

Matthew 17:14-20: And when they came to the crowd, a man came up to him and, kneeling before him, ¹⁵ said, "Lord, have mercy on my son, for he is an epileptic and he suffers terribly. For often he falls into the fire, and often into the water. ¹⁶ And I brought him to your disciples, and they could not heal him." ¹⁷ And Jesus answered, "O faithless and twisted generation, how long am I to be with you? How long am I to bear with you? Bring him here to me." ¹⁸ And Jesus rebuked him, and the demon came out of him, and the boy was healed instantly. ¹⁹ Then the disciples came to Jesus privately and said, "Why could we not cast it out?" ²⁰ He said to them, "Because of your little faith. For truly, I say to you, if you have faith like a grain of mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move, and nothing will be impossible for you."

Intro: At the beginning of Matt. 17, we saw the transfiguration: the glorious revelation of the Light of the world – the God-Man, Jesus Christ! We are to listen to Him! Last week we saw Jesus & His three disciples come down the mountain. And what do they find? A broken, sin-sick world & unbelief. In these verses today, we're reminded again that Jesus is the healer & the One Who came to destroy the works of the devil. He never fails! He saves!

- **Matthew 4:23:** And he went throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction among the people.

Who did healed in the O.T.? God: Psalm 103:2-3: Bless the LORD, O my soul, & forget not all his benefits, who forgives all your iniquity, who heals all your diseases

- **1 John 3:8:** The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil.

Who did battle with the devil in the O.T.?: God through His servant Job; The LORD rebukes Satan in the O.T.!

Jesus is the God-Man healer & the One Who destroys the works of the devil, so when life seems impossible, we should trust in Him with a true, active, & living faith because Jesus is our only true, active, & living Savior!

1. Jesus Faces An Incurable Problem

Matthew 17:14-16: And when they came to the crowd, a man came up to him and, kneeling before him, ¹⁵ said, "Lord, have mercy on my son, for he is an epileptic and he suffers terribly. For often he falls into the fire, and often into the water. ¹⁶ And I brought him to your disciples, and they could not heal him."

a. We see a desperate father come to Jesus: 1) This man knew where to go: Jesus is the only one Who can help! The disciples couldn't help! Other people couldn't help! But Jesus can help!

2) This man knew how to come: He came kneeling, in humility; 3) This man knew what to say: Lord, have mercy!

This man is a great example for us! Do you go to Jesus with your incurable, impossible problems? Do you go to Him, humbly in prayer? Do you call Him your Lord and your God? Do ask Him for mercy? Have you? **GOSPEL!**

b. We see this man's need: His son was having epileptic type seizures, & we know from later in the text that this was from demon possession. Not all disease & sickness is because of demon possession, but sometimes it is. His son is suffering; his son falls into the fire & into the water. He could burn to death; He could drown!

This man brought his son to Jesus! Do you bring your children to Jesus? There is something far worse your children face: worse than seizures, worse than death by fire/water - your children face God's wrath. Jesus saves!

c. We see the disciples' inability to heal: V. 16: I brought him to your disciples, and they could not heal him.

1) The failures of the disciples are ever present: Matthew 14:31: O you of little faith, why did you doubt?

Matthew 15:16: And he said, "Are you also still without understanding?"

Matthew 16:22: Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him . . . (We can relate to failures like the disciples!)

2) Jesus is faithful to His disciples, even when they are unfaithful & have no faith: (This is good news for us!)

3) Jesus' disciples' ability to do effective work for the LORD is, in part, dependent on their depth of faith in the LORD – Who alone could give them the power to do God's work: D. A. Carson: Their power to do kingdom miracles was not their own but, unlike magic, was entirely derivative and related to their own walk of faith.

2. Jesus Expresses Strong Disappointment With The Disciples' Faithlessness

Matthew 17:17: And Jesus answered, "O faithless and twisted generation, how long am I to be with you? How long am I to bear with you? Bring him here to me."

a. Jesus calls His disciples & their generation faithless & twisted: Jesus is clearly upset with His disciples & the generation they belong to. They don't have faith as they should; He even calls them twisted: perverse; corrupt!

b. Jesus displays a kind of exasperated anger: V. 17: how long am I to be with you? How long am I to bear with you? Jesus was angry about sin. Jesus was angry about unbelief. Jesus was angry about what God is angry about.

c. Jesus was angry with God's people like Moses: Remember we saw the parallels between Moses on Mount Sinai and Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration: Moses took three witness; They saw the God of Israel; A cloud covered the mountain; God spoke . . .

Remember when Moses came down from Mount Sinai? He found a twisted, faithless generation: **Deut. 32:5, 20:** they are a crooked & twisted generation . . . ²⁰ they are a perverse generation, children in whom is no faithfulness!

d. Jesus shows patience, mercy, & compassion: V. 17: Bring him here to me. One greater than Moses is here!

