



## This Kind Pt 1\_Learning from Failure

September 19, 2021

### **Holy Text: Matthew 17:14-21**

Note: Many newer Bible translations do not have verse 21. They skip from verse 20 to verse 22. William MacDonald writes:

**17:21** “**This kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting**” is omitted in the RSV and most modern Bibles, because it is lacking in many early manuscripts. However, it is found in the majority of the manuscripts and fits the context of an especially difficult problem.

Mark’s version of this narrative in the KJV says:

***Mark 9:29 (KJV)** And he said unto them, **This kind can come forth by nothing, but by prayer and fasting.***

The ESV and NLT omit the word “fasting” from Mark 9:29.

I agree with MacDonald that it fits the context well. Given that our Text has wonderfully served the Church for nearly 2000 years, with your permission I will preach it as is.

### **Opening Thoughts:**

1. As we begin to consider this Text, I’d like us to focus on something it points to that is all too common in our walk with Jesus: **Failure.**
2. Next week, we’ll look at **Faith** as opposed to unbelief, and the following week, the need for **Prayer and Fasting**. But today, we have Failure in view.
3. We are not exalting failure or encouraging failure; we are just acknowledging the reality of failure and prayerfully offering some encouragement concerning this commonality to the Christian life!
4. This is literally something we deal with on almost a daily basis. We fail A LOT!
5. We aren’t alone in that, as we can clearly see in today’s passage.
6. As we examine this rich Text, please remember the larger context. It wasn’t that long ago (in the timeline of the Gospels) that this happened:

***Matthew 10:1 (KJV)** And when he had called unto him his twelve disciples, he gave them power *against* unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease.*

***Luke 9:1-6 (KJV)** Then he called his twelve disciples together, and gave them power and authority over all devils, and to cure diseases. **2** And he sent them to preach the kingdom of God, and to heal the sick. **3** And he said unto them, *Take nothing for your journey, neither staves, nor scrip, neither bread, neither money; neither have two coats apiece.* **4** And whatsoever house ye enter into, there abide, and thence depart. **5** And whosoever will not receive you, when ye go out of that city, shake off the very dust from your feet for a testimony against them. **6** And they departed, and went through the towns, preaching the gospel, and healing every where.*

7. And yet, this time they failed! Is this worth discussing? We obviously think so...

### **Basic Exposition of the Text:**

1. Three of the disciples (Peter, James, and John), had just come from a “mountain” experience with Jesus, where they saw Him transfigured. MacDonald writes similarly to our final point last week, “From the mount of glory, Jesus and the disciples returned the next day to the valley of human need. Life has its moments of spiritual exaltation but God balances them with the daily round of toil and expenditure.” So true!
2. Apparently, as they were on the mountain, a crowd had gathered below, made up of the other disciples, some scribes, and many people. (Mark 9:14)
3. The Scribes, according to Mark, were questioning the disciples concerning an incident of some kind. Jesus wanted to know what was going on: **Mark 9:16 (KJV)** *And he asked the scribes, **What question ye with them?***
4. Our narrative in Matthew picks up when a grieving father steps forward to give the answer. He kneels down before the LORD and says:

**Matthew 17:15 (KJV)** *Lord, have mercy on my son: for he is lunatick, and sore vexed: for oftentimes he falleth into the fire, and oft into the water.*

**Mark 9:17-18 (KJV)** *And one of the multitude answered and said, Master, I have brought unto thee my son, which hath a dumb spirit; **18** And wheresoever he taketh him, he teareth him: and he foameth, and gnasheth with his teeth, and pineth away...*

**Luke 9:38-39 (KJV)** *And, behold, a man of the company cried out, saying, Master, I beseech thee, look upon my son: for he is mine only child. **39** And, lo, a spirit taketh him, and he suddenly crieth out; and it teareth him that he foameth again, and bruising him hardly departeth from him.*

5. Can you imagine how this father felt? His confusion? His fear? His anguish? His sense of loss? Luke 9:39 from the NLT: “An evil spirit keeps seizing him, making him scream. It throws him into convulsions so that he foams at the mouth. It batters him and hardly ever leaves him alone.”
6. There may be some question as to when this incident happened...while they were on the mountain or previous to that event.
7. But regardless, here again is the issue and our thought to consider for the day: **they failed.**

