

Mark 9:19

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

He answereth him, and saith, O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you? bring him unto me.

Analysis

Jesus responded, 'O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you?' (Ὥ γενεὰ ἀπιστος, ἔως πότε πρὸς ὑμᾶς ἔσομαι; ἔως πότε ἀνέξομαι ὑμῶν;). This lament echoes Moses' complaint about Israel's unbelief (Deuteronomy 32:20) and expresses Jesus' frustration with pervasive faithlessness. The term 'faithless' (apistos, ἀπιστος) means unbelieving or lacking trust. Jesus' rebuke wasn't directed solely at the disciples but at the entire 'generation' (genea, γενεά)—including the scribes' hostility, the crowd's superficial interest, and the disciples' prayerlessness. The rhetorical questions 'how long?' express weary patience with human unbelief. Yet despite frustration, Jesus doesn't abandon them but proceeds to heal (v. 27), demonstrating divine mercy persisting despite human failure. Reformed theology emphasizes that God's faithfulness endures despite our faithlessness (2 Timothy 2:13).

Historical Context

Jesus' lament recalls Old Testament prophetic rebukes of Israel's chronic unbelief (Numbers 14:11; Deuteronomy 32:5, 20; Isaiah 65:2). The 'generation' (genea) term often carries negative connotations in Scripture—'evil and adulterous generation' (Matthew 12:39), 'crooked and perverse generation' (Philippians 2:15). First-century Judaism prided itself on Torah observance and covenant privilege, yet Jesus identified widespread spiritual failure. This indictment applied to religious leaders (scribes), disciples, and common people alike. The questions 'how

long shall I be with you?' may hint at Jesus' limited earthly ministry—the incarnation was temporary, making persistent unbelief especially grievous.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. How does Jesus' frustration with faithlessness balance divine patience with holy intolerance of sin?
2. What does Jesus' rebuke of an entire 'generation' teach about corporate spiritual responsibility beyond individual faith?

Interlinear Text

ο	δὲ	ἀποκριθεὶς	αὐτὸν	λέγει	Ω	γενεὰ	ἄπιστος
G3588	and	He answereth	him	saith	O	generation	faithless
G1161		G611	G846	G3004	G5599	G1074	G571

ἔως	πότε	πρός	ὑμᾶς	ἔσομαι	ἔως	πότε	ἀνέξομαι
how long	G4219	unto	you	shall I be	how long	G4219	shall I suffer
G2193		G4314	G5209	G2071	G2193		G430

ὑμῶν	φέρετε	αὐτὸν	πρός	με
you	bring	him	unto	me
G5216	G5342	G846	G4314	G3165

Additional Cross-References

Numbers 14:11 (Faith): And the LORD said unto Moses, How long will this people provoke me? and how long will it be ere they believe me, for all the signs which I have shewed among them?

Mark 16:14 (Faith): Afterward he appeared unto the eleven as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen him after he was risen.

John 20:27 (Faith): Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing.

Numbers 14:27 (Parallel theme): How long shall I bear with this evil congregation, which murmur against me? I have heard the murmurings of the children of Israel, which they murmur against me.

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