

A Perpetual Fast



“And there was one Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Aser: she was of great age, and had lived with an husband seven years from her virginity; And she was a widow of about fourscore years, which departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day”
–**Luke 2:36, 37.**

What an unusual account of a praying woman. Not only was her service to God marked by prayers offered day and night, but with fastings as well. Here is a woman at least eighty-four years old (while some think her to have been widowed for eighty-four years which would make her age in excess of one hundred years) giving her life to **serve** God. Oh the blessing and privilege she received to see firsthand the promised Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ, at his presentation to the Lord in the temple of Jerusalem. How noteworthy that this should be given to one thoroughly committed to a life of fasting and prayer.

What if God’s people today took up the challenge to serve “God with fastings and prayers night and day.” Back in the 1700’s a prayer movement sprang up among the Moravians that went on for a hundred years. For a hundred years, each day there was someone in the watchtower of prayer interceding before the throne of grace. This came about around the time of the great missionary movement of the 18th and 19th centuries when the gospel was taken to the ends of the earth. Was this not much like the cry of the prophet Isaiah when he wrote, “I have set watchmen upon thy walls, O Jerusalem, which shall **never hold their peace day nor night**: ye that make mention of the LORD, **keep not silence”** **Isaiah 62:6**. About the same time John Wesley was training his disciples to fast and pray two days out of the week. What if we, in the same manner, sought the face of God in genuine humble-hearted fasting and prayer. Should we not also expect to see great movings of God among our people as they did?

God commanded Moses to make an incense altar, and place it “before the veil that is by the ark of the testimony, before the mercy seat that is over the testimony, **where I will meet with thee”** **Exodus 30:6**. In verse 8 Aaron was commanded to burn “a **perpetual** incense before the LORD.” Incense in the scriptures is symbolic of prayers being offered up to God. What if we decided that perpetual prayer would be offered up as sweet incense before the throne of grace? What untold manifestation of the glory of God would be poured out upon us if only we would take up the challenge to fast and pray.

And why not do it? Our Lord gave Himself to be crucified and shed His blood for us; could we not deny ourselves a little food? Some might argue that it would be too hard to have fasting and prayer offered up daily, but let us take a closer look. First consider the case of an elderly widow named Anna. Certainly if she could give herself daily to fasting and prayer, surely most Christians today ought to be able to find some time to fast and pray if only they would. In addition, it has come to our attention that a church of about one hundred members in

Pennsylvania has planned to have a year long fast prior to revival meetings scheduled the following year. The goal is to have at least one person fasting and praying on each day throughout the year. If only 30 adults participated, then each one would only have to fast about one day a month in order for this to be accomplished. When examined in this light, it looks easier than might be expected. Surely most Christians could fast one day a month and obviously some could do more, like Wesley's disciples—each one according to his ability. Why not issue a challenge for every church to set a watchman upon the tower of fasting and prayer that we might not hold our peace day nor night?

Who will take up the challenge to do it? God is calling us to humble ourselves and seek His face. At the preaching of Jonah, the Ninevites, from the leaders to the laymen and from oldest to youngest fasted and prayed, and God spared them from His wrath and judgment. May we, too, fast and pray and cry mightily to God that He would rend the heavens and come down in Holy Ghost power and have mercy on us in this evil day. Who will do it? Let us say like the Apostle Paul in **II Corinthians 5:14** "The love of Christ constraineth us."