

# Help Our Unbelief!

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[ 0 : 0 0 ]     Open your Bibles to the Gospel of Mark. We have been traveling through the Gospel of Mark for some time now. Now we did, for those of you who have been here or for those of you who have gone on the internet and listened, we did take a break for about a month and a half from the Gospel of Mark.

We touched on some other things, marriage, the book of Jude. But we have been back now, this is our second week back in the Gospel of Mark. We are now a little over halfway through the 16 chapters of Mark.

We are in the middle of chapter 9. And this morning we are going to read verses 14 through 29. If you're new with us, then we do something here that may seem strange to you.

But we do it in honor of God's Word. So I want to ask you all, as you turn to Mark chapter 9, to stand and we'll read the Word of God. Mark chapter 9, verse 14.

And when they came to the disciples, they saw a great crowd around them, and scribes arguing with them. And immediately all the crowd, when they saw him, were greatly amazed and ran up to him and greeted him.

[ 1 : 0 3 ]     And he asked them, what are you arguing about with them? And someone from the crowd answered him, teacher, I brought my son to you, for he has a spirit that makes him mute. And whenever it seizes him, it throws him down and he foams and grinds his teeth and becomes rigid.

So I asked your disciples to cast it out. And they were not able. And he answered them, oh, faithless generation, how long am I to be with you?

How long am I to bear with you? Bring him to me. And they brought the boy to him. And when the spirit saw him, immediately it convulsed the boy. And he fell on the ground and rolled about, foaming at the mouth.

And Jesus asked his father, how long has this been happening to him? And he said, from childhood. And it is often cast him into fire and into water to destroy him.

But if you can do anything, have compassion on us and help us. And Jesus said to him, if you can, all things are possible for one who believes.

[ 2 : 0 5 ]     Immediately the father of the child cried out and said, I believe. Help my unbelief. And when Jesus saw that a crowd came running together, he rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it, You mute and deaf spirit, I command you, come out of him and never enter him again.

And after crying out and convulsing him terribly, it came out. And the boy was like a corpse, so that most of them said, he is dead. But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him up, and he arose.

And when he had entered the house, his disciples asked him privately, why could we not cast it out? And he said to them, this kind cannot be driven out by anything but prayer.

Father, send your spirit now and take your word. Open our eyes to see beautiful things in him. Open our hearts to respond to beat us. In Jesus' name that we pray.

Amen. Have a seat. Last week, in the first part of Mark chapter 9, we came across what I told you was a pivotal moment in the life of three of Jesus' disciples.

[ 3 : 16 ] It was a moment that changed them forever. It is the picture of Jesus standing on a high mountain with Peter and James and John nearby. And suddenly, the glory of God falls, as it often did in the Old Testament, in the days of the wilderness wanderings in the form of a cloud.

And the glory of God shines through Christ, showing his indescribable, divine magnificence to his disciples. And there, on top of the mountain, appear Moses, the great lawgiver, and Elijah, the great prophet of the Old Testament.

And they bear witness to the greatness of Christ simply by being there. And I said to you that that event changed those three men forever. So that we turned to 2 Peter and we saw Peter reflecting upon that day on the mountain when he saw the glory.

We saw how John describes in the opening passage of his gospel how he says that we have seen his glory. These men were changed forever with this mountaintop experience that they had.

But the reality is, like all mountaintop experiences, like all great spiritual moments, at some point in time, we have to go down to the bottom of the mountain. And usually, when we get to the bottom of the mountain, when we come away from a great spiritual experience, and I doubt that any of us, I know that none of us, have experienced anything like these three men experienced there on that day.

[ 4 : 43 ] But we've had, most of us, those of us who are believers, have had moments where we have felt drawn especially close to the Lord. It may have been in a worship service, or it may have been in a prayer time, it may have been when you were away at a conference hearing other speakers.

But you have had those moments where the Lord has really shown himself to you, and really revealed things to you from his word, and begun to change you, and work upon you. And then you find yourself the next day, or a couple of days later, at work, or at home, holding laundry.

And you're down from the mountain. And usually, at the bottom of the mountain, there's trouble. You can see that throughout Scripture. It's a general pattern that we see in Scripture that you see, for instance, you see Moses.

So if he receives the Ten Commandments, and that's the glory of God. Just like on this day, the glory of God in the form of a cloud covered the top of the mountain. And Moses had one of his greatest spiritual experiences, but he comes down from the mountain to discover the people of Israel have created an idol.

