

Mark - Prayer Power

by J. Glyn Owen

The sermon emphasizes the importance of faith in God as the principle of prayer power, and how it is essential for effective prayer and the will of God.

Duration: 46:16

Scripture: Matthew 6:14-15, Matthew 17:19-20, Matthew 21:21, Mark 11:22-25, John 14:13-14, John 16:24

Topics: "Prayer"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker begins by mentioning that they had spent the morning in intercession for three quarreling clans and felt that God had answered their prayers. The speaker then refers to a diary entry that corresponds with a victory gained in a village with three clans. They emphasize that this should not be surprising, just as the withering of the fig tree did not surprise Simon Peter. The sermon concludes with a focus on forgiveness and the importance of forgiving others in order to receive forgiveness from God. The speaker encourages the audience to accept the 'royal highway to victory and triumph in Jesus' name' and to pray for God's blessing on their lives.

Transcript

Will you kindly turn with me in the Gospel, to the Gospel recorded by St. Mark in chapter 11? And I would just like to read now verses 22 to 25. Peter has just reminded his Lord of the fact that the fig tree which Jesus had cursed on the previous day is already withered. And then verse 22, have faith in God, Jesus answered.

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. Therefore, I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours. And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive him, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sin.

Now you remember the context, and it's very important here. The Jerusalem temple had become a fruitless fig tree, or if you like, a prayerless precinct. Beautiful to behold, a marvellous edifice, an attraction to those of aesthetic taste, and there were many who came there to go through the ritual of sacrifice and of prayer.

But that magnificent edifice had become, in the words of Jesus, a den of thieves, and was incapable at that state and stage in its history, incapable of producing men and women of prayer. Its leaders were in

process at this point in time of planning to crucify the only one who could mediate between God and men, making prayer possible and effectual. And so the divine displeasure is upon that people in that precinct.

In due course it will be trampled by pagan feet who will wade through blood, because Jesus here, in the name of his Father, brought the curse of God upon the temple, as well as upon the people. Now, all that took place on the preceding day, shall we say yesterday. Jesus and his disciples go out of the city overnight to stay.

We're not told where, but they went out of the city. The city was a dangerous place, and Jesus would die at the appointed hour, not before, not after. He was ready to die.

He wasn't afraid to die. But he will die at the very hour of appointment, according to the Old Testament scriptures and prefigurings. So he goes out, out to sleep, as he had on previous evenings.

Then the next morning, he returns with his disciples toward the city of Jerusalem again, because he's going to do so many things on this particular day, the Tuesday of Passion Week. He's going to do so many things in that city. And it was on the way back on that morning that this incident took place.

Now, let's look first of all here at a disciple's astonishment. Verses 20 and 21. In the morning, as they went along, they saw the fig tree withered from the roots.

Now, that's not in your King James Version, but really that's what it means. They saw the fig tree withered from its roots. Peter remembered and said to Jesus, Rabbi, look, the fig tree you cursed has withered.

What he's saying is this, Rabbi, it's already happened. Now, it would evidently be unwise and improper of us to conclude from the record that Peter doubted his Lord's ability to do this kind of thing. It would be wrong of us to do that, because we know that Peter had evident confidence and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

It was Peter who you will remember. Peter said when someone strange came walking on the billows, on the sea, on the waves to help the disciples in the storm and they didn't know who it was, Peter said, Lord, if it is you, you bid me come to you on the water and I'll come. I can trust you.

And he did. Peter had faith in his Lord, and it isn't true to say that Peter has gone back upon that at this stage in time. Indeed, if anything, there have been objective reasons why Peter's faith should have been enhanced and deepened of recent times.

For example, the incidents in Jericho on the way to Jerusalem and in Bethany. I can only refer to them. You remember, for example, we were considering the great healing act, bringing sight to the blind Bartimaeus.

