

CALL TO ME — HELP MY UNBELIEF!

Greetings in the name of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

Good morning, Church! Praise the Lord! Today we continue our series, CALL TO ME. Throughout this series we have been looking at people in the Bible who called upon God in different situations. Some called Him in pain. Some called Him while waiting. Some called Him when they needed forgiveness. Some called Him when the situation looked impossible. Today we come to **Mark 9:14–29**, and we meet an ordinary father with an extraordinary burden. He is not a prophet. He is not a priest. He is not one of the disciples. He is simply a father who loves his son, and his family has been living with a painful situation for many years. His son is suffering terribly under an evil spirit. The father cannot fix it. His family cannot fix it. Even Jesus' disciples tried to help him, but they could not. Have you ever reached that kind of place in your life? You have tried what you know to do. You have asked people for help. You have prayed. You have waited. But the situation is still there. Sometimes the hardest situations in our lives are the situations we cannot control. If I have a problem with myself, perhaps I can change something. But what if the problem concerns someone I deeply love? What if it is my child? What if it is my spouse? What if it is my family? What if I have done everything I know to do and nothing seems to change? This father comes to Jesus from exactly that kind of place. And what happens in this story gives us tremendous hope. The father brings his son to Jesus. He brings his disappointment to Jesus. He brings his weak faith to Jesus. And Jesus teaches His disciples that some spiritual battles cannot be faced through human ability or previous experience. We need dependence upon God through prayer. There are three truths I especially want us to carry home today: Believe that Jesus is able. Bring your hardest situation to Him. And understand that prayer is not optional; prayer is our expression of dependence upon God. But there is one more truth holding all three together: Jesus must remain at the center. The power is not in how strong we are. The power is not even in how impressive our prayer sounds. Our confidence is in Jesus Christ.

I. BELIEVE THAT JESUS IS ABLE

When Jesus comes to the disciples, He finds a crowd around them and the scribes arguing with them. Something has gone wrong. Jesus asks what they are arguing about, and a man from the crowd answers. He explains that he brought his son because an evil spirit was tormenting him. Then he says something painful in verse 18: "I asked Your

disciples to drive it out, but they couldn't." Think about the disappointment in those words. The father came expecting help. The disciples had previously been given authority by Jesus over unclean spirits. They had ministered before. They had seen God work before. But this time they could not do it. Their previous experience did not guarantee present victory. Jesus responds in verse 19, "You unbelieving generation...how long will I be with you? How long must I put up with you?" Unbelief is a major issue in this passage. Later, when the father speaks directly with Jesus, Jesus tells him in verse 23, "Everything is possible for the one who believes." We need to understand this correctly. Jesus is not teaching that if we believe strongly enough, we can force God to give us whatever we want. Biblical faith is not confidence in ourselves. Biblical faith is confidence in God. Faith says, "Lord, I may not know what You will do, but I know who You are. I may not understand your plan, but I trust your character. I may not see the answer yet, but I know you are able."

The father's response in verse 24 is one of the most honest prayers in the Bible: **"I do believe; help my unbelief!"** He does not pretend. He doesn't say, "Jesus, my faith is perfect." He essentially says, "Lord, there is faith in me, but there is also struggle in me. I believe You, but part of me is afraid. Help me where my faith is weak." Church, that is real faith. Sometimes we think faith means never having questions, never feeling fear, and never struggling. But this man shows us something beautiful: weak faith can still come to a strong Savior. The important thing is not that your faith feels enormous. The important thing is that your faith is placed in Jesus. A small hand can hold onto a strong Savior. Maybe today you are praying about something and saying, "I believe God can do it, but I am also afraid. I believe God is faithful, but I don't understand why this is taking so long." You can pray this father's prayer: "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief."

And here is something we must never forget: our faith is not based merely on what we hope Jesus might do. Our faith rests upon what Jesus has already done. Jesus went to the cross for our sins. He died. He was buried. On the third day He rose again. The resurrection is the foundation of Christian confidence. When everything looked finished, God brought victory. Therefore, when we face something we cannot understand, we look to the risen Christ. We do not say, "I believe in my ability." We say, "I believe in Jesus." We do not say, "My faith will make this happen exactly as I want." We say, "Jesus is Lord, Jesus is able, and I trust Him with the outcome." Church, believe. Believe when you can see the answer, and believe when you cannot. Believe when the door opens, and trust Him when the door remains closed. Believe when you understand what God is doing, and trust His heart when you do not understand His plan.

