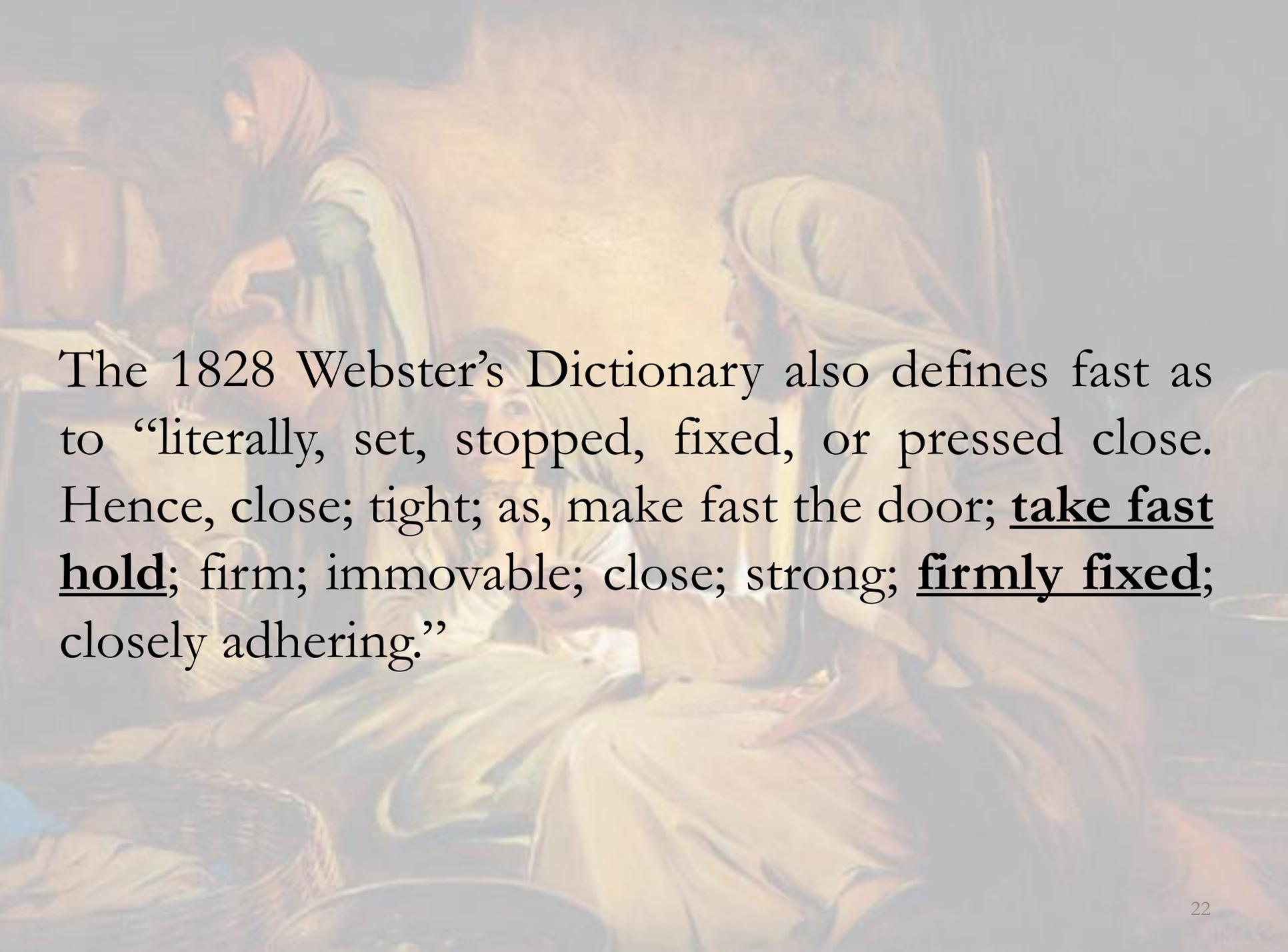
For because of the incorrect tradition of his fathers, we read that Paul consented to the stoning of Stephen. Further we read, “As for Saul [Paul’s Jewish name], he made havoc of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed them to prison.” [Acts 8:3]. Therefore Paul, as so many of the Jews in his day, had a zeal to serve God “but not according to knowledge.” [Romans 10:2]

It is critical for us to ask ourselves from time to time, “Do we make the commandments of God of none effect because of our traditions?”

