

## Daily Bible Study

### *“Lessons From A Withered Fig Tree”*

*Mark 11:20 - 26*

*October 23– October 29, 2011*

**THE LORD’S DAY & MONDAY** – As we come now to our text in **Mark 11:20-26**, Lord willing, we will along with Jesus’ disciples be taught some very valuable lessons standing with Jesus and His men in the shadow of the cursed, withered fig tree. Jesus had previously cursed the fig tree as He had passed it on His way into Jerusalem and has since been into the Temple where He cleansed it and in essence prophecies judgment on it and specifically deals with the present corruption therein. As we move along now in the text we read of Jesus being made aware of the tree that He had cursed being totally withered and then we are presented with a very interesting statement which kicks off the subsequent teaching lesson from Christ. In short, He gives the commendation of faith (*Have faith in God*) which leads Him to describe the powerful effects of genuine faith in God with the promise of moving mountains into the sea. Mark again draws us to the need for the risky commitment of faith, which most of the people we have met in his gospel record as well as many today do not make. The lesson continues with thoughts on prayer; faith and prayer are linked and that is illustrated in the text in **verse 23**. Furthermore, prayer is a true sign of a genuine faith commitment toward and in God Himself. Moving along, Jesus lets us know that prayer and faith that see results originate in the environment of a forgiving spirit. Only since God forgives us can we even approach him in prayer; therefore, an unforgiving spirit on our part destroys the atmosphere in which prayer is offered and answered. All of these lessons we will see together as we move through the text. **Mark 11:20-26** *“Now in the morning, as they passed by, they saw the fig tree dried up from the roots. And Peter, remembering, said to Him, “Rabbi, look! The fig tree which You cursed has withered away.” So Jesus answered and said to them, “Have faith in God. For assuredly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, ‘Be removed and be cast into the sea,’ and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that those things he says will be done, he will have whatever he says. Therefore I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them. And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses. But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father in heaven forgive your trespasses.”*

*(Meditate)What is God teaching me from His Word today? (Apply)How can I put it into practice?*

---

---

---

*Suggestion for Prayer: Father, teach me these necessary lessons from Your Word this week.*

**TUESDAY – Mark 11:20-22** “Now in the morning, as they passed by, they saw the fig tree dried up from the roots. And Peter, remembering, said to Him, “Rabbi, look! The fig tree which You cursed has withered away.” So Jesus answered and said to them, “Have faith in God.” As we begin the text we notice the disciples and our Lord were taking the same route into Jerusalem from Bethany that again brings them pas the fig tree. It was only yesterday that Jesus had pronounced the curse upon the fig tree and now we see that *the fig tree dried up from the roots*. This describes a PERMANENT condition as the roots as well as the outer extremities of the tree are *dried*. The next sentence again gives evidence of Peter’s influence and probable collaboration with Mark in writing this record as it seems often that Mark discloses Peter’s inner thoughts about situations. Peter remembered and as he did in **Mark 9:5**, he again uses the term *Rabbi* to address Jesus. This was a title of respect originally reserved for highly honored teachers and we find it was used of Jesus often as well as once being designated to John the Baptist (**John 3:26**). Peter is apparently astonished over the fact that in such a short time (some +-24hrs?) the tree that was so full of leaves and looking so promising to have fruit upon it is now some ghostly, dried up, shadow of its former glory. It seems that Peter and the disciples were unable to fully understand how it had been possible to bring about such a radical change in so short a time. *So Jesus answered and said to them, “Have faith in God.”* Jesus answers *them* although we have no recorded question from them rather it is Peter again who acts as the spokesman for the twelve. The first lesson Jesus teaches them is, “*Have faith in God.*” We will unpack this more later but suffice to say for now this is a common theme in the Gospel and is foundational to a relationship with God as His children. Pistis in God specifically in His Messiah Jesus, the God-Man is fallen, sinful mankind’s ONLY hope (**Hebrews 11:6, John 17:3**). This is where it begins. You can be distracted by the world, flesh, and the devil and all they offer and represent but Jesus reminds these men they must look to God alone.

(Meditate)What is God teaching me from His Word today? (Apply)How can I put it into practice?

---

---

---

Suggestion for Prayer: *Father, help me to trust, believe, and look only to You. Give me faith to believe and help my faith to grow stronger as I feed by faith upon Jesus and Scripture.*

