

# Evangelicals Are Praying and Fasting More

by Elmer G. Klassen

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of prayer and fasting among evangelical Christians, citing examples from history and the Bible, and encouraging listeners to pray for the government.*

**Scripture:** Exodus 17:11, 2 Chronicles 7:14, Daniel 9:3, Matthew 17:21, Luke 4:1, Acts 13:2, Ephesians 6:12, 1 Timothy 2:1, Hebrews 5:8, James 5:16

**Topics:** "Prayer And Fasting", "Spiritual Warfare"

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## Description

Elmer G. Klassen emphasizes the importance of prayer and fasting among evangelical Christians, highlighting its significance in seeking God's intervention in personal and national affairs. He points out that historical figures like Savonarola, Martin Luther, John Knox, John Wesley, Jonathan Edwards, and Charles Finney all practiced fasting and prayer, leading to spiritual revivals and positive changes in society. Klassen underscores the need for Christians to follow the example of Jesus Christ, who fasted and prayed, showing that fasting is essential for spiritual warfare and obedience to God. Additionally, he discusses the biblical mandate for the church to pray for the government, as outlined in 1 Timothy 2:1-4, stressing the impact of interceding for governmental leaders in shaping history.

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## Transcript

The increased interest in prayer and fasting among evangelical Christians is the most encouraging news of the day. Christians fasting and praying for God's intervention in personal and national affairs has more significance in future political developments than a signing of a peace agreement in the Middle East or of Congress passing a bill designating billions of dollars to bail out a foreign country. All the things that concern us have a root problem which only God can solve and He has ordained that man's part in the solution is increased prayer. Unless we get to the heart of our problems and cooperate with God we cannot have much faith for improvement in personal and world affairs.

The most confusing and misunderstood Biblical subject among Evangelicals is probably fasting, yet prayer and fasting has always been the beginning of spiritual revivals which resulted in the solutions of political problems. Who improved their world more than Savonarola of Florence, Martin Luther, John Knox, John Wesley, Jonathan Edwards or Charles Finney?

Savonarola in the fifteenth century was a man who practiced fasting. He fasted and prayed so much that he found it difficult to stand up for long. He was forceful in his preaching against the worldliness and corruption of church and society. He boldly called people to repentance before the impending Day of

Judgment and thus became the forerunner of the sixteenth century reformation.

Men whom God used to bring about the reformation like Martin Luther and John Calvin were men who fasted. The courage and boldness in preaching by these men were the result of prayer and fasting.

John Knox did more to shake the world authorities in his day through his prayer and fasting than any military might. What peace demonstrators and pacifists can never do Knox did through his ministry powerfully and successfully. He was an instrument in God's hand to bring a change for the better which lasted centuries.

John Wesley did more for England by preaching than the politicians of his day did by their legislating. Wesley was powerful and influential because he was a man of prayer and fasting.

Jonathan Edwards greatly influenced our nation for the better by his powerful preaching after spending time in prayer and fasting.

The moral influence of Charles Finney in the 19th century is being confirmed to this day. Finney spent weeks in prayer and fasting before undertaking some of his preaching missions. The results were lasting.

The man who improved the moral and political life in this world more than any politician, army or religious man for centuries was a man who fasted 40 days before he began his ministry. The fasting and praying of our Lord Jesus Christ is for our example and encouragement. Prayer and fasting was necessary for Him because He was a man tempted just like we all are tempted. He suffered like Christians suffer today. He had to learn obedience like Christians have to learn obedience (Heb. 5:8-9). He fasted and prayed in preparation for His atoning death on the cross. If fasting and praying was necessary for Him we can be assured that fasting and praying is necessary for His Spirit filled followers today (Luke 4:1-13). He did not desire to fast but was obedient when led by the Holy Spirit to fast 40 days in the desert. There is nothing glamorous for a Spirit filled person to go more than five weeks without food. During His fast our Lord was equipped for spiritual warfare. If He needed to fast what reasons do we have for not fasting?

Today some evangelical leaders are meeting to pray together in unity. The practice of fasting is increasing among evangelicals, yet fasting is still the most neglected form of worship among Christians (Acts 13).

The most encouraging news today is that Christians are praying and fasting more. Do you know of anything that is more encouraging to our nation than just that? Are you a part of it?

The examples we have in Scriptures and in world history are convincing. The commands we have from our Lord are written for us to read. Yet there is much ignorance on the subject in North America. Could it be the abundance of food, the continual advertising and talk of food, or the uncontrollable lust for food that has us convinced that fasting is not for today? Fasting among Evangelicals is often identified with occult, monasteries or fanatical misuse of the practice. But all along the Bible does not condemn the practice of fasting, but by example encourages Christians to fast in this time of grace. Why then do we associate fasting with other people? Why is it not a practice in our churches as it was in early Methodism? Fasting has always been a practice among Bible believing Christians since the early church. Why not now in your church?

God Expects The Church To Pray For The Government

Derek Prince, in his book "Shaping History Through Prayer and Fasting" writes that a good government is God's will and Christians should pray to that end. He explains, "Christ is 'King of kings and Lord of lords.' He is the Ruler of earth's rulers and the Governor over earth's governments. His authority over all earthly governments is made available in His name to the church -- the assembly of His believing people. As Moses stretched forth his rod on God's behalf over Egypt, so the church by its prayers stretches forth Christ's authority over the nations and their rulers."

He goes on to say that 1 Timothy 2:1-4 teaches us to pray for our government first. "Extensive experience has convinced me that the vast majority of professing Christians never give any serious consideration to this topic in prayer. Not merely do they not pray for the government 'first,' they scarcely pray for it at all! They pray regularly for groups such as the sick, the shut-ins, preachers, missionaries, evangelists, the unconverted--anything and everybody but the one group that God puts first--the government. It is no exaggeration to say that many who claim to be committed Christians never pray seriously for the government of their nation as much as once a week!

"When praying for the government, what specific petition are we exhorted to make? In the second verse, Paul answers: 'that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty.' Does the kind of government we live under affect the way we live? Obviously it does. Therefore, if we desire a good way of life, logic and self-interest alike indicate that we should pray for our government."

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