That was a mighty act of messianic power, fulfilling the Old Testament Scriptures. But in Bethany, our Lord's power seemed even more wonderful than that. Lazarus had been dead and buried for four days, and yet Jesus came and summoned him out of the darkness of the tomb and of the grave, calling him by name, said, Lazarus, come forth, and the dead arose.

So you see, it's incredible that Simon Peter did not believe that this kind of thing would happen when Jesus cursed the tree. What's the point then? What is he amazed at? I suggest two things. I suggest to you that Peter was amazed, first of all, because of the completeness of the act, the finality of it.

And that's why I point to the NIV and some of the other versions. In the morning as they went along, they saw that the fig tree was withered from the roots. Only yesterday, we read in verse 14 of chapter 11, Jesus had said, may no one ever eat fruit from you again.

Never. Overnight it's happened. The tree has become incapable of producing fruit for anyone evermore.

The verbal denunciation and condemnation uttered against Israel, as symbolized by that fig tree, had not simply resulted in the discoloring of a few branches or a few leaves. The whole tree from root to branch, with every leaf on its boughs, was now wilting and withering under the judgment resulting from the spoken word of the rejected king. The king that Israel rejected just three days ago when he came into Jerusalem on the fall of Manasseh, the king whom they rejected is the lord of the fig tree.

He has life to give and life to withhold. The completeness of it. The tree was transformed from a living thing that attracted your attention from afar to a dying entity.

From root to branch. The completeness of it. And I suggest to you that Peter was amazed at the suddenness of it.

It was only yesterday. We've hinted at that already. Only yesterday that from a distance, as we saw last Lord's Day morning, from a distance, Jesus could see this tree standing out among all the other trees.

It was so lush. It was so green. It was so apparently unique.

It was a miraculous thing. He was hungry. It wasn't the season for fruit yet, and yet this tree pretended to be fruitful.

And so Jesus and the disciples made for it. You see, it stood out among all the trees of the fields. Now, a night's dew should have refreshed it since yesterday when Jesus cursed it.

And normally this is what would have happened. The tree would have been looking fresher and greener the morning after, but immediately when the dew has been upon it, the dew was unable to do anything for this tree. Overnight, every leaf and every branch, as well as the trunk and the roots, had come under the sentence of the judgment of the Son of God, the rejected King of Israel.

Death crept through the entire branches and foliage. You will notice then that our Lord makes use of that situation resulting from the cursing of the barren fig tree as an opportunity to talk about prayer. You may not at first recognize the link between them, but the link is evident.

He says, Peter, it's amazing. How has it happened so quickly and so completely? Ah, says Jesus, have faith in God. And then he goes on to say, if only you have faith in God, certain things are possible to you.

You'll know the power of prayer. You know there is something awesome here. There is something here that ought to catch our breath if we really believe what is written.

He who brought life to the dead and buried Lazarus and sight to the blind Bartimaeus brought death to this tree and judgment to the nation. Jesus is nothing if not the possessor of life and the Lord of death. His word is a double-edged word.

He can bring life. He can bring death. A disciple's astonishment.

But now this brings us to the heart of the matter here. The Savior goes on now to give his own particular assurance concerning prayer. And you remember the link.

They said to him, how amazing. Only yesterday you uttered the word. Today it's happened.

How has it happened so quickly? And his link with the subject of prayer is this, have faith in God. You see, what he's saying is this, that the way in which that miracle of judgment was accomplished so quickly and so completely was this, he exercised faith in God. That's what he's saying.

He is saying that in order to bring that about he wasn't so much acting as the Son of God, the second person of the Trinity. You and I can't act like that. He was saying that he acted as the human, the incarnate Lord, having laid aside certain prerogatives of his deity, but he had acted and brought about the judgment of God upon the nation that was symbolized by the tree and the temple.

He had brought it about by sheer confidence in his Father. And that's the link you see with us. If he had said, well, I've done that simply as the second person of the Trinity, you and I might worship on the door, but it would have very little to say to us.

But as it is, it has everything to say to us, because we too have the same Father in and through him. As many as received him, to them gave he the right to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name. You and I have the same Father.

