

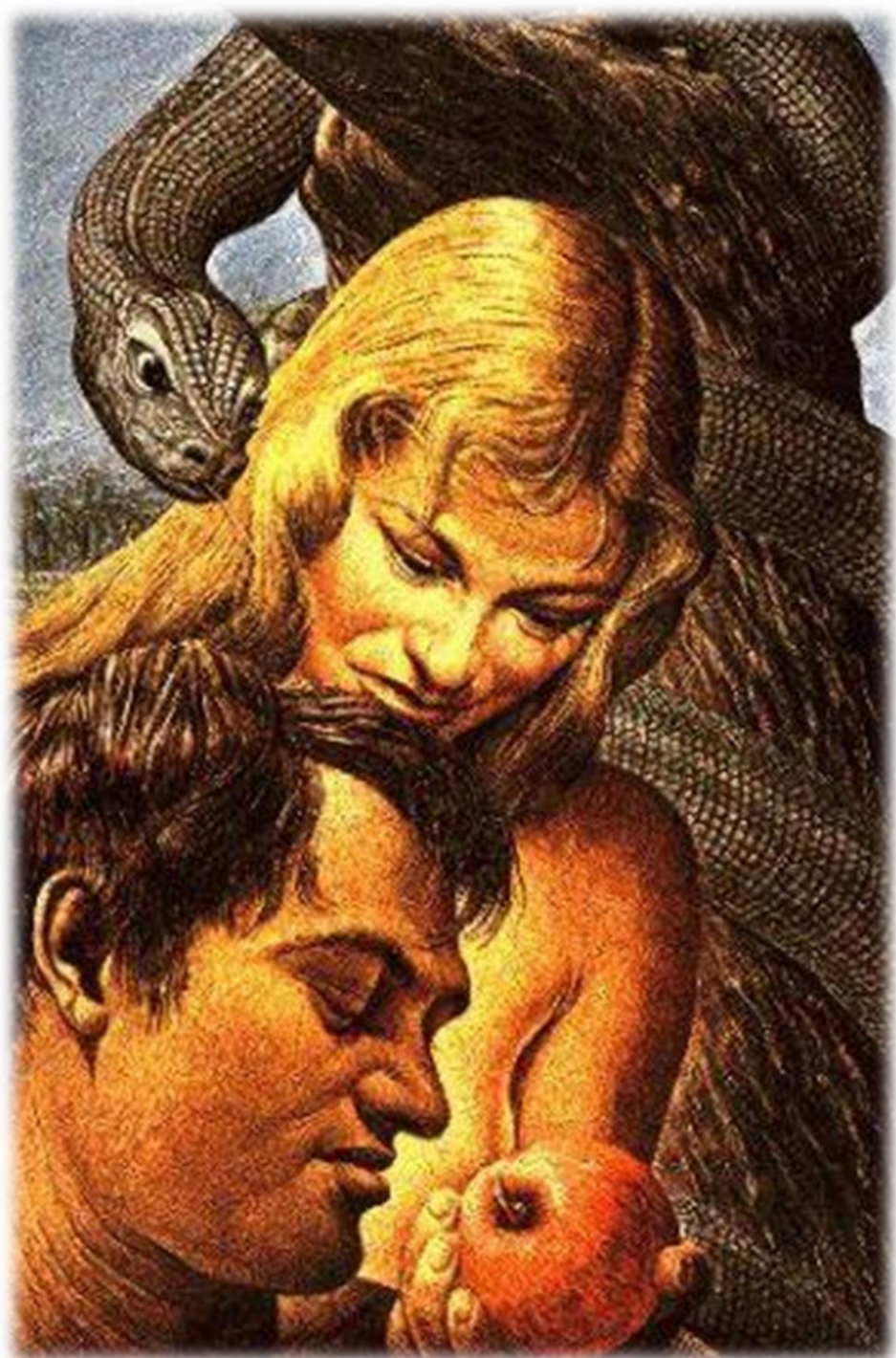
# *The Spirituality of Fasting*

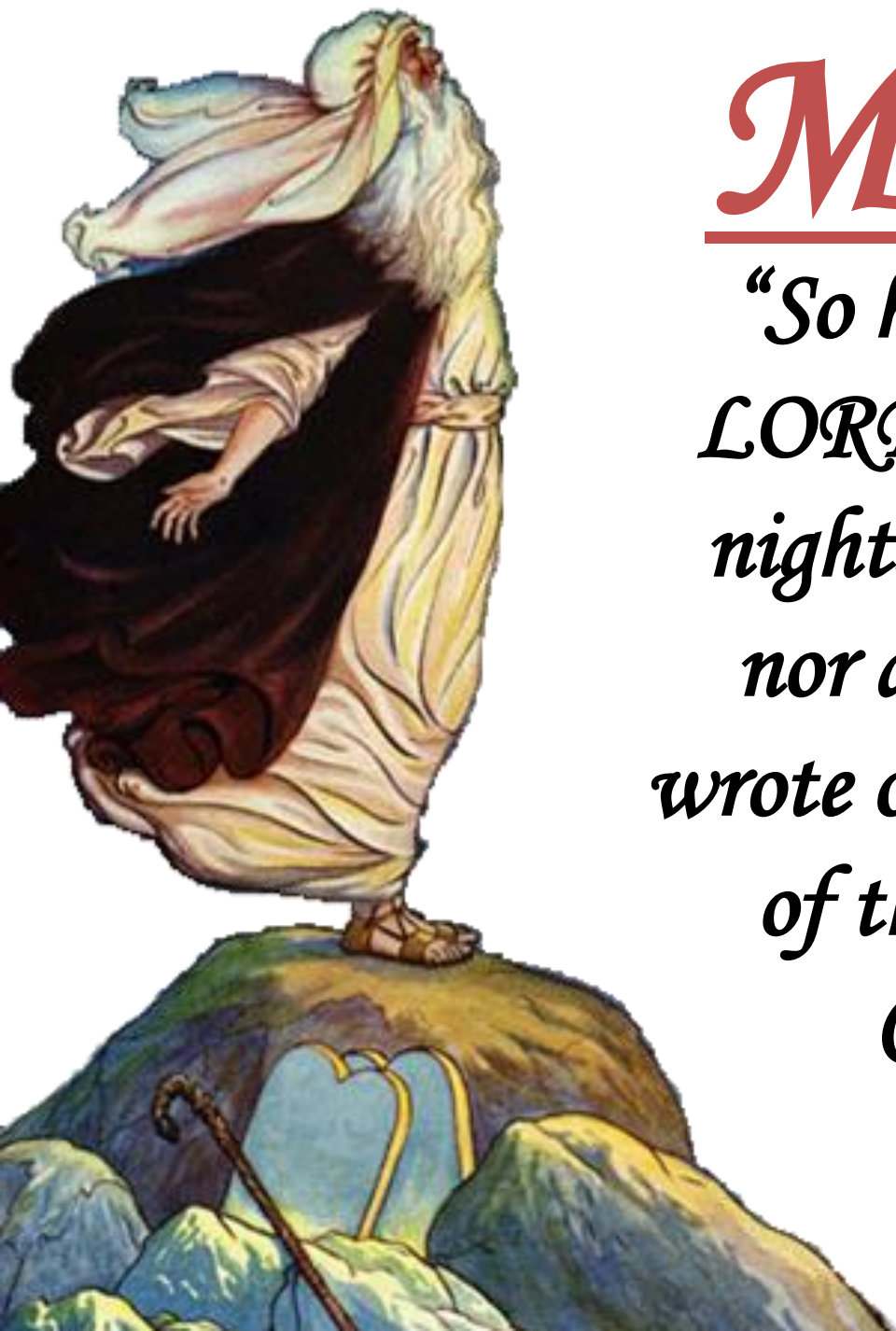
**WHAT THE BIBLE  
&  
THE CHURCH FATHERS  
SAY ABOUT FASTING**

# *What was the First Commandment ever in the Holy Bible?*



*“And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat...” Gen 2:16-17*





# Moses

*“So he was there with the LORD forty days and forty nights; he neither ate bread nor drank water. And He wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant, the Ten Commandments.”*

*(Ex 34:28).*

# Elijah



*<sup>5</sup> Then as he lay and slept under a broom tree, suddenly an angel touched him, and said to him, "Arise and eat." 1 Kings 19:5*

