

"When the Anointed Fall Short"

Source Scriptures: Matthew 17:17-20 (NKJV)

17 Then Jesus answered and said, "O **faithless** and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I **bear** with you? Bring him here to Me." 18 And Jesus rebuked the demon, and it came out of him; and the child was cured from that very hour.

19 Then the disciples came to Jesus privately and said, "**Why could we not cast it out?**"

20 So Jesus said to them, "**Because** of your unbelief; for assuredly, I say to you, **if you have** faith as a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you.

Mark 9:29 (NKJV)

"So He said to them, 'This kind can come out by nothing but **prayer and fasting.**'"

When the Anointed Fall Short

- Good morning, people of GOD! Today I want to talk to you about failure! An eye-opening moment in Scripture. The disciples, who had been given power and authority over unclean spirits by JESUS himself, found themselves powerless against a demonic force.
- How many of us on today have had this situation arise in their life. Why do we sometimes fail when we know God's power is real?
- This wasn't the disciples' first encounter with demons. They had cast out devils before. They had seen miracles. Yet here, in front of a desperate father and a suffering child, they failed.
- Jesus gives us two answers that cut to the heart of spiritual effectiveness: unbelief and the need for prayer and fasting.

I. Unbelief in the Ranks

Matthew 17:17 (NKJV)

"Then Jesus answered and said, 'O **faithless** and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I bear with you? Bring him here to Me.'"

- Notice Jesus didn't just address the crowd—He addressed His own disciples as part of this "faithless generation."
- **Unbelief** in the Greek is *apistia*—meaning "lack of trust" or "unfaithfulness." It's not just doubt; it's the absence of confident expectation in God's power.
- The disciples had **head knowledge** but lacked **heart conviction**. They knew what Jesus could do, but they doubted what **they** could do through GOD's power.

The Danger of Assumed Authority:

- These men had cast out demons before (Mark 6:13), but somewhere between past victories and present challenges, doubt crept in.
- **Unbelief is progressive**—it starts as a whisper and grows into a stronghold that paralyzes our spiritual authority.
- When we operate from unbelief, we're not just ineffective—we become **spectacles of powerlessness** before a watching world.

Romans 10:17

"So then **faith** comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."

- Faith isn't a feeling—it's a **settled conviction**, a belief based on God's unchanging Word and character.

1 John 5:14-15

¹⁴ Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. ¹⁵ And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him.

II. Prayer and Fasting

Mark 9:29

“So He said to them, ‘This kind can come out by nothing but prayer and fasting.’”

- Jesus reveals that some spiritual battles require more than casual faith—they demand **concentrated spiritual discipline**.
- **Prayer** connects us to the source of all power. **Fasting** breaks the power of flesh over spirit.

Why This Combination Matters:

- **Prayer without fasting** can become mere words without spiritual weight.
- **Fasting without prayer** becomes just dieting with religious themes.
- **Together**, they create a spiritual atmosphere where God's power flows unhindered, building our belief, our faith in Him.

Daniel 10:3

“³ I ate no pleasant food, no meat or wine came into my mouth, nor did I anoint myself at all, till three whole weeks were fulfilled.”

- Spiritual breakthrough is the deepening of a belief level; this requires us to **deny the flesh** to strengthen the spirit.
- The disciples had been operating on **past anointing** instead of **present preparation**.

III. The Distinction: "This Kind"

- Jesus specifically said **"this kind"**—indicating that not all spiritual battles are the same.
- Some demons are cast out through a simple command. Others require deeper belief and spiritual engagement.

Levels of Spiritual Opposition:

- **Surface-level spirits** respond to basic authority.
- **Entrenched spirits** require sustained spiritual warfare.
- **Strongholds** demand prolonged prayer and fasting.
- Each of these levels depends on our belief.

Ephesians 6:12

*"For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against **principalities**, against **powers**, against the **rulers of the darkness of this age**, against **spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.**"*

- The enemy has **ranks and hierarchies**. Our spiritual preparation must match the level of opposition we face.
- **Casual practices** produce **casual results** in spiritual warfare.

IV. The Solution: Faith as a Mustard Seed

Matthew 17:20

*²⁰ So Jesus said to them, "**Because of your unbelief; for assuredly, I say to you, if you have faith as a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you.**"*

- Jesus wasn't talking about the **size** of faith but the **nature** of faith.
- A mustard seed doesn't doubt its purpose—it **grows** regardless of obstacles.

Characteristics of Mustard Seed Faith:

- **Persistent**—it doesn't give up when progress seems slow
- **Penetrating**—it breaks through hard ground
- **Productive**—it multiplies and spreads
- **Purposeful**—it knows its destiny

The disciples' problem wasn't **small faith**—it was sick **faith**. Faith contaminated by doubt.

James 1:6-8

⁶ But let him ask in faith, with no **doubting**, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. ⁷ For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; ⁸ he is a **double-minded man**, unstable in all his ways.

V. The Application: Preparing for Spiritual Warfare

- **We cannot fight tomorrow's battles with yesterday's preparation.**
- Spiritual authority isn't a **one-time application**—it requires **ongoing cultivation**.

Practical Steps:

1. **Regular Prayer Life**—not just crisis prayers
2. **Periodic Fasting**—breaking flesh to strengthen spirit
3. **Word Meditation**—building unshakeable conviction
4. **Obedience in Small Things**—proving faithful in little

1 Corinthians 9:27

²⁷ But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.

Conclusion: From Failure to Faith

- The disciples' failure became their **education**, as it should be for all of us. This embarrassing moment taught them what casual discipleship costs.
- God allows some failures to expose the weakness in our spiritual foundation; it is a form of chastisement.
- After this encounter, these same men would turn the world upside down—but not until they learned the cost of dulled spiritual authority.

The Choice Before Us:

- Will we operate from **assumption** or **preparation**?
- Will we rely on **past victories** or **present discipline**?
- Will we accept **casual Christianity** or embrace **costly discipleship**?

Final Declaration:

- Maybe you've experienced spiritual failure—moments when your prayers seemed powerless, when the enemy seemed stronger than your faith.
- Today, Jesus is calling you to a deeper level of spiritual preparation.

Declare this with me:

- "I will not operate from unbelief disguised as humility." ○ "I will prepare my spirit through prayer and fasting."
- "I will cultivate mustard seed faith—small but unstoppable." ○ "I will not be satisfied with casual Christianity when spiritual warfare demands concentrated consecration." ○ "The same power that raised Christ from the dead lives in me, and I will walk in that authority through disciplined faith."
- **Let us commit to the spiritual disciplines that make us effective warriors in God's kingdom. In Jesus' name, Amen.**