

## **Divine Frustration—“...how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you?”**

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Matthew 17:1-21 (text: v. 17)

This is a question Jesus asked out of frustration. Frustration is an emotion and expression of an unfulfilled expectation. Jesus had reason to expect His disciples to have faith, yet in spite of all the miracles they witnessed, they were still faithless at times.

- ➔ How many of you ever get frustrated? Dumb question! Here is a better one: **W** gets you frustrated? When people who don't keep commitments??? Traffic on I-5 during rush hour??? Forgetting things???
- ➔ **W** do things like these frustrate you?
- ➔ Here is an even more thought provoking question: Do you think God ever gets frustrated with you? [“

- **P** —“Oh, how much longer will I have to put up with your perverse unbelief before I go back to heaven?”
- Do you sense the frustration, chagrin, and irritation in Jesus' question? Does it sound like Jesus may be a little “fed-up” with the disciple's faithlessness?
- Notice Jesus asks TWICE **How long** (Mt. 17:17).



If Jesus would ask this to His disciples, where does that leave you and I?

### **I. The RECORD of frustration.**

- ➔ is asked 61 times in the Bible. Sometimes it is man who asks, Sometimes it is God who asks,
- A. Think of the many times man asks,
  - Upon hearing a diagnosis of cancer— (2 Sam. 19:34).
  - The cry of a parent—“How long, 'til my child will get right with God?”
  - The prison inmate—“How long before I will be released?”

- A child on a car trip—“How long until we get there?”
- A Christian prays—“How long until God answers my prayer?” (Hab. 1:2).
- A weary church member—“How long before the pastor finishes his sermon?” (cf. Job 18:2)
- A Christian in a trial—“How long until this trial is over?” (see Psalm 6:3)
- Have you ever wondered, *how long* -  
(Ps. 74:10)
- The Psalmist prayed— *how long* -  
(Ps. 94:3).
- Christians wonder, “How long till the Lord comes back?”
- Even tribulation martyrs in heaven ask, *How long*,  
(Rev. 6:10).

B. God also asks man,

Yes, God is long-suffering and patient. But even God’s patience can be “worn out” by people’s stubbornness and lack of faith.

- When God commanded Ahaz to ask for a sign, but Ahaz refused, Isaiah said, *WEARY* (Isa. 7:13).
- God said to Israel— *WEARIED* (Isa. 43:24).
- God told the Jews, “ *WEARY* (Jer. 15:6).
- Malachi said,

5. How long until you possess the land (Josh. 18:3).
6. How long until you make up your mind (1 Kings 18:21)
7. TEXT—

## II. The REASONS for Jesus' frustration.

- A. Jesus is frustrated at our **PERSISTENT** unbelief when we've already experienced many examples of God's power.
  - The disciples have seen countless miracles. Yet, they still had a perverted attitude of unbelief. What more could Jesus do to get them to believe? Would another miracle convince them to believe? Was there anything Jesus could say or do that would make a difference? Probably not.
- B. Jesus is frustrated at our **POWERLESSNESS** to do what He has equipped us to do (cf. Mt. 10:1).
  1. Jesus had given them power over unclean spirits. They cast out devils. So why couldn't they do it now? They lacked the faith and focus in what He had equipped them with.
  2. How often do we neglect to use the power God has given us to do what He called us to do. Jesus has given us the Holy Spirit and expects us to work in the Spirit's power. But we still fail to utilize that power. It must be frustrating to Him.
- C. Jesus is frustrated at our **PERPLE IT** to understand who He is and what He was sent to do (Luke 9:41-45).
  1. While the people (v. 43), Jesus wanted His disciples to hear something far more important about His mission and ministry (vs. 43-44).
  2. But they didn't understand (v. 45). He already told them the same thing a few days earlier (v. 22), but they still don't get it! It must have been frustrating to Jesus.
  3. It happened again a third time in Luke 18:31-34. How many more times must He explain His mission?

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Jesus expressed a similar feeling to Philip when he said to Jesus, \_\_\_\_\_ . Jesus answered,

(John 14:9). Jesus seems somewhat frustrated in Philip's lack of perception.

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- D. Jesus is frustrated at our **PRIDE** when we fail to discern that true greatness comes by humility (Luke 9:46-48 cf. Mk. 9:33-35).
1. Instead of hearing Jesus like they were told (v. 35), the disciples argue about who is going to be the greatest. Perhaps Peter, James, and John had the idea that since Jesus only took them up the mountain, they were better than the other nine.
  2. They should have known better (see v. 23). Discipleship is not about fame or recognition. It is about denying ourselves to follow Christ.
  3. To illustrate what true greatness is all about, Jesus puts a child beside Him (vs. 47-48).

### III. The **RESPONSE** to frustration.

- When we get frustrated we need to remember how Jesus responded to frustration. He is our model.
- A. He  it. He didn't deny it.
1. Frustration is part of the human experience Jesus shared with us. Moses got frustrated. The prophets had times of frustration. Even God felt frustrated.
  2. To be frustrated and deny it is dishonest and unhealthy. I'm not saying it is OK to tear into everyone around you when you're frustrated. But we need to admit we are frustrated.
  3. Frustration and anger are not inherently sinful. It all depends on what we do with those emotions.
- B. Understand frustrations usually occur after experiencing a
- Expectations are high on the mountain. It sets you up for a disappointment when you come down off the mountain.
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**W** —Climbing up a mountain or coming down from a mountain? I'm not a mountain climber, but I have climbed a couple of mountains—Silly Mountain in Apache Junction, AZ and Hibriten Mountain in Lenoir, NC. From my limited experience, it is just as hard, and maybe harder, to come down from a mountain as it was to go up!

The same is true about coming down from a “mountain top” experience. After the emotional high of being on the mountain top, we are faced with the inevitability of coming down to the reality of pain, sorrow, and ministry.

Coming down spiritually can be painful. Jesus understood this when He came down from Mt. Zion in heaven to this sin-cursed planet. Coming down means humbling yourself. This involves killing your pride and pride does not “die” easily (and has a way of resurrecting itself continually). After the disciples came down, they needed to be humbled (Mark 9:33-35).

If you've just been to the mountain, be on guard. Frustration is waiting for you at the bottom.

- C. Frustration is no to drop out. Frustration is real. Jesus felt it, but He didn't quit.
1. After Jesus expressed His frustration, He said, “Bring the boy to Me.” Then He heals the boy where His disciples failed.
  2. So you're tired. So you're angry. So you're fed-up. Fine. Feel it. Express it. But don't use it as an excuse to quit. You can't justify getting out of the game just because you are frustrated with the other players/Christians.
  3. Following Jesus means moving forward when you want to back out.

**SUMMATION:** Might Jesus ask you and I the same question today—“  
? I'm sure He asks me. And how do I answer? I answer, “A little longer, please Jesus! A little longer!”

Maybe you are frustrated with God? You have no cause to be. He is faithful when we are not.