II. BRING YOUR HARDEST SITUATION TO JESUS

After Jesus speaks about unbelief, He gives one simple command in verse 19: “Bring him to Me.” I want us to remember those words. Bring him to Me. The disciples could not help him, but Jesus says, “Bring him to Me.” The father has been carrying this burden for years, but Jesus says, “Bring him to Me.” The situation looks impossible, but Jesus says, “Bring him to Me.” Church, this is one of the greatest invitations in this passage. Whatever you are carrying today, bring it to Jesus. Do not only carry it in your mind. Do not only discuss it with everybody else. Do not allow worry to carry it for you. Bring it to Jesus. There are times when God uses doctors, counselors, pastors, family members, friends, and other people to help us, and we should be grateful for them. But no human helper can replace Jesus. The father had already gone to the disciples, and they failed. Yet the failure of the disciples did not mean the failure of Jesus. This is important for the church to understand. Christians may disappoint you. A leader may disappoint you. A church may disappoint you. Someone you trusted may not have the answer you expected. Do not allow the weakness of people to make you walk away from Jesus. Bring your situation to Him.

Verse 20 says they brought the boy to Jesus. That action itself is powerful. The father could not heal his son, but he could bring his son to Jesus. Parents, there are things you cannot do for your children. You can love them. You can teach them. You can guide them. You can correct them. You can provide for them. But you cannot control every decision they will make, and you cannot transform their hearts. So what can you do? Bring them to Jesus in prayer. Husband, bring your wife to Jesus in prayer. Wife, bring your husband to Jesus in prayer. Bring your marriage to Jesus. Bring your children to Jesus. Bring your future to Jesus. Bring your disappointment to Jesus. Bring the situation you have stopped talking about because you are tired of explaining it. Bring it to Him.

Then Jesus asks the father in verse 21, “How long has this been happening to him?” The father answers, “From childhood.” Think about those words. This was not yesterday’s problem. This family had carried it for years. Jesus already knew what was happening, but He allows the father to tell the story. There is compassion in that moment. Jesus is not too busy to hear the history of our pain. Maybe you have something that did not begin last week. Maybe you have prayed about it for years. Maybe other people have forgotten about it because they moved on with their lives, but you are still carrying it. Jesus cares. Bring even the long story to Him.

The father then says, “If You can do anything, have compassion on us and help us.” Notice that he says “us.” His son is suffering, but the father is suffering with him. When someone we love hurts, we hurt too. Then Jesus challenges his “if.” The question is not whether Jesus has power. The challenge is whether the father will trust Him. Church, sometimes our hard situation becomes so large in our eyes that Jesus begins to look small. This passage reverses our perspective. Do not measure Jesus by the size of your

problem. Measure your problem by the greatness of Jesus. Your situation may be too difficult for you, but it is not too difficult for Christ. Bring Him the thing you cannot change. Bring Him the person you cannot fix. Bring Him the door you cannot open. Bring Him the burden you cannot carry. And after you bring it, trust Him with it.

III. PRAYER IS ESSENTIAL BECAUSE WE CANNOT WIN SPIRITUAL BATTLES IN OUR OWN STRENGTH

Jesus commands the unclean spirit to leave the boy, and it obeys Him. What the disciples could not do, Jesus does. Then Jesus takes the boy by the hand, raises him, and he stands up. Later, when Jesus enters the house, the disciples privately ask Him, "Why couldn't we drive it out?" That is a good question. They had ministered before. Jesus had previously given them authority. Why did they fail now? Mark 9:29 gives Jesus' answer: "This kind can come out by nothing but prayer." Matthew's parallel account also emphasizes their little faith. Put together, we see an important truth: the disciples needed continuing faith and prayerful dependence upon God.

Church, previous spiritual experience does not remove our need for present dependence upon God. Maybe yesterday you prayed. Pray today. Maybe God used you powerfully last year. Depend upon Him today. Maybe you have been a Christian for twenty or thirty years. You still need Jesus today. Maybe you have preached hundreds of sermons. You still need to pray before the next sermon. Maybe you have taught Bible studies for years. You still need the Holy Spirit. Maybe you have raised two children and think you know how to raise the third. You still need God's wisdom. Yesterday's experience cannot replace today's dependence on Jesus.

This is where prayer becomes so important. Prayer is not simply something we do before we begin the real work. Prayer is part of the real work. Prayer says, "God, I cannot do this without You." Prayer says, "Lord, my wisdom is not enough. My experience is not enough. My strength is not enough. I need You." Sometimes we pray only after everything else fails. We try our plans. We make calls. We ask everybody. We worry. We lose sleep. Finally we say, "I guess all I can do now is pray." Church prayer should not be our last option. Prayer should be our first response.

But we also need to understand what Jesus is not saying. Prayer is not a magic formula. We do not control spiritual power by saying certain words. The power belongs to God. Prayer keeps us dependent upon Him. That was part of the disciples' problem. They had authority before, but they could never possess Christ's power independently from Christ. Ministry without dependence becomes an empty activity. We can have programs without prayer. We can have music without prayer. We can preach without prayer. We can have meetings without prayer. We can have plans, budgets, strategies, and experience without prayer. But if we want spiritual fruit, we must remain dependent upon God.