And they're worshipping an idol, and giving this idol credit for delivering them from Egypt. And Moses has an agonizing, anguishing moment there at the bottom of the mountain. Or there's Elijah, when he defeats the prophets of Baal.

[ 5 : 52 ] And in the next scene, he's hiding for fear in a cave. Or even in the life of Jesus. We see that one of the first high points in the ministry of Jesus at the very beginning is his baptism.

Where the Father speaks from heaven and says, this is my beloved Son. It's the same thing that he says here in chapter 9, during the transfiguration. He says, this is my beloved Son. And then we read on, and we're told that the Spirit drove Jesus out into the wilderness to be tempted by Satan immediately after his baptism.

So he gives this spiritually high moment, this great moment. The Father speaks. The Spirit descends like a dove. It's a great moment. John the Baptist testifies that Jesus is the Christ.

And then the next thing you know, Jesus is in the wilderness, squaring off in the midst of hunger and pain with Satan himself. Well, the same thing I think is happening here for both Jesus and these three men.

They have this moment, and now they're at the bottom of the mountain. And there are seven things that I want us to recognize from this text this morning, that I want us to take note of from this text.

[ 6 : 55 ] And the first one is just that fact, that very fact that at the bottom of the mountain, there's usually trouble. So let's take a look at the trouble, beginning in verse 14. They've just arrived at the bottom of the mountain.

It says, and when they came to the disciples, the nine that are left down at the bottom, they saw a great crowd around them and scribes arguing with them. So they've been walking down the mountain.

And as we read earlier, these three disciples have been asking Jesus some theological questions, and Jesus has been teaching them. And that would have been an amazing experience. You have this personal time to Christ coming down the mountain after seeing this great thing that he's teaching you.

And I can imagine that they're learning. Their eyes are being opened to certain things. And then there down at the bottom, off in the distance, there are the other disciples that have been left behind.

And there's a crowd. And there are scribes. And there's arguing and fussing and fighting. And there's a promotion. And something bad is happening. And then we're told that when the crowd sees Jesus, they run toward him.

[ 8 : 01 ] It says that they were amazed. And they ran up to him. And they greeted him. And he asked him, why? What are you arguing about with them? He's either speaking to the disciples or the crowd.

We're not certain. But he says to those who run toward him, Why are you arguing with these scribes? What's happening? What's going on? There's trouble here. And they're thrown into the midst of a controversy immediately after coming down.

And there's usually trouble ahead of us after we've received some great blessing of the Lord. The second thing that I want us to see from this passage is that whether it's in a time of trouble or whether it's in a time of ease and comfort, we have all been given a charge.

We have a mission set before us. And yet this text will teach us that if we attempt to accomplish the mission that God has laid before us, if we attempt to accomplish that on our own, we will fail.

We cannot, in our own power and in our own strength, accomplish the mission that Christ has given to us. Take a look. I'll show you. Verse 17. It says, Literally what this text says is that these disciples were not strong.

[ 9 : 28 ] They weren't strong to cast out the demon. They didn't have the necessary power to do it. And that's significant within the context of the Gospel of Mark. Because if you will just turn back a couple of pages in your Bible to chapter 6 of the Gospel of Mark, Jesus has previously sent out His 12 disciples with a mission to accomplish in Galilee.

In verse 7 of chapter 6, we are told that He called the 12 and began to send them out two by two and gave them authority over unclean spirits. He charged them to take nothing for their journey except a staff, no bread, no bag, no money in their belts, but to wear sandals and not put on two tunics.

And He said to them, Whenever you enter a house, stay there until you depart from there. And if any place will not receive you and will not listen to you when you leave, shake off the dust that is on your feet as a testimony against them. And then notice this, it says, So they went out and proclaimed that people should repent, and they cast out many demons and anointed with oil many who were sick and healed them.

Jesus has previously given His disciples a mission, a task to accomplish, and central to that task at this point in time in salvation history, at this point during the earthly ministry of Jesus, central to that task is the defeat of demonic powers, the casting out of demons.

That is central to the ministry that Jesus has given to them at this point in time. And so when this man brings his child to them to have this demon cast out, he's not bringing them to do something that they've never done before.

[ 11 : 01 ] They have been successful at this ministry. They have cast out demons. They have healed the sick. They have proclaimed the message of repentance just as Jesus did. They have done these things. And yet here we are told they are not strong to do it.

They're unable to do it. And I'm convinced that the reason that they're unable to do it, as we'll see in a few minutes, is that they were trying to do it in their own strength. You notice what it says there in chapter 6?

