

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

Psalm 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 νηστείᾳ
prayer **and** **fasting**
G4335 G2532 G3521

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