You and I have the one mediator in Jesus Christ. You and I have the promises of God in Jesus Christ. And you and I have the Spirit of God in Jesus Christ, if we are Christian.

It has everything to say to us. Have faith in God, says Jesus. And then he goes on, and he brings out this matter of prayer.

Now, two things alone can we focus upon this morning. One, the principle underlying prayer power. Have faith in God.

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. Power ultimately resides in God and in God alone.

Now, that may sound a philosophical rather than a theological statement. Well, it is both, as a matter of fact. But fundamentally, it is a theological statement.

It's a biblical statement. There is no power anywhere else other than in God, as there is no life anywhere else other than in God. Under certain circumstances, God's people may draw upon his power and perform certain things that naturally and normally they could not.

And the key to a human being, a child of God, a disciple of Christ, sharing in the power of God, and doing what is humanly impossible, is this. It's the prayer of faith. Now, we need to be very clear as to what faith is.

Faith is not working up an emotion or an idea or a notion in the mind. I have had good reason to believe, on many occasions in the ministry, that when you tell people to exercise faith, the kind of thing they do is to screw themselves inwardly, and they kind of go through some inner mental contortions to come to a point where they've got to go contrary to all the facts they know and believe the opposite to what they have

reason for believing. It's a sort of total crucifixion of the self.

That's not what faith is. Faith is expectation founded upon a promise. Let me repeat that.

Faith is expectation based upon a promise. Someone has made a promise. The hearer of the promise believes.

And because he believes the promise, he expects. It's as simple as that. Now, there's much more to it than that, but this is it in essence.

It's as simple as that. To expect God to do what he has not promised is presumption. I hear people sometimes say, but can't God do it? It's an invalid statement.

It's not a question whether God can do this or whether God can do that. The real question is whether it is the will of God to do this or to do that. God can do many things that he's never promised to do, and we have no right to expect him to do.

And that is why in the matter of prayer, we need to be not just going according to our own imaginings, but according to the Word of God and the revelation of what God wills to do. Now, if we keep ourselves anchored to the Word of God and see the will of God and know it at the point of asking, then that's a different cup of tea altogether. Faith is expectation founded on a promise.

To expect what God has not promised is presumption. To expect what God has not promised is presumption. To doubt the fulfillment of what he has promised is unbelief.

To expect the accomplishment of what he has promised is faith. Now, I have no time this morning to go into this subject and deal with larger issues than are here in our text. But I would have to remind you that our Lord Jesus didn't make this statement in a vacuum.

You see, he's been teaching these people for over three years, and he's already told them many, many things about prayer. Evidently, they read from the Old Testament a statement like this, If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me. Might as well shut shop, as pray when we are courting sins in our hearts, when we're holding on to what the Word of God condemned.

Don't bother going through your prayers. There's no use to them. And you tell me I'm being unbiblical.

I'm not. God tells the people of old in Isaiah chapter 1, Stop praying. Your hands are full of blood.

I'm sick of it. Now, literally, that's what he said. I'm fed up to the teeth, and I'm going to be sick.

I'm going to vomit. That's the metaphor. And he's telling them, Be quiet, be quiet, be quiet.

You're challenging my sovereignty by praying with sin in your heart. You see, many of us fall into this category. And so we've never come to know the experience of answered prayer.

Because we don't give up our sins. We pray with sins reigning in our hearts, and we will not let them go or run away from them. Now, there are other passages.

Listen to some of the things that our Lord has said already. He that comes to God, well, this is in the epistle to the Hebrews, and I'm sure it must have come from our Lord. He who comes to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.

If you're coming to pray to God, well, you must recognize that there is a God. Not just a figment of your own imagination. You must come with conviction as to a person who can do what you're asking for.

Again, Jesus said to the disciples, and this is very relevant. If you abide in me, now, the picture is, you remember, of the branch abiding in the vine. Fellowship.

Koinonia. Communion. If you abide in me, and then this, this double abiding is important.

And my words abide in you. My teaching is in your head. In your memory.

