

## Building a Tough Faith for Tough Times Series:

# How Faith Works

Pastor Rick Shelton

June 13, 2010

Mark 11:12-14 (NKJV) *"Now the next day, when they had come out from Bethany, He was hungry. And seeing from afar a fig tree having leaves, He went to see if perhaps He would find something on it. When He came to it, He found nothing but leaves, for it was not the season for figs. In response Jesus said to it, "Let no one eat fruit from you ever again." And His disciples heard it."*

Mark 11:20-24 (NKJV) *"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."*

- Anytime we come to learn about faith, we must come to Mark 11:23-24. But we often see that these verses have been misused and abused on how they are applied. Some have used them for the lust of the flesh and for selfish gain.
- We must avoid those abuses, but we must not avoid these scriptures which are the Bible. Don't throw out the truth of the scripture. These words are even in red which means Jesus said them, not a man. Since Jesus said them, this means it is a powerful life changing truth.
- The substance of these verses is found in verse 22 which says "Have faith in God".
- Now look at verses 23 and 24. Your faith must be put to work. Faith is not a passive agreement with scripture but an active participation with God. Faith must be worked.
- If you view faith as a subject and not a verb, you will never grasp what Jesus teaches about faith.
- Faith is not just a belief system but something we do in cooperation with God as a partner bringing His will for our lives into this earth.
- In Verse 22 Jesus did not say, "Have God". He said "Have faith in God". The emphasis is not just on having God in our lives to answer prayers, but on developing a relationship of trust and a working faith in God.
- God does not work alone. He gave us authority and dominion to work in His name. He has chosen to carry on the rule of His kingdom on this earth through the work of His people.
- When we learn and apply the laws of faith, God cooperates with our faith as we cooperate with His will. We are in a partnership with God. This is why it is so important to grow strong in our faith.

Luke 17:5 (NKJV) *"And the apostles said to the Lord, "Increase our faith."*

- The disciples asked Jesus to increase their faith after Jesus' teaching on offense.
- Jesus responds by speaking about having faith the size of a mustard seed.
- They were saying give us more faith but their faith was passive and unused.
- Jesus responded by saying, you don't need more faith that you won't use; instead, **USE WHAT YOU'VE ALREADY GOT.** Use the faith you already have.
- The key to mountain moving faith is using the faith that God has already given you. The responsibility is on **YOU.**
- People who go through difficult things sometimes whine and complain to those of us who are doing our best in the midst of our own difficulties – as if we have never had to deal with anything.
- Do not "freak out" just because you cannot control your circumstances. Instead focus on what you can control, yourself. You can control your thoughts and words.
- You have authority over your own mind, your own mouth, your own attitude. You cannot "loose it" unless you "give it" to be lost; surrendering the authority Christ has given you to use in these circumstances.
- **DON'T FREAK OUT, FAITH UP!**

Mark 11:13-14 (NKJV) "And seeing from afar a fig tree having leaves, He went to see if perhaps He would find something on it. When He came to it, He found nothing but leaves, for it was not the season for figs. In response Jesus said to it, "Let no one eat fruit from you ever again." And His disciples heard it."

- Notice that when Jesus walked up to the fig tree, there were leaves. Also, after he cursed it, there were still leaves. Nothing changed.
- When you pray and ask God for things, most of the time nothing changes right away. This is the way it works most of the time.

Mark 11:20 (NKJV) "Now in the morning, as they passed by, they saw the fig tree dried up from the roots."

- When the disciples saw the fig tree the next day they noticed a change. Something changed from the inside out. They saw that the fig tree had dried up from the roots.
- God tells us in verse 23 to "speak to the problem" and in verse 24 to "ask God in prayer".
- When you do this, things may not change immediately. But God begins working immediately from the inside out.
- This is why faith takes time to produce God's promises.
- Because of this, many get mad at God when they didn't see anything change on the outside. They do not realize He is working inside, in the world of the spirit.
- In Daniel 9, Daniel heard a word from God about a promise to His people for a future time. So Daniel set himself to pray asking God to bring it to pass. In the natural nothing changed. But three weeks later, an angel came to report that for three weeks he had been fighting in the heavenlies against the Prince of Persia. He said from the first day Daniel's words were heard and he was dispatched to let him know that the answer was being taken care of and answered in the unseen realm first.
- Basically, the Angel said to Daniel, "we'll do the fighting, you do the praying!"
- Don't stop believing for this to happen. Don't take your faith off the job. Don't let go of the Word.
- Your faith activates the power and presence of God. He sends His angels to continue working on your behalf.
- DON'T STOP. When you do, the angels stop and retreat from their work on your behalf. All of God's resources are taken off the job.
- Don't worry about how long it takes! Keep your faith on the job.
- George Mueller, a great man who built orphanages, lived by faith. For 60 years, he prayed for two men to be saved. Someone once asked him if he was still praying and believing for them. He said "yes". When they asked why, he said "*because God will not deny my prayers because they are based on the promise of His Word*". Two weeks before he died, the first man got saved. A few weeks after he died, the second man got saved. We know George is rejoicing in heaven.
- Hebrews 11 tells us that the heroes of faith all died in faith still believing and knowing even though they had not seen the promise.
- Pastor Rick's vision for the "Sea of Humanity" was given 31 years ago. Some say it should have happened by now. But they don't understand how these things work! Pastor Rick is still as radical today as he was when he first got the vision.
- You must believe you have it when you pray and act the same as you would when you see it.
- Mark 11:24 tells us that when you pray, believe you will receive it (present) – and then you shall have it (future).
- Ask yourself, do you have it when you pray or when you see it?
- It is hard! Adversity, thoughts, and attacks come. But you can do it. Your life and future depends on it.
- Some things take a while but you must not let the storm on the outside get on the inside.
- Look at how Medieval fortresses worked when they were attacked by enemy. They locked the gates and fought from the wall. They were safe inside the wall with the enemy on the outside. But the battle turned when the enemy broke through the wall and got on the inside.
- Keep it on the outside.