

HAVE FAITH IN GOD

Mark 11:20-25

Key Verse: 11:22

"Have faith in God,' Jesus answered."

Today Jesus talks with his disciples about the fig tree that withered overnight (20-25). In this dialogue Jesus teaches his disciples what kind of faith they must have. At this time let's pray that we may have the faith Jesus wants us to have.

I. Faith that moves mountains (20-23)

First, Jesus' power and authority (20-21). Verse 20 begins with the words, "In the morning, as they went along..." It was the second day of the Passion Week. They were coming along the road back to Jerusalem. On the way, they saw the fig tree withered from the roots. During the last two days Peter was amazed by many events: Jesus' ordering the two disciples to bring another person's colt without permission; and the two disciples who were sent carrying out the mission absolutely. Peter was again amazed when Jesus cleared the temple with great authority before the envenomed religious leaders. Peter was at the point of fainting because of many amazements. Peter remembered the event when Jesus cursed the fig tree. (21) It was a big surprise to Peter to see the fig tree Jesus had cursed withered from the roots overnight. This fig tree had been in beautiful foliage. How could it be that in

the space of one night, the flourishing fig tree had dried up so wretchedly to the roots!

At this time, he probably thought, "Wasn't it too ruthless to curse an innocent fig tree like that?" Peter's dream of an earthly messianic kingdom to be established by Jesus was no longer tenacious, since Jesus had battered the mundane authorities at the temple. Peter probably thought Jesus' action was one of anomalous severity which would bring disaster upon disaster. Peter was caught by an ominous premonition of a dolorous and cadaverous future because Jesus had offended the religious leaders' pride by clearing the temple (18). But what really surprised him was the authority of Jesus' word. At a word of Jesus, the fig tree dried up completely from the roots. In his amazement, Peter said to Jesus, "Rabbi, look! The fig tree you cursed has withered!" At a word from Jesus, a fig tree in full leaf dried up from the roots. This power and authority was what Peter really wanted to have. Peter wanted to exercise his power and authority over the other disciples. But he had no power and authority because he had no faith.

Second, have faith in God (22,23). How did Jesus help him to have power and authority? Jesus said, "Have faith in God" (22). Jesus believed that Peter and the other disciples could have great power and authority if only they had faith in God. What kind of faith did Jesus want them to have? Look at verse 23. "I tell you the truth, if anyone says to this mountain, 'Go, throw yourself into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart but believes that what he says will happen, it will be done for him." Jesus wanted them to have faith that moves mountains. Jesus helped them to have mountain-moving faith so that they might have power and authority. As we know, a mountain is characteristically immovable. In time past and present, many people have written with awesome respect about mountains because of their loftiness, solemnity and

unchangeableness. There is an episode about Mohammed. In order to demonstrate a miraculous sign before the eyes of his followers, he ordered, "You mountain, come to me!" But the mountain did not move. He did not have power and authority to move the mountain, but he was wise. So Mohammed said, "Then I will go to you." Anyway, he and the mountain got together. His followers were surprised at his expediency. So they decided to follow him continuously. A mountain is too big to move. But Jesus wants his disciples to have faith that moves mountains. To have mountain-moving faith is the same as to have absolute faith. Hebrews 11 is the record of heroes and heroines of faith. They overcame the world with mountain-moving faith, that is, absolute faith. Absoluteness is the major fiat of faith.

When Jesus said, "Have faith in God," it meant, "Our God is Almighty God." When Jesus said, "Have faith in God," it meant, "Our God is Almighty God, so we can do nothing but he can do everything for us when we believe in him." When Jesus said, "Have faith in God," it meant, "Believe in God Almighty absolutely and see the great things God will do for you." We must believe that God made the heavens and the earth out of nothing. Our God is the Almighty Creator God who made the world out of nothing (Ge 1 and 2).

