

# True Faith: I Believe, Help Thou My Unbelief

sermonaudio.com

*Exposition of Mark*

By Mark Raines

**Bible Text:** Mark 9:14-29

**Preached on:** Sunday, June 13, 2010

## **Harbor Reformed Baptist Church**

269 Douglas Avenue

Holland, Michigan 49424

**Website:** [www.harborchurchholland.org](http://www.harborchurchholland.org)

**Online Sermons:** [www.sermonaudio.com/rbcholland](http://www.sermonaudio.com/rbcholland)

Let's turn again to the passage that we just read together, Mark chapter 9, and let's begin by seeking the Lord's help in prayer.

*Father, we thank you that you have helped us many times as we have come to this place and heard your word opened up. Lord, we would not take that for granted and so we turn to you afresh and ask for your help as we study your word. We know, O Lord, that the devil can be very busy around sermon time, seeking to snatch away the seed as it's sown. We pray, Lord, make us watchful and guard our hearts and help us to put away all distractions and to focus upon your word. We pray in Jesus' name, amen.*

In August, 1997 I had the privilege of attending the Aberystwyth Conference in Wales. The speaker for the week was Pastor Geoffrey Thomas and he gave a series of wonderful addresses on the book of Daniel. Attendances each day were in the region of a thousand people, many of them Welsh, singing their favorite Welsh hymns with tremendous fervor and every evening we had delightful hours of Christian fellowship that went long into the night. It's a tremendous experience. If ever you get the opportunity to go to the Aberystwyth Conference I would heartily recommend it. But sadly, of course, it had to come to an end and I had to make a long car journey back to London and, of course, Monday morning I had to go back to work, back to the benefits office, back to unhappy claimants angrily pointing out the nature of their plight, pointing out my own inadequacies and failures in meeting the needs of their plight. You come down to earth with quite a thud in a situation like that. Well, I wonder if that wasn't similar in a way to the experience that Peter, James, and John have had as they come back down from the Mount of Transfiguration. Up on top of the Mount their eyes have beheld something of the dazzling, radiant glory of Christ in all his splendor and magnificence. They have been enveloped in the Shekinah presence which descended upon them in the form of a cloud. They fellowshiped with the saints in a manner as they were patched in on that heavenly conference call between Jesus, Moses and Elijah. These men have had a foretaste of glory. They have had a brief taste of the powers of the age to come. Now it's Monday morning, as it were. Now it's back down to earth. Now they are 9,000 feet away from the glories that they beheld there on the Mount and instead they are confronted with the grievous effects of sin, of the curse and of the devil. These disciples come down to earth with a thud. There's a reminder here to them. There's work to be done. There is a ministry

to be undertaken, and as we shall see in these verses, this is something that must be done in continual dependence upon him, not to trust in themselves, but to look continually to Christ.

So these are themes that we're going to think about this evening. Three things. Firstly, demonic foul play. Secondly, the disciples' failure. And then discussions about faith. Firstly then, demonic foul play, verse 14, "And when he came to his disciples, he saw a great multitude about them, and the scribes questioning with them. And straightway all the people, when they beheld him, were greatly amazed, and running to him saluted him." So this scene then begins with a great reception for Jesus. Having made his way down the Mount with Peter, James and John he returns to meet the other disciples, and as he does so a large crowd runs out to meet him. This crowd, it would seem, has been gathering around the disciples because there seems to have been some kind of confrontation with the scribes. The scribes, if you remember from previous studies, these were the elites within Judaism, these were the theological lawyers, extremely knowledgeable and learned in interpretation of the Old Testament law, and many of these men, of course, in recent months have had a number of skirmishes and run-ins with the Lord Jesus and his disciples, most of which have left them walking off with their tail between their legs, nursing their wounds. And these are proud men, of course, they don't take kindly to that kind of thing and so here in this situation with Jesus gone for a time up to the Mount, they are thinking to themselves, "Now is the time. Now is our opportunity to launch an attack upon these men, to strike at them now while they're vulnerable we can show the people that really these men, they don't know what it is they're talking about." And so they embroiled the disciples in an argument. It says that in verse 14 that they were questioning them, examining them, disputing with them is what that means.

