



Scripture nugget – Fasting with prayers transforms us, paves the way for God’s mighty intervention and mitigation of His wrath

And when He was come into the house, His disciples secretly asked Him: Why could not we cast him out? And He said to them: This kind can go out by nothing, but by prayer and fasting (Mark 9:27-29).

Fasting with prayers humbles us, helps us gain mastery over unruly passions, and renews awareness of our dependence on God. Fasting, though not commanded by God, meets with His approval especially when undertaken in a sincere way and coupled to heart-felt prayers. It is important enough for Jesus to advise us on our behaviour when we fast. We are to do it secretly and remain neat in our appearance (cf. Matthew 6:17-19). Fasting, an established Christian spiritual exercise, is a good way to show God sincerity and urgency of our prayers in seeking His powerful help, intervention and deliverance. Scripture is full of examples of the effective use of fasting with prayers in times of tribulation, danger, imminent calamity, embarking on important missions and personal needs. Before he received the Ten Commandments, Moses was on Mount Sinai fasting for 40 days and 40 nights (cf. Exodus 34:28). It was only after fasting and praying that St Paul and Barnabas, selected by the Holy Spirit, were sent off on their mission (cf. Acts 13:3-4). Jesus Himself gives us a great example on the need to mortify our bodily passions, when driven by the Holy Spirit, He spent 40 days and 40 nights in the desert fasting in preparation for His public mission, after which He returned to Galilee in the power of the Holy Spirit (cf. Luke 4:14).

Fasting with prayers paves the way for God’s mighty intervention and mitigation of His wrath. When His disciples asked Jesus why they could not cast the deaf and dumb spirit out of the boy, Jesus answered that this kind could only be cast out by prayer and fasting (cf. Mark 9:27-29). Evidently, the casting out of a more entrenched evil requires greater spiritual effort in prayer and fasting so as to secure God’s powerful intervention. The ancient Jews knew this truth. Queen Esther, of Jewish descent, asked the Jews to fast for three days and three nights before she approached her husband, the Persian King Xerxes in a desperate mission to avert the imminent threat of death and destruction that awaited her fellow Jews (cf. Esther 4:16). Fasting and praying in repentance effectively mitigate God’s wrath. When Prophet Jonah pronounced God’s judgement against Nineveh, the king ordered his people to pray and fast. *When God saw by their actions how they turned from their evil way, He repented of the evil He had threatened to do to them; He did not carry it out (Jonah 3:10).*

Conversation with Jesus: Precious Lord, Your time on earth provides beautiful examples for us to emulate. By Your 40 days and 40 nights of fasting in the desert, You show us how important it is for our spiritual well-being to mortify our bodily passions and to be in control of the wayward inclinations of our sinful, fallen human nature. Through fasting, we effectively humble ourselves before God, acknowledge our human weakness and dependency on God, open ourselves to the Holy Spirit Who will reveal our spiritual condition to us. Indeed, Lord, You have not given us a spirit of fear and timidity, but one of power, love, and self-discipline (cf. 2 Timothy 1:7). It is through self-discipline and self-control that I can pick up my cross, follow You and be a good disciple. Mary, Mother of Salvation, pray for me. Thank You, Jesus. Praise You, Jesus.