

Matthew 17:14-21 The Disciples' Failure and the Lord's Success

Introduction: Jesus had taken Peter, James and John up into a mountain. There He had been transfigured before them. Now they return back down the mountain.

I. The Disciples' failure to heal an afflicted boy

- A. Matthew says that Jesus and the three came to the multitude, V. 14.
 - 1. According to Mark and Luke the nine apostles were in the center.
 - 2. Certain scribes were there questioning the disciples.
 - 3. We can be sure they were trying to discredit Jesus.
 - 4. They specialized in questions that could embarrass either way they were answered.
- B. To add to their problems they were unable to heal a lad who had been brought to them, V. 14-16.
 - 1. The critical scribes would take full advantage of this.
 - 2. They would make it appear that somehow it must be the fault of Jesus.
- C. Jesus issued a stern rebuke, calling them a “faithless and perverse generation,” V. 17.
 - 1. This rebuke was to the scribes who were so critical.
 - 2. It must have included the masses who were so easily persuaded first one way and then another. (By miracles they were persuaded toward Jesus and by questions and failure against Him.)
 - 3. It may have included the disciples who were unable to heal the boy.
 - 4. It must have included the father who had come to doubt Jesus because of the disciples' failure, Mark 9:22-23.

II. The Lord's success in healing the boy

- A. Jesus called for the boy to be brought to Him, V. 17b.
- B. Even as the boy came, the demon threw him to the ground, Luke 9:42.
(The Devil never gives up.)
- C. Jesus cast the demon out and the boy was healed, V. 18.
- D. Just because the disciples had failed that was no sign that Jesus would fail.

III. Lessons we learn from this incident

- A. That satanic forces are powerful.
 - 1. This boy was oppressed and afflicted by the demon.
 - 2. He could not free himself from the demon.
 - 3. His father could not free him.
 - 4. Even the disciples could not free him.
- B. That satanic forces are cruel.
 - 1. The boy was sore afflicted. (Cast in water and fire.)
 - 2. The fact that he was but a small boy made no difference.
 - 3. The fact that the father was grieved made no difference.
 - 4. Satan would like nothing better than to see men suffer in hell.
- C. That the Lord is not to be judged by the failure of disciples.
 - 1. Even today the Lord's disciples have failures.
 - 2. And even today men judge the Lord by our failures.
 - 3. But that is a sad mistake.
 - 4. The Lord was well able to heal that boy and He is well able to save the soul of the lost sinner
- D. That the faith of a disciple may be weak.

- E. That the weak faith of a disciple may grow strong.
- F. That prayer is an important factor in growing a strong faith.
- G. That the material things of life are not as important as spiritual things.
(Food was not as important as prayer.)

Conclusion

1. Is there some unsaved person here today who will turn to Jesus for salvation? He has never failed. Trust Him.
2. Is there some Christian here today in need of a church home?
3. Is there some Christian here whose faith is weak or whose life needs straightening out with God?

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