Now what were they arguing about? That's the question that Jesus asks in verse 16 when he comes over. He walks through the crowd and he says, "What question ye with them? What's the problem here? What is it that you're asking them?" And then Mark tells us that a voice comes from the crowd. We don't know who this is. We know it's a father. We don't know his name. We don't know where he comes from but he's a man with a desperate situation. Verse 17, "Master, I have brought unto thee my son, which hath a dumb spirit; And wheresoever he taketh him, he teareth him: and he foameth, and gnasheth with his teeth, and pineth away." So this is a man in a desperate condition. This is a man whose son, and Luke tells us that it was his only son, he was in the grip of an evil spirit.

Now this was quite a common thing in Palestine in those days. I think we've said this before, that the powers of hell were so stirred up by the presence, the power, the ministry of the Son of God when he was upon the earth, that there seems to be a whole ratcheting up of the level of demonic activity in the land in those days. So the incidents of demonic possession become actually quite widespread and you find examples of these filthy, foul, unclean spirits entering into ordinary people, that is people who weren't actively looking for this, they weren't dabbling in any of this, these were people who just find themselves being taken over by unclean spirits. Even little children we find are targets for this and that's what we have here, we have a young boy being possessed of a dumb spirit, that

means a spirit who has suppressed the power of his vocal cords, also causing him to lose the ability to hear as well, and with that producing in him the most fearful, frightening kinds of seizures. If you look to verse 18, the father says, "where soever he taketh him, he teareth him, and he foameth, and gnasheth with his teeth." So this is the destructive power of this spirit, that all of a sudden it would seize hold of this little boy, it would throw him into a violent convulsion and slam him to the ground, whereupon he would gnash his teeth and he would foam, all the symptoms, the scholars say that would indicate some kind of brain trauma as a result of all of this.

So this is violent, this is destructive, this is malicious. It reminds us, doesn't it, of the spirit that entered into Legion, the demoniac which caused him to lacerate his body and to cut himself. This is a filthy, wicked spirit that wants to destroy this little boy. There's no doubt about that. When Jesus asked the Father about the condition later on, verse 22, the Father says, "ofttimes it hath cast him into the fire, and into the waters, to destroy him." This is a fearful thing. You can imagine the scene, maybe the father has put together a fire in the home there to warm them up and then he, I don't know, goes into the kitchen and he's talking with his wife when all of a sudden he hears shrieking in the living room. He comes in and there is his boy rolling around in the flames. Or another occasion they send their little boy out to gather some water from the well and as he leans over the well the spirit seizes hold of him, convulses him and throws him down into the well seeking to destroy him, the father says.

And this has gone on year after year, ever since he was a child he says. You can picture in your mind the look of this boy, how his face must have been disfigured with burns and his body pockmarked with scars and bruises and wounds all over. How much more of this can a young boy take? Not very much more by the sounds of it. His father says here, "he pineth away." That means he is declining, he's deteriorating, he's fading before our very eyes. You can sense the anguish in the father's voice here. While other fathers are watching their sons grow up and become strong, this man is doing his utmost just to keep his boy alive. While other fathers are watching their sons learn and grow, maybe teaching them a trade, he's having to watch his son writhe around in the flames convulsing and gnashing his teeth. You can imagine the sorrow, the torment that this man and his wife, if he has one, is going through. Imagine the conversations at night after they put the boy to bed. "Whatever did we do wrong? Whatever happened? Why has this happened to our son?"

