

Several weeks ago, before we focused for a couple of weeks on Palm Sunday and Easter, the message was about prayer and how prayer is critical both in knowing God's will for our lives and in fully receiving the blessings He wants to give us. Today we're going to jump back to the topic of prayer and look at another key factor in effective prayer. The importance of faith in our prayer life and in all aspects of our Christian life.

When the Israelites left Egypt, God promised them a land flowing with milk and honey. Because of their lack of faith, the Israelites ended up wandering the desert for forty years until the entire generation had died. Too often, when God promises us a mountaintop we settle for a molehill, or maybe for nothing at all. I don't know about you, but I'm tired of just settling... I want the mountain God has promised me...

A small congregation in the foothills of the Great Smokies built a new sanctuary on a piece of land willed to them by a church member. Ten days before the new church was to open, the local building inspector informed the pastor that

the parking lot was inadequate for the size of the building. Until the church doubled the size of the parking lot, they would not be able to use the new sanctuary. Unfortunately, the church with its undersized parking lot had used every inch of their land except for the mountain against which it had been built, and pretty much every penny of their building fund as well. In order to build more parking spaces, they would have to come up with considerable funding and move the mountain out of the back yard, all in a little more than a week.

Undaunted, the pastor announced the next Sunday morning that he would meet that evening with all members who had "mountain moving faith." They would hold a prayer session asking God to remove the mountain from the back yard and to somehow provide enough money to have it paved and painted before the scheduled opening dedication service the following week.

At the appointed time, 24 of the congregation's 300 members assembled for prayer. They prayed for nearly three hours. At ten o'clock the pastor said the final "Amen." "We'll

open next Sunday as scheduled," he assured everyone. "God has never let us down before, and I believe He will be faithful this time too."

The next morning, as he was working in his study, there came a loud knock at the pastor's door. When he called, "Come in," a rough looking construction foreman appeared, removing his hard hat as he entered.

"Excuse me, Reverend. I'm from Ace Construction Company over in the next county. We're building a huge new shopping mall over there and we need some fill dirt. Would you be willing to sell us a chunk of that mountain behind the church? We'll pay you for the dirt we remove and pave all the exposed area free of charge, if we can have it right away. We can't do anything else until we get the dirt in and allow it to settle properly."

The little church was dedicated the next Sunday as originally planned and there were far more members with "mountain moving faith" on opening Sunday than there had been the previous week!

Jeremiah 32:17 says, “Ah Sovereign Lord, you have made the heaven and the earth by your great power and outstretched arm. Nothing is too hard for you.”

Sometimes we try to make things hard for God to do.

Because with our limited thinking, because they are too hard for us to do in our own power, we think they are too hard for God to do too. But as the Bible says, "Nothing is too hard for God!"

Jesus came so we could experience the abundant life, Jesus came so we could all experience the promised land God has prepared for His Children!

So, if God has promised us the mountain, why do so many choose to live in the foothills or on a molehill instead of living on the mountain, with all the promises and benefits that God has already chosen to provide for us?

Please stand if you are able and turn with me to James 5:13-16 (READ)

What exactly are the benefits that God makes available to us, each and every day? Because of our salvation

experience and the relationship we have with God, we aren't limited to a certain number of benefits. We are entitled to all of the benefits God has thought of, or created!

That kind of gives new meaning to Jeremiah 29:11, "For surely I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."

The word 'surely' is used in the scripture to emphasize the speaker's firm belief that what they are saying is true, and often their surprise that there is any doubt about it. Long story short, God means what He says and expects us to take Him at His word!

There are some 1,500 promises in the Bible!

To name a few, God has promised us; Love, Grace, Eternal Life, Forgiveness, Favor, Our needs to be met, Strength and peace in times of trial... All of the promises of God are summed up in what Jesus came to deliver to us! ABUNDANT LIFE!!

John 10:10 says, “The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.”

So why aren't more believers living the abundant life? Why aren't more believers experiencing the daily benefits that God is delivering to them every day?

It's because they're focusing more on themselves and the circumstances that are going on around them than they are on what God has promised! The thief, Satan, with his stealing, killing and undermining Gods promises prevents the benefits from becoming real and tangible in their lives! Then when everything is messed up, they want to be the one in charge of changing the situation instead of handing it over to the one who is really in charge.

God told Moses to send out twelve men to spy out the land of Canaan, which he had promised to the Israelites. They came back and told of a land flowing with milk and honey, but 10 or the 12 were distracted by the size and strength of the people in the land. Only Joshua and Caleb remembered that their God was stronger and called for the people to go

up and take the land. And because the people listened to the 10, Israel wandered in the desert for 40 years and, of the people of that generation, only Joshua and Caleb survived to enter the land.

The children of Israel found out what a lot of believers find out in their lives. Obtaining God's promises and walking into the promised land isn't always as easy as it might appear to be! However, we're the ones who make it hard, not God!

But that doesn't make God's promises any less true, or less believable, or less obtainable! Because God's promises are yes and amen, concerning us!