3. Jesus Casts The Demon Out And Heals The Boy – Jesus Heals The Incurable

Matthew 17:18: And Jesus rebuked him, and the demon came out of him, and the boy was healed instantly.

a. Jesus is the God Who rebukes demons & heals: 1) Who rebuked Satan in the O.T.: Zechariah 3:2: The LORD rebuke (ἐπιτιμάω) you, O Satan!

2) Who rebuks demons in the N.T.: Matt 17:18: Jesus rebuked (ἐπιτιμάω) him, & the demon came out of him

3) Jesus is God! Jesus is LORD!

b. Demons seek to destroy: These demonic seizures led this boy into fire & water to be destroyed!

- **1 Peter 5:8:** Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.

- **Ephesians 6:12:** For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

c. Jesus heals the boy instantly: Jesus can cure the incurable! He does the impossible! He casts out demons!

- Remember Jesus is able; Jesus is not only able, but He's able to do what we ask; He's not only able to do what we ask, but He's able to do what we ask or think; He's not only able to do what we ask or think, but He's able to do all we can ask or think; He's not only able to do all we can ask or think, but He's able to do more than all we can ask or think; He's not only able to do more than all we can ask or think, but He's able to do far more than all we can ask or think; Jesus is not only able to do far more than all we can ask or think, but Jesus is able to do far more abundantly than all we can ask or think!

4. Jesus Addresses The Problem Of Having No Faith - Faithlessness

Matthew 17:19-20: Then the disciples came to Jesus privately and said, "Why could we not cast it out?" ²⁰ He said to them, "Because of your little faith.

a. The disciples ask Jesus a question: V. 19: Why could we not cast it out? They tried but couldn't!

b. Jesus tells them they couldn't cast out the demon because of unbelief: little faith = unbelief

- **V. 20:** He said to them, "Because of your **little faith**. For truly, I say to you, if you have **faith like a grain of mustard seed**, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' & it will move . . .

- **V. 17:** And Jesus answered, "O **faithless** and twisted generation"

- **Mark 9:29:** And he said to them, "This kind cannot be driven out by anything but prayer."

Daniel Doriani: The disciples' surprise at their failure suggests that they assumed they could solve this problem. Why? Because they began to trust in themselves, in their gifts, their skills, rather than trusting the Lord. They apparently thought they had the gifts, the training and the experience to make this work.

"little faith" here means faith in the wrong thing (object) which is unbelief in God! The disciples apparently were trusting in themselves, their abilities, their past successes and not in God! Faith is little because of its object! If you put your faith in yourself, that's little faith – because you are little! If you put your faith in the government, that's little faith – because the government (all worldly powers!) are little – they cannot save you! If you put your faith in money or a relationship or a job or a dream or in an accomplishment, that's little faith – because all those things are little compared to God! They cannot save or satisfy you! But God is big! God is great! God can save and satisfy you! God is the only worthy object of your faith! And if you have just a little bit of faith in the one, true, great, all loving, all merciful, all satisfying God, then you can accomplish anything God calls you to do! (**Phil. 4:13!**)

France: The Greek word for "little faith" is a favorite word of Matthew that means unbelief not inadequate belief.

- **Matthew 8:24-26:** And behold, there arose a great storm on the sea, so that the boat was being swamped by the waves; but he was asleep. ²⁵ And they went and woke him, saying, "Save us, Lord; we are perishing." ²⁶ And he said to them, "Why are you afraid, O you of little faith?" (Peter walking on water)

John MacArthur: Little faith means trusting God when you know how things can be accomplished by you!

Tom Schreiner: Why is it true that mustard seed faith can move mountains . . . ? Jesus plainly tells us. It isn't because of the quantity of our faith but the object of our faith. If our faith is in the God & Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, then it has a great effect. Our faith makes a difference not because it is so great but because God is so great, because He is the sovereign One who rules over all things. Our faith doesn't thrive when we think about how much faith we have; it springs up when we behold our God – when we see Jesus as the One crucified & risen for us.

c. We need mustard seed faith in the truly great God: The father who came to Jesus to heal his son came to the right Person! & the father knew he himself was helpless! & he knew Jesus was the only One Who could help him!

- **Mark 9:24:** Immediately the father of the child cried out and said, "I believe; help my unbelief!"

5. Jesus Encourages His Disciples To Have Mountain-Moving Faith

Matthew 17:20: For truly, I say to you, if you have faith like a grain of mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move, and nothing will be impossible for you.

a. This promise isn't about rearranging the Alps: Who in the Bible actually, literally moved mountains? God! This promise isn't about naming and claiming every carnal, worldly desire that every other worldly pagan desires!