Now it's interesting that Luke in his account, he says after Jesus heals the boy that he gave him back to his father. That's striking isn't it? Indicates that really the father's had the boy taken from him. You can imagine him saying to his wife, "This isn't our son. What happened to our son? Where is our son?" And of course, it's the kind of thing that some parents today have to say, don't they, when they see the life of a son or daughter destroyed by drug abuse and by alcohol, when they see before their very eyes a life once so full of promise becoming the tragic spectacle of a wasted life. You know, I think I've mentioned this before, we have this pop singer in England and she's a really wild woman, she's always in and out of drug rehabilitation and I sometimes read of this on the internet, the newspaper reports and to me she always seems to be teetering on the verge of self-

destruction. And a couple of years ago, there was her parents, in fact, they made a public appeal to the people, "Stop buying her records. This is destroying her." Maybe peer pressure as well, it can rob parents of a child, can't it? "Where did we go wrong? What did we do wrong? What is it that's turned my child into a snarling, gnashing picture of rebellion? Where did they get these values which throw them down into the gutter and cause them to roll around in the dirt?"

This is the pain that can enter into the heart of a father but also, of course, it points us to the pain in the heart of the greatest Father, our heavenly Father as he sees our own willingness to embrace evil and the ways of sin, and the loss of relationship that has been caused by that when we could be enjoying the wonder of a close intimate relationship with the living God but instead we relate to him like angry, touchy adolescents shaking our fist saying, "Leave me alone, I don't want anything to do with you!" And we slam the bedroom door of our souls, as it were.

This is the terrible destructive effects of sin but secondly, let's think about the disciples' failure. This is verse 18. The Father says, "I spake to thy disciples that they should cast him out; and they could not." This man has come looking for Jesus. Presumably he's heard about Jesus, his power, and so he has brought here his son to get help from Jesus, but finding he's not there, that he's gone up into the mountains, then he turns to his disciples who remain behind and yet these men, was it all nine of them? Probably. These men clearly were powerless to help. Despite their best efforts, they were unable to provide the deliverance that this man and his son so desperately need.

Now that was perplexing for the man himself, but also it was perplexing for the disciples as well, wasn't it? Because if you think back, this was something that they had been given power to do. Jesus had commissioned them to go out to preach the gospel, and he'd given them power and authority over devils, Luke chapter 9 verse 6. Mark tells us back in chapter 6, "They went out and preached that men should repent," verse 13, "and they cast out many devils." So this was something they had done a number of times. Probably word of this has been spreading around, not only can Jesus of Nazareth cast out devils, but also now his disciples, they have the power to do this too. And so it could be that this man has heard something of the power that both Jesus and his disciples had, and so finding that Jesus wasn't there, he then turns to the disciples and asks them, and yet he discovers that they don't have the power to do what he thought they could. In fact, they then discover that they themselves don't have the power to do what they thought they could. Something has gone wrong here. Things aren't quite the way that once they were. Things are not as easy as once they were. And that's a theme that you find in the second half of Mark's gospel, that is that the Christian life is not one that gets progressively easier. The Christian life is one that in many ways gets progressively harder and harder.

In the first half of the gospel, following Jesus of Nazareth was a relatively easy thing. There's all the excitement and the romance even of following this exciting dynamic young rabbi with his astonishing preaching and teaching. These incredible miracles. The thrill of being with him and used by him to feed a multitude and to cure people who were terminally sick. The thrill of being able to walk upon the waves of a lake which once you

fished on as a boy. This was a thrill-a-minute stuff to follow Jesus of Nazareth. But now in the second half of the gospel, you find the disciples have really turned a corner. Things are going to start getting difficult from now on. The subject of death is introduced. There is now a cross to be taken up. There is a self to be denied. There is suffering to be borne. There is a work to do and the work, well, it's just not as easy as once it was, and those demons, they used to come out with just an utterance, but now they don't seem to come out at all. And everything is getting hard. And it's getting quite difficult now, and I thought this was going to be easy, but actually it's getting quite tough. And that is the nature of the Christian life, isn't it? It isn't one of those callings where after a few months in the job you can say, "Ah, you know, I've got this sussed." There are some jobs that are like that, aren't there? You can do it for a year or two, and you can say, "Ah, I can do this job with my eyes closed." There are some people, aren't there, like that, they know their job so well, or they're so good at their job, you know, they even take their iPod to work and, you know, they get on with their job, and they listen to music, or whatever it is, and they hardly have to think about what they're doing. But the Christian life is not like that because if ever you're tempted to think like that, then don't be surprised if something comes into your life to make you realize pretty quickly that the Christian life isn't like that at all.

