

HAVE FAITH IN GOD

Mark 11:20-25

Key Verse: 11:22

"'Have faith in God,' Jesus answered."

In the last passage we studied the Lordship of Christ. Those who are not humble enough to accept the Lordship of Christ all become like the rich young man who came to Jesus and at the words of Jesus, "Sell everything you have and give to the poor, and come follow me," went away sad. Because of his wealth, this young man was not able to accept eternal life. Those who deny the Lordship of Christ cannot find their meaning of life. They cannot but be involved in politics in the world without God. Finally they become the enemies of God similar to the Pharisees and Sadducees. God called us to use us for the conquest of the world with the gospel of God. If we do not have faith which generates the power of faith, we cannot be the servants of God that he wants us to be. Today, Jesus talks with his disciples about the [fig](#) tree that withered overnight (20-25). In this dialogue Jesus teaches his disciples what kind of faith they must have. At this time let's [pray](#) that we may have the faith that Jesus wants us to have.

I. Faith that moves mountains (20-23)

First, Jesus' power and authority (20-21). Verse 20 begins with the words, "In the morning, as they went along..." It was the second day of the Passion Week. They were coming along the road back to Jerusalem. During the last two days Peter had been amazed by many events: Jesus' ordering the two disciples to bring another person's colt without permission; and the two disciples who were sent carrying out the mission absolutely. Peter was again amazed when Jesus cleared the temple with great authority before the envenomed religious leaders. Peter was at the point of fainting because of many amazements. Now as they went along, they saw the fig tree withered from the roots. Peter remembered the event of Jesus cursing the fig tree (21). It was indeed a big surprise to Peter to see the fig tree Jesus had cursed withered from the roots overnight. To Peter it was a surprise, and it was a big surprise. This fig tree had been in beautiful foliage. How could it be that in the space of one night, the flourishing fig tree had dried up so wretchedly to the roots! Wow! It was a surprise. At the time, Peter probably thought, "Wasn't it too ruthless to curse an innocent fig tree like that?"

Until now, Peter had dreamed of an earthly messianic kingdom to be established by Jesus. But this dream was no longer tenacious, since Jesus had battered the mundane authorities at the temple. Peter probably thought Jesus' action was one of anomalous severity which would bring disaster upon disaster. Peter was caught by an ominous premonition of a dolorous and cadaverous future because Jesus had offended the religious leaders' pride by clearing the temple (18). But what really surprised him was the authority of Jesus' word. At a word of Jesus, the fig tree dried up completely from the roots. In his amazement, Peter said [to Jesus](#), "Rabbi, look! The fig tree you cursed has withered!" At a word from Jesus, a fig tree in full leaf dried up from the roots. This power or authority was what Peter really wanted to have. Peter "really" wanted that. Peter wanted to exercise his power and authority over the other disciples. But

he had no power and authority because he had no faith. Peter thought that he needed power and authority as the top man in the messianic kingdom Jesus would establish. But Peter did not have power; he did not have the power that comes from faith in God.

Second, have faith in God (22,23). How did Jesus help him to have power and authority? Jesus said, "Have faith in God" (22). Jesus believed that Peter and the other disciples could have great power and authority if only they had faith in God. What kind of faith did Jesus want them to have? Look at verse 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." Jesus wanted them to have faith that moves mountains. Jesus helped them to have mountain-moving faith so that they might have power and authority. As we know, a mountain is characteristically immovable. In times past and present, many people have written with awesome respect about mountains because of their loftiness, solemnity and unchangeableness. There is an episode about Mohammed. In order to demonstrate a miraculous sign before the eyes of his followers, he ordered, "You mountain, come to me!" But the mountain did not move. He did not have power and authority to move the mountain, but he was wise. So Mohammed said, "Then I will go to you." Anyway, he and the mountain got together. His followers were surprised at his expediency. So they decided to follow him continuously. A mountain is too big to move. But Jesus wants his disciples to have faith that moves mountains. To have mountain-moving faith is the same as to have absolute faith. Hebrews 11 is the record of heroes and heroines of faith. They overcame the world with mountain-moving faith, that is, absolute faith. Absoluteness is the major fiat of faith.

Why did Jesus want his disciples to have the power which comes from faith? It is because the disciples of Jesus had to conquer the whole world by the power of faith with the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. If we have no faith which generates the power of God, we are useless to our Lord Jesus Christ. May God help us to have faith that produces the power of faith.

When Jesus said, "Have faith in God," it meant, "Our God is Almighty God." When Jesus said, "Have faith in God," it meant, "Our God is Almighty God, so we can do nothing but he can do everything for us when we believe in him." When Jesus said, "Have faith in God," it meant, "Believe in God Almighty absolutely and see the great things God will do for you." We must believe that God made the heavens and the earth out of nothing. Our God is the Almighty Creator God who made the world out of nothing (Ge 1 and 2).

