

Matthew 17:21

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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

Analysis

Jesus explains the disciples' failure to cast out the demon: 'this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting.' Some spiritual battles require extraordinary dependence on God. While many manuscripts omit 'and fasting,' the principle remains: certain ministries demand concentrated devotion and self-denial. Reformed practice recognizes prayer and fasting as means of grace, not earning God's favor but expressing desperate dependence. The disciples' failure despite previous successes (Matthew 10:8) shows that past victories don't guarantee present power—continuous reliance on God is essential.

Historical Context

First-century Judaism practiced fasting for spiritual purposes, particularly in connection with prayer for divine intervention. Jesus fasted forty days before beginning ministry (Matthew 4:2). The early church continued this practice (Acts 13:2-3, 14:23). This teaching came shortly before Jesus' Passion, preparing disciples for coming trials requiring intense prayer.

Related Passages

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Study Questions

1. What spiritual battles in your life require intensified prayer and fasting?
2. How does fasting demonstrate dependence on God versus earning His favor?
3. When have past spiritual victories led to presumption rather than continued dependence?

Interlinear Text

τοῦτο δὲ τὸ γένος οὐκ ἐκπορεύεται εἰ μὴ ἐν
this **Howbeit** G3588 **kind** **not** **goeth** G1487 G3361 **by**
G5124 G1161 G1085 G3756 G1607 G1722

προσευχῇ καὶ νηστεία
prayer **and** **fasting**
G4335 G2532 G3521

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