

Praying, Fasting – Faith Factor

Mark 16: 14-18 [NKJ]

“14 Afterward he appeared unto the eleven as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, *because they believed not them which had seen him after he was risen.*

We find here two hindrances to the Great Commission

- 1. Unbelief**
- 2. A stubborn refusal to believe and to go forth to bear witness**

15 And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.

16 He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.

The Great Commission

- * Go in the World**
- * Go preach**
- * Preach what? The Gospel**
- * Where? – The World.**

The reason for the Great Commission

- * If they believe – Salvation**
- * If disbelieve – Condemned**

17 And these signs shall follow them that believe [*Gr:Trust*]; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues;

18 They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover”

The Promise to the believers as they carry out the Great Commission

- * The anointing of the Lord.**
- * His Presence, His Power!**

Mark 16: 19

19 “So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God”

The Confirmation of the Great Commission

- * The Lord’s ascension to the **POSITION OF POWER**
- * We first must settle this issue in our lives – the position of Jesus!

Mark 16:20

20 And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen”

Confirmation of the Great Commission

- * The Lord’s working through the disciples ministry

“And these signs shall follow them that believe...” [Mark 16:17]

According to Jesus, these supernatural signs are supposed to follow those who believe

The Word “Signs” comes from the Greek word “Semeion”

This word described:

The official written notice that announced the final verdict of a court

It also described:

The signature or seal applied to a document to guarantee its authenticity and a sign that marked key locations in a city

Jesus was sending His disciples into the world to preach the Gospel

- * Jesus sent them forth!
- * Jesus was telling them that “*God’s Signature*” would be upon their ministry

These “Signs” were to be the signature of God!

* These “Signs” were to be the very signature the official declaration that they were sent by Heaven and that the Gospel of Jesus Christ was true!

For unbelievers

* “These Signs” would authenticate the very fact that this was no man-made message: This message was straight from God Himself.

Just as a street sign points a traveler in the right direction, “These Signs” would point the unbeliever to the Lord Jesus if they would only pay attention to them

“These Signs” would help the believers Faith and Boldness to carry on with the Gospel of Jesus

Mark 16: 17-18

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18 They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover”

The Specific Signs that Jesus Mentioned were:

- * They will cast out devils.
- * They will speak with new tongues.
- * They will take up serpents.
- * If they drink any deadly poison, it will not hurt them.
- * They will lay hands on the sick, and the sick will recover.

Jesus said that “These Signs” would “Follow” those who believe

* The word **“follow”** is the Greek work “*parakoloutheo*” from two words “*Para*” and “*Akoloutheo*”

“Para”

* Means “*Alongside*” – as to be near or in a close proximity

“Akouloutheo”

* Means **“To Follow”** or **“To go somewhere with a person, as to accompany him on a trip”**

When you join the two words together to form one word it means:

“To tirelessly accompany someone; to constantly be at the side of an Individual; to always be in close proximity with a person, like a faithful companion who is always at one’s side”

This word *“Parakouloutheo”* has such a very strong sense of *“Following someone”* it came to convey the idea of “Discipleship”

Mark 16: 17

17 **“And these signs shall follow them that believe [Gr:Trust]; In my name shall they...”**

“These Signs” and *“Wonders”* are continually in step with those that believe and with the message they preach

How do we begin to see more of “These Signs”?

* The answer to this question is found in Jesus words – He said, *“And these signs shall follow them that believe”*

“Believe” [Gr.Trust]

Note:

Because of the tense used with this Greek word, this verse would be better translated:

“These Signs shall follow them that are constantly believing...”

Simply, *“These Signs”* don’t automatically manifest just because a person once walked with Jesus

“These Signs” follow those who are “constantly believing”

* Steadfast as Disciples of Christ – growing maturing and moving forward – doing the Gospel in the midst of humanity

Mark 16: 14-18 [NKJ]

“14 Afterward he appeared unto the eleven as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, *because they believed not them which had seen him after he was risen*”

“The Atmosphere of Faith”

Everything in the Kingdom of God is activated by Faith

- * When you pray for the sick – expect them to recover
- * When you confront someone who is demonized – expect deliverance
- * When you are in a situation that requires the miraculous, expect the miraculous to occur

Your faith base built on the Word of God activates the supernatural of God!

