

It is important to ensure fellowship with God before the study of the Word.

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9).

Standing on the Promises of God - -

Romans 1:20 For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power, and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse.

From ***The Power of Prayer*** – - Reuben Archer Torrey -1856-1928

The Early Church's Victory

When we read the only inspired church history that was ever written, the history of the church in the days of the apostles as it is recorded by Luke (under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit) in the Acts of the Apostles, what do we find? We find a story of constant victory, a story of perpetual progress. We read, for example, such statements as Acts 2:47: "The Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved" and Acts 4:4: "Many of them which heard the word believed; and the number of the men was about five thousand," and Acts 5:14: "And believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women." In addition Luke in Acts 6:7 states: "And the word of God increased: and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith."

And so we go on, chapter after chapter, through the twenty-eight chapters of Acts, and in every one of the twenty-seven chapters after the first, we find the same note of victory.

Present-day Departure From Prayer

There is nothing else in which the church and the ministry of today or, to be more explicit, you and I, have departed more notably and more lamentably from apostolic precedent than in this matter of prayer. We do not live in a praying age. A very considerable proportion of the membership of our evangelical churches today do not believe even theoretically in prayer. Many of them now believe in prayer as having a beneficial "reflex influence," that is, as benefiting the person who prays, a sort of lifting yourself up by your spiritual bootstraps. But as for prayer bringing anything to pass that would not have come to pass if we had not prayed, they do not believe in it, and many of them frankly say so, and even some of our "modern ministers" say so. I believe it is still the vast majority in our evangelical churches-even they do not make the use of this mighty instrument that God has put into our hands that one would naturally expect. As I said, we do not live in a praying age. We live in an age of hustle and bustle, of man's efforts and man's determination, of man's confidence in himself and in his own power to achieve things, an age of human organization and human machinery, human push and human scheming, and human achievement, which in the things of God means no real achievement at all.

I think it would be perfectly safe to say that the church of Christ was never in all its history so fully, so skillfully and so thoroughly, and so perfectly organized as it is today. Our machinery is wonderful; it is just perfect, but, alas, it is machinery without power; and when things do not go right, instead of going to the real source of our failure, our neglect to depend on God and look to God for power, we look around to see if there is not some new organization we can get up, some new wheel that we can add to our machinery. We have altogether too many wheels already. What we need is not so much some new organization, some new wheel, but "the Spirit of the living creature in the wheels" we already possess.

FASTING – (in review)

- 1. During the Age of Israel (Old Testament)**
- 2. During the Gospels**
- 3. During the New Testament Epistles**

Fasting during the Age of Israel from the Old Testament

1. People fasted as a result of mourning over calamitous circumstances.
 - A. Military defeat (**Judges 20:26; Nehemiah 1:1-4**)
 - B. Death of a king (**1 Samuel 31:13; 2 Samuel 1:12**)
 - C. Terminal illness of a child (**2 Samuel 12:16-23**)
 - D. Personal distress of a king over the possible loss of a loyal subject (**Daniel 6:16-24**)

Point of Observation - Personal grief or sorrow was associated with fasting.

2. Calamitous circumstances lead the genuinely humble believer to pray from the soul (**Nehemiah 1:3-11; 2 Chronicles 20:1-4**).

Point of Observation - Oftentimes fasting accompanied prayer.

Point of Observation - Confession of sin was associated with fasting.

Prayer does not prevail in every calamitous circumstance - -

- David and his first born son with Bathsheba
 - David prayed and fasted for seven days (**2 Samuel 12:16-23**).
 - David fasted, wept, and prayed thinking the Lord might be gracious to him.
 - David's prayers did not prevail.
 - How does **Romans 8:28** apply?
- 3. Fasting has been used as a religious façade which is contrary to the will of God.
 - Jezebel's legislation of a fast (**1 Kings 21:9-16**)
 - Pharisees' fasting (**Luke 18:9-14**)

Luke 18:9-14

And He also told this parable to some people who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and viewed others with contempt:

POD - Those who believe they are righteous by works view others with contempt.

POD - Those who know they are righteous because of what God has done in grace should view others with compassion.

¹⁰ “Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. ¹¹ “The Pharisee stood and was praying this to himself: ‘God, I thank You that I am not like other people: swindlers, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. ¹² ‘I fast twice a week; I pay tithes of all that I get.’ ¹³ “But the tax collector, standing some distance away, was even unwilling to lift up his eyes to heaven, but was beating his breast, saying, ‘God, be merciful to me, the sinner!’ ¹⁴ “I tell you, this man. . .

The tax collector - a convicted sinner, yet one who trusts in God

. . . went to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted.”