**WEDNESDAY – Mark 11:22** “So Jesus answered and said to them, “Have faith in God.” As we continue discussing this call of Jesus to “*Have faith in God*” we should notice that it is a present active Imperative in the original Greek. Jesus is not merely making a statement or asking a question; He is giving a command here. The original also suggests that an abiding continuing faith is what is meant (these two verses contain the same thought in the original: **Mark 5:36, John 3:16**). Before we look generally at this command to faith for all men let us look in context of the disciples in their present situation. Jesus has just symbolically illustrated judgment to come upon the nation and upon the Temple itself in His cursing of the fig tree and cleansing of the Temple (see also **Mark 13:2**). In Scripture we find that Jeremiah used figs as a symbol of judgment upon Jerusalem in **Jeremiah 24**. Jeremiah had also pronounced God’s curse upon the Temple twice before in **Jeremiah 7:1-14** and **26:2-6**. Also, the total destruction of the fig tree as well as the

predicted devastating doom coming upon the Temple illustrate that the physical Temple and the false forms of empty worship that were taking place within it are not the final goal of redemptive history. God is building a spiritual Temple (**1 Corinthians 6:19-20**, **2 Corinthians 6:16-18**, **1 Peter 2:4-5**, **Revelation 3:12**) with true worshipers and as the New Jerusalem, they will live with God in his presence in a new heaven and earth forever (**Revelation 21:1-26**). This judgment scene must have been devastating to the disciples thinking. As we are so removed from the destruction of The Temple in A.D. 70 we may think this command is irrelevant to us but this is not the case. Faith is demanded of us today as well. Faith, trust, resting in God, believing Him, leaning on Him, committing our way to Him knowing He will do whatever is best is still our duty. Faith was the means of Abraham's justification (**Romans 4:1-8**) and was displayed at Jericho, Mt. Carmel, with David in his battle with Goliath as well as Daniel in the lion's den. Finally, we know that *faith is the substance of things hoped for and the evidence of things not seen* (**Hebrews 11:1**) and is the victory that overcomes the world (**1 John 5:4**).

*(Meditate) What is God teaching me from His Word today? (Apply) How can I put it into practice?*

---

---

---

*Suggestion for Prayer: Father, forgive me for often not resting in You and trusting You as I ought. Thank You for being the One who ultimately gave me faith as a gift (**Ephesians 2:8-9**).*

**THURSDAY – Mark 11:23-24** “For assuredly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, ‘Be removed and be cast into the sea,’ and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that those things he says will be done, he will have whatever he says. Therefore I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them.” Remembering to keep the story in its setting we see Jesus refer to a *mountain* and a *sea*. In our text, it would appear “*this mountain*” is the Mount of Olives and “*the sea*” is most likely the Dead Sea. If this mountain were to be literally *removed* and *cast into the sea* would mean a sudden plunge of about 4,000 feet. In light of the context which is speaking of *faith* and *prayer*, obviously the point here is that nothing in harmony with God's will is impossible to be performed by those who believe and don't doubt (**Matthew 17:20**, **21:21**, **Luke 17:6**). We are given an Old Testament illustration of this type of figure of speech concerning mountain moving and its possibilities through God's power in **Zechariah 4:6-7**. Mountains of seeming difficulties are nothing before God Almighty. What immediately follows in **verse 24** starting with *Therefore* confirms this. Jesus goes on to say there “*I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them*”. By seeing this as a lesson about *prayer* and *faith* we must not lose sight of the tremendous force of these words. The apostles had already been doing things considered as “impossible” as casting a mountain into the sea. Peter exemplified this type of faith when he walked on the water (**Matthew 14:29**), the disciples demonstrated it when they spoke to Jesus of the demons “*being subject to us in your name*” (**Luke 10:17**), and without even mentioning the book of Acts, we finish with reminding us of our responsibility to this command as we remember the words of Jesus from **John 14:12-14**: “*Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to*

*the Father. And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it.” Praying “in my name,” is praying in harmony with all that Jesus has revealed concerning himself (Colossians 3:17).*

*(Meditate)What is God teaching me from His Word today? (Apply)How can I put it into practice?*

---

---

---

*Suggestion for Prayer: Father, teach me to believe that nothing is impossible for You and help me pray with faith believing. Teach me to pray “in Your name” Jesus; as You would pray for things.*

**FRIDAY & SATURDAY** – **Mark 11:25-26** “*And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses. But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father in heaven forgive your trespasses.*” We recognize the power in faith filled prayer yet realize it is not some “rabbit from a hat” affair; rather, like everything in the life of a believer, prayer has a necessary environment. Prayer that produces requires a forgiving spirit. God’s forgiveness of us is ground for approaching Him in prayer. An unforgiving spirit destroys the atmosphere where prayer is offered and answered. Effective, pleasing prayer to God is offered from a forgiving, loving heart. Finally, **verses 25-26** remind us of the Lord’s Prayer in **Matthew 6:12**, “*And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.*” Jesus continues in **vs. 14** saying forgiveness before God is dependent upon our forgiving of others. Jesus may very well be teaching these same principles here by repetition. Our problem as sinners is we’re prone by nature to be unforgiving; we need to be reminded to be like our Lord. It is our Father in heaven that pardons us on the basis of Jesus’ atonement (**Ephesians 4:32**). The lessons of the fig tree include: Fruitlessness results in a curse, true *faith in God* results in answered prayer, brings confidence in God’s promises, and teaches us to be *loving* and forgiving to others.

*(Meditate)What is God teaching me from His Word today? (Apply)How can I put it into practice?*

---

---

---

*Suggestion for Prayer: Father, thanks for Your love & forgiveness of me demonstrated in Jesus.*