*Raised the son of the widow (1king 18:21).*

# Queen Esther

*Go, gather all the Jews who are present in Shushan, and fast for me; neither eat nor drink for three days, night or day.*

*My maids and I will fast likewise. And so I will go to the king, which is against the law; and if I perish,*

*I perish!* Esther 4:16





# People of Nineveh

*“So the people of Nineveh believed God, proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest to the least of them.”* Jonah 3:5

# *The Lord Jesus*

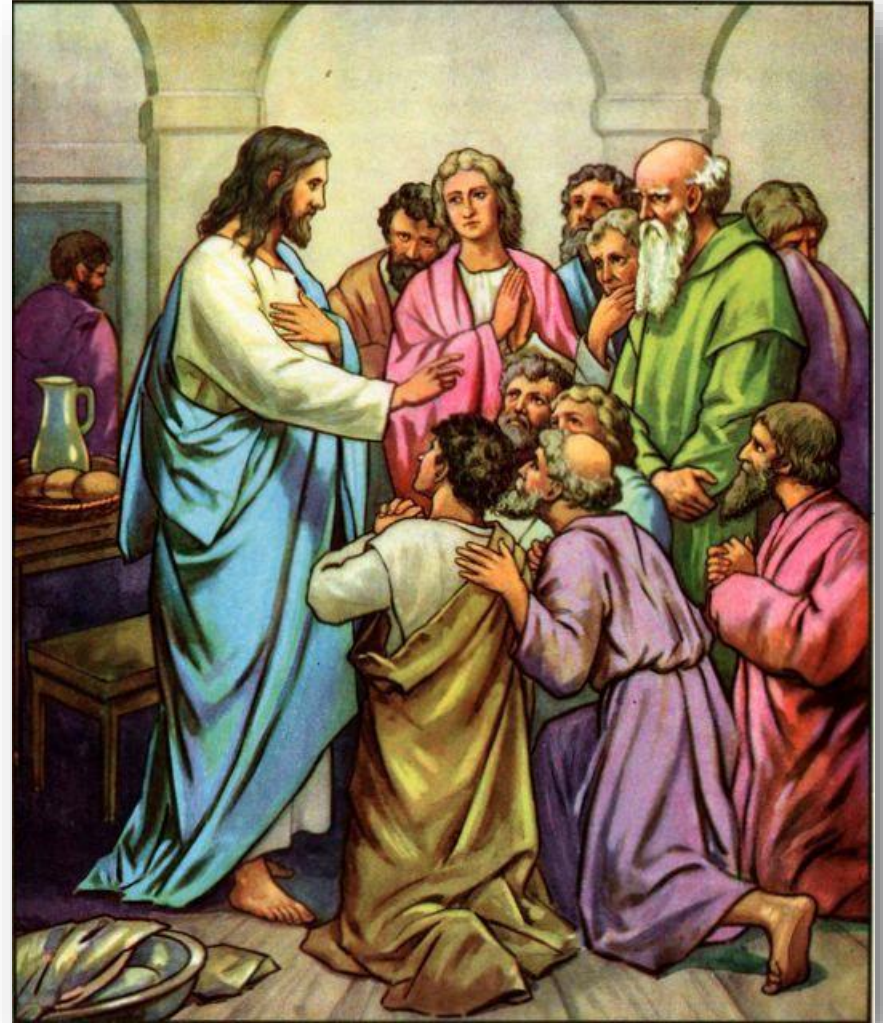


*“And when He  
had fasted  
forty days and  
forty nights,  
afterward He  
was hungry.”  
Matthew 4:2*



# *The Disciples Fasted*

- “Now in the church that was at Antioch there were certain prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.
- As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them. Then, having fasted and prayed, and laid hands on them, they sent them away. Acts 13:1-3





# *St. Paul Fasted*

**“But after long  
abstinence from  
food, then Paul  
stood in the midst  
of them and said...”**

**Acts 27:21**

# *How Many Fasts do We Fast?*

- **1. Nativity Fast**
- **2. Jonah's Fast – Ninevites**
- **3. Great Lent**
- **4. The Fast of the Apostles**
- **5. The Fast of the Virgin St. Mary**
- **6. Wednesdays & Fridays**

