

## PRAYER AND FASTING



*So Jesus said unto them, "Because of your unbelief...  
Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting."  
—Matthew 17:20-21*

Our Lord here taught us that a life of faith requires both prayer and fasting. That is, prayer grasps the power of heaven, and fasting loosens the hold on earthly pleasure.

Jesus Himself fasted to get strength to resist the Devil. He taught His disciples that fasting should be in secret and that the heavenly Father would reward openly. (See Matthew 6:6.) Abstinence from food, or moderation in taking it, helps to strengthen the soul for communion with God.

Let us learn this great lesson that abstinence, moderation, and self-denial in temporal things are a help to the spiritual life. After eating a hearty meal, one does not feel much desire to pray. To willingly sacrifice our own pleasure or bodily enjoyment, and to subdue the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes, will help to set our minds more fully on heavenly things. The very exertion needed in overcoming the desires of the flesh will give us strength to take hold of God in prayer.

The great lesson is this: our dullness in prayer comes from our fleshly desires for comfort and ease. *"And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts"* (Gal. 5:24). Prayer is not easy work. It may easily become a mere form. For the real practice of prayer, to really take hold of God and have communion with Him, it is necessary that all that can please the flesh is sacrificed and given over to death.

Beloved Christian, it is worth any trouble to deny ourselves daily, in order to meet the holy God and receive heavenly blessings from Him.