

DAY SEVEN

BELIEVING AND RECEIVING

DAY 7 - JESUS ON MOUNTAIN-MOVING FAITH AND PRAYER

SUN JUNE 12: MATTHEW 21:18-22 – BELIEVING AND RECEIVING

MATT 21:18 Early in the morning, as Jesus was on his way back to the city, he was hungry. ¹⁹ Seeing a fig tree by the road, he went up to it but found nothing on it except leaves. Then he said to it, “May you never bear fruit again!” Immediately the tree withered.

²⁰ When the disciples saw this, they were amazed. “How did the fig tree wither so quickly?” they asked.

²¹ Jesus replied, “Truly I tell you, **if you have faith and do not doubt**, not only can you do what was done to the fig tree, but also you can say to this mountain, ‘Go, throw yourself into the sea,’ and it will be done. ²² **If you believe**, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer.”

The die was now cast. Jesus was in the vicinity of Jerusalem and his final rejection and crucifixion were looming. Jesus’ cursing of the fig tree was not a fit of pique due to its lack of fruit. It was a symbolic prophetic action displaying the truth that because of their lack of spiritual response and fruit, Israel would be judged by God (like the fruitless fig tree).

But our focus is on Jesus’ statements about faith. At first glance they appear to be concerning. It seems that Jesus was promising that human faith would not only produce miracles but would result in every single prayer being answered. At face value, this is dangerous territory. A young pastor emailed me today: “Yesterday I was praying with a young adult girl who had just been diagnosed with a serious disease. Her boyfriend had been hinting to her that if she got her words right and her faith right then she had the power to be rid of her disease.” That theology is a recipe for guilt and pain and disillusionment. Not at all like real faith.

One of the clearest biblical examples of a faith prayer not being answered was Paul’s prayer for healing in 2 Cor. 12:8. Three times he pleaded for Jesus to release him, but Jesus said, “No. I have better plans for you.” So what do Jesus’ statements about faith mean here?

We need to understand what faith is. It has two main components:



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1. Faith that Jesus is in charge and has the power to do anything. This has been our focus in these devotions. It doesn't have to be a huge faith, just a consistent even stubborn belief and trust that Jesus can do what we ask of him. In a secular, prosperous world this kind of faith easily diminishes. We desperately need to believe for more as Jesus says in this Scripture.
2. Faith that Jesus is in charge and has the power to do best/right. In a broken world, God's best is not always evident to us. Paul thought that healing was best, but God knew that weakness would be better. We think that a particular job will be best, but we don't get it and find that God has much better plans for us. Sometimes we see this in hindsight. Sometimes we have no idea what God is doing. But Jesus really does what is best. Faith means trusting him and not limiting him to our agenda.

Both these aspects of faith are essential. If we only believe that God can do anything, we will try to press him into our agenda. What we think is best. If we only believe that God does what is best, we will not bother to believe for his miraculous power to work and we'll miss out on moving mountains.

But if we believe with all our heart that Jesus will do more than we could ever imagine and also believe that Jesus will always do what is best for us and his kingdom, then our prayers are answered, and mountains end up in the sea. When Jesus said to the father of the demonised boy (see last devotion), "Everything is possible for one who believes" (Mk. 9:23), the father's response was "I do believe help me overcome my unbelief." That sounds like a great prayer to finish these devotions. Please pray it with me.

FAITH-FILLED PRAYER FOR REVIVAL

Personal Revival: That I will have a greater compassion for the lost and a deeper desire to serve and save them.

Church Revival: That there will be a harvest of new Christians in our community who accept Jesus as Lord and Saviour.

National Revival: That COVID and other national challenges will produce a growing need for God and a deep desire to fill our spiritual void.