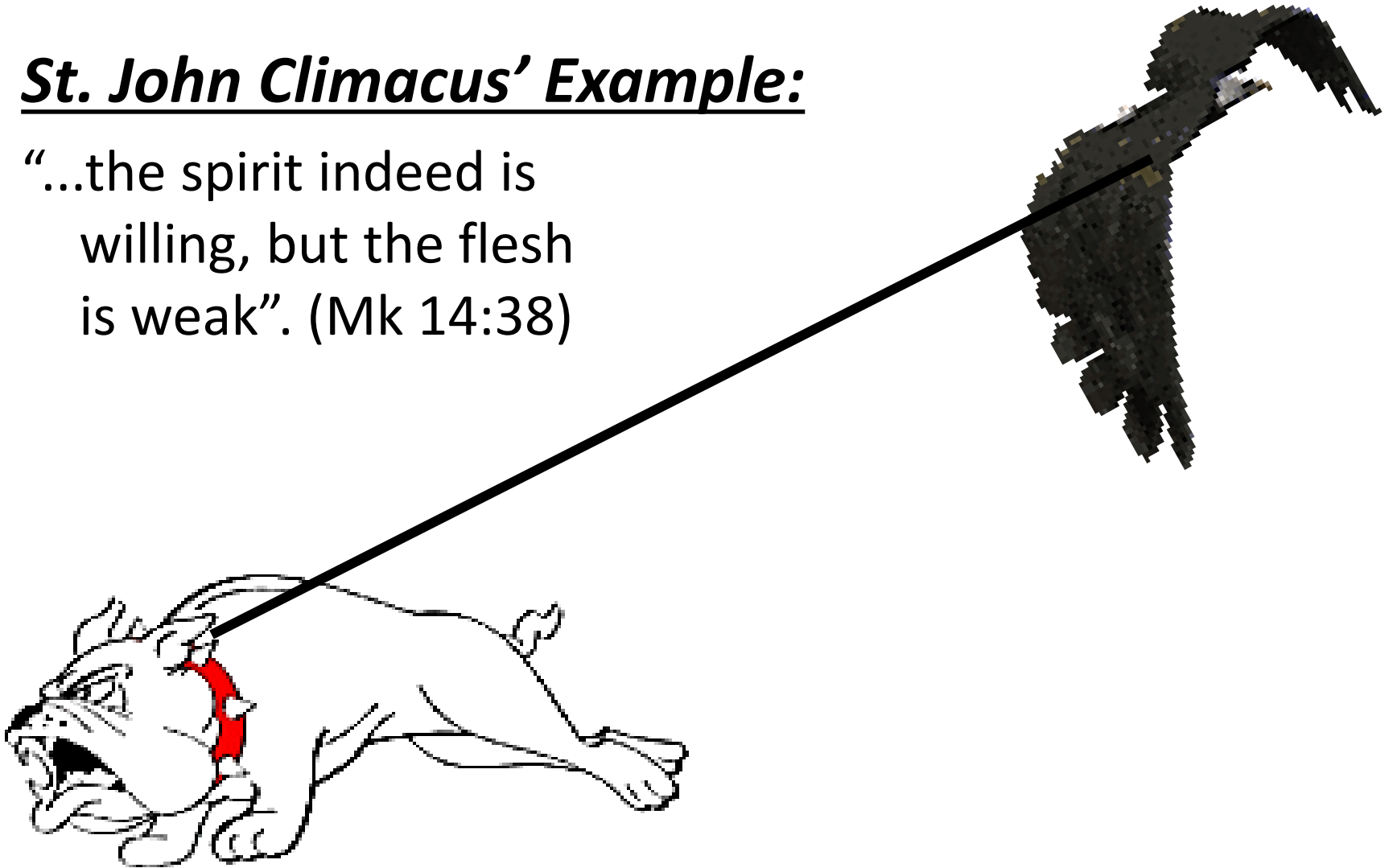
# *Why do we Fast?*



# *Flesh against Spirit*

## *St. John Climacus' Example:*

“...the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak”. (Mk 14:38)





**Obscene & Indecent  
Behavior or Language**

**Boisterous Festivities- Parties**

- 17 "For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish. 18 But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. 19 Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, **lewdness**, 20 idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, 21 envy, murders, drunkenness, **revelries**, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told *you* in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God." Galatians 5:17-21