**Matthew 17:16 (KJV)** *And I brought him to thy disciples, and they could not cure him.*

**Mark 9:18 (KJV)** *...and I spake to thy disciples that they should cast him out; and they could not.*

**Luke 9:40 (KJV)** *And I besought thy disciples to cast him out; and they could not.*

8. Mercifully, Christ rebukes their faithlessness in v17 (more on this later), rebukes the devil and heals the boy! (v18)

**Mark 9:25-27 (KJV)** *When Jesus saw that the people came running together, he rebuked the foul spirit, saying unto him, **Thou dumb and deaf spirit, I charge thee, come out of him, and enter no more into him. 26** And the spirit cried, and rent him sore, and came out of him: and he was as one dead; insomuch that many said, He is dead. **27** But Jesus took him by the hand, and lifted him up; and he arose.*

**Luke 9:42-43a (KJV)** And as he was yet a coming, the devil threw him down, and tare him. And Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit, and healed the child, and delivered him again to his father. **43** And they were all amazed at the mighty power of God.

9. Confused, the disciples asked the LORD why they failed. (v19) Keep in mind that:
  - There was nothing wrong with the man bringing his son to the disciples.
  - The disciples were willing to help; they tried to do the right thing.
  - They failed for reasons the LORD indicated. The slight distinction we are making today lies between their *compassionate hearts* and their *current ability*.
10. His answer will be the subject of two upcoming messages and Faith (vs unbelief) and Fasting:

**Matthew 17:20-21 (KJV)** And Jesus said unto them, *Because of your **unbelief**: for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you.* **21** *Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by **prayer and fasting**.*

What can we learn from the disciples' failure?

### **What is Failure?**

1. Failure is, according to most dictionaries, "the state or condition of not meeting a desirable or intended objective, and may be viewed as the opposite of success."
2. The Webster 1828 says *failure* or *to fail* is, "A deficiency; cessation of supply, or total defect...an omission; non-performance; as the failure of a promise; a man's failure in the execution of a trust...To miss; not to produce the effect."
3. In a biblical worldview, perhaps failure might simply be described as "unfaithfulness to the will of God."
4. As implied in our Text, the root of such failure may be faithlessness or perverseness...sin.
5. For the purposes of this message, we are not referring to righteous suffering. Scripture is filled with God's people being obedient but rejected. Thankfully, not every tribulation is a failure!

**Acts 14:19-23 (KJV)** And there came thither *certain* Jews from Antioch and Iconium, who persuaded the people, and, having stoned Paul, drew him out of the city, supposing he had been dead. **20** Howbeit, as the disciples stood round about him, he rose up, and came into the city: and the next day he departed with Barnabas to Derbe. **21** And when they had preached the gospel to that city, and had taught many, they returned again to Lystra, and to Iconium, and Antioch, **22** Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God. **23** And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed.

### **What are kinds of Failure are there?**

1. Failures of faith: refusing to repent and believe in Jesus
2. Failures of the heart: not desiring God's will or Word
3. Failures of the mind: sinful or forgetful attitudes and thoughts
4. Failures of the flesh: not applying such wisdom in obedience
5. Failing others (marriage, parenting, friendships, teams, etc.)

6. Failing to achieve something sought after
7. Failing to rightly steward (time, gifts, money, etc.)

### **Failure: What does Scripture say?**

1. It began early, at the Fall.
  - **Genesis 3:6 (KJV)** *And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat.*
2. It often comes because of disobedience.
  - **Joshua 1:8 (KJV)** *This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success.*
3. It is often tied to unbelief!
  - **Matthew 14:26-31 (KJV)** *And when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit; and they cried out for fear. 27 But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid. 28 And Peter answered him and said, Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water. 29 And he said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus. 30 But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me. 31 And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?*
  - **James 1:5-8 (KJV)** *If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. 6 But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. 7 For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord. 8 A double minded man is unstable in all his ways.*
4. It is endemic to man after the Fall.
  - **Genesis 6:5 (KJV)** *And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.*
  - Here are just a few biblical examples:
    - Uzzah
    - 2 Samuel 6:6-7 (KJV)** *And when they came to Nachon's threshingfloor, Uzzah put forth his hand to the ark of God, and took hold of it; for the oxen shook it. 7 And the anger of the LORD was kindled against Uzzah; and God smote him there for his error; and there he died by the ark of God.*