Mark 16: 15-

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17 And these signs shall follow them that believe [*Gr:Trust*]; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues;

18 They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover”

Jesus said...“*And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils...*”

- * “*Cast Out*” - Greek: “*Ekballo*”
- * Compound word: “*Ek*” and “*Ballo*”

“*Ek*” means “*out*”

“*Ballo*” means to “*to throw*”

Simply when the words are brought together they mean:

“to throw out, as to evict someone from a place; to drive out; or to expel”

Note:

It is historically used to describe a nation that forcibly removed its enemies out from its borders

Faith activation establishes signs not only to the believers and not only to the non-believers but to Hell itself, simply GET OUT CAUSE I AM THROWN YOU OUT!

Matthew 8: 16 [King James]

“16When the even was come, they brought unto him many that were possessed with devils: and he cast out the spirits with his word, and healed all that were sick”

The word tells us that the spirits where cast out with his word

- * This **“Cast Out”** are from the same Greek word *Ekballo*
- * Means to forcibly throw out
- * Simply Jesus literally kicked out, threw out, spirits out of peoples lives

Matthew 9: 34 [KJ]

“But the Pharisees said, He casteth out devils...”

The Pharisees acknowledged Jesus’ authority over demon spirits – they simply said **“He casteth out devils”**

- * The words **“casteth out”** are from the word *“Ekballo”*
- * Meaning that even the Pharisees recognized that Jesus literally tossed demons out of the lives of people.

Matthew 10:1 [KJ]

“1And when he had called unto him his twelve disciples, he gave them power against unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease”

Tells us that Jesus gave this authority to his disciples – He gave them power against unclean spirits, to cast them out

Again it’s same word for **“cast them out”** – *[Ekballo]* so not only did Jesus expel demons from peoples lives

Jesus commissioned and anointed those who follow Him to do the same!

Praying, Fasting – Faith Factor

Mark 9: 25-29 [Amplified]

“But when Jesus noticed that a crowd [of people] came running together, He rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it, You dumb and deaf spirit, I charge you to come out of him and never go into him again.

26 And after giving a [hoarse, clamoring, fear-stricken] shriek of anguish and convulsing him terribly, it came out [Note – the unclean spirit was cast out - The Lord charged the unclean spirit to come out] and the boy lay [pale and motionless] like a corpse, so that many of them said, He is dead.

27 But Jesus took [a strong grip of] his hand and began lifting him up, and he stood.

28 And when He had gone indoors, His disciples asked Him privately, Why could not we drive it out?

29 And He replied to them, This kind cannot be driven out by anything but prayer and fasting”

The word in the New Testament for "fast" is "not to eat"

In the Old Testament it means "to close your mouth"

It's a fact my friends that if your mouth is closed, you can't eat

Fasting involves food my friends

It has been well said that prayer is not preparation for the battle - prayer IS the battle

* Of all the things we can do to enhance the power and focus of Prayer - Fasting is doubtless the most potent

Fasting must include Prayer

* This is where the power is at, because fasting puts us in harmony with an All Powerful God who demands humility from those who wish to be close to Him

Fasting humbles the flesh

* When it is done for that purpose, it pleases the Spirit of God.

The early church fasted before starting any major work

* The greatest spiritual leaders of the 20th century who are making an impact are all men of fasting of prayer to my knowledge.

* Anyone who started a significant spiritual movement in Christianity was, to the best of my knowledge - Luther, Wesley, Finney, Booth were all men of fasting.

In our day, Cho, Bonnke, Osborn, Annacondia are all men of much fasting

* Fasting counts a lot with God.

* Fasting is not magic, nor does it twist the arm of God.

Fasting gives you God's focus for your life

* It is a major key to hearing God's voice (the other is true worship - the two are related)

* We need focus from God more than anything.

Fasting cuts out the world so we can tune into God

* If we are obedient to God fasting will make us catalysts for revival and awakening

Joel 2:12

“Therefore also now, saith the LORD, turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning:
 13 And rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the LORD your God: for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil”

God made it clear through the prophet Joel that the last days outpouring of the Spirit will be in proportion to our fasting and crying out to God in humility, hunger and repentance.

- * Dreams and Visions
- * The Lord pouring out of His Spirit
- * Fasting and Prayer brings us closer to the Lord

Prayer and Fasting prepares us to move forward with the Lord

Ezra 8: 21-23 [KJ]

“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.

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.

23 So we fasted and besought our God for this: and he was intreated of us”

Preparation

- * Before beginning the long 900 mile trip back from exile Ezra encouraged the people to prepare themselves spiritually.