It says that Jesus gave them authority to do this. They didn't have any intrinsic power of their own, and we don't have any intrinsic power of our own to accomplish great things for God.

They didn't have the power within themselves to cast out demons and heal the sick. Theirs was a borrowed power. Theirs was a power on loan channeled through them, but the authority came from Jesus.

The demons are scared of Christ. They run from Christ, but they have a secondary authority next to Christ. And as long as they're operating in His power and His authority, they're able to do it.

[ 11 : 58 ] Here, suddenly, they're not able to. They're not strong to do it. They don't have the power to accomplish it. And I think the same thing is true for you and I and for us as a church.

We also have a mission. It's not identical to what Jesus told the disciples to do here in Mark chapter 6. There's a lot of overlap. Our mission is found in the Great Commission in Matthew, that we are to go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey all that Christ taught us.

Christ says, I will be with you forever. That's the Great Commission. That's the mission that He's given to the church and to His people. In this age, we are to be about that at all times. There is overlap.

We preach a message of repentance and salvation in Christ. They were preaching a message of repentance. There will be times when we encounter real demonic powers at work, just as they did.

I'm not convinced that it's as prevalent today as it was at this time in salvation history, but I think it's real and it happens. There's overlap. We do have a distinct mission to go out and make disciples of all the nations.

[ 13 : 07 ] In fact, our mission statement as a church at Church of the Cross is very simple. We exist to glorify God by making disciples of Jesus Christ. It's not complicated. You don't need a lot of programs to do it.

You don't need a lot of committees and teams and ministries to do it. It's very simple. We're here to make disciples and to glorify God in the pursuit of that ministry. But if we try to do that in our own strength, by our own ingenuity, with our own ideas and our own schemes, and with our own power, we as the disciples, we will fail.

Because ours is a borrowed authority. It's a power alone. Just before he gives the Great Commission, Jesus says, All authority has been given to me.

In other words, I'm sovereign. I have all authority. I have all power. And then he says, Therefore, go. In other words, everything that we do in ministry, anything that we're able to accomplish, is rooted in and fueled by the sovereign authority of Christ over all things.

It is a borrowed authority every step of the way. And whenever we begin to presume that we can accomplish things on our own for Christ, we will fail.

[ 14 : 25 ] The disciples learned that lesson. And probably you have learned that lesson over and over as I have. The good news is that the third thing that we see in this text is that while we lack power, Christ has all power for the accomplishing of the mission.

I want you to take a look and see what happens when Jesus encounters this demon. In verse 21, it says, We're told that Jesus asked the father, How long has this been happening to him?

And he said, From childhood. So from the time this boy was very young. Now, he's probably either a young man, he's at the end of childhood because he's called a child later in the text.

He's not yet quite an adult, but he's an older child now. And from the time that he was very small, his father tells Jesus, he has been suffering at the hands of this demon.

Which means that this is a particularly difficult case. One of the things you learn as you read through the Gospels is you'll learn that not all demons are the same, and not all sicknesses are the same, and they're not all as easily dealt with as some others.

[ 15 : 32 ] This would have been a particularly difficult case. A demon that's been possessing his voice since he was a small child was able to control him physically to a certain degree, prevent him from speaking. It's a tough, tough case.

In verse 22, he describes all this, He casts him into the fire and the water, tries to destroy him, and then listen, this is key here. The Father says, but if you can do anything, have compassion on us and help us.

If you're able to do this, Jesus, would you have compassion, and would you help us? And Jesus' response is amazing. He responds by repeating the man's words back to him.

If you're able, I kind of read it, I don't know if that's right, because you don't get the tone of how Jesus spoke, and Mark doesn't give it to us clearly, but as I was reading it, I thought Jesus was saying, if you're able, really, if you're able, and then Jesus says, all things are possible to him who believes.

And then, with great ease, with great ease, Jesus continues on, and he casts out the demon. Take a look down at verse 25.

[ 16 : 46 ] When Jesus saw that a great crowd came running together, he rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it, you mute and deaf spirit, I command you, come out of him, and never enter him again. That's authority.

Not only come out, but you can't ever come back. And then after crying out and convulsing him terribly, it came out, and the boy was like a corpse, so that most of them said he's dead. But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him up, and he arose.

This is no great difficulty for Christ. Nine disciples can't accomplish this. All right? We'll even say eight, since Judas is in the mix, and we know that he's not a real believer.

