

Powerful, Effective Prayer

Mark 11:22-26

November 10, 2003

Introduction

Last week, we looked at Jesus cursing the fig tree and seeing how it was related to the temple. He cursed the fig tree and it died. He did not do this out of anger but used it as a parable to the temple of the Jews. The cursing of the fig tree was a picture of cursing of the temple. The temple was the center of Jewish worship, and Jesus went in the temple to cast out the moneychangers and disrupt their works. They were the sign of the hypocrisy and apostasy.

When they came back to the fig tree the next morning, Peter remembered what Jesus had said and exclaimed that He had cursed the tree to its death. Matthew adds that they were amazed and asked this question.

Matthew 21:20 *When the disciples saw this, they were amazed. "How did the fig tree wither so quickly?" they asked.*

Then Jesus talks about prayer. This seems at first glance a strange transition where there is very little connection between the cursing of the fig tree and prayer. There is a connection, and that connection is that all power comes from God, and prayer is the way for us to bring that power down to earth.

The disciples have been with Jesus 24/7 for three years. He has provided for their meals, their needs, their payments, and their protection. During this time, the disciples' prayer life must have dwindled to perhaps nothing. Remember these men are Jewish, and they are taught to pray ritually and regularly. They are God-fearing men who love God; however, when they are with Jesus, they must have found that they did not need to pray. Now Jesus knows that He is going to be gone soon, so He takes the time to teach them that whatever power they need can only come from God and through prayer. So when Peter and the disciples ask how this thing happened, Jesus answers that this power comes from God.

From Jesus' words we see that there are 5 things that make effective, powerful prayer.

Mark 11:22-25 *"Have faith in God," Jesus answered. 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. 24 Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours. 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."*

I. Remember (v 20)

Mark 11:21 *Peter remembered and said to Jesus, "Rabbi, look! The fig tree You cursed has withered!"*

- Peter remembered
- This is an important part of powerful, effective prayer
- We remember God's hand and power—in Scripture, church history, personal experience
- You have more confidence to call upon the Lord when you remember what He has done for you

II. Trust (v 22)

- Have faith in God
 - We must trust His power, His purpose, His promises, His plan, and His will
 - We must trust that God knows better than we do
- Two ways to pray
 - To God

Matthew 6:9-10 *This, then, is how you should pray: 'Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name, 10 Your kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.*

- We pray to honor His name, that His kingdom and His will be accomplished on earth and in heaven
- In other words, we seek Him first
- For self

James 4:3 You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions.

- Being selfish, we will not receive answers in our prayers
- Correct way to pray
 - Pray according to His will

1 John 5:14 *This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us.*

- Scripture tells us His will—it is all there
- Pray according to His name

John 14:13-14 *And I will do whatever you ask in My name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father. 14 You may ask Me for anything in My name, and I will do it.*

- Does not mean that we end the prayer “in Jesus’ name”
- It means that we are praying to His person, His purpose, His character.
- Christ-likeness

III. Believe (23)

- Anyone
 - believers
- Mountain to be thrown into the sea
 - Doesn't matter what mountain He is on or looking at (general principle)
 - Is this to be taken literally?
 - No because Jesus did not do this
 - Expression of speech (hyperbolic analogy)
 - Means that there are some insurmountable problems that seem have no human solutions
- Do not doubt
 - The issue is not about yourself (it is impossible for us)
 - The issue is trusting God—when we doubt, we are doubting God
 - When we doubt

James 1:6-7 *But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. 7 That man should not think he will receive anything from the Lord.*

- We are to have faith in the power of God
- How much faith is required?
 - Mustard seed faith

Matthew 17:20 *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."*

- Our faith is always mixed with doubt
- However God accepts our "little faith"
- Faith is an empty hand that receives the power of God

VI. Ask (24)

- Jesus tells us to ask
- Anything? Everything?
 - There are qualifiers
 - His will
 - Abiding in Him

John 15:5, 9-10 *I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in Me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from Me you can do nothing. 9 As the Father has loved Me, so have I loved you. Now remain in My love. 10 If you obey My commands, you will remain in My love, just as I have obeyed My Father's commands and remain in His love.*

V. Forgive (25)

Note: verse 26 is not in the older and best manuscripts of Mark. It seems that a scribe copied **Matthew 6:15** in verse 26. This verse is very much true, but Mark must not have written this.

- Forgive others
 - If there is anything that our brothers or sisters have done to us
 - We hold on to what they have done—this means that we have not forgiven them
 - When this happens, God will not hear our prayers
 - We are commanded to forgive others...why?

Ephesians 4:32 *Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.*

- Father will forgive your sins
 - Not in a salvation sense
 - But in everyday life of believer (**John 13:10**)
 - What happens is there is an interrupted fellowship with God
- We have a choice