### **The father of the child in our Text**

**Mark 9:21-24 (KJV)** *And he asked his father, How long is it ago since this came unto him? And he said, Of a child. 22 And oftentimes it hath cast him into the fire, and into the waters, to destroy him: but if thou canst do any thing, have compassion on us, and help us. 23 Jesus said unto him, If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth. 24 And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief.*

### **Ephesus in Revelation**

**Revelation 2:1-7 (KJV)** *Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write; These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks; 2 I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars: 3 And hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted. 4 Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. 5 Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent. 6 But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. 7 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.*

5. We must move on from it!

- **Proverbs 24:16 (KJV)** *For a just man falleth seven times, and riseth up again: but the wicked shall fall into mischief.*
- **Matthew 10:13-15 (KJV)** *And if the house be worthy, let your peace come upon it: but if it be not worthy, let your peace return to you. 14 And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, when ye depart out of that house or city, shake off the dust of your feet. 15 Verily I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrha in the day of judgment, than for that city.*

6. Through every failure, we must Trust the LORD!

- **Psalms 73:25-28 (KJV)** *Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee. 26 My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever. 27 For, lo, they that are far from thee shall perish: thou hast destroyed all them that go a whoring from thee. 28 But it is good for me to draw near to God: I have put my trust in the Lord GOD, that I may declare all thy works.*
- **Proverbs 3:5-7 (KJV)** *Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. 6 In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths. 7 Be not wise in thine own eyes: fear the LORD, and depart from evil.*

7. We must forgive and help our brothers and sisters when they fail.

- **Matthew 18:21-22 (KJV)** *Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? 22 Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven.*
- **Ephesians 4:32 (KJV)** *And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.*
- **Romans 15:1 (KJV)** *We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves.*
- **Galatians 6:1-2 (KJV)** *Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. 2 Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.*

### **Learning from Failure!**

- Failure and sin are often synonymous. Again, if there is a slight distinction commensurate with our primary Text, it might lie in the sincere effort of the one who failed to do good and godly things.

- Failure often brings disappointment along with it, as every sincere believer will feel such when he or she fails their Master.
- But as been often said, unless you are Uzzah, *failure is not final!* Christ is LORD! Even in our failures, missteps, and weakness, He is strong!

**2 Corinthians 12:9 (KJV)** *And he said unto me, **My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness.** Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.*

- **So here are seven things I suggest we can learn and do in the midst of failure:**

1. Acknowledge the failure. Do not act as if nothing happened!
2. Examine the failure. Where did things go wrong and why?
3. Take responsibility for the failure. If at fault, do not point fingers.
4. Repent of the failure. Apologize for any sins or misunderstandings.
5. Forgive others' failures. Why? Because you have been forgiven!
6. Grow out of the failure intentionally. Adjust and commit to different patterns going forward.
7. Give all glory to Christ! He forgives and heals us!

### **Final encouragement**

Although the disciples failed to heal this man's son, they would go on to heal the sick and cast out devils. Scripture says:

**Acts 5:12-16 (KJV)** *And by the hands of the apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people; (and they were all with one accord in Solomon's porch. **13** And of the rest durst no man join himself to them: but the people magnified them. **14** And believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women.) **15** Insomuch that they brought forth the sick into the streets, and laid **them** on beds and couches, that at the least the shadow of Peter passing by might overshadow some of them. **16** There came also a multitude **out** of the cities round about unto Jerusalem, bringing sick folks, and them which were vexed with unclean spirits: and they were healed every one.*

**Don't you forget that our God is a Redeemer and a Restorer! Like the disciples, in Christ, our failures do not define us. Christ defines us! And despite our weaknesses, He can and does use us for His glory!**

Amen!

### **Family Worship Suggestions:**

1. Discuss this topic this week in your household.
2. Since everyone fails, see it as a point of commonality and a place to grow from.
3. As appropriate, admit a failure of yours and what you did to address it.
4. Repent of any failures on your part and ask for forgiveness. Forgive those who repent!
5. Pray together for increased humility and desire to be corrected by our LORD!