But eight disciples, men who have cast out demons in the past, men who have done mighty works in the name of Christ, cannot do it, and Jesus merely speaks to the demon, and the demon shudders and leaves, and he can never come back.

Christ has all the power necessary to accomplish his mission. All of it. It will never reside in us, but to the degree that we remain dependent upon him, to that degree will we have the power and the strength and the ability to do the things that he calls us to do.

[ 17 : 53 ] Not just in the accomplishing of the great commission, which is for all of us, but in the accomplishing of the smaller missions that he gives you in your life. Maybe the thing that he has been really challenging with is to actually be bold enough to go next door to your neighbor and knock on their door and get to know them and wait for an opportunity to share the gospel with them.

Maybe it's something as small as that. Or for many of us who are still raising small children, one of the things that God has charged us with is to raise our children up in the word and the point of the Christ and everything that we do and we get tired and we become lax and we become lazy at times and we don't always do the things that we need to be doing with our children.

And I think that that happens when we're relying on our own power, but when we realize that Christ has the power for the accomplishment of that mission, then we'll receive courage. We'll receive strength.

We'll be in that moment. He has his power. And just so you don't miss how necessary this power is, here's the fourth thing that I want you to see from this text is that the reality that we are facing and the trouble that we face, whether it's at the bottom of a mountain of spiritual, of a spiritually great experience or an everyday life, the challenge that we are facing is a real, evil, spiritual, and powerful opposition toward the mission that Christ experienced.

This is a real demon here at work. I've read commentators who would come through this passage and say, well, it's clearly the case of epilepsy and the ancient writers mistook epilepsy for demon possession.

[ 19 : 37 ] So we don't really, this is not really any kind of demon possession. This is more about, if any kind of miracle takes place, it's a miracle of healing and it enables this young boy to speak and hear and gets rid of this convulsion.

This is merely a severe case of epilepsy that Jesus is dealing with or a severe case of deafness and muteness that's leading to these other symptoms.

One of the things that I would point out, though, is if you just turn back in your Bible, probably one page in your Bible, but if you just turn back to chapter seven, there's a story beginning in verse 31 of chapter seven and going down to verse 37.

We won't read the whole thing, but there is a story there in Mark chapter seven in which Jesus heals a man who is deaf and unable to speak clearly, barely able to speak at all.

A man with a very similar condition to this boy, and yet there's no talk of demon possession in Mark chapter seven, no talk of casting out a demon. It's merely a healing. So it's not as if Mark and Jesus, when these events were occurring, it's not as if they are unable to distinguish between a physical illness and a spiritual and spiritual oppression.

[ 20 : 47 ] They're well aware of the difference. The ancients are not ignorant. They practiced medicine, and they understood the difference between spiritual oppression and physical illness.

Jesus understood the difference. That's why sometimes he casts out a demon, and sometimes he heals, even if externally things sometimes look the same. My point is to say here, is that this is real.

This is a demon at work. And while we may not experience this in our everyday lives, I'm convinced that we don't experience this to the degree that they experience it in the New Testament, but I'm also convinced that we often miss it.

I am. I do think that there is something to you as you read through the book of Acts. At the beginning of the book of Acts, there's a lot of talk about demons and casting out demons, and by the time you get to the end of the book of Acts, there's very little discussion of it.

There's very little discussion of it in the epistles that come back, that come later. I am convinced that this overt demonic activity tapers off a bit in the New Testament, but it never goes away.

[ 21 : 49 ] And I don't believe that it's gone away today. And I think that we fall into one of two errors often. Either we will view everything as caused by the demonic, and so we will look at people who are sick, and we will think that they are somehow inflicted by a demon, rather than addressing the fact that they have an actual physical illness, and we'll give them some sort of blame for that.

Or, and this is far more likely in our culture, we will dismiss the possibility of the involvement of evil spirits altogether.

And there will be those who suffer year after year and languish under demonic oppression because we refuse to acknowledge that it's real and that it exists.

We're far more likely to fall into that trap, I believe. But we can fall into either of those. And my point here, and one of the things I think that Mark wants us to see is that we are facing, we are facing real, spiritual, evil bounds at work.

Satan would prevent us and do all that he can to prevent us from accomplishing the mission that God has given us. Satan would, Satan would blind the eyes of your children, as we're told in 1 Corinthians, he blinds the minds of unbelievers.

[ 23 : 04 ] Satan would blind the minds of your children as you present the gospel to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel. He would do that. He would blind the minds of your neighbors so that they couldn't hear the message that you're bringing to them.