# *What is the purpose of Fasting?*

*This is You!!*

*This is the Flesh!!*



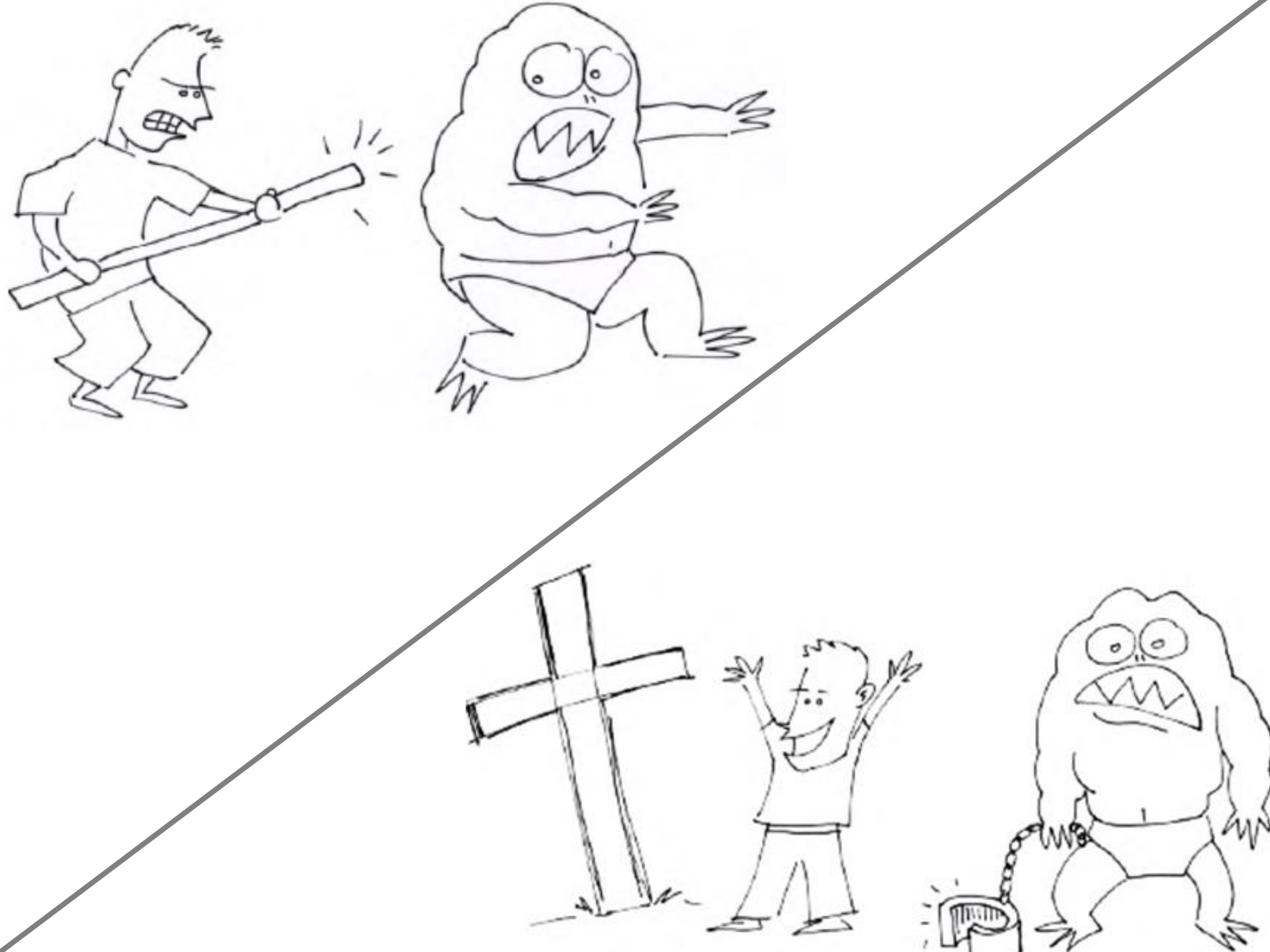
- 1. To Gain back the control over oneself*
- 2. To Gain back the strength of the will.*



**“If you will wait until you reach the level of perfect fasting...you will never learn how to fast, because it is through the practice of fasting that you will reach the perfect and pure fast”**