You remember the principles I've enunciated. You remember the things I've said. Now, if he says you abide in me and my words abide in you, you can ask what you will.

The world's yours. Now, please don't misunderstand. Jesus does not say you can ask anything, anytime, anywhere.

He did not say that. But he said if you're in fellowship with me, as I am in fellowship with the Father, and his purposes. And if my word is in your mind and in your memory to direct you in the asking or refusing to ask, then, he says, given those two qualifications, you can ask anything.

The world is yours. If you ask anything, he says later on in John chapter 16, anything in my name, I will do it. Now, what I'm saying is this.

When Jesus came to say this that he's saying in our text this morning about faith and later on about forgiveness, he's saying it against that background. He'd already taught those lessons, you see. He's brought them through standard one, two, three, class one, two, three, four, and he's brought them to this point.

Now he says, here's the other lesson. I've told you, I've told the same thing before. I've taught you this lesson two, three, four times previously, but I'll tell you again.

In fact, it's amazing how often our Lord must have used similar words to what we have here, slightly different in form and in other circumstances. For example, I noticed that when the disciples were unable to cast out the demon from the boy who was brought by his parent, you remember, at the foot of the Mount of Transfiguration, Matthew 17, the disciples were unable to cast him out. And then they asked the Lord Jesus, well, why couldn't we? Because when he came down, he did what they couldn't.

You remember? He says, 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 to you. Now, a slight variation, but you see the same principle, and in different circumstances. Now, we have the same kind of thing again, the same principle in another set of circumstances, recorded by Luke in chapter 17 and verse 6. He replied, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mulberry tree or this sycamine tree, as the RSV has it, be uprooted and planted in the sea, and it will obey you.

What Jesus says in our text is this, and he was standing there facing the Mount of Olives. Now, I don't know, I can't say now, whether Jesus was really trying to get the message across by telling them to think of it literally. I can't tell you.

There are some people who believe that. Well, all right. Don't take it as fact, but take the possibility.

That Jesus is looking over there at the great Mount of Olives, 4,000 plus feet higher than the Dead Sea, and he's saying to them, look, men, if it were necessary in the will of God, the same word that brought judicial fruitlessness to this tree could remove that mountain and cast it into the depths of the Dead Sea below. Or, more probably, if I may say what I believe, more probably Jesus had it, was thinking of it in a less literal way. Not to take away from the power of it or the meaning of it, but you see, you look, and you'll see later on how the disciples met mountains on their way of obedience, on their path.

There was the whole community of the Jewish people in Jerusalem. There was the whole Jewish community that stood in their way as they went to proclaim Jesus as Messiah in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, to the uttermost parts of the earth. The Jewish people stood against them at every turning point.

But, my friends, what they saw was this. They saw the mountain removed into the sea. You'll read the story of the first few chapters of the book of the Acts.

Despite the people of the Jews, despite their hatred, despite their opposition, they moved ahead onwards vitally, victoriously. Come, not only the Jews, but the whole of Rome was against them. Move on into the age of the persecutions or study the book of Acts as some of us have been doing on Wednesday nights.

And this is what you see. They challenged not only the Jewish people, they challenged the whole might of Rome and the philosophies of Greece until they take the gospel of a crucified Lord to the uttermost parts of the earth and the mountains were moved. How? Out of sheer simple faith in God.

You know, there is something here which is really deeper still, I think. Our Lord doesn't say it like this. Look, if anyone pleads with God and wrestles in prayer for it, then he can say to this mountain, dance into the sea, and it'll be done.

He didn't say that. You know what Jesus said? If anyone says to this mountain, go throw yourself to the sea, it'll go. You say, what's the difference? Well now, there is in the New Testament, there is an area, there is an experience of wrestling in prayer.

But there is a place in prayer where you do not even need to wrestle. Where God gives you authority as he gave to Jesus and he only uttered the word and the tree was cursed. He spoke the word.

Now, I want you to get this. Jesus didn't go through contortions in order to make himself bring the judgment of God upon this tree. He spoke the word and it was done.