And these disciples, they faced that situation. Think about it, they've been out preaching the word, they had been out casting out demons for some months now and they've been pretty successful. It's easy, isn't it? It's a piece of cake, this exorcism thing. Did Andrew ask for his iPod as he walked out the door to do his next exorcism? "I can do this thing with my eyes closed." Were they beginning to think in that way? Well, they quickly discover that they can't, because here is a young boy in a desperate convulsive state, and maybe there is Andrew, and perhaps he's scratching his head, and he says, "Philip, can you come over here? Have you ever dealt with one like this?" And Philip is standing there looking blankly, "And Thomas, you come over, can you help?" And before long, you've got all of these disciples standing there scratching their head before a growing multitude of people, and you've got this convulsive, demoniac scene in front of them, and they are powerless to do anything about it. What is this but a wake-up call for the disciples. This is a shake-them-off-their-lees moment for the disciples. This is like a 747 pilot suddenly being awoken from his nap and realizing he's passing through an electrical storm. He needs to turn off the autopilot. He needs to take control.

So it was for the disciples. Christian service isn't something that can be done on cruise control. You know the way it is, perhaps you've said this sometimes, "You know, I don't even have to think about it. You know, I just go to church and, you know, listening to sermons is fine, singing hymns. It's easy. Preparing sermons, you know, I can do it with my eyes closed. Pass me the iPod." Well, if ever we get like that, don't be surprised if God brings some trouble into your life. Don't be surprised if God puts you into a situation to make you painfully aware of just how weak you are, painfully aware of how desperately you need the Lord to help you in every area of your life. That's what's happened here. That's why this has happened here. The disciples have gone into cruise control mode. They've gone into pass-me-the-iPod mode and because of that, they are put into an alarming, distressing situation to wake them up. And in that sense, this is a very

good thing for these men. These are young men. They have many years of ministry ahead of them. They need to be taught this lesson, that if they're going to be successful in the work of the ministry, they must depend continually, every day, upon the Lord. We'll think about that more in a minute. Just keep that thought in your mind.

But also, one other thing to say about their failure here, and that is that it was compounded and it was aggravated by arguments, arguments with themselves and with the scribes who had come along to gloat over their failure. That's the situation you have here. You have a man who has a desperately sick son being tormented and aggravated by an evil spirit and yet the disciples themselves are unable to minister to this boy and give relief and grant deliverance to this boy, and one of the reasons for this was they were too busy arguing with themselves, and the father and the son they look on in bemused helplessness as the disciples get taken up with this dispute. Doesn't the devil delight in that kind of thing? Doesn't the devil just dance for joy at that kind of thing when he sees his own destructive purposes marching forward and he sees Christian people too busy pouring their time and effort and energy into arguments to do anything about it? Is it any wonder the world casts a bemused look towards the church? Is it any wonder they begin to question, "Can these people really help me? Do these people really have any answers when all they seem to do is argue about their theology and matters of secondary importance? Do they really have answers for me?" Is it any wonder people come into a church and then they never come back again? "I spoke to thy disciples that they should cast them out and they could not." Why? Because they were too busy arguing. Dear friends, we need to have purpose and focus. We need to make sure we are not sidetracked. You think about the life and ministry of Jesus. So often in Mark's gospel it says "immediately, immediately, immediately," it says this of Jesus' purpose. He was so direct, he was so focused on accomplishing his mission and we need to have that too.