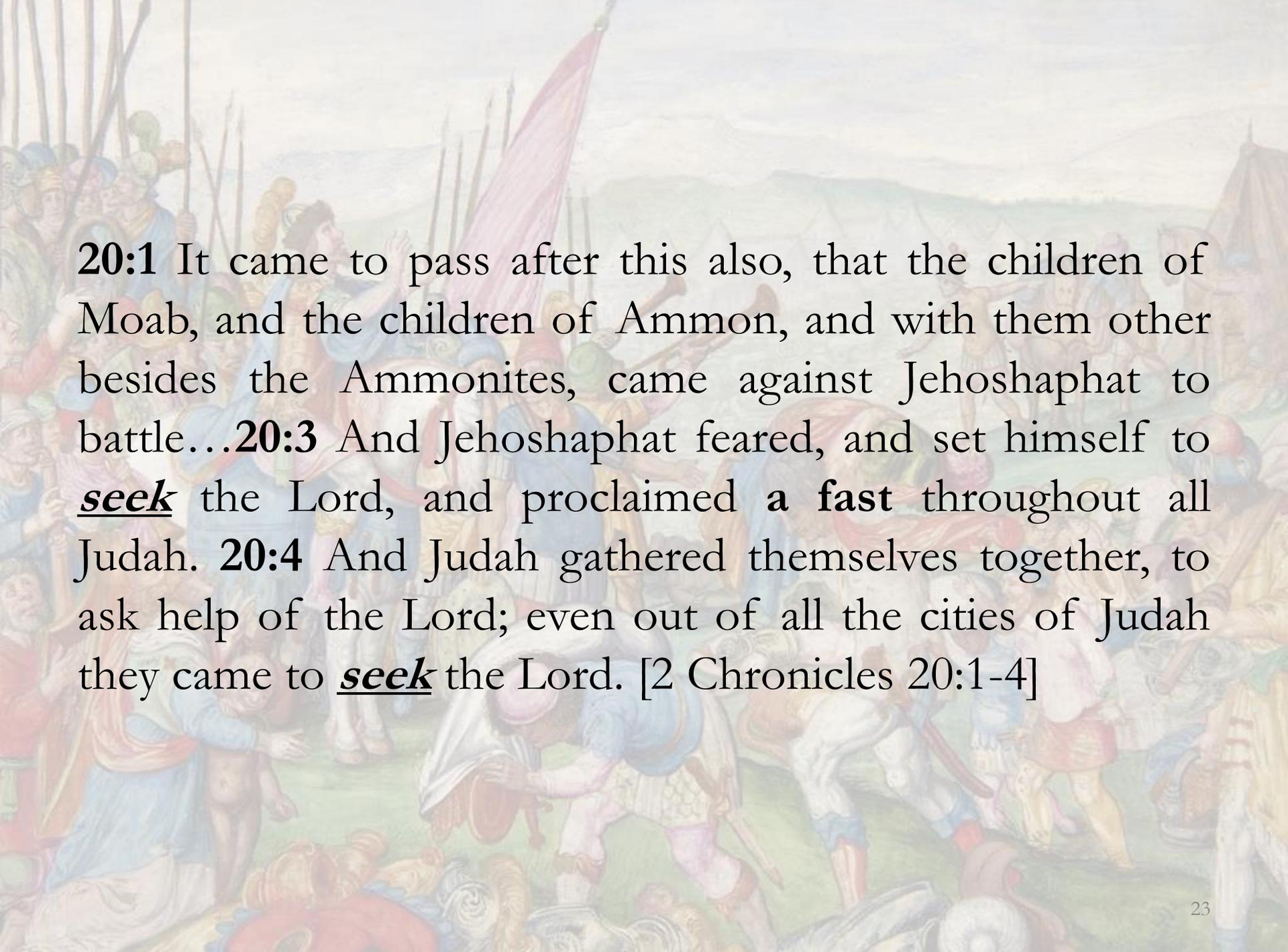


Why do the disciples of John and of the Pharisees fast, but thy disciples fast not? And Jesus said unto them, Can the children of the bridechamber fast, while the bridegroom [Jesus] is with them? As long as they have the bridegroom with them, *they cannot fast.* But the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then shall they fast in those days. [Mark 2:16-18]