It reminds you of the creative act in Genesis 1. Let there be. Only in this case it was let there not be. He who brought life brings death, but with a simple, sovereign word.

This is none other than the Son of God, my friends. You cannot take these records seriously and disbelieve that. Either he is the Son of God or this entire record is completely out of the way.

He spoke the word and he is daring to say to his disciples, there is a place for you where by the authority given you, you can command the mountains to move. Now, this points to a resource that few of us have tapped. Isn't it true, brothers and sisters? Few of us know this.

And because we don't know it, our tendency is to believe that it's... it's not existent at all. But it is. I must say this.

Faith is important, faith in God, but I want you to notice that really faith is not the cause of it, the ultimate cause or the source of the blessing. Now, this is important. So you and I can get so het up trying to work up faith and we become so conscious of our little faith or great faith or feeble faith, what have you.

We're always thinking of the faith that we have or the faith we don't have. Jesus put it beautifully when he said, you only need the teeniest little bit of faith like a little grain of mustard seed, the least of all the grains. You don't need an awful lot of faith.

But you need your faith focused in God, the real God. Now that's the point, you see. I know many people that need a big faith because their God is so small.

And you need some faith to believe that the God that they have can do very much. But Jesus said you don't need a lot of faith. You need a little faith.

But you do need to see that your faith is focused upon God and the blessing comes not because of your faith. Your faith is but the empty hand of a beggar receiving the gift of his grace that he grants according to the means that he has established. Asking and receiving in his name.

Now that's the first thing then in that main thrust of the passage. Know how we need to look at it. The principal underlying prayer power is faith directed Godwards.

The second thing, in brief, the promise of Jesus undergirding those who will thus pray. Now he turns to them and he says, look, because of that, because that's the way, that's the principle, therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it and it will be yours. Oh, this has challenged many people.

Not believe that you will receive it, that's what you have in the previous verse. But here it is more than that. It is a confidence that because it is in the will of God, in the name of his Son, asked in faith, then you've already received it.

Now if as yet you and I have not reached this area of life and this quality of life and this level of Christian living, my good friends, can I do something to encourage us all in that way this morning? You see, there are so many ways of facing the Christian life and we can become bogged down with one thing and another. I tell you that one of the best approaches to the whole Christian life is this. It's along the avenue of prayer.

Concentrate on this one thing and you will master everything else. I don't care who you are. If you have learned how to pray in this way, you are master of every situation.

Nothing is impossible in the will of God to the man or the woman that knows how to pray. On the other hand, you see, if you know the doctrines and you don't know how to pray, you just don't know what's gone wrong. You've got it all.

You can see so-and-so isn't believing the right doctrines and you fiddle and you quarrel and you get cross. But still you haven't got the grace of God and the peace of God and the certainty of God in your soul. Because that comes in the knowledge of God and there is a knowledge of God which is unique that comes by asking according to His Word and by His Spirit and receiving according to the promises.

Now men and women who know what it means to plead the promises and see the promises fulfilled, they are the men and women who will stand in the day of evil tidings and things. And you see, if you don't do this, what's going to happen is this. You're going to get disgruntled.

Things don't happen as you want them to happen. So what do you do? You blame everybody but yourself. That's true.

I know Christians. They're blaming everybody for the things that are happening to them. That is everybody but themselves.

And they've got the key. Jesus said so. They've got the key.

And the key is right here. Learn how to pray right. You can move mountains.

Now this is why I would like to encourage younger people here this morning and especially our teenage group and young people. Whatever else you do this summer, try to read some of the biographies of the saints, of men and women who've lived on this level. Get on to it.

Get to the library and get some books and take them with you and don't go to sleep through the summer but learn something. Only this last week I was picking up, this is purely an illustration, only this last week I picked up a book which I was hoping might give me some help on a subject that I was grappling with. And in it there was a reference to the great Saint Isabel Kuhn and her husband John laboring in China.