Third and final point is the discussion about faith. Jesus is very concerned about faith. He says in verse 19, "O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you?" These are words of frustration, aren't they? These are the words of a pained teacher with a class of students who don't understand or who don't believe his message. And he's referring here to the crowd who so often came simply to see miracles. He's referring here to scribes who were intent on opposing him at every turn. He's referring here to disciples who've taken their eyes off the Lord and are trusting in themselves. But also at this point he is referring to the father as well whose faith is quickly beginning to ebb away.

At first he had brought his boy there with confident hope. Jesus wasn't there but the disciples were there, maybe they could help. He finds that they can't help. Then the scribes come along and they begin to undermine his faith with arguments and with their own unbelief. Then Jesus comes along and instead of the boy getting better, we're actually told that "straightway the spirit tare him; and he fell on the ground, and wallowed foaming." The boy's condition seems to get even worse when Jesus comes along and so, whatever faith the man had seems to be ebbing away fast and you can see that in his words where he says, verse 23, "If thou canst do anything, have compassion on us and help us." If, he says, "Lord, if you can help, if possible, could you do something

for us?" And Jesus then fastens on that little word, if. If. He fastens on that if clause. "If, if did I hear you, correctly? It's not if I can, it's if you can believe. If you can believe all things are possible to him who believes. There's no limitation or constriction with me or with my power. The problem is with you and your willingness to believe." True faith sets no limits upon what God can do. True faith doesn't say, "If you can," true faith says, "unto him who is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that you could ask or think." True faith says God is able to make all grace abound towards you. True faith says nothing is too hard for God. That's the way that true faith reasons. "The problem is not with me," he's saying, "the problem is with you." All things are possible to him who believes.

Those words, of course, have been much abused and distorted over time. We need to remember that. Jesus is not saying here that you will always get what you want if you just believe it hard enough. He's not saying that no matter what it is you need you just have to name it and claim it. If that is the case then why did Paul still have his thorn in the flesh? He wanted that removed pretty badly. If that was the case, why did Jesus not have the cup taken from him in the Garden of Gethsemane; in his human nature he recoiled from the suffering and the separation of the Father that was about to come upon him. You're not going to say that Jesus didn't have enough faith, are you? I don't think you'd want to say that. You're not going to say that Paul didn't have enough faith. Would you want to say that? That would be a foolish thing to say, wouldn't it? Now what Jesus means here is that, yes, God does do amazing things in response to faith, and sometimes that amazing thing takes the form of a very positive answer to your prayer, but sometimes it takes the form of great grace being given to you to cope with a negative answer to prayer. But either way, all things are possible to him who believes, whether it be an amazing answer to your prayer or grace given to cope with a negative answer to your prayer. All things are possible to him who believes.

Now you may say, "Well, that's wonderful, that's so encouraging. How can I know something of that in my own life? How can I know that confidence in my own daily experience?" Well, the answer that we get from this passage is faith. Faith. Faith connects you to that power. Think of a power station. Imagine the electricity plant that you have on Lake Michigan, a few miles down the road, the power from that place runs the gadgets in your home, your TV, your oven, your computer, those kind of things, but how does that electricity come to you? It comes to you by cables and by wires that connect you to the source of power. Without those cables, without those wires, then that tremendous source of power, which is down the road there, it's going to do you no good whatsoever. What you need is something to connect you to it. And so it is with Christ. In him there is a tremendous source of power. In him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily, the Bible tells us. He upholds all things by the word of his power. What strength, what power there is in Jesus Christ and he is willing to endow you and me with that power. As Paul would say, he will strengthen us with all might in the inner man. But what you need is something to connect you to him. You need the spiritual cables and wires, as it were. You need faith. That is the connecting apparatus. Faith is the connecting grace. Spirit-wrought faith in your heart connects you to Jesus Christ. Without that connection you have, or without faith, you have no connection in Christ. Without faith the Bible says it's impossible to please God, you have no connection with the power supply. Your life will

continue to be devoid of all spiritual life and power. You'll be like a house, for example, and it has no power supply. It may look very nice, well built, well constructed on the outside, but inside there's no light. There is no life. There is no power.