THE LORD'S FAST

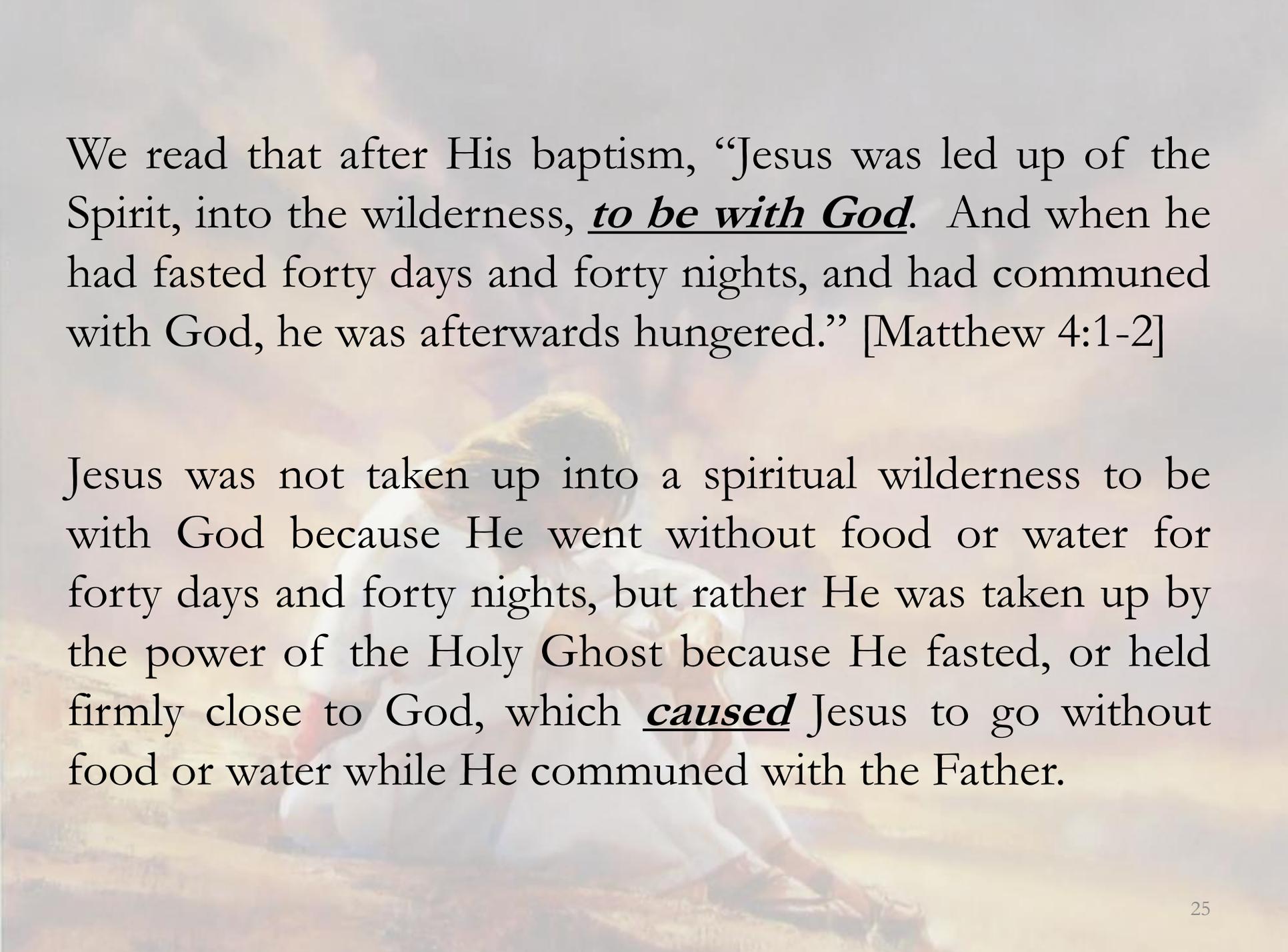


The 1828 Webster's Dictionary also defines fast as to “literally, set, stopped, fixed, or pressed close. Hence, close; tight; as, make fast the door; **take fast hold**; firm; immovable; close; strong; **firmly fixed**; closely adhering.”

A historical painting depicting a battle scene. In the foreground, soldiers in blue and red tunics are engaged in combat, some on horseback. A prominent red banner is held aloft in the center. The background shows a hazy landscape with hills and a tent on the right. The overall style is that of a classical or Renaissance-era historical painting.

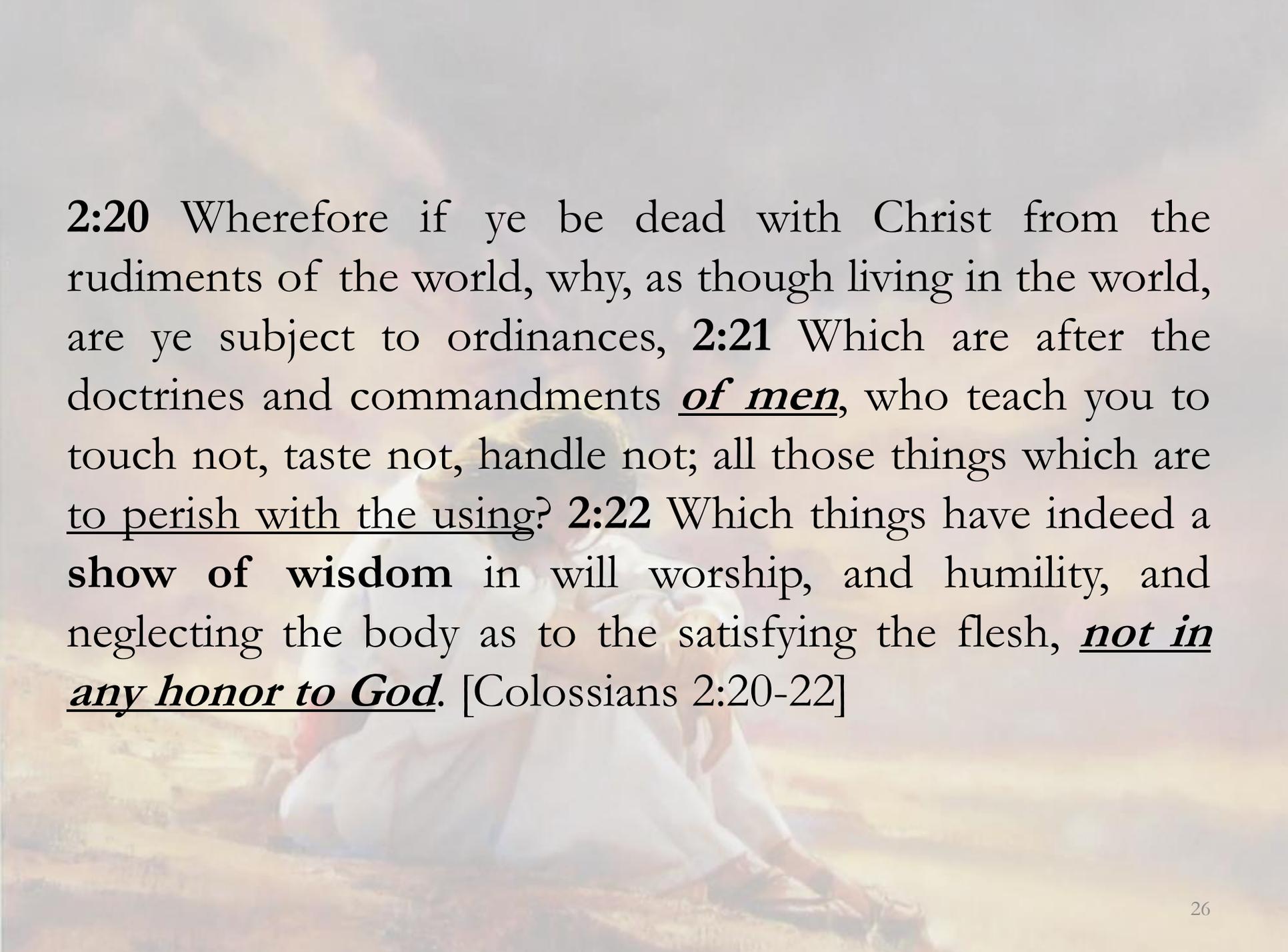
20:1 It came to pass after this also, that the children of Moab, and the children of Ammon, and with them other besides the Ammonites, came against Jehoshaphat to battle...**20:3** And Jehoshaphat feared, and set himself to seek the Lord, and proclaimed a **fast** throughout all Judah. **20:4** And Judah gathered themselves together, to ask help of the Lord; even out of all the cities of Judah they came to seek the Lord. [2 Chronicles 20:1-4]





