

## 4.12.26

# In Preparation for Pentecost: Forgiving, Praying, Believing, Agreeing, Receiving, and the Bread of Life

### First Things First

Mark 11:24-25 ESV

*“As they passed by in the morning, they saw the fig tree withered away to its roots. And Peter remembered and said to him, “Rabbi, look! The fig tree that you cursed has withered.” And Jesus answered them, “Have faith in God. Truly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, ‘Be taken up and thrown into the sea,’ and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says will come to pass, it will be done for him. Therefore, I tell you, whatever you ask in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours. And whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone, **so that** your Father also who is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses.”*

Interesting that the connection to verse 24 of Mark chapter 11 is seldom made to verse 25, leaving the interpretation of the passage completely untethered from its original and intended context. In fact, verse 24, without verse 25, has (sadly) been used in the faith movement to mislead

thousands into unhealthy expectations and entitlements from one's relationship with God. In fact, praying self-willed, self-purposed prayers, too often promoted by "what we want" rather than praying Christ-willed, Christ-purposed prayers, prompted by "what we need", is why many Christians struggle to have their prayers consistently and effectively answered. Teaching the "self-willed, self-purposed" kind of prayer leads to misguided faith. Ultimately, a misguided faith is a failed faith, leaving those who believe in it with unrealistic expectations and often leading to a complete crisis of faith. Disillusioned and angry, they wrongly believed that God was to be on demand for whatever they asked and believed for, whenever they wanted it. But biblical faith is founded on the good pleasure, plans, purposes, and unmovable will of God rather than the pleasure, plans, purposes, and ever-changing will of man. Biblical faith is founded upon love for who God is - rather than a manipulative and entitled expectation for what we may or may not want God to do. Without forgiving one another, which is the perfect (like Christ) sacrifice, the ignorant, the deceived, the arrogant, or the untaught will continue to stand and pray prayers that HAVE NO LIFE or eternal purpose. Wrongly, we continue on...

*...If I just believe more, I can ask for more!*

*...if I can visualize it, I can speak it into existence!*

*...God, You have promised in Your Word that if I believe it, I can receive it!*

*...Whatever I ask in Your Name, You will do it!*

*...I claim this under my authority as a believer!*

Each of those statements carries various elements of biblical truth, and yet when abused or used outside the right and righteous context of the

author's intended meaning, there is a problem for those who teach to pray and believe in that way.

As we said, this kind of unbiblical faith has too often led many Christians into a tragic crisis of faith rather than biblically discipling them to build a stronger, more complete, or perfected faith. We must go back to the origin of this foolishness.

To begin, neither you nor I (nor anyone, for that matter) can untether the two verses of Mark 11 from their shared context and coupled meaning. Here is how that works. The biblical premise for praying (asking), believing, and receiving in prayer is only made completely possible when preceded by forgiving others of their trespasses against us so that our heavenly Father forgives us of ours. In other words, the effectiveness and success of our praying and believing are directly related to our forgiving and being forgiven. That is precisely why Jesus said, *“and when you pray, pray this way; “forgive us of our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.”* We cannot untether each one from the other: our praying, believing, and receiving, from the condition, intent, and motive of our hearts. The two are uniquely connected to one another by way of preferring and surrendering to God's will for us above our will for ourselves. With Yeshua, this started with an emptying of the heart of trespasses - the ones we have committed and the ones committed against us - the ones we have done, and the ones we have left undone.

Here is the good news regarding our praying, our believing, and our receiving, which we must reconcile with our faith and relationship with God

and with one another. Reconciliation is always possible through forgiving and being forgiven.

Go to your brother and forgive, and be forgiven; go to your sister and forgive, and be forgiven. In doing so, the obedience of offering love and a full measure of grace through deserved or undeserved forgiveness will carry with it the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus.

Here are some righteous biblical examples of what our prayer, believing, and receiving should look like. Look closely for the connection Jesus makes to the swift forgiveness and reconciliation of an offense or trespass in relation to the offering of our prayer and worship to our Creator. Let's open our hearts to the biblical realities of those hindrances to our prayer that we ourselves control and correct. Let's welcome into our daily praying, believing, and receiving the call of God to forgiveness, righteousness, the motive and intent of our hearts, and living in right and righteous relationships with one another.

Matthew 5:23-24 ESV

“So if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.”

James 5:16 ESV

“Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.”

1 Peter 3:7-12 ESV

“Likewise, husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel, since they are heirs with you of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered. Finally, all of you have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind. Do not repay evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary, bless, for to this you were called, that you may obtain a blessing. For “Whoever desires to love life and see good days, let him keep his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking deceit; let him turn away from evil and do good; let him seek peace and pursue it. For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and his ears are open to their prayer. But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.”

James 4:3-10 ESV

“You do not have, because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions.

4 You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore, whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. Or do you suppose it is to no purpose that the Scripture says, “He yearns jealously over the spirit that he has made to dwell in us”? But he gives more grace.

Therefore, it says, “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.” Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Be wretched and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you.”

## **Overcoming Hindered Prayer**

*Confession, Forgiveness, and Repentance:* Regularly confessing sins and seeking forgiveness can restore our relationship with God and clear the way for effective prayer.

*Aligning Motives and Intent:* Ensure that your requests align with God's will and purpose. Reflect on your motives and intent before bringing prayer to God.

*Nurturing Spiritually Healthy Relationships:* Work on resolving conflicts and practicing forgiveness, as this can significantly impact your prayer life.

*Strengthening and Increasing Faith:* Cultivate a strong faith through prayer, scripture reading, and community support to overcome doubt.

*Persistent and Purposed Prayer:* Continue to pray and seek God, even when answers seem delayed. Colossians 4:2 encourages us to "continue

in prayer" and remain steadfast. Pray His purposes and will be done over you and in you.

By courageously confronting these hindrances, we can enhance our prayer life and develop a deeper connection, displaying a more consistently purposed and effective faith in God. Remember, effective prayer is rooted in a sincere, clean heart, fearless faith, and an unwavering commitment to living in alignment with God's Word, God's Will, and God's Ways.