

# Staff Devotions

## The Withered Fig Tree

<sup>20</sup> In the morning, as they went along, they saw the fig tree withered from the roots. <sup>21</sup> Peter remembered and said to Jesus, "Rabbi, look! The fig tree you cursed has withered!"

<sup>22</sup> "**Have faith in God,**" Jesus answered. <sup>23</sup> "**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.**" <sup>24</sup> **Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.** <sup>25</sup> **And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive him, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins."**

**Prayer:** the fig tree was **noticed** as the disciples returned to the temple on Tuesday morning. It had not been noticed the evening before because they either took a different route out of the city to Bethany or it was too dark to notice when they passed by.

- There are those who say the fig tree represented Israel.
- The fig tree was full of leaves, appearing fruitful, but it had no fruit.
- Israel appeared to be full, to be religious, professing spiritual fruit; but the nation bore no fruit.
- Its religion was barren, legalistic, and fruitless.

**I want you to note this is not the lesson we are going to learn today. There are and may be many lessons drawn from this event, including Israel's experience; but the application made by Jesus was clearly power, power that comes through faith and prayer**

## "The Conditions of Prayer."

Peter was *surprised* at the answer to Jesus' prayer or pronouncement in cursing the fig tree. His surprise was both at the *effectiveness and the quickness of the answer*.

### 1. The first condition to prayer is **faith** in God.

note four significant facts.

**Fact #1**      **The object of faith is **God Himself**.** (*The critical words are "in God."*)

There are "3" significant things that need to be noted about the object of faith.

**a. Jesus did not say, "**Have faith**," but "**Have faith in God**."**

*Faith has to have an object.*

*"In God" is where one is to have faith, where one is to place his faith.*

*Faith has no value by itself; only the object (God) has value.*

*The Bible never says to have faith in faith, yet this is the experience of many.*

**b. Faith has **no power**; it is the object that has power.**

*A man's faith is not going to remove the mountain. God is going to remove the mountain. The strength of faith is not faith, but God.*

**c. Faith requires **knowing** the object.**

*The more one knows the object of faith, the more one believes in the object*

Illustration:

Consider two men who want to go out on a frozen lake to fish. One man is told to go ahead and cross the lake.

He is assured by his friend that the ice will hold him up. Yet, when he begins to step out on the ice, he cautiously and tremblingly takes step after step—usually until he can stand it no more and returns. But the other man walks out courageously and boldly, cuts a hole in the ice, and sits down and begins to fish.

Note 3 important questions.

- ⇒ What supported the man sitting out on the ice? Not his faith, but the ice—the object of his faith.
- ⇒ Who had the strongest faith? Of course the man out on the ice. The one with the weak faith is the man who slowly inched his way back.
- ⇒ What made the difference between the faith of the two? One thing. One man *knew* the ice and the other man *did not know* the ice.

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## **Fact #2 About faith is its purpose.**

*The purpose of faith is to remove mountains.*

*Jesus' teaching says, "Have faith in God...[and then] say unto this mountain, Be thou removed." Mountains represent the immovable, the impossible.*

*It is something almost too steep to climb,*

*almost too high to cross,*

*almost too awesome to see beyond.*

*This is the reason Jesus discussed prayer and communion along with faith.*

*One learns to have faith in God as He prays and communes with God.*

*And the more he prays and communes with God the more he will know God;*

*And the more he knows God, the more he can experience faith in God and experience the removal of mountains that slow our progress through life.*

## **Fact #3 About faith is the way to possess faith.**

The way is prayer. Jesus explicitly says, "If anyone...does not doubt...but believes that what he says will happen; it will be done."

There are two crucial points in this promise.

- a. Not doubting at all.

This means never having a thought whether a thing can be done or not.

It means not hesitating, not wondering, not questioning, not considering, not being concerned at all.

Realistically, only God Himself can know if a thing will happen or not. What Christ is after is that we grow in belief and trust. He wants us to believe that all things are possible through Christ who strengthens us

- b. Believing in God's authority. Note the word "say"

The power of Christ came from the authority of God. All He had to do was *say*, speak the word and it was done.

That is the very point He was making to us. If we believe, doubting not, then we stand in the authority of God.

## **Fact #4 A fourth fact to note about faith is the result of faith.**

*A man who prays having faith, truly "having faith in God..."*

*The mountains which confront him will be removed, effectively and quickly*

**Mark 9:23** *"If you can'?" said Jesus. "Everything is possible for him who believes."*

## **2. (11:24) The second condition to prayer is, expectancy.**

A believer must believe and expect the answer to their prayer.

We must be confident and assured, must anticipate and look for the answer

### **1 John 5:14-15**

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

## **3. (11:25-26) The third condition to prayer is forgiveness.**

This is a critical condition in prayer, a condition that is stressed time and again by Jesus

Note it is while a person is *actually praying*, that he must forgive. It does no good to pray unless we ask and seek forgiveness.

When praying there must always be forgiveness of those who have wronged us.

**Matt 6:12** *"And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors"*

### **Matt 6:14-15**

For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. 15 But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.