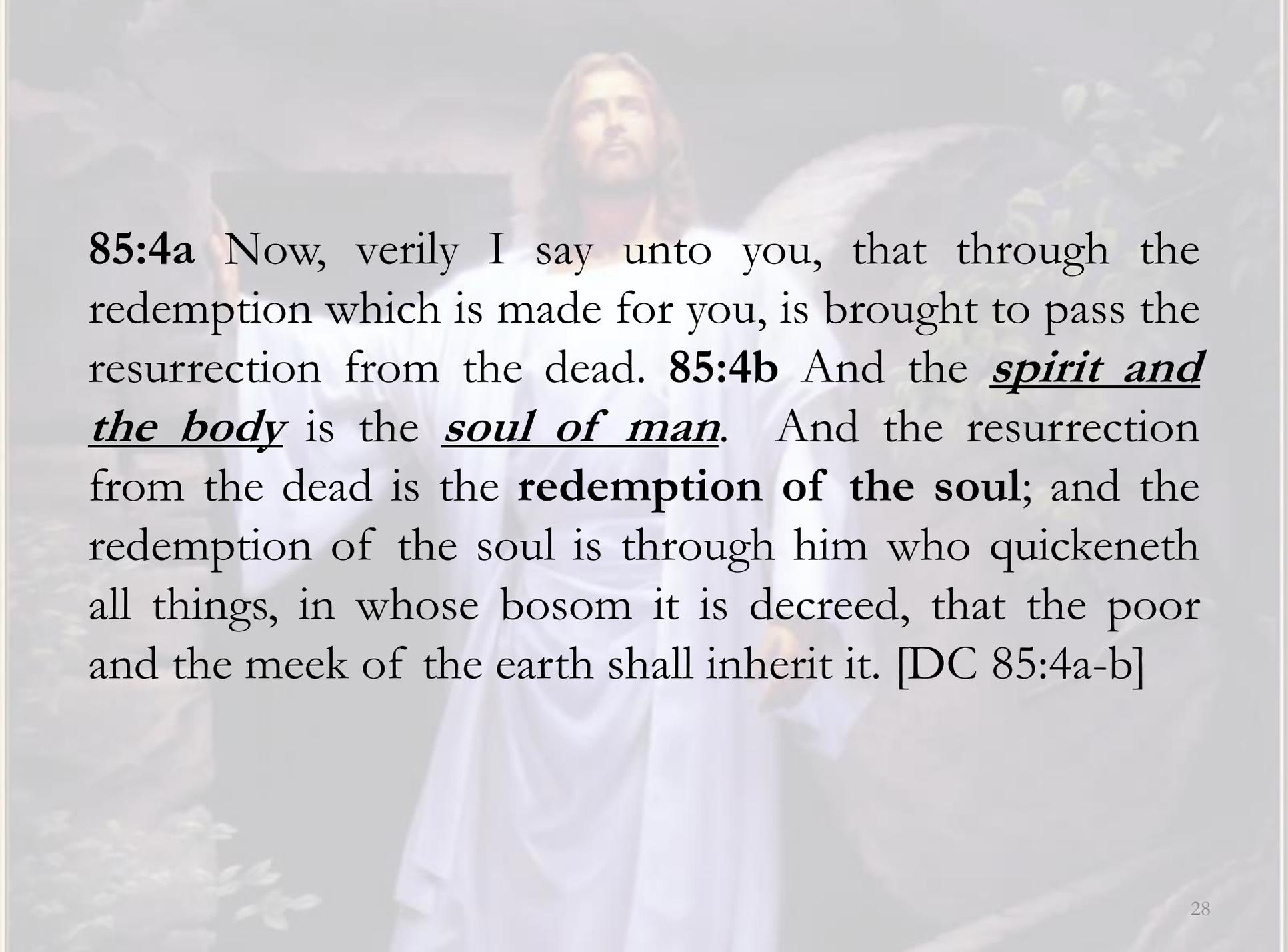
We read that after His baptism, “Jesus was led up of the Spirit, into the wilderness, *to be with God*. And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, and had communed with God, he was afterwards hungered.” [Matthew 4:1-2]

Jesus was not taken up into a spiritual wilderness to be with God because He went without food or water for forty days and forty nights, but rather He was taken up by the power of the Holy Ghost because He fasted, or held firmly close to God, which *caused* Jesus to go without food or water while He communed with the Father.



2:20 Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances, **2:21** Which are after the doctrines and commandments ***of men***, who teach you to touch not, taste not, handle not; all those things which are to perish with the using? **2:22** Which things have indeed a **show of wisdom** in will worship, and humility, and neglecting the body as to the satisfying the flesh, ***not in any honor to God.*** [Colossians 2:20-22]