The thing you have to remember concerning His promises is, that Gods promises are dependent on God. Not only giving us the promises, but also delivering on them to us. Our part is to only believe that He can and will do what He has promised to do for us!

If they were only dependent on us being able to supply and deliver them, they wouldn't require any faith at all in God, only us... But we aren't able to deliver.

God's ways are greater than our ways, God's thoughts are greater than our thoughts! And we should be thankful that they are, and grateful for the fact that we are included in Gods thought process at all, let alone on the receiving end of those great promises... If we can only have enough faith to believe!! And we know we can, because God has already given us enough faith (even if it is the size of a mustard seed like we talked about a month or so ago) for every situation we will ever come up against!

1st Kings 19:11 - 12 says, "Then Elijah was told, "Go, stand on the mountain at attention before God. God will pass by." A hurricane wind ripped through the mountains and shattered the rocks before God, but God wasn't to be found in the wind; after the wind an earthquake, but God wasn't in the earthquake; and after the earthquake fire, but God wasn't in the fire; and after the fire a gentle and quiet whisper."

Elijah, had been a part of and witnessed so many incredible things that God had done. But Elijah had gotten sidetracked by his circumstances, like a lot of believers get sidetracked by their circumstances.

The thing circumstances will do is take your focus off of the one who controls all circumstances and makes all things become possible!

Circumstances like to talk loud,

Circumstances like to dictate the outcome of the events that are happening right in front of you!

Circumstances like to make you think that they are in control of every situation!

But behind the scenes it's a different story altogether, God is constantly saying, “you can do this! You have my overcoming DNA flowing through your blood, your muscles, every fiber of your being, your body soul and your mind!

You are wonderfully made, you are my workmanship, my pride and joy! I have prepared this event for you and have well-equipped you to walk right in and seize the moment!”

You may have been beaten down, kicked around and left by the wayside of life. But God says today is a brand-new day. Today is the day to start walking in the plans that he has

created for you! To start enjoying the promises he has ready for you to walk into!

A pilot was flying over a mountainous terrain, and as he was flying, he looked down to see two vehicles driving down the highway.

The first vehicle was a semi-trailer, pulling his load up and down that old highway. The second vehicle was a sports car driven by a guy who had better things to do than be stuck behind a semi that couldn't always maintain the speed limit up the mountain grades. Well, what the pilot could see that the drivers couldn't was that there was no traffic coming the other way. The car could easily have passed the truck with no danger. The problem is that neither the truck nor the car driver could see that. They couldn't see around the next bend, only what was immediately in front of them... They couldn't see the big picture.

You see, we can only see things from our perspective. We don't see the big picture. Only God does. What we need to do is, look through our eyes of faith and trust what God sees, as if we see it ourselves!

Today is your day to take hold of the mountain that has been promised unto you!

Just like in the story I shared with you at the beginning of the sermon. When the believers went to prayer and ask God to move the mountain, He answered their request in a miraculous way!

What will God do for you, when you pray and ask in faith to give you the mountain that's been promised to you?

Remember his ways are not your ways, his thoughts are not your thoughts, his methods are not your methods! But also remember that God is not some cosmic vending machine where you pop in a prayer and out comes whatever you want. For the most part this message has been about TRUST in the Lord, but a key that we can never overlook is that little phrase "IN THE LORD". If we expect to get the blessings that he wants to give, we have to be living in his will, seeking his will, and praying in his will... In my will I can ask for fame and fortune, but his will for me is more likely to be along the lines of humility and service, both to him and to those around me. If I ask him for what I want without regard

to what he wants, his answer will almost always be a resounding “NO” because he knows what I really need. If I seek his will, he will answer with the blessings that I truly need.

He is not limited by your understanding, so you shouldn't let your requests be limited by your understanding either!

With the measure of faith that God has given you, if you are praying in his will, you can say to this mountain jump from here to there! The only thing you have to do is decide how high you want it to jump!

One more time, I want to make it perfectly clear that I'm not talking about the lies that a lot of “name it, claim it” prosperity preachers try to peddle to line their pockets. But I am talking about a God... the only true God... who can and will do far more than we ask or imagine when we are praying in faith and in His will. Prayer needs to be the foundation of everything we do at Restoration. Not prayer that God will bless what we are wanting to do, but prayer that we are wanting to do what God will bless us for. Not praying that God will bless what we are already doing, but prayer that we

will align what we are doing with God's will for us. That what we're doing will bless and honor God and grow His kingdom, here in our neighborhood, throughout Sioux Falls, and beyond.

Every Sunday morning at 10:30 we have a prayer meeting aimed at seeking God's will for our church and getting ourselves aligned with His will. I encourage you to come... But where are you today? Are you trusting in God? Are you trying to seek His will for your life? Are you spending time with Him daily, reading His Word, praying to Him, and listening for His answers? Or are you struggling and feeling far from God and His will? Have you accepted the free gift of salvation that God offers through the death and resurrection of His son Jesus. Today is the day. Come to the altar during the closing song and take care of whatever business you have with God.