



## The Power of Prayer and Fasting

*“And Jesus being **full of the Holy Ghost** returned from Jordan, and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, being forty days tempted of the devil. And in those days he did eat nothing... And when the devil had ended all the temptation, he departed from him for a season. And Jesus returned **in the power of the Spirit** into Galilee: and there went out a fame of him through all the region round about.”* -Luke 4:1-2, 13, 14.

The power of prayer and fasting is quite evident in the earthly life and ministry of Jesus. His disciples, however, did not fast in those days. When someone asked Jesus why his disciple ate and drank while the disciple of John and of the Pharisees fasted often and made prayers, Jesus let them know that his disciples would fast after he was taken from them. He implied that they could gain, through fasting, what they would lose by his bodily absence. Then, in a parable, he made it clear that fasting is a spiritual discipline whose primary appeal and benefits would be for those who were filled with the Holy Ghost. (See Luke 5:33-39).

The Pharisees fasted twice a week. Their fast had no spiritual relevancy, however; it was merely a memorial. Tradition said Moses ascended Sinai on a Thursday and returned on a Monday. His forty day fast produced more than a holy glow on his face; it resulted in the giving of the law. The Pharisees' fast on Mondays and Thursdays was a powerless ritual that gained them little more than weight loss and the acclaim of their peers.

### Why did Jesus fast?

The lengthy time Jesus spent in the wilderness was not without purpose; it produced a dimension of power he could get in no other way. Let's note some of the benefits of fasting that accrued to our Lord.

· **Fasting enabled Jesus to quote the holy scriptures with great authority and effect. (See Luke 4:4, 8, 12-13).**

Nothing is more of a “put down” to the devil than a Spirit-inspired “It is written” in the mouth of a son of God! Did you know that even a partial fast can have a quickening effect upon your mind? Four Hebrew children (Daniel 1) illustrated this truth. After ten days of taking no nourishment except pulse (a simple vegetable diet) and water, their countenances appeared fairer than all the children that ate the king's food. Later, when the king brought them in to quiz them, “he found them ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers that were in all his realm in all matters of wisdom and understanding” (verse 20). Bible quizzers, when you hide the Word of God in your hearts, you are doing more than preparing to hit the buzzer button and say the right words. You are laying arsenal up in store for your wilderness temptations.

· **Fasting heightened Jesus' awareness of his identity and purpose. (See Luke 4:3-12).**

Has the devil ever tried to get you to question your spiritual sonship? Has he tempted you to “strut your stuff”? Has he allured you through the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, or through pride? Has he, by means of one or more of the five senses, nearly persuaded you to cast off that which is invisible and eternal? Pray! Fast! Return from your temptations in the power of the Spirit!

· **Fasting gave Jesus a powerful anointing to preach, heal, deliver, recover, and liberate. (See Luke 4:18).**

*“And all bare him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth”* (Luke 4:22).

*“And they were astonished at his doctrine: for his word was with power”* (Luke 4:32).

Prayer with fasting enables us to see the unseen, hear the unheard, know the unknown, and understand mysteries. The Bible becomes a living book. It is discovered to be a veritable treasure house of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ.

Preacher, when you stand in the pulpit in the power of the Spirit, the people will sit up and take heed. The Holy Ghost can do more in a few moments of anointed ministry than any of us can do in an hour of mere sermonizing. You can preach salvation, but you can save no one. You can proclaim deliverance, but you can deliver no one. You can declare miracles, but you are powerless to do them by yourself. You can teach divine healing, but you can heal no one. You may exhort holiness and separation from the world, but you cannot transform a disciple into a saint. Jesus made the divine decree: **“Without me ye can do nothing”** (John 15.5). Fasting enhances our consciousness of his presence.

· **Fasting was a key factor in giving Jesus the faith he needed to do the work of God.**

Harvest '96. Will the church be as effective as it could be in reaping the end time harvest? While his disciples into the city to buy food, Jesus lingered at Jacob's well to win a soul. As his new convert hastened into the city to witness to the men of Sychar, Jesus' disciples returned and offered him something to eat. His reply astonished them: "I have meat to eat that ye know not of. My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work". His fast produced a harvest they had not even been aware existed. (See John 4:5-43).

Note this scenario from Matthew 17: a distraught dad, his demon possessed son, disenchanted onlookers, and despairing disciples. "Why could not we cast him out?" *“Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed... Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting.”*

Jesus prayed with fasting often because he knew he needed faith in order to be effective. Faith would be necessary if he were to cast out devils, build his church, endure the downtimes, press on despite adversities, and calm troubled seas. In short, he needed faith to do whatever he could not do on his own as the son of man. Do you and I need faith?

One time some people who followed Christ from worldly motives asked him, *“What shall we do, that we might work the works of God?”* *Jesus answered and said unto them, “This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.”* (See John 6:28-29).

Our motives in the work of God must be pure and selfless. They must be to the end that others believe on Jesus as the Christ, the Son of the living God. When we fast and pray, we will decrease, but he will increase.