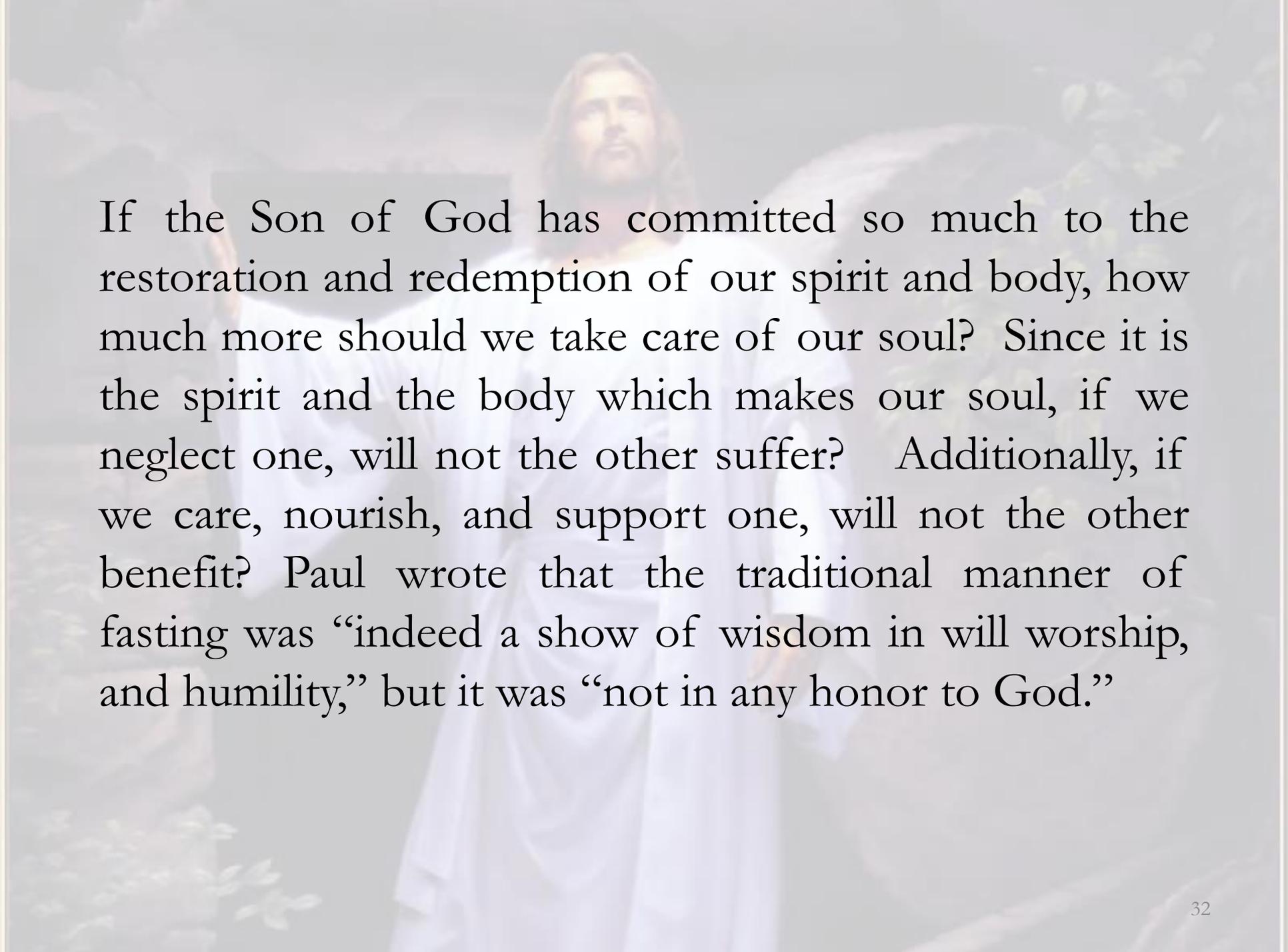
85:4a Now, verily I say unto you, that through the redemption which is made for you, is brought to pass the resurrection from the dead. **85:4b** And the *spirit and the body* is the *soul of man*. And the resurrection from the dead is the **redemption of the soul**; and the redemption of the soul is through him who quickeneth all things, in whose bosom it is decreed, that the poor and the meek of the earth shall inherit it. [DC 85:4a-b]

6:29 And the grave must deliver up its captive bodies, and the bodies and the spirits of men will be restored, one to the other; **6:30** And it is by the **power of the resurrection of the Holy One of Israel**. **6:31** O how great the plan of our God! For on the other hand, the paradise of God must deliver up the spirits of the righteous, and the grave deliver up the bodies of the righteous; **6:32** And the spirit and the body is restored to itself again, and all men become incorruptible, and immortal, and they are living souls, having a perfect knowledge like unto us, in the flesh. [2 Nephi 6:29-32]

8:98 For behold, the day cometh that **all shall rise** from the dead and stand before God, and be judged according to their works. **8:99** Now there is a death which is called a temporal death; and the death of Christ shall loose the bands of this temporal death, that all shall be raised from this temporal death; **8:100** **The spirit and the body shall be reunited again, in its perfect form**; both limb and joint shall be restored to its proper frame, even as we now are at this time; **8:101** And we shall be brought to stand before God, knowing even as we know now, and have a bright recollection of all our guilt.

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8:102 Now this restoration shall come to all, both old and young, both bond and free, both male and female, both the wicked and the righteous; **8:103** And even there shall not so much as a hair of their heads be lost; but *all things shall be restored to its perfect frame*, as it is now, or in the body, **8:104** And shall be brought and be arraigned before the bar of Christ the Son, and God the Father, and the Holy Spirit, which is one eternal God, to be judged according to their works, whether they be good or whether they be evil. **8:105** Now behold I have spoken unto you concerning the death of the mortal body, and also concerning the resurrection of the mortal body. **8:106** I say unto you, that this mortal body is raised to an immortal body; that is from death; even from the first death, *unto life*, that they can **die no more**; their spirits uniting with their bodies, *never to be divided*; **8:107** Thus the whole becoming spiritual and immortal, that they can no more see corruption. [Alma 8:98-107]



If the Son of God has committed so much to the restoration and redemption of our spirit and body, how much more should we take care of our soul? Since it is the spirit and the body which makes our soul, if we neglect one, will not the other suffer? Additionally, if we care, nourish, and support one, will not the other benefit? Paul wrote that the traditional manner of fasting was “indeed a show of wisdom in will worship, and humility,” but it was “not in any honor to God.”