He would do all that he can do to prevent us from accomplishing the mission that Christ has given to us. That is real. And when you realize that that is real, that this is not about coming up with a better program or a better scheme or a better way to reach people, that this is about a real spiritual battle, then I think you'll begin to sense your desperate need of the power of Christ rather than your own power.

Which leads us to ask a very important question, is how do we, how do we connect to the power of Christ? Obviously, the disciples at one time, the power of Christ was at work for them, and now here, the power of Christ is not at work for them.

How can we ensure that Christ is working by the power of the Holy Spirit mightily through us to accomplish the mission? I think the key is faith.

It's right here in the passage. Look how Jesus responds when he finds out that his disciples are unable to cast out this demon. Verse 19, he answers them, Oh, faithless generation, how long am I to be with you?

[ 24 : 30 ] How long am I to bear with you? They're a faithless generation, he says. Faithless. He diagnoses their problem.

Their problem is that it's not that they didn't say the right words, they didn't come up with the right incantation, or if they didn't approach it with enough boldness or enough self-assurance. Their problem, the disciples' problem in this moment, is that they lack faith in Christ.

That's a reality that can happen to us even if Christ has done mighty things to us. Even if we have, even if we've done great, God has done great things through us for ministry, even if he's accomplished things through us in the past, there is always the danger that we will slip into a weak, little, small, pathetic, ineffective faith.

And Jesus would look at us and we would say, why is this not working? Why is this not? Why are these things not happening? Why? And the reasons may be, it will not always be, but the reasons may be, I'm faithless.

I'm faithless. Generation, it says. Faith unites us to Christ. Faith connects us to Christ so that not only does His righteousness cover us, but His Spirit comes to live within us and His Spirit begins to work powerfully in and through us.

[ 25 : 58 ] But you must obey. You must, you must believe. This is, this is Christianity 101. This is not, this is not simply about accomplishing a mission or fulfilling a charge.

This is Christianity 101. The gospel is the basic message that we are powerless to save ourselves. We are, we deserve God's wrath, we are headed to hell, we deserve nothing else, nothing less for our sins, and we are powerless to alter that destiny.

And yet, Christ comes and He lays down His life on our behalf so that we trust in His power and we trust in His righteousness rather than our own. He saves us, He delivers us, He redeems us.

That is the gospel. The gospel message is a message of stop relying on yourself. Stop trying to contribute to your own, to your own righteousness in the sight of God.

Stop. You can never attend church enough to be righteous in God's sight. You can never read your Bible enough. You can never practice enough spiritual disciplines to be righteous in His sight.

[ 27 : 06 ] But what you can do, is trust in Jesus and have His perfect righteousness cover you. Have the power of the cross cast a shadow over your life and you stand before Him guiltless, spotless on the day of judgment.

This is not just about accomplishing the mission. This is about understanding what Christianity is all about. That there's real spiritual issues at work and the ultimate spiritual issue is heaven or hell and we are headed for hell apart from Christ.

But the power of Christ is so great and His compassion is so great that He can save us if we will but trust in Him.

We must trust in Him. There's something that happens towards the end of this passage that I think is... It first threw me for a bit of a loop because I couldn't understand exactly what Jesus was really saying there.

In verse 28, His disciples asked Him directly, Jesus, why couldn't we cast the demon out? Why are we unable to do this? And what you expect Jesus to say is, well, I told you earlier you were faithless so the reason you cannot cast out the demon is because you lack faith.

[ 28 : 23 ] And in fact, if you read the account in the Gospel in Matthew chapter 17, you'll find that that's exactly what Jesus told the disciples. One of the things that you can do that's interesting is you can weave the Gospel accounts together because Mark is not telling us everything that happened.

These are a brief made of accounts of these events that took place. So Mark is not telling us everything that Jesus said in this event just as Matthew does not tell us everything that Jesus said in this event.

You can sort of weave them together. You can harmonize them at times to get a more complete picture. And as you read this account in the Gospel of Matthew, you find that when the disciples ask this question, Jesus tells them about their lack of faith, how small their faith is.

Mark leaves that out because I think Mark has already made it clear that a lack of faith is the main part of the problem, but Mark wants to record something else that Jesus says to help us see the problem evident in our own lives.

Jesus says, this time cannot be driven out by anything but prayer. Well, Jesus didn't pray.



[ 29 : 32 ] Right. It can't be driven out by anything but prayer, but you didn't pray, Jesus. You just told him to leave and never come back and he obeyed you, so what do you mean that you can't be driven out by anything but prayer?

