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The Futility of Self-Reliance

Mark 9:14-29

Human history is the long futile story of man trying to depend on himself—if success ever does come to that man, it is because the providence of God’s grace beats him to the incident.

What are you doing practically to break yourself of the habit of self-reliance—do you know its signs?

## Overcoming the futility of self-reliance…the fruit of UNBELIEF—Consider the two forms “O unbelieving generation” takes in the text, and what is required to spot them and change them to believing…

1. **POSITIONAL UNBELIEF**--Unbelief concerning what God can do (9:19-27)

 “***if you can do anything***” –he believes Jesus cares; he doesn’t believe in his power.

 “***If you can? Everything is possible to him who believes.”***—not because there is anything powerful or positive in believing, in and of itself, but because believing in God, to whom nothing is impossible, makes everything possible for him who believes.

 **“I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!”**

Belief is the total capitulation of prideful self-dependence to a wholehearted belief to trust in Christ alone; not only to believe in him (he is; he can), but to trust in him alone to enable you to believe.

2. **PRACTICAL UNBELIEF**—Unbelief through self-reliance (9:14-19, 28,29)

 ***“Why couldn’t we drive it out?***”—you tried to be middlemen in a spiritual transaction without the permission and powerful resources found in Christ alone.

 “***This kind can come out only by prayer***.” (you didn’t pray)-- You mistakenly thought that the gifts given you (6:7) were now yours to control and exercise, independent of Christ—trusting in yourself is a form of and return to unbelief.

Our gifts must be exercised in constant contact and dependence on Christ or…

* We lose vitality--our gifts become a performance from a corpse rather than a living sacrifice
* We lose humility—our gifts are used for the glory of ourselves rather than the glory of the Lord. (William Barclay)

Remember that we are agents of God’s power and grace; not free agents calling our own shots in favour of our will and our wishes.