27:31 Paul said to the centurion and to the soldiers, Except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved. **27:32** Then the soldiers cutoff the ropes of the boat, and let her fall off. **27:33** And while the day was coming on, Paul besought them all to take meat, saying, This day is the fourteenth day ye have tarried and continued **fasting**, having taken nothing. **27:34** Wherefore I pray you to take some meat; **for this is for your health**; for there shall not a hair fall from the head of any of you. **27:35** And when he had thus spoken, he took bread, and gave thanks to God in the presence of them all; and when he had broken it, he began to eat. **27:36** Then were they all of good cheer, and they also took some meat. [Acts 27:31-36]

98:5h And all they who suffer persecution for my name, and endure in faith, though they are called to **lay down their lives for my sake**, yet shall they partake of all this glory. **98:5i** Wherefore, fear not even unto death; for in this world your joy is not full, but in me your joy is full. **98:5j** Therefore, care not for the body, neither the life of the body; ***but care for the soul***, and for the life of the soul, and ***seek the face of the Lord always***, that in patience ye may possess your souls, and ye shall have eternal life. [DC 98:5h-j]

Is abstaining from food a way to care for the soul, or perhaps are there times while caring for the soul that we abstain from food?

16:112 O Lord, wilt thou comfort my soul, and give unto me success, and also my fellow laborers who are with me; yea, Ammon, and Aaron, and Omner, and also Amulek, and Zeezrom, and also my two sons; yea, even all these wilt thou comfort, O Lord? Yea, wilt thou *comfort their souls in Christ?* **16:113** Wilt thou grant unto them that they may have strength, that they may bear their afflictions which shall come upon them, because of the iniquities of this people? **16:114** O Lord, wilt thou grant unto us that we may have success in bringing them again unto thee, in Christ? **16:115** Behold, O Lord, their souls are precious, and many of them are our near brethren, therefore, give unto us, O Lord, power and wisdom, that we may bring these, our brethren, again unto thee.

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16:116 Now it came to pass, that when Alma had said these words, that he clapped his hands upon all them who were with him. **16:117** And behold, as he clapped his hands upon them, they were filled with the Holy Spirit. **16:118** And after that, they did separate themselves one from another; *taking no thought for themselves* what they should eat, or what they should drink, or what they should put on. **16:119** And the Lord provided for them that they *should hunger not, neither should they thirst*, yea, and he also gave them *strength*, that they should suffer no manner of afflictions, save it were swallowed up in the joy of Christ. **16:120** Now this was according to the prayer of Alma; and this because he prayed in faith. [Alma 16:112-120]

The Lord's Fast

58:1 Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and show my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins. **58:2** Yet they seek me daily, and delight to know my ways, as a nation that did righteousness, and forsook not the ordinance of their God; they ask of me the ordinances of justice; they take delight in approaching to God. **58:3** Wherefore have we **fasted**, *say they*, and thou seest not? wherefore have we **afflicted our soul**, and thou takest no knowledge? Behold, in the day of your fast ye find pleasure, and exact all your labors.

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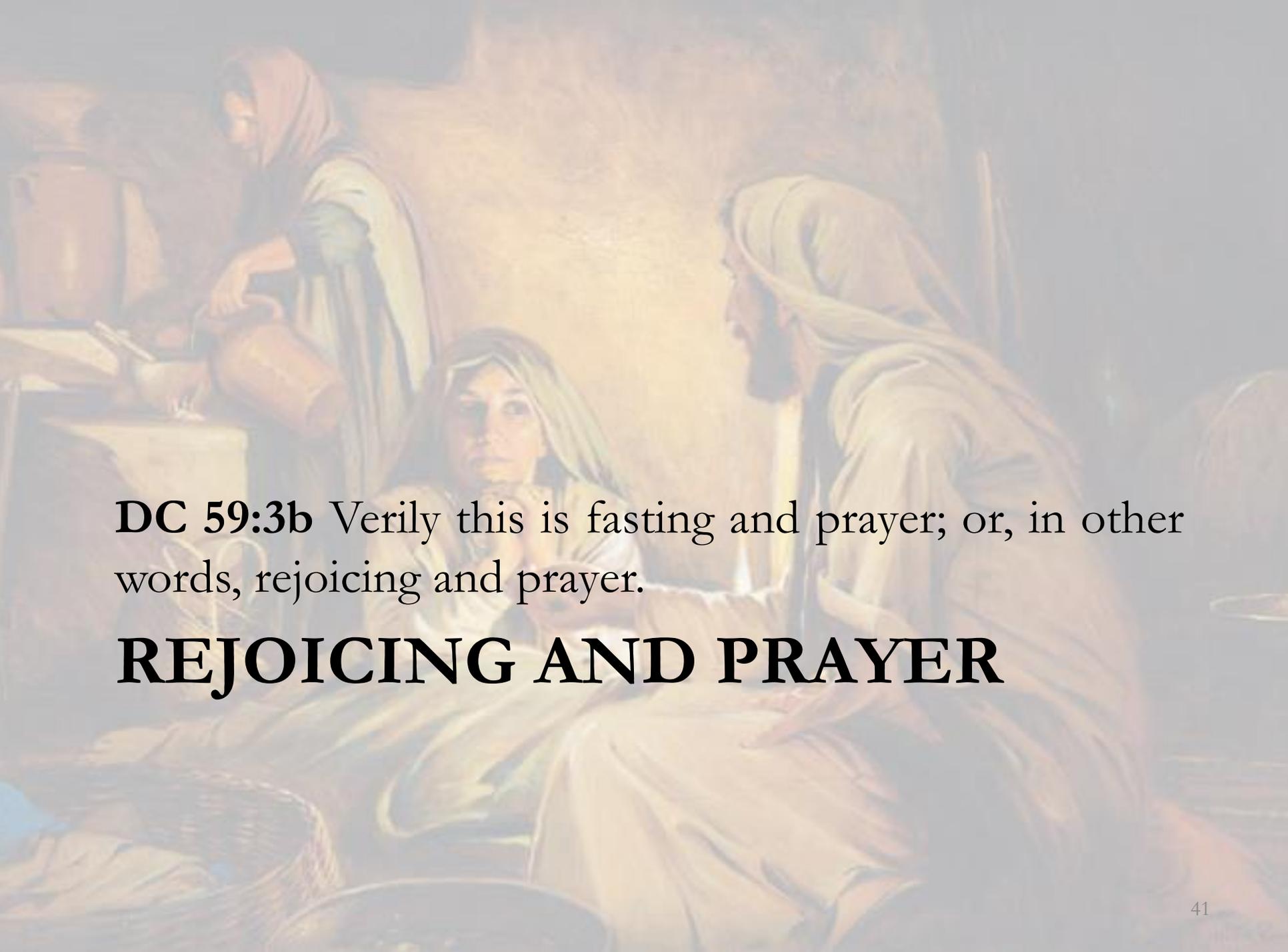
58:4 Behold, ye fast for strife and debate, and to smite with the fist of wickedness; **ye shall not fast as ye do this day**, to make your voice to be heard on high. **58:5** Is it such a fast that ***I have chosen***? a day for a man to afflict his soul? is it to bow down his head as a bulrush, and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him? wilt thou call this a fast, and an acceptable day to the Lord? **58:6** Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to **loose the bands of wickedness**, to **undo the heavy burdens**, and to let the **oppressed go free**, and that ye **break every yoke**? **58:7** Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh?