4. Oftentimes, fasting accompanied grieving over and confessing sin upon conviction (**1 Samuel 7:6; 1 Kings 21:27; Nehemiah 9:1-3; Jonah 3:5-10**).
5. Fasting accompanied the seeking of God's deliverance through prayer (**Ezra 8:21-23; Nehemiah 1:3-11; Psalms 69:5-19; Psalms 109:21-31; Daniel 9:3-23; Jonah 3:5-10**).

Psalms 109:21-24 But You, O GOD, the Lord, deal kindly with me for Your name's sake; Because Your lovingkindness is good, deliver me; ²² For I am afflicted and needy, And my heart is wounded within me. ²³ I am passing like a shadow when it lengthens; I am shaken off like the locust.²⁴ My knees are **weak** . . .

“**Weak**” - כָּשַׁל - “to tremble, to be unstable”

. . . from fasting, and my flesh has grown lean, without fatness.

POD - Fasting will reduce your fatness; however it will sap you of much needed strength to go about your day.

6. Fasting was a means of humbling one’s soul (**Psalms 35:9-21** cf. **Leviticus 23:27-28; Isaiah 58:3**).

Psalm 35:11-13 Malicious witnesses rise up; they ask me of things that I do not know. ¹² They repay me evil for good, to the bereavement of my soul. ¹³ But as for me, when they were sick, my clothing was sackcloth; I humbled my soul with fasting, and my prayer kept returning to my bosom.

7. Fasting acceptable to God [*during the Age of Israel*] is directly related to the soul (**Isaiah 58:3-12; Jeremiah 14:10-12** cf. **Daniel 9:3 -23; Joel 2:12-18; Zechariah 7:5**).

Jeremiah 14:10-12 Thus says the LORD to this people, "Even so they have loved to wander; they have not kept their feet in check. Therefore the LORD does not accept them; now He will remember their iniquity and call their sins to account." ¹¹ So the LORD said to me, "Do not pray for the welfare of this people. ¹² "When they fast, I am not going to listen to their cry; and when they offer burnt offering and grain offering, I am not going to accept them. Rather I am going to make an end of them by the sword, famine, and pestilence."

Joel 2:12-18 "Yet even now," declares the LORD, "Return to Me with all your heart, and with fasting, weeping and mourning; ¹³ and rend your heart and not your garments." Now return to the LORD your God, for He is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger, abounding in lovingkindness [*loyal love*] and relenting of evil. ¹⁴ Who knows whether He will not turn and relent and leave a blessing behind Him, even a grain offering and a drink offering for the LORD your God? ¹⁵ Blow a trumpet in Zion, consecrate a fast, proclaim a solemn assembly, ¹⁶ gather the people, sanctify the congregation, assemble the elders, gather the children and the nursing infants. Let the bridegroom come out of his room and the bride out of her bridal chamber. ¹⁷ Let the priests, the LORD'S ministers, Weep between the porch and the altar, and let them say, "Spare Your people, O LORD, and do not make Your inheritance a reproach, a byword among the nations. Why should they among the peoples say, "Where is their God?"" ¹⁸ Then the LORD will be zealous for His land and will have pity on His people.

- This is true in any form of worship.
 - Singing
 - Prayer
 - Giving
 - Helping
 - Function of one’s spiritual gift
 - Execution of responsibility of the Believer Priesthood

Daniel 9:23 "At the beginning of your supplications the command was issued, and I have come to tell you, for you are highly esteemed; so give heed to the message and gain understanding of the vision.

8. Fasts were imposed by authorities in times of distress and observed to mourn calamitous historical events (**Jeremiah 36:4-9; Joel 1:14; Zechariah 7:5 cf. 8:19**).

- For example, they would fast over the fall of Jerusalem (**2 Kings 25-1-4 cf. Zechariah 8:19**).

9. During the Millennial reign of Christ, the fasts will become celebratory feasts (**Zechariah 8:1-19**).

Zechariah 8:19 “Thus says the LORD of hosts, ‘The fast of the fourth, the fast of the fifth, the fast of the seventh, and the fast of the tenth *months* will become joy, gladness, and cheerful feasts for the house of Judah; so love truth and peace.’”

Fasting during the Age of Israel as referenced in the Gospels –

1. It was the Father’s will for the humanity of Christ to fast during the wilderness testing for 40 days (**Matthew 4:2**).
2. It was appropriate for the Jewish Age Believer to fast (**Matthew 6:16-18; Luke 2:36-37**).
3. It was not appropriate for the disciples to fast during the Age of Israel while the Lord was with them (**Matthew 9:14-15; Mark 2:18-19**) – *because the Bridegroom was present*.
4. However, it was appropriate for them to fast once the Lord was taken away from them (**Matthew 9:15; Mark 2:20**) – *because of the Bridegroom’s departure*.
5. Issue of **Matthew 17:21** *"But this kind (a demon) does not go out except by prayer and fasting."*

All Scriptures quoted are from New American Standard unless otherwise noted.