In spiritual terms, then you are really, you're just a shell. Or, to use a word from the Bible, you are a carcass. Remember that word? Very striking word, isn't it? It was said of another unbelieving generation who wandered in the wilderness, wasn't it? And they themselves did not trust God as a generation. They severed that connection of faith in God and do you remember what it said of them? Their carcasses fell in the wilderness. That's how God viewed them as carcasses. That's how God views men and women who do not honor him with trust and faith. They're merely an outward shell. They're devoid of all the life and light that comes from a living relationship with the living God. But if on the other hand we are joined to him by faith, then we can know the animating power of God in our lives and we shall do great things for him and we shall see him doing great things for us in our lives.

This is the encouragement and the promise of these words. Let me ask you, are you a person who has faith? Are you a person who is joined to that spiritual power supply which is Jesus Christ? Do you know the life of God in the soul of man? Do you have faith? Well, you say, "I think I do, but I'm not sure I have enough faith." That's what this man says, really, isn't it? He says, "I believe, help thou mine unbelief. I do believe you can do this, but I'm filled with all kinds of doubts." What do we do with that? Calvin makes a good comment here. He says, "The man declares that he believes and yet acknowledges himself to have unbelief. Every believer experiences something of that. Our faith is never perfect. It follows that we are partly unbelievers. For that, God forgives us and exercises such forbearance towards us as to reckon us believers on account of a small portion of faith." So you see what he's saying there, he's saying to know the power of Christ in your life, you don't have to have mighty faith, you don't have to have great faith, you just have to have faith. Even a small portion of faith as Calvin would say. Or to go back to the power station, you don't need to have a lot of cables to connect you to it, you just need to have one cable. Or you think about a rocket that's going to be launched by NASA when all the fuel begins to pour out of those burners, you don't need to have lots of matches underneath that, you only need to have one match, don't you?

To know the power of Christ in your life you don't need to have mighty faith. The old Puritans would say that even a weak hand can lay hold of a strong Christ. You don't need to have mighty faith, you just need to have faith, even a mustard seed size grain of faith, and you can say to this mountain, "Be removed into the sea." This is the wonder of being joined to Jesus Christ by faith, but also see here the glory, the beauty of Christ as well. It's amazing to think of him in this situation. He has just come down from the Mount where he has been transfigured in glory, the veil has been taken back, dazzling effulgence of the glory of Jesus Christ. He could have said to this man, "How dare you come to me so riddled with doubts. Come back to me when you've got perfect faith." But he doesn't say that at all, does he, because that isn't what saving faith is. Saving faith isn't about saying, "Well, I am faithful, now you bless me." No, that's faith in yourself, isn't it? That's what every other religion in the world says. All the other religions say, "Well, if



you do this and you do that, then God will bless you." But that isn't faith in Christ, that's faith in yourself. That's making you to be your own saviour. But here we see true saving faith says, "I am not faithful. I am not what I should be. I am filled with all kinds of doubts and fears. I'm not enough to meet my own challenges. I need you, Lord Jesus. I need you to help me."

That's faith in him, not in ourselves. That's faith in his power, not in our power and when we come to Jesus like that, as this man did, then Jesus says, "Yeah, I can work with that. I can do business with that." And then you start to see his power being released into your life. Tremendous resurrection power. Look at verse 27, it says, "Jesus took him by the hand, and lifted him up; and he arose." Literally in the original that is he raised him up and he was resurrected. When a sinner puts his faith in Christ there is new life, resurrection power flows into him and then after that flows out of him to others as well.

And that brings us on to the question of the disciples in verse 28, when they say, "Well, why couldn't we do it? Why could we not cast him out?" And he said unto them, "This kind can come forth by nothing but by prayer and fasting." So this really relates to the nature of faith. The first discussion was about the need for faith, this is now the nature of faith and that is that true faith isn't just a one-time act and then after that we go on and we forget all about it. No, a true faith is characterized by ongoing daily dependence upon the Lord. The disciples, they thought that their faith in Christ had got for them this gift, this power, this authority, and it was now their own and that they could now go out and use this gift without any recourse to the giver. But they quickly discovered that they didn't have the power they thought they had. They quickly discovered, like Samson did, that the strength and power they once had had now gone. Why was that? Because they were trusting in the gift. They were trusting in themselves and not looking to the giver of the gift. He is the source of strength and power. It's to him that we must look daily for supplies of grace and strength and help.

