

## Faith to Believe

Mark 11: 22-26

Clearly our text today deals with faith we are expected to have as believers. Faith is something we often discuss but fail to exercise as we should. It is easy to walk by faith when all is well, but it is an entirely different situation when we face adversity and an uncertain future. We must bear in mind that Jesus spoke these words to His disciples at a significant moment in their lives. While they had yet to fully realize all that would transpire, their world was about to change in dramatic fashion, and they would be forced to walk by faith.

It is impossible to overemphasize the need and importance of faith in our lives. The Bible declares that it is impossible to please God without faith. We are expected to walk by faith, not by sight – what we see and experience in the physical realm. Faith is defined in Hebrews 11:1 – **Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.** Faith is the guaranteed assurance of things hoped for, the conviction and proof of things not seen. Faith is essential to a victorious Christian journey. George Bernard Shaw once said, ‘*You see things as they are, and ask “why?” But I dream things that never were, and ask “why not?”*’ Faith sees the impossible and believes the impossible will become reality.

As we continue in Mark’s gospel, I want to discuss the **requirements** Jesus revealed regarding faith as we consider: **Faith to Believe.**

**I. The Exercise of Faith** (22-23) – In these opening verses, Jesus challenged the disciples to exercise their faith. Notice:

**A. The Command** (22) – **And Jesus answering saith unto them, Have faith in God.** This statement was made in regard to their amazement at the withering of the fig tree so quickly. Jesus will use their amazement as an opportunity to teach an eternal truth. He offers a simple statement, yet it is also a very emphatic statement. He commanded the disciples to have faith in God. This was not given for their consideration; Jesus fully expected them to comply with His command and exercise faith in God.

- This statement was given to the disciples, but it applies to everyone who follows the Lord. We are to exercise faith in God. He is the source of our life, our hope, and our strength. In fact, He is the source of all we possess. Everything we have and enjoy in life comes from the good hand of God. We must learn to rely on God to continually provide our every need. We know that we are unable to provide for every situation we face. We even know that God is able to do whatever He

pleases, and yet we doubt Him at times. Dr. Adrian Rogers said, "Faith is not knowing God can; faith is believing God will." We must exercise faith in God.

**B. The Confidence** (23) – *For verily I say unto you, That whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith.* We need to remember that Jesus and the disciples were on their way from Bethany back to Jerusalem. They were very near the Mount of Olives. The text doesn't specifically say, but it appears likely that Jesus may have referred to the Mount of Olives as He spoke these words. It has an elevation of 2,710 feet above sea level. Jesus declared that if the disciples had enough faith, believing in their hearts without any doubt, they could say unto the mountain, "be removed and cast into the sea," and their request would be granted. I can only imagine their amazement at this moment. Such a statement exceeded the wonder of a withering fig tree.

- We must understand that genuine faith is required – faith that believes and does not doubt. That faith must be centered in the Lord. *Have faith in God.* Faith does not rest in the power of faith itself, but in the power of God. One would think such a task would require monumental faith, but a small measure of genuine faith can move mountains. *Matthew 17:20 – And Jesus said unto them...for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you.*

- We need to take a moment to discuss the focus of Jesus' comment to the disciples. While I am convinced God has the power to literally move mountains, and our genuine faith in Him, can also move mountains, Jesus used this to illustrate the power available to them to overcome obstacles in their lives and enjoy victory over defeat. We must always remember that God is sovereign and we are not. He possesses all wisdom and we do not. In order for God to move in accordance to our faith, our faith must be motivated by Him and directed toward Him. I do not believe the Lord is teaching that we can literally cast mountains into the sea apart from the divine will of God. In reality, what good would that do any of us? Who would get the glory in such a situation? What would be the genuine motivation for such an action? Jesus does teach that faith can move the impossible. Faith can bring victory to our lives!

**C. The Conclusion** (24) – *Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them.* What a gracious promise the Lord gives to the disciples, and in essence all who follow Him. We may receive the desires of our hearts if we have faith to believe that God will grant our request. Jesus affirmed His desire to provide that which is needed and desired by those who follow Him. *Matt.7:11 – If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts*

unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?

- I am convinced the average believer lives well below his means spiritually. There is so much at our disposal, but we often lack the faith necessary to receive it! **Matt.7:7-8 – Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: <sup>[8]</sup> For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. John 14:13 – And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. John 15:7 – If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.**
- I must address one issue before we move on from this thought. Jesus is no way implied that faith was a blank check to be filled out and cashed in according to our own desires. That is a popular teaching by many today through the corrupt social gospel that is being proclaimed. It is not affirmed in Scripture and must be rejected as heresy. Notice what we just read in John 15:7. Jesus said – If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you! One must abide in the vine. The branch desires that which the vine supplies. The branch would never want anything contrary to that which the vine offers. **1 John 5:14-15 – And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us: <sup>[15]</sup> And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.** Our requests of faith must be made in accordance to the Father's will for our lives. I for one am thankful that God did not grant every request I have made! **James 4:3 – Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.**

**II. The Expectation in Faith (25-26)** – Finally Jesus revealed what is expected of the believer as they seek the Lord by faith in regard to specific needs. Consider:

**A. The Command (25a)** – **And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any.** Some would argue that Jesus had switched His focus here, but He continued to speak in the same context. He is speaking of praying prayers of faith in order to receive that which we desire from the Lord. As we seek the Lord by faith, we must also be willing to examine our hearts to ensure that we are right with God and our fellow man. If there are issues or animosity toward a brother or sister, we must be willing to forgive that before we pray.

- Prayer is the greatest tool we have in our Christian journey. It is the means by which we communicate with the Lord and bring our requests unto Him. We are commanded to pray without ceasing. Every aspect of our lives should be bathed in prayer. We are expected to pray for others,

not just for our immediate needs. We limit our effectiveness in prayer when we are unwilling to forgive and address the needs in our own lives. We must strive to have a pure heart when we pray.

**B. The Consideration** (25b) – *And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses.* We cannot expect God to hear or answer our prayers if we are unwilling to forgive the trespass of another. There is no doubt that we all fail and miss the mark daily. None live above sin. We are encouraged to confess our sin before the Lord, knowing He is faithful and just to forgive. However, it is hypocritical and even foolish to ask God to forgive our trespasses when we are unwilling to forgive someone else of the same.

**C. The Consequence** (26) – *But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses.* Jesus revealed a sobering word for our consideration. When we refuse to deal with the sin in our lives, which includes refusing to forgive the trespass of another, we cannot expect the Lord to deal favorably with us when we pray. The attitude of our hearts, and our willingness to address personal sin, have a direct bearing on our prayers. God will not hear our prayers, nor answer them, if we fail to forgive others as we should.

- I know it can be difficult to offer forgiveness at times. There may have been wrongs committed that reconciliation has not been sought by the offender. It is difficult to offer forgiveness when it appears the other party doesn't even care about the situation. We are expected to forgive, period. The Lord doesn't apply any stipulations to this command. We must be willing to forgive if we are to receive. Consider all that Jesus endured as He hung on the cross, bearing our sin. Those who abused Him had not sought forgiveness, but He asked the Lord to forgive them because they did not know what they were doing. If Jesus can forgive the greatest injustice of all time, surely, we can forgive too!

**Conclusion:** This has been a compelling and challenging passage. Do we have genuine faith in God? Do we daily exercise our faith, seeking His will for our lives? Are we willing to deal with those areas in our lives that hinder our faith? I know that my faith needs to be increased and I struggle daily with issues that have the potential to hinder my walk with the Lord. We must be willing to seek Him for the needs we have, confessing our sin, forgiving others, and believing by faith!