As we know well, in history, all men knelt down before the power of death: Julius Caesar, Genghis Khan, and all people knelt down before the power of death--some quietly, some very sorrowfully. But God raised Jesus from the dead and made him the firstfruits of eternal life (1Co 15:20). The Hebrew people believed that God is the Almighty God who made Aaron's dried staff sprout, bud and blossom. At first, these people were nomad peo-

ple; later, they were slaves. Even though they became a nation, their nation was weak in between world-power nations. But these people were strong because they had faith in God Almighty.

When Jesus said, "Have faith in God," his real meaning was far greater than his literal words. He meant that they should depend on God who is almighty, and conquer the whole world by faith. Once, a father whose son had the symptoms of epilepsy came to Jesus and said, "If you can do anything, take pity on us and help us." "If you can?" said Jesus. "Everything is possible for him who believes" (Mk 9:22,23). Like this father, we are liable to have half-faith. Half-faith is not faith at all. If we have half-faith we cannot experience the power and authority of faith.

Mountain-moving faith usually starts from oneself. One man had many bad habits. Through Bible study, he decided to grow as a disciple of Jesus. Before conversion, he saw Christians as weaklings and bums. But after conversion, when he looked at all other Christians, they looked so holy and mature to him that he felt he was not able to catch up with them. He despaired at his poor spiritual condition. But he decided to have absolute faith in God. He could not help himself much. But when he had absolute faith in Jesus, Jesus gave him the Spirit of Jesus to overcome himself and so grow spiritually.

Paul was in a helpless situation when he was in a Jerusalem jail for the sake of Jesus' name. At that time, Paul was old and tired, and he was in prison. He had no one to depend on. But he depended on God Almighty. He believed absolutely that he could go to Rome and establish a world mission

center there, so that through Rome the gospel of Jesus might spread to all nations by virtue of Roman roads. Finally, Paul went to Rome in chains. Later he said in Philippians 4:13, "I can do everything through him who gives me strength." In his testimony, we learn that Paul himself had no power to change such a great Roman Empire; he had no power to change the course of world history. But Paul had absolute faith in God that he could do nothing, but God could do everything for him. Here we learn that to have faith in God is very simple but requires absoluteness. According to the degree of their faith, some can barely move their fingers or complain; some can move mountains; some can change the course of world history. May God bless each of us to have the power and authority of faith when we believe in him absolutely.

There are many kinds of mountain-moving faith. By faith, Martin Luther wrote the 95 Theses of the Reformation in 1517. By faith he challenged his own hypocrisy as well as the corruption of the huge Roman Catholic Church leaders. His mountain-moving faith was virtually to fight against the corruption of the Roman Empire. By faith, David Livingstone (1813-1873) went on a heroic evangelistic journey that lasted 30 years to southern, central, and eastern Africa--places where no white man had previously ventured. His mountain-moving faith was to love lost souls of African people.

When we have faith in God absolutely, God gives us his divine love in our hearts. We can see the most beautiful example of mountain-moving faith in Jesus. Jesus chose the twelve disciples from among very ordinary people and planted faith and hope in their hearts. It seemed to be a small matter. But there was Jesus' mountain-moving faith. Jesus and his disciples looked so hungry most of the time that they seemed to have no other desire than to eat.

Nevertheless, because of Jesus' faith in God, they were raised as matchless history-makers. Because of Jesus' faith in God, the disciples were changed from clumps of desire into servants of God like Jesus.

Third, faith that overcomes doubt (23b,24). Let's read verse 23 again. "I tell you the truth, if anyone says to this mountain, 'Go, throw yourself into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart but believes that what he says will happen, it will be done for him." In order to have faith that moves mountains, we must overcome our doubts moment by moment by depending on God's words. When we live by faith, all kinds of doubts come into our hearts. It is easy to plant doubt in one's heart. Planting doubt in one's heart is like setting fire to a building. But to plant faith in Jesus in someone's life takes life-giving effort, still we cannot guarantee. Therefore, we must know that success comes after overcoming Satan's doubt. Many young people want to live a holy life. But they soon become shaky when Satan comes and whispers, "Hey, you! Take it easy! You can do it tomorrow." The root of doubt is laziness or an easy-going mentality. We can analyze here regarding what is mountain-moving faith. In order to have mountain-moving faith we must fight against the doubt in our hearts. We must put out the fire of doubt in our hearts every day.

