

Mark 11:20-26 — "The Duty to Pray in Faith"

It is our shame to think so little of prayer—to have such low, dark, desponding thoughts concerning it. And why? Because our **faith** itself is weak. Therefore let us pray— "**Lord increase our faith.**" It is but a little while longer we shall have need of either faith or prayer. These are the exercises, the invariable exercises of grace; the ebullitions of that well of water which has been opened in the soul by the gift of Christ in the Holy Spirit, and which is ever springing up to everlasting life! (John Angell James)

Faith is holding on to the faithfulness of God and, as long as you do that, you cannot go wrong. Faith does not look at the difficulties. . . . Faith does not look at itself or at the person who is exercising it. Faith looks at God . . .
(Martyn Lloyd Jones)

Background to Mark 11:20-26

- **Mark 11:20-21** - occurs on early Tues morning, the disciples leave Bethany & they pass the cursed fig tree.

THESIS — The theme: PRAYING IN FAITH! We want to understand the *necessity of praying in faith* in 4 helpful ways. **Why?** So that we will **honor** God in our prayer lives & that we will be **powerful & mighty** in our praying!

1. The **COMMAND** for praying in faith! (22)
2. The **POSSIBILITIES** of praying in faith! (23)
3. The **ENCOURAGEMENT** of praying in faith (24)
4. The **HINDRANCES** to praying in faith (25-26)

I. THE COMMAND FOR PRAYING IN FAITH (22)

1. Obligation = Have faith...
2. Object = In God...
3. Ongoing = [implied] Continue!

II. THE POSSIBILITIES OF PRAYING IN FAITH (23)

- ❖ **Faith** is FULL CONFIDENCE, TOTAL reliance, FULL SUBMISSION, CONSTANT ENDURANCE.
- ❖ Faith is Receiving, Believing, Relying, Walking, Obeying, Clinging, Hoping, Persevering, Trusting.
- ❖ Thomas Watson: faith is the conquering grace on earth. Faith is the master-wheel; it sets all the other graces running.

III. THE ENCOURAGEMENT OF PRAYING IN FAITH (24)

- ❖ Andrew Murray captures a bit of the enormous, gigantic encouragement: *WHAT a promise! so large, so Divine, that our little hearts cannot take it in, and in every possible way seek to limit it to what we think safe or probable!!*

This is NOT presumption: the motive is selfish & the attitude is arrogant & the goal was self-exaltation. Rather Jesus wants praying *in faith*; this is **not presumption but humiliation, desperation, ambition.**

“The phrase about removing mountains was a quite common Jewish phrase. It was a regular, vivid phrase for removing difficulties.” (Barclay)

Consider these many prayer invitations & encouragements to Christ’s children:

- ❖ Matt 6.13-14; Matt 7.7; Matt 17.20; Matt 18.19; Luke 11.9; Luke 17.6; John 14:13-14; John 15.7; John 16.23-24; 1 John 5.14-15.

IV. THE HINDRANCES TO PRAYING IN FAITH (25-26)

what are hindrances to prayer?

1. Ongoing, cherished sin in the heart (Ps 66.18)
2. Unbelief (Hebrews 4.11; 11.6)
3. Unstable mind (James 1.7)
4. A condemning conscience (1 John 3.21-22)
5. Selfish, self-seeking motive (James 4.3)
6. Hypocritical, external religiosity (Isa 1.15)
7. Constant refusal of God’s Word (Prov 1.23-30)
8. An ungodly marriage (1 Pet 3.7)
9. **Unforgiving spirit (Mark 11.25-26 // Matt 5.23-24; 6.14-15)**

The ONE concern of the Devil is to keep Christians from prayer. He fears nothing from prayer less studies, prayer less work, and prayer less religion and preaching and church ministry. He laughs at our toil and mocks our wisdom, but Satan trembles when we pray. No man is greater than his prayer life. (Samuel Chadwick)

MORE PRAYER, MORE POWER! MUCH PRAYER, MUCH POWER! (Leonard Ravenhill)

HOLY HOLY HOLY!

Holy, holy, holy! Lord God Almighty!
 Early in the morning our song shall rise to thee.
 Holy, holy, holy, merciful and mighty!
 God in three persons, blessed Trinity!

Holy, holy, holy! All the saints adore thee,
 casting down their golden crowns around the glassy sea;
 cherubim and seraphim falling down before thee,
 who was and is and evermore shall be.

Holy, holy, holy! Though the darkness hide thee,
 though the eye of sinful man thy glory may not see,
 only thou art holy; there is none beside thee,
 perfect in pow'r, in love, and purity.

Holy, holy, holy! Lord God Almighty!
 All thy works shall praise thy name in earth, and sky and sea.
 Holy, holy, holy! merciful and mighty!
 God in three persons, blessed Trinity!

Psalm 114 [NASB]

When Israel went forth from Egypt,
 The house of Jacob from a people of a foreign language,
² Judah became His sanctuary;
 Israel, His dominion.

³ The sea looked and fled;
 The Jordan turned back.

⁴ The mountains skipped like rams,
 The hills, like lambs.

⁵ What ails you, sea, that you flee?
 Jordan, that you turn back?

⁶ Mountains, that you skip like rams?
 Hills, like lambs?

⁷ Tremble, earth, before the Lord,
 Before the God of Jacob,

⁸ Who turned the rock into a pool of water,
 The flint into a fountain of water.

GREAT IS THY FAITHFULNESS

Great is thy faithfulness, O God my Father,
 there is no shadow of turning with thee.
 Thou changest not, thy compassions, they fail not;
 as thou hast been, thou forever wilt be.

Great is thy faithfulness!
Great is thy faithfulness!
Morning by morning new mercies I see;
all I have needed thy hand hath provided.
Great is thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me!

Summer and winter and springtime and harvest,
 sun, moon, and stars in their courses above
 join with all nature in manifold witness
 to thy great faithfulness, mercy, and love.

Pardon for sin and a peace that endureth,
 thine own dear presence to cheer and to guide,
 strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow,
 blessings all mine, with ten thousand beside!

The first acting of the new life of grace is **believing prayer**. They grow together. Belief strengthens prayer—prayer reacts upon believing, and strengthens it. They die together. The last act of the believer is the last act of prayer; when faith is turned into sight, and prayer ends in uninterrupted eternal praise.

But what is the precise influence of faith in prayer?

That believers must ask in **faith**; that is, having a full persuasion that they not only needed this Divine help—but that they could most lawfully ask it as a thing very proper to be carried to God in prayer; that God would be pleased with their asking for it; would hear their prayers, and grant them their petition in reference to that very thing. There was to be no "wavering;" no doubt about their need of the blessing; nor about the propriety of praying for it; nor about the certainty of God's hearing their prayer; nor about their right to expect the blessing. There was to be nothing at all resembling the frame of mind of a man hesitating about going for a favor to a fellow-creature. "Shall I go—or shall I not? Will he hear me and grant me the thing I need—or will he not. Sometimes I think, I will go, and at another time I resolve not to go. At one time I am full of fear, and at another time, full of hope." Now this is "wavering," to which there must be nothing like in the frame of a believer's heart towards God in prayer. Such a man is like a wave of the sea, driven by the wind now one way, now another, without stability. Such a man is not authorized to expect an answer to his prayers. He is a double-minded man, or, as the word signifies, a two-souled man; one soul of faith, another of unbelief. In opposition to this, there must be the one-mindedness of faith—a firm persuasion that we are warranted both to ask and to expect this very thing. (John Angell James)