It is to be gathered every day like manna in the wilderness. Fresh supplies of grace. You cannot live on past experiences. You cannot live on past supplies of grace. We must be seeking his help afresh every single day and that, as we see here, manifests itself by prayer. This comes out by prayer, he said. Prayer is the visible manifestation of faith. Prayer visibly expresses our dependence upon God. It says, "I am not enough to meet my own challenges. I am weak, I need help." Conversely, no prayer says, "I am enough to meet my own challenges. I don't need God's help. I can do this." And all that is, is just another form of unbelief. In fact, you notice if you compare this with Matthew's account, when the disciples ask him the same question, Jesus says, "because of your unbelief." So the two statements are not contradictory, it's two sides of the same coin. True faith manifests itself in earnest prayer, growing unbelief manifests itself in declining prayer. That was the reason for their failure and their impotence. They were powerless because they were prayerless. They could make no intervention because there had been no intercession.

Without prayer we reveal the nature of our hearts, that we are becoming proud, presumptuous, self-confident, "I am enough to meet my own challenges," and when we

get like that we are doomed to failure and embarrassment. But with prayer, then we demonstrate the true source of our strength. With prayer, we begin to unleash the power of God into situations. With prayer, we begin to open up the treasure chest of God's blessing. With prayer, we begin to write checks which come from the bank of heaven. Tremendous things take place when we show faith in God through prayer. Are you a praying man? Are you a praying woman? I'm not saying are you a missionary or a pastor, I'm not saying are you a deacon or an elder, we're not all called to be in those particular roles, but we are all called to take up a life of prayer, a life of humble daily dependence upon the Lord, manifest in continual out-breathings of supplications and intercessions before his throne. That is key to the life of faith. That shows that you're in connection with the power that there is in Jesus Christ, so that through you and through your prayers salvation can come to those around you, to loved ones, even those who are deeply in the grip of sin, can transform even demoniacs.

You know this morning we did a study of William Grimshaw and one of the things that we said about him was he was a mighty man of prayer, but also in connection with this he was a man who also had an only son and his only son was destroyed by a demon. Really? The demon of drink. Now, was that due to the fact that he lost his mother when he was three, and his stepmother when he was ten, and his sister when he was twelve? Well, those things may have been contributing factors, but by the time he was in his early twenties, he was a very heavy drinker, caught up in a very dissolute and dissipated life. Grimshaw never stopped praying, earnestly prayed and prayed for his son, but it seemed all to no avail. Then on his deathbed the son came to visit Mr Grimshaw and he saw his father there, but still he could not turn from his drink. But the remembrance of his father after his death remained with him, particularly his prayers and his holiness of life. He would be riding Grimshaw's horse and he would say to the horse, "You used to carry a saint, now you carry a devil." And he was deeply filled with deep remorse for his sin. And then he himself became very ill when he was 31 and he began to seek the Lord, and he himself was saved. He died not long after that and on his deathbed he said, "What will my father say when he sees me in heaven?" Well, what would he say? He would give all the glory to Jesus Christ, wouldn't he, the one who is pleased to do mighty things in response to the earnest prayers of his people, even to transform demoniacs.

Let's close in prayer.

*Father, we come and we praise you for the Lord Jesus Christ. We thank you that in him all the fullness of the Godhead dwells bodily. We thank you, Lord, that we can be in touch with Christ, that we can know his power in our own lives. Lord, we pray that you would form that connection even tonight in those who do not yet know him. We pray, Lord, that even a weak hand tonight may reach out and find a strong Christ. Come into our midst and do saving work we ask. For Jesus' sake. Amen.*