Well, for us, for us, prayer is evidence of trust in the one to whom you pray. Jesus doesn't need to pray here because the power resides within himself, but the disciples are to accomplish this.

The disciples must trust in Christ and call upon Christ for help. They must pray, and in praying that will give evidence that they have faith, but the disciples, they didn't call to Christ.

They didn't run looking for Christ. In fact, it appears here that it's quite possible that the crowd ran more quickly than the disciples to reach Jesus. The crowd, we are told, was amazed when they saw him and they wanted to greet him and meet him.

The disciples, not so much. They didn't cry out to him. If they had cried out to him, if they had called up him, if they had depended upon him, if they had called to him in faith, there would have been evidence that their faith was strong and genuine and real and the power of Christ would have worked through them and they would have been able to accomplish this great miracle.

[ 30 : 50 ] But they did not. faith, faith, faith is evidenced by prayer in our lives. But there's something else that I believe Mark wants us to see about prayer in here and the relationship of prayer to faith.

And that it's not just that prayer gives evidence of faith. It's that prayer actually strengthens faith. Let me show you what I mean. I want you to see what this father says in verse 24 where Jesus, in response to Jesus saying all things are possible to the one who believes.

Verse 24, it says, Immediately the father and the child cried out and said, I believe. This is, he's addressing Jesus so this is in a sense a prayer. I mean, face to face so not technically but it is in a sense like prayer.

He's addressing Jesus and the first thing he says is, I believe. So first of all, here we see his prayer, his crying out to Christ is an evidence of faith. I believe, he says.

And then he says, help my unbelief. So prayer first gives evidence that this man does believe in Jesus. He has faith in Jesus. After all, he didn't say earlier that I brought my child to your disciples for them to cast out the human.

[ 32 : 05 ] He says, I brought it to you and he got second grade. Alright? But he was looking for Jesus initially. I brought him to you, Jesus, so that you would cast out this demon. And now he says, I believe.

So this prayer, this crying out to Christ is evidence that his faith is real, but it's more than that because it goes on and he cries out, help my unbelief. I believe, but I don't believe enough.

My faith is not strong enough and so I need you to strengthen my faith so that prayer, more than just evidence of faith, prayer is one of the means that God uses to strengthen and shore up our faith.

because if you're like me, it just wavers at times. There are just times, there are days, there are things in front of me that I'm just, either I begin to rely upon my own strength and my own skills and try to accomplish it myself or I just waver in the face of a difficult task and I think I can't, I don't think this is going to be done.

I just don't think this is going to happen. And in that moment, if we will stop, stop worrying, stop being filled with anxiety over the tasks before us or the troubles that have come our way, if we will stop worrying and stop being filled with anxiety but instead come to Christ in prayer and pour out our hearts to Him and say, I do believe in you but not enough.

[ 33 : 29 ] I don't believe enough to deal with this. I can't handle this. I can't face this. I can't overcome this. I can't accomplish the task that you've given me. I cannot do it unless, unless you strengthen my faith.

You see that small little bit of faith in the first place was a gift of God's grace from the beginning. Faith is not something we muster up in ourselves and we're able to create and conjure up and we can just go from unbelief to belief out of our own sheer willpower.

The scriptures are clear. Faith is a gift that God gives to His people. And so if He's the original giver of the gift, if we want more of it and we need more of it for the task in front of us, why would we do anything else but come and ask Him?

Strengthen my faith. So here, let me ask you, let me ask you some questions this morning as we close here. What is it?

Identify it for you. What is it? What, besides the Great Commission which we are together trying to accomplish? What is it? What has God set before you? What task? What goal?

[ 34 : 40 ] What ministry? What mission has He set before you and said, do this? And you're either in the middle of it and you don't think it's going to work out or you haven't started yet because you're not sure. What task is it that you desperately need to have greater faith for?

Is there something for you that fits in that category? And then if there's not something that fits for you in that category, there's a much more important question that I want you to ask yourself and that is, are you still trusting in your own power and your own strength or in your own goodness or in your own niceness in order to be accepted by God?

He will not accept you on the basis of your niceness. All our righteousness is as filthy rags before you. He will only accept you on the basis of faith alone.

And I wonder, if there are not even in this small of a group, I wonder if there are not some of us here who have never laid aside everything else.

It's not kind of you. I just trust in you. I've got nothing else to offer. Trust in you and your blood to come in my sins. And I'm not nothing else. Have you ever done that?

[ 35 : 56 ] Let's pray. Let's pray.