H. Ridderbos: It is not the task of faith literally to move mountains. That is irrelevant . . . Jesus was not speaking of the task of faith . . . but only of its power. This power is unlimited because it is based on God's omnipotence.

b. This promise about mountain-moving faith is about trusting God so that nothing that Jesus has called you to do or given you the authority to do will be impossible for you: The context of this promise for the disciples was that they faced this difficult task of casting out a demon! Jesus had already given them authority to cast out demons, & He told them this was their calling: **Matthew 10:7-8:** And proclaim as you go, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand.' ⁸ Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, cast out demons.

c. This promise is that in Christ by faith, you can overcome any & all difficulties, obstacles, pains, hardships, & sufferings, even ones that seem impossible to you, so that you might walk in the good, pleasing, & perfect

will of God: Trust in the LORD! He will provide all the help you need to follow, trust, & obey Him!

- **D. A. Carson:** Removal of mountains was proverbial for overcoming great difficulties.

Mountain-moving is proverbial for accomplishing something difficult that seems impossible: "You'll have to move a mountain to get that job!" "You'll have to move mountains to get into that school!" 16 seed beating a one seed!

- **Psalm 46:1-2:** God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. ² Therefore we will not fear though the earth gives way, though the mountains be moved into the heart of the sea

- **Isaiah 54:10:** the mountains may depart & the hills be removed, but my steadfast love shall not depart from you

- **1 Corinthians 13:2:** And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing.

d. Mountain-moving faith empowers us to obey the difficult commands of God: Luke 17:3-6: Pay attention to yourselves! If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him, ⁴ and if he sins against you seven times in the day, and turns to you seven times, saying, 'I repent,' you must forgive him." ⁵ The apostles said to the Lord, "Increase our faith!" ⁶ And the Lord said, "If you had faith like a grain of mustard seed, you could say to this mulberry tree, 'Be uprooted and planted in the sea,' and it would obey you.

Tom Schreiner: The question remains: What is mountain-moving faith? Notice what Jesus says in Luke: Those who have faith like a mustard seed do great things. They have the faith to forgive brothers & sisters who sin against them repeatedly. The illustration Jesus provides, then, is enormously helpful. We know it's God's will that we forgive those who sin against us. Yet when we're faced with actually forgiving them, we often struggle because the pain is so severe. Mustard seed faith, then, is faith that kills works of the flesh & produces the fruit of the Spirit. Love, joy, peace, & patience are mountains that can only be climbed by faith; faith, after all, expresses itself in love. Mustard seed faith believes the gospel will go the ends of the earth and triumph over the gates of hell. And the clearest evidence of mustard seed faith is whether you love God & your neighbor. Our greatest enemies are not outside of us but within. Our greatest foe is the hate & rebellion that overtakes us, & mustard seed faith – because it is placed in Jesus Christ – gives us the victory over our sin. Yet we are freed from the sin that enslaves when we rely on Christ & not our own strength & works. Mustard seed faith is enormously powerful – not because of our faith, but because it unites us to the God who raised Jesus Christ from the dead.

e. Mountain-moving faith empowers us to more than conquer great suffering and keep clinging tightly to Jesus: By faith in God, we more than conquer in hard marriages! By faith in God, we more than conquer the loss of loved ones! By faith in God, we more than conquer loneliness! By faith in God, we more than conquer terrible past church experiences! By faith in God, we more than conquer having disabilities or living with children who have sicknesses and disabilities! By faith in God, we more than conquer all pain & suffering & hardship & loss!

f. Christians live by faith: John MacArthur: Now, faith moves mountains. Faith accomplishes great things. That's obvious. I think we've heard that many, many times. But I wonder if we really understand what it means? Let me give you just a little background. It was faith in God's power that caused Caleb, the Jewish spy, to look at the land of Canaan, with its giants, and say this in Numbers 13:30, "Let us go up at once and possess it, for we are well able to overcome it." That was faith in God's power. It was faith in God's care that enabled Job to say, in the midst of personal disaster, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him," Job 13:15. It was faith in God's protection that enabled Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego to stand on the edge of the fiery furnace and say, "Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning, fiery furnace. And He will deliver us out of thine hand, O king," in Daniel 3:17. It was also faith in God's Word that enabled Daniel to survive the lion's den, as it says in the sixth chapter. So, Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no manner of hurt was found upon him because he believed in his God. It was faith that saved the sinful woman who washed Jesus' feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head, as it tells us in Luke chapter 7, verse 50. And as you look at the eleventh chapter of Hebrews, that great chapter of faith, the Bible tells us it was faith that enabled Abel to offer a better sacrifice. It was faith that caused Enoch to be translated to heaven without death. It was faith that allowed Noah to build a great ark and

