

There are some who would say that what this boy and his family were going through was a living hell. What could be worse than the misery that this hellish demon was causing? Yet hell is where God is not present. In hell the demons have all authority. And in hell there is no hope whatsoever. So no, this was not a living hell. Because Jesus was present there with the boy and his family. He was there for the boy and for his family giving them hope. And He, with an authority greater than hell, drove the demon from the boy once and for all.

The boy and his family, therefore, were not going through a living hell. And neither are you no matter what you are going through, no matter how hopeless you may feel. Because Jesus is as much here with you as He was with the boy, and He has authority over everything that is afflicting you in your life.

Well then, if this boy and his family were not being put through hell, exactly what do we call it? How about a blessing? The foaming at the mouth, the grinding of the teeth, the throwing down to the ground becoming rigid, the casting of the boy into fire and into water to destroy him, and all this from his childhood, we call it a blessing, a blessing from God. Because this great affliction at the hands of the demon drove the father with his boy to Jesus. And whatever drives us to Jesus is a blessing.

So, this father comes with his boy to Jesus, but Jesus is not there at the time. Yet His disciples are. But they struggle with the demon. They simply cannot drive it from the boy. They are frustrated and they are humiliated.

Then Jesus comes, but can He help? His disciples could not. The father turns to Jesus and says, *“If you can, have compassion on us and help us.”* If you can? Not a shining example of faith, is it? This father is a mess. His faith is a mess. He lacks confidence. He is a broken man, helpless and nearly hopeless. And yet this man accomplishes what Jesus’ disciples could not. The disciples try and try, but they are unable to drive the demon from the boy. Yet this father, this complete mess of a man, is able, and the demon is driven out. What does this father have that the disciples do not have? Prayer. *“This kind,”* says Jesus, *“cannot be driven out by anything but prayer.”*

We have prayer too. But do we truly understand what we have? Quite often a church member will ask his pastor to pray for some special request, which is good, and the pastor always will. Yet sometimes the church member words it in such a way making it sound as if the pastor can accomplish more by his praying than can the church member; as if the pastor is some great prayer warrior who offers up powerful prayers to God, prayers which are more effective than the prayers of the average church member.

God forbid that any of us entertain such thoughts as these. Look at the father of the boy in our text. Is he a prayer warrior? Is he offering up a powerful prayer to Jesus? *“I believe,”* he cries pitifully, *“help my unbelief.”* This is his prayer to Jesus. This father, who just admitted that he is unsure whether even Jesus can help, expresses this very thing in his prayer. *“I do believe,”* he says, *“but I also have unbelief. And I am torn between the two. Help me.”*

My friends, this is how we are to pray. Not proudly, but humbly. Not with all our might and strength, but in our pitiful weakness. Not as prayer warriors who have all faith as if to move mountains, but as feeble sinners who struggle between faith and unbelief.

The disciples of Jesus had all faith to cast out the demon. They had confidence. They would be effective in ridding the demon from the boy. Yet they accomplished nothing. Whatever prayer they used to cast out the demon was ineffective because they got in the way of their prayer.

We get in the way of our prayers, too, if we think we are such great prayer warriors who know how to get things done with our powerful prayers. No, my friends, in prayer you and I do nothing more than hide ourselves beneath the cross of Jesus, covering ourselves, not with our shining confidence, but only with His precious blood, and giving everything over to Him. In prayer we become small, not big and great. In prayer we become nothing, and Jesus everything.

This father drove the demon from his boy by his prayer. The disciples could not. But this father gave everything over to Jesus: *“I believe; help my unbelief.”* And Jesus did. He helped his unbelief. And He helped his boy. He drove the demon from his boy. The demon that only prayer could drive out.

In your baptism Jesus drove out the power of hell from you. He cast out the devil, the prince of the demons. Satan was determined to destroy you; to cast you into the fire of hell. But your parents, by prayer, brought you to Jesus. They asked Him to do for you what they could not. When you were baptized, you and your family became nothing, but Jesus everything. They kneeled beneath Jesus’ cross and watched as Jesus washed you with His precious blood.

Jesus gave you faith on the day of your baptism. Yet as a sinner like me, you live daily between faith and unbelief. Do not fear. Cry out to Jesus in prayer, *“I believe; help my unbelief.”* And He does. Friend, He forgives you. He forgives you for your lack of faith. He forgives you because for you He died and rose again. He calls you to faith, and He helps your unbelief. You are weak, but He is strong. You are small, but He is great. You are nothing, but He is everything. He is everything for you.

No demon has the final authority over you. Jesus does. No affliction is too much for Him. No sin too grievous for Him to forgive. Come to Him with everything. Come weak and small, pitiful and afflicted. Yes, what a friend you have in Jesus, and more. He is everything you are not. But He gives everything to you. Amen.