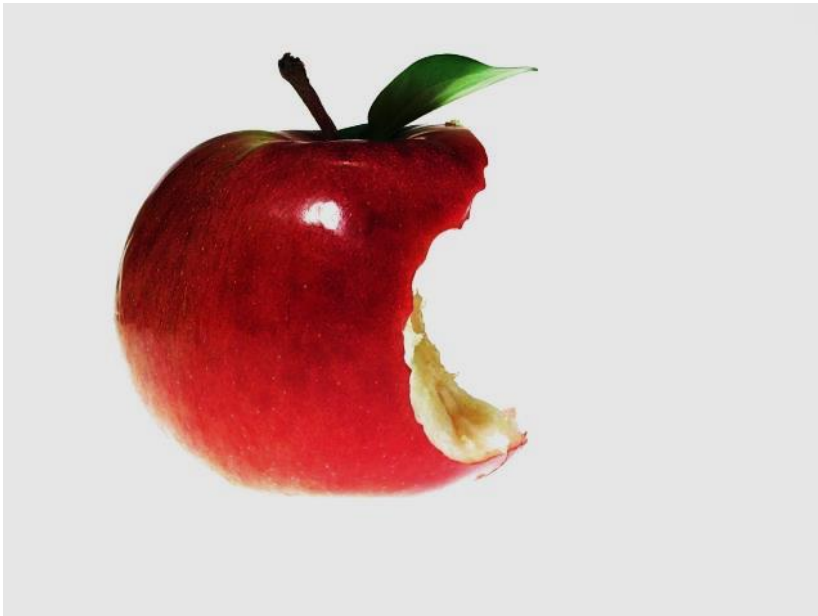
**St. Isaac the Syrian**





# Defeat ... Not a Pleasant thing....

- How did Adam & Eve Feel?
- Why?
  - Desire of the Body overpowered them and the body dominated and defeated them.



# Flesh vs. Spirit

- Point → the Body submits to the Spirit  
the Body is not destroyed, but the deeds of the evil deeds of the body are so that we may live according to the Spirit.

**“...if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live...” Romans 8:13**



# Transfiguration

- Recorded in Matthew 4
- This magnificent scene, conceals behind it an important message that by conquering the body through fasting, the spirit becomes manifest and the body is transfigured.
- Who appeared with the Lord?
  - Moses & Elijah – Who both FASTED !!!
- They conquered their body through fasting.

# ***How should one fast?***

- **1. Eating vegetarian food**
- **2. Abstaining for a period of time**
- **3. Increase your time of Prayer**
- **4. Increase your almsgiving**
- **Is that all?**
- **5. We should fast from Sin... !!!**

# St. John Chrysostom

- ***“ Do you fast? Give me proof of it by your deeds. If you see a poor man, take pity on him. If you see a friend being honored, do not envy him. Do not let your mouth fast, but also the eye, the ear, the feet, the hands, and all the members of our bodies. Let the hands fast, by being free of greed. Let the feet fast by ceasing to run after sin. Let the eye fast by disciplining it not to look at that which is sinful. Let the ear fast by not listening to evil talk and gossip. Let the mouth fast from foul words and unjust criticism. For what good is it if we abstain from chicken, and fish, but bite and devour our brothers?”***  
—St. John Chrysostom

- ***“ Is it possible for one who fasts not to be rewarded for his fasting.? How? When we abstain from foods, but do not abstain from sin, when we do not eat meat, but chew to pieces the homes of the poor; when we do not become drunk with wine, but we become drunk with evil pleasures, when we abstain all the day, but all the night we spend watching lustful shows. Then what is the benefit from fasting?” St. John Chrysostom***



# POINT?

- The acceptable fast is not a fast from food alone, but from every form of evil in one's life and everything that takes us away from God.