preach righteousness. It was faith that caused Abraham to follow the call of God. It was faith that caused Sarah to have a child. It was faith that caused Isaac to bless his sons, that caused Jacob to bless his sons, that caused Joseph to hope in the future. It was faith that called Moses to reject the pleasures of sin for the reproach of Christ. It was faith that caused Rahab to receive the spies. And it was faith that came, in the time of crisis to Gideon, and Barak, and Samson, Jephthah, and David, and Samuel and the prophets, and many, many others. The power of faith. And the writer of Hebrews leads into the great opening of the twelfth chapter and says, "Wherefore, seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses" – and to what are they witnessing? To a life of what? – of faith – "as we stand surrounded by so many who say that we are to live by faith, let us lay aside every weight and the sin that doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith." And so, you have throughout holy Scripture the testimony to the life of faith, to the power of faith. [And faith is so powerful, only because it's object is the omnipotent God!]

f. Mountain-moving faith is a true, living, & active faith in Jesus Christ: 1) Knowledge; 2) Assent; 3) Trust
- Jesus is the God-Man healer & the One Who destroys the works of the devil, so when life seems impossible, we should trust in Him with a true, active, & living faith because Jesus is our only true, active, & living Savior!

- Remember this father's son was being destroyed by a demon; he was torn & cast down; he was thrown into fire & into water to be destroyed. Jesus brings life out of death through His own death: You see, Jesus is the one Who allowed Himself to be totally destroyed by the roaring lion – the chief demon, the Devil; Jesus was thrown into the fires of God's wrath & judgment. Jesus was cast into the sea of God's fury & curse!

- Jesus passed through the waters of God's wrath & was drowned in them! He was thrown into the fire of God's wrath so that you would never be scorched by the flames of everlasting hell-fire! He allowed Himself to be destroyed on that cross, and then He rose up from the grave triumphant so that all of you who repent and believe in Him will never be destroyed by the Devil forever!

- **Colossians 2:15:** And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.

- **Isaiah 43:1-3:** But now thus says the LORD, he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: "Fear not, for **I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine.** When you pass through the waters, **I will be with you;** & through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, & the flame shall not consume you. **For I am the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior.**

Jesus Is The God Who Can; Heal Uncontrollable, Sinful Man And Forever Crush And Ban; The Devil's Wicked, Godless Plan!

The entire crowd was totally amazed
When on the God-Man their eyes gazed
Where all He went He stirred them crazed
And spoke so some of them were dazed
For He said He'd soon be raised
Then live to be forever praised
So stand in awe and be amazed!

A father distressed cries for his son
Who's been possessed since life's begun
The Devil's made his life undone
To save His life – they have found none
But now they've come unto God's Son
Whose face had shined just like the sun
This Christ can save the worst undone
Devils He came to crush and stun
He died and rose – His work is done
So to this Christ by faith let's run!

“Help my unbelief!” was his humble cry
Though he believed doubts cloud the eye
He shows us how to pray thereby
And all our doubts and fears defy
Cast down our self-sufficient try
To Christ in weakness we must fly
He'll be our “all in all” supply
In Him your joys shall be so high
By faith the only limit's sky!

The Devil aims your hopes to kill
Destroy you – your life he'd steal
With fire and water – t'was his will
To crush this son with voices shrill
And crash his bones into a hill
But there's a God Who's full of zeal
Who has a plan He will fulfill
And He won't rest at all until
This Devil mad, His Son would kill
On Calvary's hill His blood He'd spill
There forsaken His voice was shrill
God crushed His Son – this was His will
But He's alive! – oh what a thrill!
So come to Him – your life He'll heal
And in your heart with joy fill!

The greatest of victories only happen through prayer
In this the disciples surely did err
For prayer is faith's highway to take you where
The power of God is always there
For on our God we cast every care
Since He's the One Who counts all our hair
In Jesus' name we end our prayer
For with Him no one can compare
His glory and beauty we must declare!

Jesus Christ is the God Who can
The only Savior of every man
He alone does the impossible plan
So be a follower – not a fan
He's the greatest before time began!

Christ Jesus Cast The Demon Out
And Heals The Sick, He's God Devout
So Often We Are Weak Through Doubt
Faithless, Twisted, Cry, And Pout
But Christ Is Strong, A Rock Who's Stout
He Died, The Sun Went Full Blackout
And All God's Wrath He Did Burn Out
Then Rose Alive, “Death's Dead!” We Shout

Through Faith Like Mustard Seeds That Sprout
Impossible Deeds We Bring About
According To His Will All-Out
Christ Ends Our Pain And Joy Drought
With Him No Pleasures Go Without
For All Our Enemies He'll Rout
Christ Is Our Joy, Our All Straight-Out!