As we know, in history all men knelt down before the power of death: Julius Caesar, Genghis Khan, and all people knelt down before the power of death--some quietly, some very sorrowfully. But God raised Jesus from the dead and made him the firstfruits of eternal life (1Co 15:20). The Hebrew people believed that God is the Almighty God who made Aaron's dried staff sprout, bud and blossom. At first, these people were nomads; later, they were slaves. Even though they became a nation, their nation was weak in between world-power nations. But these people were strong because they had faith in God Almighty.

When Jesus said, "Have faith in God," his real meaning was far

greater than his literal words. He meant that by faith they should depend on God who is almighty, and conquer the whole world with the gospel of Jesus Christ. Once, a father whose son had the symptoms of epilepsy came to Jesus and said, "If you can do anything, take pity on us and help us." "If you can?" said Jesus. "Everything is possible for him who believes" (9:22,23). After severely rebuking the father's half-faith, Jesus healed the boy. Thus he demonstrated the power of faith.

Mountain-moving faith usually starts from oneself. Shepherd Mark Yang was short and proud. Then God helped him to be changed in Jesus. Before conversion, he saw Christians as weaklings and bums. But after conversion, when he looked at other Christians, they all looked so holy and mature that he felt he was not able to catch up with them. He despaired at his poor spiritual condition. He had to decide to have absolute faith in God. He could not help himself much. But when he had absolute faith in Jesus, Jesus gave him the Spirit of Jesus to overcome himself and grow spiritually little by little. When he grew great, soon he became proud. Because of this he had to receive Chicago training for two years. Now his spiritual power is getting stronger.

Paul was in a helpless situation when he was in a Jerusalem jail for the sake of Jesus' name. At that time, Paul was old and tired, and he was in prison. He had no one to depend on. But he depended on God Almighty. He believed absolutely that he could go to Rome and establish a world mission center there, so that the gospel of Jesus might spread to all nations by virtue of Roman roads. Finally, Paul went to Rome in chains. Later he said in Philippians 4:13, "I can do everything through him who gives me strength." In his testimony, we learn that Paul himself had no power to change such a great Roman Empire; he had no power to change the course of world history. But Paul had absolute faith in God; Paul could do nothing, but God could do everything for him. To have faith in God is very simple but requires absoluteness. Without absolute faith no one can experience the power of faith. By faith Paul was able to have a vision to conquer the whole world with the gospel of Jesus. Yes, his faith fulfilled his vision. His faith also helped many people to have vision. May God bless each of us with the power and authority of faith when we believe in him absolutely.

There are many kinds of mountain-moving faith. By faith, Martin Luther challenged his own hypocrisy. He also wrote the 95 Theses of the Reformation in 1517. By faith he challenged the corruption of the leaders in the huge Roman Catholic Church. His mountain-moving faith was virtually to fight against the corruption of the Holy Roman Empire. By faith, David Livingstone (1813-1873) went on a heroic evangelistic journey that lasted 30 years to southern, central, and eastern Africa--places where no white man had previously ventured. His mountain-moving faith was to love the lost souls of African people.

We must know what faith is. Hebrews 11:1 says, "Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see." Again Hebrews 11:3 says, "By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God's command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible." We cannot experience the power of faith after understanding. Some want to understand first. But we must obey Jesus' words and do what we should do. Then God always is with us and helps us so that what we ask for is done. For example, Hebrews 11:29 says,

"By faith the people passed through the Red Sea as on dry land; but when the Egyptians tried to do so, they were drowned." It is indeed amazing that undisciplined soldiers of Israel knocked down the invincible wall of Jericho, by simply obeying the words of God. It is also amazing that South Korean students have sent 1,557 self-supporting missionaries to 89 countries when they simply believed and prayed.

When we have faith in God absolutely, God gives us his divine power in our hearts. We can see the most beautiful example of mountain-moving faith in Jesus. Jesus chose the twelve disciples from among very ordinary people and planted faith and hope in their hearts. It seemed to be a small matter. But there was Jesus' mountain-moving faith. Jesus' disciples looked so hungry most of the time that they seemed to have no other desire than to eat. Nevertheless, because of Jesus' faith in God, they were raised as matchless history-makers. Because of Jesus' faith in God, the disciples were changed from clumps of desire into servants of God like Jesus.

Third, faith that overcomes doubt (23b,24). Let's read verse 23 again. "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." In order to have faith that moves mountains, we must overcome our doubts moment by moment by depending on God's words. When we live by faith, all kinds of doubts come into our hearts. It is because where there is faith in a person, doubt follows like shade follows a tree. It is easy to plant doubt in someone's heart. Planting doubt in someone's heart is like setting fire to a building. But to plant faith in Jesus in someone takes life-giving effort and sacrifice. Still, we have no guarantee. Therefore, we must know that success comes after overcoming Satan's doubt. One balding young man wanted to live a holy life. But he soon became shaky when Satan came and whispered, "Hey, you! Take it easy! You can do it tomorrow." The root of doubt is laziness or an easy-going mentality. We can analyze here what is mountain-moving faith. In order to have mountain-moving faith we must fight against the doubt in our hearts. We must put down the fire of doubt in our hearts every day. Then God will give us the power of faith.

