

MOUNTAIN-MOVING FAITH

MATTHEW 21: 18-22

Introduction:

Jesus wanted His followers to be what Israel had never been. Because of His desire for them, He provided for them a dramatic object lesson. When He failed to find any fruit on the fig tree that was full of leaves, He pronounced a word of curse against the tree and it withered away immediately. Israel had been “leafy” with the outward signs of religion, but fruitless in the things that really matter. The beloved nation was facing the horrible fate of the cursed fig tree. Jesus points the way to fruitfulness and effectiveness to His followers: it is the way of mountain moving faith. It is so important that our religious life be more than mere profession. It must be marked by mountain-moving faith.

The disciples had no question about “why” Jesus had cursed the fig tree, but they did want to know “how.” It is surprising that this miracle provoked this question and what would seem to be greater miracles did not. But it provided our Lord an opportunity to teach this important lesson a type of faith that can overcome any obstacle that may arise.

A “mountain” was a common symbol for an obstacle. They were probably looking at Mount Zion itself as Jesus spoke these words. The assumption is

that His followers do His work in the world, and thus replace Israel that is facing terrible destruction, and they will encounter “mountains”. It will not always be easy to do the work of the Lord in an unbelieving world. They will find what they need for the accomplishment of their task in faith.

We can learn some important things about mountain-moving faith from this word.

I. MOUNTAIN-MOVING FAITH IS PERSONAL.

These strong words seem to be addressed to the individuals as well as to the group. Actually the verbs are all plural as are the pronouns. In the end faith is always a personal response to God.

1. Faith depends on God’s faithfulness.
2. Faith expects God’s enablement.

II. MOUNTAIN-MOVING FAITH IS VERBAL.

“If you SAY to this mountain!” Faith manifests itself in words.

1. Words reveal the heart.
2. Words release the power of God.

This really takes us back to the beginning—God spoke and it was done.

When God spoke in the creation, it was done.

We should be warned by the experience of the children of Israel at Kadesh Barnea. The spies came back from their exploration of the land saying, “It is a good land, but we cannot take it.” And they could not. Their doubting words limited the power of God. Be careful what you say. Check your words.

Calvary Baptist in Lubbock experienced the power of such words one night in a business meeting. They were discussing the building of a new building which they desperately needed. The collective wisdom of some of the trusted leaders in the church was that it did not seem advisable to attempt such a project. They were doubtful about the ability of the church to pay for such a project.

Then a dear elderly widow asked to speak. She was well-known to all of the congregation. She proceeded to share a personal testimony to the faithfulness and ability of God to meet her needs, and the needs of an adult invalid daughter that was totally dependent on her. She said to the church, “If God is able to meet my needs, and to sustain me across these years, He is surely able to meet the needs of His bride. Mr. Moderator, if the bride needs this building, let’s ask God for it and move forward. He will make a way.” And they did, and He did. O the power of spoken faith!

III. MOUNTAIN-MOVING FAITH IS PRAYERFUL.

Such faith not only speaks to the mountain, it also speaks to God believing. It asks for what it needs with confidence that God can and will answer. It is not a matter “if” God will answer, but rather a matter of “when”.

1. Faith asks specifically.

“Whatever” gives great latitude in asking. However it should probably be confined to the context which is finding what is needed to bear fruit to the glory of God. Whatever you need in order to do what God wants you to do can be requested through prayer.

2. Faith asks persistently.

Here the verb “believing” is a present tense verb, which means that it has a continuous action. It keeps on believing until the mountain is gone!

IV. MOUNTAIN-MOVING FAITH IS POWERFUL.

1. Faith receives the impossible.

2. Faith pleases God

It brings to the follower the power needed to overcome the obstacle and to accomplish the purpose of God.

The disappointment of Jesus with the fig tree is a parable of the disappointment with God. He so delights when He finds faith in His people.