And there Isabel Kuhn tells us how she and her husband were experiencing tremendous opposition in a heathen village in China. The people were deeply convicted. They knew that what they were doing was wrong and they knew that Jesus was the Son of God in the sense of being intellectually convinced but they wouldn't give up their sins and their idols to trust him.

And Isabel Kuhn and her husband John were almost heartbroken as to know what to do. Then suddenly something happened. And I quote now.

The last two days without any explanation that we could discover a sudden and astounding change took place. Glorious victories were gained and quarrels were settled and people were saved. They did not know it but a letter giving the explanation was already on its way to us.

She had noted the date in her diary and she said to her husband I'm sure someone in the homeland is especially praying for us just now. Letters took a long time in those days two months. Then the letter came.

John says Isabel to her husband You read this while I get my diary. You read the letter while I get my diary. This is what the letter said.

I must write and tell you what happened today. Two months ago that is. All morning I could not do my housework because of the burden on me concerning three clan village.

That is the village where these people were working. So finally I went to the telephone and I called Mrs. W. She said she had been feeling the same way and suggested we could call Mrs. J and all three of us go to prayer together. We did so each in her own kitchen.

We spent the morning in intercession for three quarreling clans. We feel God has answered. You will know question mark.

That's how the paragraph ended in the letter. Isabel said to John What do you think the date is in the diary? The date on the diary exactly corresponded with the victory gained in three clan village. Brothers and sisters in Christ this should not amaze us any more than the withering of the fig tree should amaze Simon Peter.

And that brings me to close. Just saying what Jesus says here about one other thing and it doesn't naturally come in. Save that it is so important it has to be mentioned.

The last verse or two verses verses 25 and 26 go on like this. You when you stand praying if you hold anything against anyone forgive him. So that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins.

But if you do not forgive neither will your Father in heaven forgive your sins. What's he saying? Can I summarize it? You have kept the conditions as far as you know and you're asking in the will of God. There's one other thing.

When you stand praying you must be in a forgiving spirit. Have you got anything against anyone as you pray? Does it come up to you? Up in your mind, up in your thoughts up in your memory. Very well says Jesus.

It's so very important that you have fellowship with God with nothing going contrary to his will. You must be prepared to forgive there and then. See, if we are not forgiving those that have trespassed against us you see, we are not in fellowship with God.

We are regarding sin in our hearts and we are hugging sin in our souls. It is necessary for us to forgive those that have trespassed against us because our God to whom we pray is a forgiving God who has forgiven our trespasses against him which were infinitely greater than the trespasses of any man or any human against us. So, we have to be in fellowship with him.

We have to be humble enough to see how trifling the sins of men and women are against us in comparison with our sins against God. And because he has forgiven us we must be prepared to forgive. Now we have fellowship with him.

Now we can claim. Now we can pray. Now we stand on firm ground.

Brothers and sisters, this is a message for us today. It's a message for me as an individual. It's a message for you as an individual.

As the head of a family. As the parent or as parents of children. As a Sunday school teacher or a leader in any department.

This is the way forward. This moves mountains. You have God's word for it.

Let us then by the grace given to us accept the royal highway to victory and triumph in Jesus' name and bend the knee and bend the neck that we may stand in triumph over our foes and fulfill our God-given mission in life. Let us pray. O Lord our God and Father we pray your blessing upon your word to us in one sense reminding us of something that we were all taught as very young children maybe or very young Christians.

In another sense forcefully reminding us that though we may have heard it with our years we have not really entered into the experience of it. And we have concentrated so much upon other things and we have tried psychologically and sociologically and philosophically to analyze our situations. And we fought the battle with other weapons but the enemies are still there and they're not bound and the mountain doesn't move.

O God teach us to be the disciples of your Son our Lord and if it please you to entrust us with anything akin to this authority so grant it and enable us so to follow in the way of your will that we may grow in grace and in the knowledge of yourself on this level. Again we ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/26/SID26561.mp3>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/j-glyn-owen/mark-prayer-power/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net