

Faith in Failure

MARK 9:14-29

When they came to the disciples, they saw a great crowd around them, and some scribes arguing with them. **15**When the whole crowd saw him, they were immediately overcome with awe, and they ran forward to greet him. **16**He asked them, "What are you arguing about with them?" **17**Someone from the crowd answered him, "Teacher, I brought you my son; he has a spirit that makes him unable to speak; **18**and whenever it seizes him, it dashes him down; and he foams and grinds his teeth and becomes rigid; and I asked your disciples to cast it out, but they could not do so." **19**He answered them, "You faithless generation, how much longer must I be among you? How much longer must I put up with you? Bring him to me." **20**And they brought the boy to him. When the spirit saw him, immediately it convulsed the boy, and he fell on the ground and rolled about, foaming at the mouth. **21**Jesus asked the father, "How long has this been happening to him?" And he said, "From childhood. **22**It has often cast him into the fire and into the water, to destroy him; but if you are able to do anything, have pity on us and help us." **23**Jesus said to him, "If you are able! —All things can be done for the one who believes." **24**Immediately the father of the child cried out, "I believe; help my unbelief!" **25**When Jesus saw that a crowd came running together, he rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it, "You spirit that keeps this boy from speaking and hearing, I command you, come out of him, and never enter him again!" **26**After crying out and convulsing him terribly, it came out, and the boy was like a corpse, so that most of them said, "He is dead." **27**But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him up, and he was able to stand. **28**When he had entered the house, his disciples asked him privately, "Why could we not cast it out?" **29**He said to them, "This kind can come out only through prayer."

ROMANS 8:18-27

I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed to us. **19**For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God; **20**for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope **21**that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. **22**We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labor pains until now; **23**and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies. **24**For in hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what is seen? **25**But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience. **26**Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words. **27**And God, who searches the heart, knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.



What are the echoes between the two passages?

What is the role of prayer?

The disciples failed. They could not heal this child. What a disappointment! When have you experienced a failure? To what extent are you in the middle of an unresolved disappointment?

THE PAIN. Experiencing disappointment hurts and leads to questions of why. Everything - creation, humans, and the Spirit – groan while waiting for completion of God’s will. And, even when Jesus intervenes, it can seem hopeless. Jesus rebuked the demon, but then the boy looked like a corpse and the people said he was dead.

PURSUE THE Our hope in God’s promise of future glory is not futile. This vision of freedom, redemption, and adoption is worth suffering for! While things looked bad for the boy, Jesus then took him by the hand and lifted him up. Resurrection-new life! New life also echoes in the Romans passage as Creation groans in labor pains. Think about how a mother suffers through the pain of childbirth because she hopes for the baby that is unseen. She knows a child is being born and that makes present pains insignificant by comparison.

HIS ABILITY. This is God’s work, and He will bring perfection to his creation. We are God’s children, and He will pursue healing for us. “All things can be done by the one who believes.” God can do more than we imagine if we have faith in Him. We must depend on Jesus, not on our past successes and skills.

PRAY FOR YOUR A practical expression of dependence is prayer. When questioned about his faith, the boy’s father exclaimed, “I believe; help my unbelief!” Your understanding doesn’t need to be perfect before you talk to God. You just need to communicate your honest thoughts. And, even when your emotions overcome you and you don’t know how to pray, the Spirit will pray for you. We are weak, dependent on God, and the Spirit will be with us, will keep on helping us.



REFLECTION GUIDE: Take some time to talk with God about a past failure and a present one.

Past Failure

- How did it make you feel?
- What vision was dashed?
- How did you need to trust God?
- Are there things you still need to talk through with God?

Present failure

- How are you feeling?
- What vision has God given you?
- How do you need to trust God?
- What do you need to talk with God about?



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What are the echoes between the two passages?

- Groaning/crying out/sighs too deep for words – there is pain too deep for words as all of God's creation and God Himself as Spirit groans waiting for redemption. And the evil spirit shrieks as he is abolished from the boy as the boy is redeemed.
- Faith/hope – Boy's father has faith that his son can be healed, and all of creation waits in hope for freedom from bondage.
- Father's effort for his son – The boy's father brings his son to the disciples and then to Jesus. God as Spirit prays for his children. They stop at nothing to bring healing to their children.

What is the role of prayer?

- Dependence on God is essential to seeing healing and redemption.
- The disciples had depended on past successes (see Mark chapter 6:7-13) in order to heal the boy, and they failed.
- The father's faith was shaken with the failure of the disciples attempt to heal, so he asked Jesus "If you are able." But, Jesus replied, "If you are able!" The father needed to trust God to heal his child. And, so the father prayed, "I believe; help my unbelief!" In his weakness, he acknowledged his faith.
- In the Romans passage, the Spirit helps us in our weak state by interceding for us.

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