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58:8 *Then* shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thine health shall spring forth speedily; and thy righteousness shall go before thee; the glory of the Lord shall be thy rearward. **58:9** *Then* shalt thou call, and the Lord shall answer; thou shalt cry, and he shall say, *Here I am*. If thou take away from the midst of thee the yoke, the putting forth of the finger, and speaking vanity; **58:10** And if thou *draw out thy soul* to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul; then shall thy light rise in obscurity, and thy darkness be as the *noonday*; **58:11** And *the Lord shall guide thee continually*, and satisfy thy soul in drought, and make fat thy bones; and thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not.

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58:12 And they that shall be of thee *shall build the old waste places*; thou shalt raise up the foundations of many generations; and thou shalt be called, *The repairer of the breach*, The restorer of paths to dwell in. **58:13** If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honorable; and shalt honor him, not doing **thine own ways**, nor finding **thine own pleasure**, nor speaking **thine own words**; **58:14** *Then* shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father; for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it. [Isaiah 58:1-14]



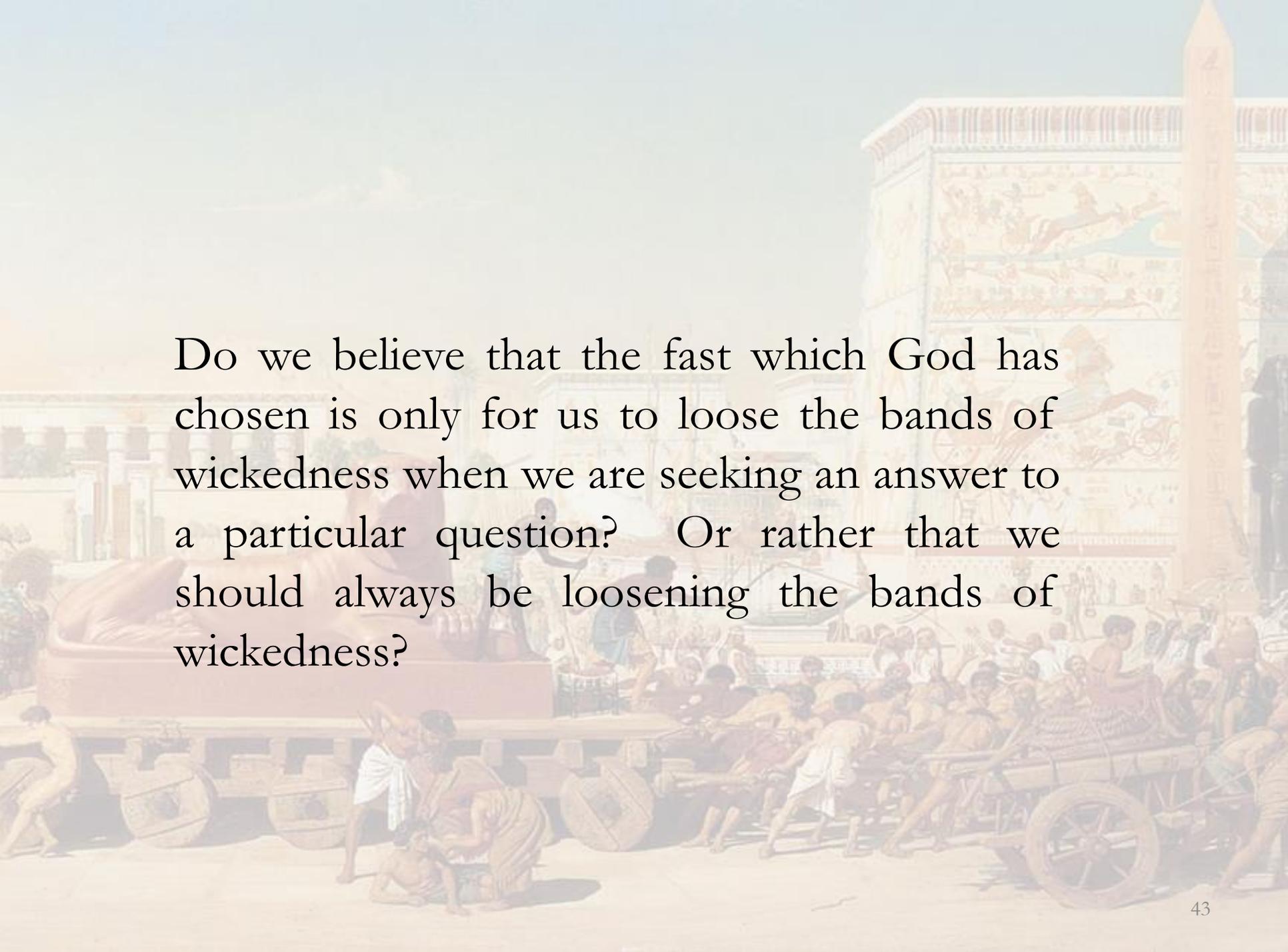
DC 59:3b Verily this is fasting and prayer; or, in other words, rejoicing and prayer.