Let's look at verse 23b again. It says, "...and does not doubt in his heart but believes that what he says will happen, it will be done for him." We must believe in the promise of God. For example, God gave us a promise, "But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well" (Mt 6:33). We must believe in this promise absolutely. We must live for the glory of God, believing that if we live for the glory of God

he will bless us abundantly as well as our descendants. It is better to live by faith than to suffer from anxiety attacks.

II. Faith that prays (24)

We are living in the last part of the 20th century. Everybody is proud of the civilization of the 20th century. Everybody pretends to be happy. Outwardly people live in a paradise by virtue of cultural achievements and civilization. But inwardly people live in fear and doubt under Satan's rule. It is remarkable to know the fact that each time the civilization rose up to its peak, the world was utterly corrupted and the people became ungodly. As a result, people do not know how to pray. Prayer is, in essence, spiritual breathing. In prayer we lay all our anxiety and burden of sin on Jesus. In prayer we can rejoice in God, believing that he will care for us. But those who do not pray are all like asthma patients. Modern times are full of asthma patients or mental patients.

Look at verse 24. "Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours." This verse teaches us that when we pray God hears our prayers, and our requests are granted. This is a great promise of God. We cannot do great things for God. But we must believe that when we pray God answers our prayers, and that we have received what we prayed for. For the last several years we prayed that God would establish America as a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. We have prayed that God would raise 10,000 Bible teachers and spread them all over the country. Whether these prayer topics are realistic or unrealistic, what is

most important is that we pray with a prayer topic in accordance with God's will for world salvation. And God will show us the glory of God. Once, General Patton asked his chaplain to pray for good weather for a surprise attack the next day. Then the chaplain got mad and didn't want to pray because he couldn't believe that God would answer such a prayer. We should not be like the army chaplain. Never. Therefore prayer is our expression of faith. We must believe God's promise that he answers our prayers. Prayer is our faith that we can do nothing but God can do everything.

III. Faith that forgives (25)

Look at verse 25. "And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive him, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins." Until now, Jesus talked about faith that moves mountains and the power of prayer. But now, Jesus talks about faith that forgives. It might be a very difficult problem for his disciples to forgive brothers. So, once Peter came to Jesus and asked, "Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?" Jesus answered, "I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times" (Mt 18:21,22). Wow! Seventy-seven times! Not to forgive is easy. But to forgive others who sin against us is not easy.

When we read biographies of heroes, we learn that each was the product of the social and national milieu of his times. Each of them had courage to overcome impossible tasks. Each of them burned with the spirit of conquest and victory. But there was a common factor in all of them: None of them could forgive others' wrongdoings. They all died holding grudges in their hearts.

They were nothing but fallen men.

Let's read verse 25. "And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive him, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins." Jesus wants us to have faith that forgives. When we don't forgive others' sins, our Father in heaven does not forgive us our sins. Forgiving others might be a most difficult matter to fallen men. Rather, it is easy for us to keep the law of Moses, "A tooth for a tooth." How can we forgive others? We must look at Jesus' cross. We are objects of God's wrath and anger, living by our sinful natures. But God nailed his one and only Son to the cross in order to forgive men's sins. Through his Son's ransom sacrifice, God gave us the grace of forgiveness. Our sins were forgiven, and we became the precious children of God. Therefore, we can forgive others' sins as much as we remember God's grace through his Son. A certain minister's two sons were shot to death by militant communists. Later, the one who shot them was arrested. But the minister adopted him as his own son. Some asked him, "Why did you do so?" He said, "Because Jesus forgave my sins." We can forgive others only when we realize Jesus' grace of forgiveness of sins.

In this passage we learn that we must have faith in God so that we may have power and authority in our lives. Let's read the key verse, verse 22, again. "'Have faith in God,' Jesus answered."