Jesus Himself gives us the greatest example. If anyone could have said, “I don’t need to pray,” it would have been Jesus. Yet the Gospels repeatedly show Jesus praying. Before major moments, Jesus prayed. In the wilderness, Jesus depended upon His Father. Before choosing the twelve, Jesus prayed. At Gethsemane, Jesus prayed. On the cross, Jesus prayed. If Jesus prayed, how much more should we pray? Church, there are battles that intelligence cannot win. There are hearts that arguments cannot change. There are burdens money cannot remove. There are spiritual realities human strength cannot overcome. We need God. Therefore, we pray. Pray for your children. Pray for your marriage. Pray for your church. Pray before making decisions. Pray when you are strong. Pray when you are weak. Pray when you see results. Pray when you see nothing changing. Do not stop praying simply because the answer has not yet appeared. Prayer is not proof that we are weak Christians. Prayer is the confession that we have a strong God.

IV. OUR CONFIDENCE IS IN JESUS, NOT IN OURSELVES

Now bring the entire story together. Who could solve the problem? The father could not. The son could not. The disciples could not. The crowd could not. Jesus could. That is why Jesus must remain the center of this sermon. If we leave today simply saying, “I need stronger faith,” we have missed something. If we leave saying, “I need to pray harder so I can make things happen,” we have also missed something. The Gospel message is not, “Become strong enough.” The Gospel message is, “Come to the One who is strong enough.” The father’s faith was imperfect. The disciples had failed. Yet Jesus remained powerful, compassionate, and sufficient.

Look at the movement of the passage. The father comes with a hard situation. Jesus says, “Bring him to Me.” The father comes with struggling faith. He cries, “I believe; help my unbelief!” The disciples come with failure. Jesus teaches them about prayer. Every road in this story leads back to dependence upon Jesus. That is where our lives must lead as well. Bring your hard situation to Jesus. Bring your weak faith to Jesus. Bring your unanswered questions to Jesus. Bring your failure to Jesus. Then stay dependent upon Him through prayer.

And ultimately, our greatest problem was much bigger than anything we could solve. Our greatest problem was sin. We could not save ourselves. Religion could not save us. Good works could not save us. Our own righteousness could not save us. So God did for us what we could never do for ourselves. He sent Jesus Christ. Jesus lived the life we could not live. He went to the cross and bore our sins. He died in our place. He was buried, and on the third day He rose again. The cross looked like defeat, but God turned it into victory. The tomb looked final, but Jesus walked out alive. Therefore, Christian faith is not positive thinking. Our confidence has a name: Jesus Christ.

Maybe today you are carrying a situation that feels impossible. Hear Jesus saying, "Bring it to Me." Maybe your faith is struggling. Pray, "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief." Maybe you have been trying to win a battle in your own strength. Hear Jesus reminding His disciples: pray. Depend upon God. Maybe you have failed before. The disciples failed too, but Jesus did not throw them away. He brought them into the house and taught them. Failure became a classroom. Jesus was preparing them to understand that they could never serve Him independently of Him.

So Church, here are the truths I want us to carry home. Believe that Jesus is able. Bring your hardest situation to Him. Make prayer essential in your life. And keep your confidence in Jesus Christ. If you believe, trust Him. But remember: faith does not mean God must do exactly what you imagine. Faith says, "Lord, You are able, You are good, and I trust You." If you have a hard situation, bring it to Him. Do not carry tomorrow's burden with today's strength. Bring it to Jesus. If you are facing a spiritual battle, pray. Do not depend only on yesterday's experience. Today's battle needs today's dependence upon God.

I want to finish with the father's prayer: "I do believe; help my unbelief!" What an honest prayer. Maybe that is your prayer today. "Jesus, I believe You are God, but help my unbelief. Jesus, I believe You care for my family, but help my unbelief. Jesus, I believe You have a plan, but help my unbelief. Jesus, I believe You are with me, but help my unbelief." You do not need to hide your weakness from Jesus. Bring it to Him. The same Jesus who received this desperate father receives people who come to Him today. The same Jesus who had compassion is still compassionate. The same Jesus who was greater than the disciples' failure is greater than our weakness. And the Jesus who died and rose again is worthy of our complete trust.

Church, when the situation is hard - bring it to Jesus. When your faith is weak, bring it to Jesus. When people cannot help you, bring it to Jesus. When you don't know how you will overcome, pray and depend upon Jesus. Do not trust in the size of your faith. Trust in the greatness of your Savior. Believe. Bring it to Him. Pray. Depend on Him. And leave the result in the hands of Jesus Christ. May the Lord bless you Amen!