

# Luke 9:40

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And I besought thy disciples to cast him out; and they could not.

## Analysis

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**And I besought thy disciples to cast him out; and they could not.** The father had already sought help: *edeēthēn* (έδεεθην, "I besought" or "begged")—the same urgent pleading now directed to Jesus was first directed to the disciples. The phrase **to cast him out** (*hina ekbalōsin auto*, ἵνα ἐκβάλωσιν αὐτό) uses *ekballō* (to expel or drive out)—the standard term for exorcism. The devastating conclusion: **and they could not** (*kai ouk ēdynēthēsan*, καὶ οὐκ ἀδυνάθησαν)—they were powerless.

This failure is striking—the disciples had previously cast out demons successfully (9:1, 6). What changed? Jesus later explains: this kind requires prayer and fasting (Mark 9:29). Their earlier success may have bred complacency, relying on technique rather than God's power. The failure occurred while Jesus was on the mountain, suggesting their dependence on His presence rather than cultivating their own prayerful dependence on the Father. This public failure humiliated them but taught a crucial lesson: spiritual authority flows from intimacy with God, not mere authorization or past success.

## Historical Context

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Jesus had given the Twelve authority over demons and diseases (Luke 9:1), and they had exercised this successfully during their preaching tour (9:6). Their failure here echoes Israel's defeat at Ai after Jericho's victory (Joshua 7)—presumption following triumph. Jewish exorcists used elaborate formulas and rituals (Acts

19:13-16), but Jesus' disciples had been given simple authority in His name. Their failure while Jesus was absent parallels the church's struggle throughout history—powerlessness when prayer life declines. The early church understood this lesson, devoting themselves to prayer (Acts 2:42, 6:4). The incident warned against presumptuous ministry divorced from dependent communion with God.

## Related Passages

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**Genesis 1:1** — Creation of heavens and earth

**Psalm 19:1** — Heavens declare God's glory

## Study Questions

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1. What causes spiritual authority previously exercised successfully to become ineffective, as the disciples experienced?
2. How does the disciples' failure while Jesus was on the mountain warn against dependence on external authority rather than personal communion with God?
3. In what ways can past ministry success breed complacency that leads to present powerlessness?

## Interlinear Text

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καὶ	ἐδεήθην	τῶν	μαθητῶν	σου	ίνα	ἐκβάλλωσιν	αὐτό
And	I besought	G3588	disciples	thy	to	cast	him
G2532	G1189		G3101	G4675	G2443	G1544	G846

καὶ	οὐκ	ἡδυνήθησαν
And	not	they could
G2532	G3756	G1410

## Additional Cross-References

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**Luke 9:1** (Parallel theme): Then he called his twelve disciples together, and gave them power and authority over all devils, and to cure diseases.