II. Faith that prays (24)

We are living in the first part of the 21st century. Everybody is proud of the civilization of the 21st century. Everybody pretends to be happy. People pretend that they are living in a paradise by virtue of cultural achievements and civilization. But inwardly people live in fear and doubt under Satan's rule. It is remarkable to know that each time a civilization rose up to its peak, the world was utterly corrupted and people became ungodly. As a result, people do not know how to pray. Prayer is, in essence, spiritual breathing. In prayer we lay all our anxieties and burdens of sin on Jesus. In prayer we can rejoice in God, believing that he will care for us. But those who do not pray are all like asthma patients. Modern times are full of asthma patients or mental patients.

Look at verse 24. "Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours." This verse teaches us that when we pray God hears our prayers, and our requests are granted. This is a great promise of God. We cannot do great things for God. But we must believe that when we pray God answers our prayers,

and that we have received what we prayed for. For the last several years we prayed, "May God make America a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (1 Pe 2:9). We have prayed that God would raise 10,000 Bible teachers and spread them all over the country. At first, it was not well accepted. But when we prayed and prayed, gradually God moved students' hearts. Now they pray from their hearts, "May God make America a kingdom of priests and a holy nation." Most students have decided to go out as missionaries and have even chosen their mission fields. Pastor Ron's daughter decided to go to Kenya, Africa. Her father is basically happy about it. But when he thinks about his daughter's future missionary life, he makes a bitter smile. These days student shepherds in Chicago UBF write Bible testimonies from their deep prayers. So every Friday the students' Bible testimony sharing time has been like heavenly music in paradise.

III. Faith that forgives (25)

Look at verse 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." Until now, Jesus talked about faith that moves mountains and the power of prayer. Now, Jesus talks about faith that forgives. It might have been a very difficult problem for his disciples to forgive brothers. So, once Peter came to Jesus and asked, "Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?" Jesus answered, "I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times" (Mt 18:21,22). Wow! Seventy-seven times! Not to forgive is easy. But to forgive others who sin against us is not easy.

When we read biographies of heroes, we learn that each was the product of the social and national milieu of his times. Each of them had courage to overcome impossible tasks. Each of them burned with the spirit of conquest and victory. But there was a common weakness in all of them: None of them could forgive others' wrongdoings. They all died holding grudges in their hearts. They were nothing but fallen men.

Let's read verse 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." Jesus wants us to have faith that forgives. When we don't forgive others' sins, our Father in heaven does not forgive us our sins. Forgiving others might be a most difficult matter to fallen men. Rather, it is easy for us to keep the law of Moses, "A tooth for a tooth." How can we forgive others? We must look at Jesus' cross. We are objects of God's wrath and anger, living by our sinful natures. But God nailed his one and only Son to the cross in order to forgive our sins. Through his Son's ransom sacrifice, God gave us the grace of forgiveness. Our sins were forgiven, and we became the precious children of God. Therefore, we can forgive others' sins as much as we remember God's grace through his Son. A certain minister's two sons were shot to death by a militant communist. Later, the one who shot them was arrested. But the minister adopted him as his own son. Some asked him, "Why did you do so?" He said, "Because Jesus forgave my sins." We can forgive others only when we realize Jesus' grace of forgiveness of sins.

Faith in God involves forgiveness of others. The chosen people Israel became bitter enemies of God. The chosen people Israel despised and rejected Jesus when he healed the sick and proclaimed the good news of the kingdom of God. The Jews, who were God's chosen people to be a

kingdom of priests and a holy nation, crucified Jesus on the cross, saying, "Save yourself as you saved others." But Jesus did not save himself. It was because he wanted to forgive all humankind. His blood dropped on the head and shoulder of Mary the mother of Jesus and the other Marys. At the time of pain and sorrow, Jesus prayed, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing" (Lk 23:34a). In other words, Jesus bore the cross in order to forgive all our iniquities and transgressions. Jesus' forgiving others was very painful and difficult. A Roman soldier who might have been one of the executioners cried out, "Surely this man was the Son of God!" (15:39)

To have faith in God involves forgiveness of sin. There was a young boy who was used as a cook and babysitter. He was also beaten up every day because his stepmother wanted to relieve her stress caused by her oldest daughter's pregnancy. Finally, this stepmother found a living hope in Jesus. After that, she saw her stepson coming to visit his father's house. The converted stepmother ran out of the house and with great joy wanted to hug her stepson. But he did not budge. In other words, he could not forgive her mistreatment. As a result, he became a loser to his stepmother in the sight of God.

In this passage we learn that we must have faith in God so that we may have power and authority in our lives. Let's read the key verse, verse 22, again. "'Have faith in God,' Jesus answered."