



LESSON 121 MARK 11:22-26 (Continued)

22 So Jesus answered and said to them, "Have faith in God. (Literally this is "Have the faith of God," which Jesus defines for us in the next verse.) **23 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. 24 Therefore I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them. 25 "And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses. 26 But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father in heaven forgive your trespasses."**

The "therefore" in verse 24 connects the instruction that has been given in verses 22-23 with prayer. There are several important principles in these verses that give us a foundation for praying (v 24 "when you pray...") effectively and powerfully.

a. Forgive.

Forgiveness is a prerequisite to mighty prayers. Most of us have someone or several someones that we hold grudges against, or dislike them for what they did or said to hurt us, to offend us, or even to betray us.

There are two aspects to forgiveness: your fellowship with God and your behavior toward the offender. The latter is defined in several places in the scriptures.. For instance, **Luke 17:3-4 Then He (Jesus) said to the disciples, ...Take heed to yourselves. If your brother sins against you, rebuke him (D: let him know what he did wrong); and if he repents, forgive him. And if he sins against you seven times in a day (D: he's careless) and seven times in a day returns to you, saying, 'I repent,' (D: he's sensitive to his conscience or the Holy Spirit), you shall forgive him."**

If the offender comes to you and asks for your forgiveness, you are to forgive. Doing so, you would be being obedient to the Lord and stay in fellowship with Him. If the offender doesn't come to you, you are to forgive him in your heart, so there won't be any hindrance to your fellowship with the Father. That's what Jesus did on the cross. By His asking His Father to forgive those who were instrumental in crucifying Him, Jesus showed He had forgiven them in His heart. He did not speak forgiveness to those people, because they could not receive forgiveness until they repented for what they had done, (**Luke 17:3-4 If your brother sins against you, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him.**), but He paved the way for the possibility of their repentance and receiving forgiveness from God by having a heart of forgiveness toward them. He had a clear conscience, harboring no unforgiveness in His heart that would have been a barrier between His Father and Him.

So, forgiving in your heart keeps you in fellowship with the Lord. You are not, unless specifically and clearly led by the Holy Spirit, to go to the offender and proclaim that you have

forgiven him, when he has not repented. That kind of proclamation does not help the offender come to repentance. In fact, it usually builds a higher wall of rebellion in his heart--against you and against God. Make sure you don't interfere with the work of God in the offender's heart by a show of your spiritual pride and false piety.

Understand that forgiving someone means, even though you know they did wrong, you are not going to avenge yourself against them. You are not going to talk ugly about them, try to slander them, or do mean things in any way to get back at them. You are giving the right of vengeance to God. If they don't repent, He will avenge you appropriately.

Understand also that forgiving people does not necessarily mean that you now trust them or would put them back in a position of trust . After all, if a person had tried to kidnap or molest your child, even though you forgave him in your heart,(that is, you gave your right of vengeance to God), you wouldn't let him babysit your child. In this instance, God has given the legal system the right to avenge you, and if it doesn't appropriately, God will. Offenders may not be deserve a re-instatement of your trust, but you must allow God to handle any retribution. You can trust and rest in Him.

If you forgive, your behavior will match what the Lord Jesus said and did. **Matthew 5:43-44** **"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, love your enemies, (D: by the following behavior) bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.** Notice Jesus still calls them "enemies," but He outlines the behavior of a forgiving believer: in speech, in works, and in prayer. The Lord ties this behavior into being like the behavior of our heavenly Father (**that you may be sons of your Father in heaven;**).

Isaiah 55: 7-8 state that forgiveness is a part of the holy character of God: **Let the wicked forsake his way, And the unrighteous man his thoughts;**(D:this forsaking wrong-doing and wrong thinking is a part of repentance) **Let him return to the Lord, And He will have mercy on him; And to our God, For He will abundantly pardon.** "For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways," says the Lord. "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways, And My thoughts than your thoughts.

When we forgive, we are showing how much like our Father we are. We are thinking as He thinks. We are standing in agreement with Him and letting His Holy Spirit develop His kind of thoughts in us.

When you forgive, you are also saying to God that you don't want anything to stand between you and Him that would keep Him from hearing your prayers (**Psalm 66:18 If I regard iniquity in my heart, The Lord will not hear.** Forgiving others means we can also receive forgiveness, when we repent. **Mark 11:25-26 ... if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses. 26But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father in heaven forgive your trespasses."**

To have power in prayer, you must be clean of all unforgiveness against anyone. To make sure this is true of you, tell the Lord you want to have " clean hands and a pure heart" (Psalm 24:3-5) before Him. Ask Him to reveal to you which persons you have not forgiven, and then you repent of that unforgiveness and tell the Lord that you want to walk in His ways and think His thoughts

about forgiveness. Thank Him for forgiving you. Ask Him to take care of any judgment and justice that is needed. From that point on, bless, do good and pray for the offender. Next time we'll look at the other principles of powerful prayer.

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