# What benefit can one receive from fasting?

- 1. By Fasting one rises above the level of the body
  - by denying its need and learns how to depend on spiritual nourishment.
  - Unlike Eve, who when she “saw that the tree was good for food [and] pleasant to the eyes, she took of its fruit and ate [and] also gave to her husband...and he ate.” ( Gen 3:6).
  - Also remember what the Lord said to the devil “...man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God” (Mt 4:4)



- Saint Paul the anchorite used to eat only half a loaf of bread at sunset
- "Thirty years have passed by during which the sun has not seen me eating".
  - A Monk

# *Why is Hunger part of the Practice of Fasting?*

## **HUNGER**

- 1. He who hungers becomes aware of his weakness.
- 2. Thus hunger leads him leads him to spiritual submission.
- 3. Through hunger, the body is humbled, feeling the need for support and pleads to God for strength.



*Advice?*

# What benefit can one receive from fasting?

- 2. By Fasting one can conquer the devil. “ this kind [devil] can not come out by nothing but prayer and fasting Mk 9:29

# What benefit can one receive from fasting?

- 3. By Fasting one can be free from passions and lusts.
  - “...Meager food at the table...cleanses the soul from passion...for the work of fasting and vigils is the beginning of every effort against sin and lust. Almost all passionate drives decrease through fasting.”
    - St. Isaac of Syria



# What benefit can one receive from fasting?



- ***4. You Become SelfLESS***

- Through continuous training and negligence for the bodily needs, trained to endure hunger and thirst, and brings the body into subjection to conquer the desires and lusts becomes the most selfless person....
- **It is natural that he, who cannot abstain from food, would find it difficult to sacrifice for others... offer his life.**

# What benefit can one receive from fasting?

- **5. Save Time:**

- Usually much time is lost in preparing food, but by preparing simpler fasting food, one will have more time to pray, to read the Bible and spiritual books.





# What benefit can one receive from fasting?

- **6. A Time of Prayer**

- Fasting is a time to let God know of our every problem.
- It is a period for the repentant heart to lament and to ask God to hear our prayers.



# What benefit can one receive from fasting?

- 7. Learning to live in a Simple way.
  - By Fasting one learns how to live an ascetic life.
    - Because of hunger and thirst.
  - **“I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.” Matt 18:3**



# What does the Bible say about fasting?

- "Then I proclaimed a fast there...that we might humble ourselves before our God and to seek from Him the right way for us..." Ezra 8:21
- *"My knees are weak through fasting."* (Ps 109:24).
  - Fasting is a way of humbling oneself because it shows how much we need some food... without which, there is no energy And then thankful for the food when we partake of it.



# What does the Bible say about fasting?

- “Is this not the fast...to **loose the bonds** of wickedness, to **undo** the heavy burdens, to let the oppressed go free... is it not to **share** your bread with the hungry...and bring to your house the poor who are cast out. When you see the naked, that you **cover** him...then your **healing** shall spring forth speedily and ...the glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard. Then you shall call and **the Lord will answer**; you shall cry and He will say ‘Here I am’ —Isaiah 58:6-9

# What does the Bible say about fasting?

- “Thus says the Lord to this people...they have not restrained their feet therefore the Lord does not accept them; He will remember their iniquity now and punish...then...when they fast I will not hear their cry and when they offer burnt offering and grain offering, I will not accept them.”

—Jeremiah 14:10-12

# What does the Bible say about fasting?

- So the people of Nineveh believed God, proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest to the least of them...let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock taste anything, do not let them eat or drink water. But let man and beast ...cry mightily to God, let everyone turn from his evil way...then God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God relented from the disaster that He had said He would bring upon them, and He did not do it.” -Jonah 3:5-10

# What does the Bible say about fasting?

- “Moreover when you fast, do not be like the hypocrites with a sad countenance [face]...but when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face so that you do not appear to men to be fasting, but to your Father who is in a secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly”

—Matthew 6:16-18

# What does the Bible say about fasting?

- “Then the disciples of John came to Him saying, why do we and the Pharisees fast often, but Your disciples do not fast? And Jesus said to them, can the friends of the bridegroom mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? But **the days will come** when the bridegroom will be taken away from them, **and then they will fast**” - Matthew 9:14-15



# Did You Know...?



- 1. The Wednesday and Friday fast has been observed in the Church since the late first century? (Written in the Didache - a first century document called “The Teaching of the 12 Apostles” Chapter 8
- 2. The reason why we fast Wednesdays is to remember the betrayal of the Lord by Judas Iscariot.
- 3. Also, the reason why we fast Fridays is to remember the Crucifixion of our Lord.

