

CLASS FIVE

LEARNING TO PRAY FROM THE WORDS OF JESUS

Faith and Prayer

- I. **Then the disciples came to Jesus in private and asked, "Why couldn't we drive it [the demon] out?" He replied, "Because you have so little faith. I tell you the truth, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there' and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you."**
— Mt. 17:19-21

A. *drive it out . . .*

1. Speaks of deliverance—expelling a demon from a person.
2. Demons are mentioned 71X in the NT.
3. How does possession happen? A clue may be found in *Dt. 32:17; Psm. 106:36-37*.
4. Are there such things as demons today?
5. If so, do we have power over them?
See Mk. 16:17-18.

B. *so little faith . . .*

1. Define faith. *See Heb. 11:1.*
2. Types of faith.
 - a. Great faith (Mt. 8:10).
 - b. Little faith (here and also Mt. 6:30).
 - c. No faith (Mk. 4:40).
3. What is the connection between prayer and faith? *See Jas. 5:15.*

NOTES

Prayer Quote: Depend upon it, if you are bent on prayer, the devil will not leave you alone. He will molest you, tantalize you, block you, and will surely find some hindrances, big or little or both. And we sometimes fail because we are ignorant of his devices. I do not think he minds our praying about things if we leave it at that. What he minds, and opposes steadily, is the prayer that prays on until it is prayed through, assured of the answer." — Mary Warburton Booth

p.p: Mk. 9:14; Lk. 9:37-42

Dt. 32:16-17: They made him jealous with their foreign gods and angered him with their detestable idols. They sacrificed to demons, which are not God—gods they had not known, gods that recently appeared, gods your fathers did not fear.

Psm. 106:36-37: They worshiped their idols, which became a snare to them. They sacrificed their sons and their daughters to demons.

Mk. 16:17-18: And these signs will accompany those who believe: In my name they will drive out demons; they will speak in new tongues; ¹⁸ they will pick up snakes with their hands; and when they drink deadly poison, it will not hurt them at all; they will place their hands on sick people, and they will get well."

Heb. 11:1: Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.

Jas. 5:15: And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise him up. If he has sinned, he will be forgiven.

C. *as small as a mustard seed . . .*

1. A proverbial phrase meaning the least, the smallest particle.⁹
2. Black mustard seed is native to southern Europe along the Mediterranean Sea and has been cultivated for thousands of years. It is believed to be the mustard seed mentioned by Jesus. *See photo in margin.*
3. The amazing fact about this little seed is that it could grow into a plant that could reach some 10 feet high. Birds are very fond of the little black mustard seeds it produces. A cloud of birds over a mustard plant is a very common sight. In fact, the full-grown wild mustard can overgrow the space allotted to it and often overcrowds the other garden plants next to it.
4. The kingdom of heaven is compared to a mustard seed. *See Mt. 13:31-32.*

D. *move from here to there . . .*

1. A proverbial statement meaning to remove great difficulties. *See 1 Cor. 13:2.*

E. *Nothing will be impossible for you.*

1. In context, this refers to the accomplishment of the works of the kingdom for which they had been given authority.

F. Paraphrase of Mt. 17:19-21, from *The Message*:

When the disciples had Jesus off to themselves, they asked, "Why couldn't we throw it out?" Because you're not yet taking God seriously," said Jesus. "The simple truth is that if you had a mere kernel of faith, a poppy seed, say, you would tell this mountain, 'Move!' and it would move. There is nothing you wouldn't be able to tackle."

NOTES

⁹ Zodiates, p. 1291

Mt. 13:31-32: He told them another parable: The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field. Though it is the smallest of all your seeds, yet when it grows, it is the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and perch in its branches.

1 Cor. 13:2: If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing.

II. **Early in the morning, as he was on his way back to the city, he was hungry. 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. When the disciples saw this, they were amazed. "How did the fig tree wither so quickly?" they asked. Jesus replied, "I tell you the truth, 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. If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer."** — Mt. 21:18-22

A. *he was hungry . . .*

1. The humanity of Jesus.
2. Fig trees grow all over Israel and their fruit is delicious right off the tree.
3. Fig trees do not produce their fruit until the fall. This was Passover season, which was in the spring.

B. *nothing on it except leaves . . .*

1. Fig trees do produce a small, edible fruit that appears in the spring before the sprouting of the leaves, but this tree had no fruit at all.¹⁰

C. *May you never bear fruit again!*

1. Was Jesus expressing angst against a fruit barren fig tree or was there a deeper truth by this action?

D. *Immediately the fig tree withered . . .*

1. The deity of Jesus displayed and a lesson given.
2. The withering of the fig tree illustrates God's judgment on unbelieving Israel. See Lk. 13:6-9.

NOTES

Prayer Quote: The prayer power has never been tried to its full capacity. If we want to see mighty wonders of divine power and grace wrought in the place of weakness, failure and disappointment, let us answer God's standing challenge, "Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and show thee great and mighty things which thou knowest not!" — J. Hudson Taylor

¹⁰ Nelson's, p. 1180.

Lk. 13:6-9: Then he told this parable: "A man had a fig tree, planted in his vineyard, and he went to look for fruit on it, but did not find any. So he said to the man who took care of the vineyard, 'For three years now I've been coming to look for fruit on this fig tree and haven't found any. Cut it down! Why should it use up the soil?' " "Sir," the man replied, "leave it alone for one more year, and I'll dig around it and fertilize it. If it bears fruit next year, fine! If not, then cut it down." "

3. Does this message have any application to the church? To you? *Read Jn. 15:1-8.*

E. *if you have faith and do not doubt . . .*

1. Faith works miracles and is the basis for answered prayer. *See Heb. 11:6.*

F. *If you believe, you will receive . . .*

1. A person does not increase belief by trying harder to believe but by increasing the object and content of belief.
See Rom. 10:17

2. This is why we need to know the will of God in order to believe effectively.
See Jer. 9:23-24; 1 Jn. 5:14-15.

3. Where do we find the will of God?

G. Paraphrase of Mt. 21:18-22, from *The Message*:

Text

Early the next morning Jesus was returning to the city. He was hungry. Seeing a lone fig tree alongside the road, he approached it anticipating a breakfast of figs. When he got to the tree, there was nothing but fig leaves. He said, "No more figs from this tree—ever!" The fig tree withered on the spot, a dry stick. The disciples saw it happen. They rubbed their eyes, saying, "Did we really see this? A leafy tree one minute, a dry stick the next?" But Jesus was matter-of-fact: "Yes—and if you embrace this kingdom life and don't doubt God, you'll not only do minor feats like I did to the fig tree, but also triumph over huge obstacles. This mountain, for instance, you'll tell, 'Go jump in the lake,' and it will jump. Absolutely everything, ranging from small to large, as you make it a part of your believing prayer, gets included as you lay hold of God."

NOTES

Heb. 11:6: And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.

Rom. 10:17: Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ.

Jer. 9:23-24: This is what the LORD says: "Let not the wise man boast of his wisdom or the strong man boast of his strength or the rich man boast of his riches, but let him who boasts boast about this: that he understands and knows me, that I am the LORD, who exercises kindness, justice and righteousness on earth, for in these I delight,"

1 Jn. 5:14-15: This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us—whatever we ask—we know that we have what we asked of him.