

Fasting to See God's Mighty Acts –

Jonah 3: 1-10 – The people of Nineveh believed God about His intention to destroy them if they did not repent of their sins. So they proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest to the least of them.” Their fasting showed God their seriousness about repenting of their sins and seeking God for mercy to be shown to them. It allowed them to have the time and an even greater inclination to “cry mightily to God” and each one to “turn from their evil ways”. Then perhaps, they reasoned, God might turn and relent and turn from His fierce anger, so that they might not perish.

Matthew 17: 14-21 – There are some kinds of demons and the oppression that they bring to the soul of their victims, that only prayer coupled with fasting will be able to cast out. Sometimes even Christians, doing the work of ministry in the Lord's service, run into this kind of demonic activity in the lives of those whom they would help. What is required is praying in faith, and having that faith strengthened by means of fasting. It is not the amount of faith (the quantity), it is the quality. (A grain of mustard seed, verse 20)

John Calvin says on this: This kind goeth not out, (492) By this expression Christ reproveth the negligence of certain persons, in order to inform them that it was not an ordinary faith which was required; for otherwise they might have replied that they were not altogether destitute of faith. The meaning therefore is, that it is not every kind of faith that will suffice, when we have to enter into a serious conflict with Satan, but that vigorous efforts are indispensably necessary. For the weakness of faith he prescribes prayer as a remedy, to which he adds fasting by way of an auxiliary. “You are effeminate exorcist,” said he, “and seem as if you were engaged in a mock-battle got up for amusement; (493) but you have to deal with a powerful adversary, who will not yield till the battle has been fought out. Your faith must therefore be excited by prayer, and as you are slow and languid in prayer, you must resort to fasting as an assistance.” (494) Hence it is very evident how absurdly the Papists represent fasting to be the specific method of driving away devils, since our Lord refers to it for no other reason than to stimulate the earnestness of prayer. When he says that this kind of devils cannot be cast out in any other way than by prayer and fasting, he means that, when Satan has taken deep root in any one, and has been confirmed by long possession, or when he rages with unbridled fury, the victory is difficult and painful, and therefore the contest must be maintained with all our might.

Thomas Coke says: “This kind goeth not out, &c.— Prayer and fasting could have no relation to the ejection of demons, but so far only as they had a tendency to increase the faith of miracles in him who had that power formerly conferred upon him. For example, prayer, by impressing a man's mind with a more intimate sense that all things whatsoever depend upon the infinite and incomprehensible

power of God, raises his idea of that power to a greater sublimity than can be done in the way of ordinary speculation. And as for fasting, by weakening the animal life, it subdues such passions as are nourished by continual repletion of body. Hence fasting has a tendency to free the mind from the dominion of passion, which never fails to occasion a great inward perturbation, and at times has been found to make even holy men inattentive, at least to the more silent impressions of God's Spirit. Fasting therefore produces an inward quietness and calm, very favorable to the growth of faith.

Acts 13: 1-4 – The church at Antioch was engaged in prayer; called “ministering to the Lord and fasting” in verse 2. It was during that serious and self-denying time, trying to discern the Lord’s will about what should be done to promote Christ’s kingdom and His glory in evangelism, that the Holy Spirit spoke to them and said, “Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.” It was after they had fasted and prayed that they laid their hands on them, and sent them away. Fasting was a good preparative to hearing the Lord’s voice speaking to them. It will be the same for Christians even though they will hear no audible voice, yet they will in relation to their seeking the Lord’s will on how they might better evangelize their city, find that the Lord will be directing them where to place their efforts and who it should be who should go into such a work.

J. Pulsford says – “Deep, earnest thoughts have often stirred in me on bodily abstinence, as the condition of helping the spirit through the strait gate of opposing animalism, into the sweet and holy Paradise element. There is an element of which Jesus is the Prince, and there is an element of which Satan is prince. While we appropriate the elements of the nethermost prince, we may be strong in the powers of nature, but perhaps not so strong in the life that is hid with Christ in God; for in the exercise and indulgence of our fleshly appetites we do not breathe deeply enough to inspire the holy element of our risen Prince. Finding that deep and holy spirit breathing was suspended during bodily enjoyments, godly souls have often interdicted the gratifications of the flesh, in order to help their spirits in the God-ward direction. (J. Pulsford.)