

On Fasting

by Timothy Tow

Timothy Tow's sermon emphasizes fasting as a spiritual discipline to draw closer to God, contrasting it with the works-based salvation seen in other religions.

Scripture: Esther 4:16, Psalm 69:10, Isaiah 58:6, Daniel 9:3, Matthew 6:16, Acts 14:23, Romans 14:5, 1 Corinthians 8:8, Ephesians 2:8

Topics: "Salvation By Grace", "Fasting And Prayer"

Description

Timothy Tow preaches about the dangers of seeking salvation through works, highlighting the different forms of salvation by works in various religions and denominations, including fasting, charity giving, and penance. He emphasizes the importance of salvation by grace through faith in Jesus Christ, as stated in Ephesians 2:8-9, and warns against trying to earn salvation through Church rules and good deeds. Tow also discusses the biblical perspective on fasting, showing that it is a means to draw closer to God through prayer and submission to the Spirit, as seen in examples like David, Daniel, Esther, and Paul and Barnabas.

Transcript

As we study the Gospel of Matthew serially and we come to the subject of Fasting this Lord's Day, it coincides with the fasting of another religion. It is Ramadan, the Islamic holy month with a month-long fast for Muslims in Singapore . Fasting during Ramadan is one of the five basic requirements of Islam, and involves abstinence from eating, drinking and smoking from morning to dusk. Moreover the devotees are urged to do more good deeds and pray more during Ramadan. They will celebrate the end of the fasting month with Hari Raya Puasa which falls on Dec. 27 of this year.

During the month of Ramadan, Muslims are required to pay "personal tithes" which is calculated to be \$3.40 per person. This is equivalent to the amount of rice each person consumes a month. The sum total is paid by the head of every Muslim household.

There is also the annual charity drive to raise funds for needy Malay-Muslims. The amount raised last year was \$1 million.

Fasting and collection of personal tithes and further charity giving during Ramadan is a form of salvation by works. In fact that is the way with every human religion, including Roman Catholicism. As with the Muslims, Roman Catholics have also many works to perform to obtain salvation. Doing penance is one

thing. What is penance? Chambers Dictionary defines it as "external acts performed to manifest sorrow for sin, to seek to atone for the sins and to avert punishment which, even after the guilt has been remitted, may still remain due to the offence." One kind of penance is annual auricular confession to the priest.

How about Protestants? There are Protestant churches that have so degenerated from the doctrine of "the just shall live by faith" (Rom 1:17) that salvation depends entirely on works. Insofar as modernist Churches are concerned, they preach a salvation called the Social Gospel. They stress the material side of giving to the poor and not the spiritual of repentance from sin.

The Charismatics veer away from the centrality of the Gospel by stressing tongues-speaking and healing in the power of the Holy Spirit. The fundamental Churches stress on Bible teaching but often do not apply them to challenge members that they must be born again. Salvation for them seems to be regular Church attendance and giving some money to the church. They contribute more if there is a charity drive. This is no better than the Jews who rely on keeping the X Commandments and giving to the poor.

There was a lady, the mother of an FEBC student. She had a quarrel with her husband Saturday night. She felt uneasy in her heart. So, she put \$5 into the offering bag when she went to Church on Sunday to salve her conscience. This happened about 40 years ago when the money was big. She is one of those who grew up in a Protestant Church that preached salvation by works. How about you? I understand from the Lively Stones recently that there are the children even of Session members who are not sure of their salvation. If they are not trusting in the precious Blood of Jesus Christ that washes away all their sin, they would belong to the class of working their way to heaven, no different from those in prolonged fasting and giving to charity.

It is hopeless for you to try to earn your way to heaven by keeping some Church rules and giving to charity. For what does the Bible say,? "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast" (Eph 2:8,9). By faith means, "Forsaking all I take Him." Come humbly and confess your sins to the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God who died on the Cross for you, and He will wash all your sins away and give you everlasting life. Let go and let God!

Fasting in the Bible is never a means unto salvation. It is a means whereby we are drawn closer to God, like prayer. Fasting in the Bible is occasional abstinence from food, in order to bring the body into subjection to the Spirit, and is connected with prayer.

David fasted, when his child was sick. Daniel fasted and prayed for the sins of Israel for a season before God sent Gabriel to answer him.

Esther fasted in order to seek God's favour before going to see King Ahasuerus.

Paul and Barnabas fasted when they appointed elders (Acts 14:23).

There are no hard and fast rules on fasting. It seems to be left to every one's discretion in the New Testament. J.C. Ryle says, "There is great wisdom in this. Many a poor man never has enough to eat, and it would be an insult to tell him to fast. Many a sickly person can hardly be kept well with the closest attention to diet, and could not fast without bringing an illness. It is a matter in which every one must be persuaded in his own mind, and not be hasty to condemn others."

On the contrary affluent Singapore is now afflicted with too many obese children and young people. Insofar as joining National Service is concerned, whether they like it or not, officialdom will deprive them of

over-eating. Such enforced fasting is good for the whole nation.

Indeed, the day may come to Singapore in these tumultuous times when the pastors of Singapore might have to rally Christians to a time of prayer and fasting for our Nation and supplication for protection from aggression. In time of famine and pestilence too, which our Island Nation has been spared year after year.

Calvin says, "The observation of Lent, in holy imitation of Christ, is superstitious; for Christ fasted, not to set an example to others, but in order to prepare for the preaching of the Gospel. Christ did not fast after this. It is nothing but a vain affectation, to dignify the fasting of Lent with the pretext of an imitation of Christ." (Lent is an annual fast of forty days in commemoration of the 40-day fast of our Saviour in the desert (Matt 4:2).

I have known of a woman FEBC graduate who became drawn to Charismatism. As a result she tried to imitate Christ in His fasting forty days and nights. She became ill. After some months she died. Whether her death was directly connected with her prolonged fasting or not, I do not know. Such fasting is even more ostentacious than putting on a sad countenance and disfiguring their faces to show off their piety before men.

When we fast let us fast in secret before God and not openly before men. Amen.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/timothy-tow/on-fasting/>

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