He challenged them to seek the Lord through prayer and fasting

Prayer was urgently needed for three reasons:

1. The people needed to seek the Lord for a safe journey, for God's guidance and protection.

* **Safe journey – Gods guidance and protection**

2. The people needed to seek the Lord because the trip was lengthy, demanding, and perilous, especially with children present.

The roads of that day were infested with bandits and gangs of marauders. Furthermore, they would be passing through territory that was held by various anti-Semitic groups.

* **Moving forward through some very tough situations**

3. The people needed to seek the Lord because Ezra felt uneasy about asking the king for a military escort

* **Needed the favor of the Lord**

Ezra 8: 21-23 [Message]

“21-22 I proclaimed a fast there beside the Ahava Canal, a fast to humble ourselves before our God and pray for wise guidance for our journey—all our people and possessions. I was embarrassed to ask the king for a cavalry bodyguard to protect us from bandits on the road. We had just told the king, "Our God lovingly looks after all those who seek him, but turns away in disgust from those who leave him.”

23 So we fasted and prayed about these concerns. And he listened”

We must keep in mind God's purpose for us all

* His purpose is to teach us to draw closer to Him, to fellowship and commune with Him.

* Nothing causes us to draw nearer the Lord than trials and hardships

God knows that we will face situations in this life where we will have to cast ourselves totally upon Him, trusting Him to protect and provide for us

* There are occasions when we have to be prepared for greater missions.

This was the case with Ezra

* The Lord knew that during this season of his life, Ezra needed to cast himself totally upon the Lord, needed to draw near the Lord in fellowship and communion

A genuine believer should undertake every task with prayer.

* Prayer should be the very first step taken

* If the task is large or significant, both prayer and fasting is needed

* If we are concerned enough to pray and fast, God will hear and answer

No matter what our need is, if we turn to the Lord, He will protect and provide for us, granting exactly what we need

God will never leave us alone to face the hardships and sufferings of this life on our own.

Listen to what God says about prayer:

“Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you” (Matthew 7:7)

“Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak” (Matthew 26:41)

“Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them” (Mark 11:24)

“And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it” (John 14:13-14)

“If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you” (John 15:7)

“Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full” (John 16:24)

13.

“If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land”

(2 Chronicles 7:14)

“And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear” (Isaiah 65:24)

“Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and show thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not” (Jeremiah 33:3)

Listen to what God’s Holy Word says about fasting:

“But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face; That thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly”

(Matthew 6:17-18)

“...Then came the disciples to Jesus apart, and said, Why could not we cast him out? And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you.

Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting”

(Matthew 17:18-21)

14.

“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 they were ended, he afterward hungered” (Luke 4:1-2)

“And he was three days without sight, and neither did eat nor drink”

(Acts 9:9) *[Paul moving forward with God]*

“As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away” (Acts 13:2-3)

“And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed” (Acts 14:23)

“And he was there with the Lord forty days and forty nights; he did neither eat bread, nor drink water. And he wrote upon the tables the words of the covenant, the ten commandments” (Exodus 34:28)

“Sanctify ye a fast, call a solemn assembly, gather the elders and all the inhabitants of the land into the house of the Lord your God, and cry unto the Lord” (Joel 1:14)

“Therefore also now, saith the Lord, turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning” (Joel 2:12)

Daniel 9:3

“And I set my face unto the Lord God, to seek by **prayer** and supplications, with **fasting...**”

Psalms 35:13

“But as for me, when they were sick, my clothing was sackcloth: I humbled my soul with **fasting**; and my **prayer...**”

Luke 2:37

“And she was a widow of about fourscore and four years, which departed not from the temple, but served God with **fastings** and **prayers** night and day”

Matthew 17:21

“Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by **prayer and fasting**”

Mark 9:29

“And he said unto them, This kind can come forth by nothing, but by **prayer and fasting**”

Fasting is scriptural – The Word of God makes it very clear that fasting and prayer are instruments of spiritual power – a key by which the bonds of evil are broken.

Jesus taught fasting – by His own word and example, Jesus taught fasting and prayer. [Matthew 4: 2; 6:16 – Mark 2:20]

Prayer joined with Fasting is a proven means of advancing spiritual objectives so we begin each New Year setting aside the first weeks of the New Year in a corporate time of Fasting and Prayer.