REJOICING AND PRAYER

The Lord told Isaiah that the fast which *He has chosen* is to:

- to loose the bands of wickedness,
- to undo the heavy burdens,
- to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke?
- to deal thy bread to the hungry,
- to bring the poor that are cast out to thy house
- to cover the naked

God promised that if we would do this “*then* shall thy light break forth as the morning...*Then* shalt thou call, and the Lord shall answer; thou shalt cry, and he shall say, *Here I am.*”



Do we believe that the fast which God has chosen is only for us to loose the bands of wickedness when we are seeking an answer to a particular question? Or rather that we should always be loosening the bands of wickedness?



King Benjamin told his people that he had been chosen and preserved by God “to serve thee with **all the might, mind, and strength** which the Lord hath granted unto me... Yet, my brethren, I have not done these things that **I might boast**, neither do I tell these things that thereby **I might accuse you**; but I tell you these things that ye may know that I can answer a clear conscience before God this day. Behold, I say unto you, that because I said unto you that I had spent my days in your service, I do not desire to boast, for I have only been in the service of God. And behold, I tell you these things that ye may learn wisdom; that ye may learn that when ye are in the service of your fellow beings, ye are only in the **service of your God**.” [Mosiah 1:42 and 47-49]

59:2f And that thou mayest more fully keep thyself unspotted from the world, thou shalt go to the house of prayer and offer up thy sacraments upon my holy day; for verily this is a day appointed unto thee to rest from thy labors, and to pay thy devotions unto the Most High; **59:2g** nevertheless thy vows shall be offered up in righteousness *on all days*, and *at all times*; **59:2h** but remember that on this, the Lord's day, thou shalt offer thine oblations, and thy sacraments, unto the Most High, confessing thy sins unto thy brethren, and before the Lord. **59:3a** And on this day thou shalt do none other thing, only let thy food be prepared with **singleness of heart**, that thy fasting **may be perfect**; or in other words, that thy joy may be full. **59:3b** Verily this is fasting and prayer; or, in other words, *rejoicing and prayer*.

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59:4a And inasmuch as ye do these things, *with thanksgiving, with cheerful hearts*, and countenances; not with much laughter, for this is sin, but with a glad heart and a cheerful countenance; **59:4b** verily I say, that inasmuch as ye do this the fullness of the earth is yours: the beasts of the fields, and the fowls of the air, and that which climbeth upon the trees, and walketh upon the earth; **59:4c** yea, and the herb, and the good things which come of the earth, whether for food or for raiment, or for houses or for barns, or for orchards, or for gardens, or for vineyards; **59:4d** yea, all things which come of the earth, in the season thereof, are made **for the benefit and the use of man**, both to please the eye, and to gladden the heart; yea, for food and for raiment, for taste and for smell, to strengthen the body, and to enliven the soul. [DC 59:2f-4]

God also explained to the prophet Zechariah that fasting was rejoicing in Him, saying, “The fast of the fourth month, and the fast of the fifth, and the fast of the seventh, and the fast of the tenth, shall be to the house of Judah **joy and gladness**, and **cheerful feasts**; therefore love the truth and peace.” [Zechariah 8:19]

After all that God has done for the souls of men, it is our reasonable service to give the best that we have to the Master, and thereby to each other. In so doing, perhaps we will finally recognize that through fasting, or in other words holding firm to the Lord, not only are we as individuals drawing closer to God, but we as a people are also drawing closer to each other so that our hearts might be knit together in unity and in love. On that day, the Lord might verily say of His people, as He did with David [read Acts 13:22], “I have found a people through my Son to be after **mine own heart**, which shall fulfill **my will**.”



1:13 And they did not walk any more after the performances and ordinances of the Law of Moses, but they did walk after the commandments which they had received from their Lord and their God, *continuing in fasting and prayer*, and in meeting together oft, both to pray and to hear the word of the Lord. **1:14** And it came to pass that there was *no contention* among all the people, in all the land, but there were mighty miracles wrought among the disciples of Jesus. **1:17** And it came to pass that there was no contention in the land, because of the *love of God* which did dwell in the hearts of the people. **1:18** And there were no envyings, nor strifes, nor tumults, nor whoredoms, nor lyings, nor murders, nor any manner of lasciviousness; **1:19** And surely there could not be a happier people among all the people who had been created by the hand of God. [4 Nephi 1:13-14 and 17-19]