

Mark: 11:22–26

From Catena Aurea:

19. And when even was come, he went out of the city.

20. And in the morning, as they passed by, they saw the fig tree dried up from the roots.

21. And Peter calling to remembrance saith unto him, Master, behold, the fig tree which thou cursedst is withered away.

22. And Jesus answering saith unto them, Have faith in God.

23. For verily I say unto you, That whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith.

24. Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them.

25. And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses.

26. But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses.

THEOPHYLACT. The greatness of the miracle appears in the drying up so juicy and green a tree. But though Matthew says that the fig tree was at once dried up, and that the disciples on seeing it wondered, there is no reason for perplexity, though Mark now says, that the disciples saw the fig tree dried up on the morrow; for what Matthew says must be understood to mean that they did not see it at once, but on the next day.

AUGUSTINE. (de Con. Evan. ii. 68) The meaning is not that it dried up at the time, when they saw it, but immediately after the word of the Lord; for they saw it, not beginning to dry up, but completely dried up; and they thus understood that it had withered immediately after our Lord spoke.

CHRYSOSTOM. (non occ.) The wonder of the disciples was the consequence of imperfect faith, for this was no great thing for God to do; since then they did not clearly know His power, their ignorance made them break out into wonder; and therefore it is added, And Jesus answering saith unto them, Have faith in God. For verily I say unto you, That whosoever shall say unto this mountain, &c. That is; Thou shalt not only be able to dry up a tree, but also to change a mountain by thy command and order.

THEOPHYLACT. Consider the Divine mercy, how it confers on us, if we approach Him in faith, the power of miracles, which He Himself possesses by nature, so that we should be able even to change mountains.

CHRYSOSTOM. (non occ.) Or else, as He did not dry up the fig tree for its own sake, but for a sign that Jerusalem should come to destruction, in order to shew His power, in the same way we must also understand the promise concerning the mountain, though a removal of this sort is not impossible with God.

THEOPHYLACT. For whosoever sincerely believes evidently lifts up his heart to God, and is joined to Him, and his burning heart feels sure that he has received what he asked for, which he who has experienced will understand; and those persons appear to me to experience this, who attend to the measure and the manner of their prayers. For this reason the Lord says, Ye shall receive whatsoever ye ask in faith; for he who believes that he is altogether in the hands of God, and interceding with tears, feels that he as it were has hold of the feet of the Lord in prayer, he shall receive what he has rightly asked for. Again, would you in another way receive what you ask for? Forgive your brother, if he has in any way sinned against you; this is also what is added: And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses.

From Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture:

11:23a Whoever Does Not Doubt in His Heart But Believes

The Power of Prayer.

Chrysostom: Prayer is an all-efficient panoply, a treasure undiminished, a mine never exhausted, a sky unobstructed by clouds, a haven unruffled by storm. It is the root, the fountain, and the mother of a thousand blessings. It exceeds a monarch's power.... I speak not of the prayer which is cold and feeble and

devoid of zeal. I speak of that which proceeds from a mind outstretched, the child of a contrite spirit, the offspring of a soul converted—this is the prayer which mounts to heaven.... The power of prayer has subdued the strength of fire, bridled the rage of lions, silenced anarchy, extinguished wars, appeased the elements, expelled demons, burst the chains of death, enlarged the gates of heaven, relieved diseases, averted frauds, rescued cities from destruction, stayed the sun in its course, and arrested the progress of the thunderbolt. In sum, prayer has power to destroy whatever is at enmity with the good. I speak not of the prayer of the lips, but of the prayer that ascends from the inmost recesses of the heart. On the Incomprehensible Nature of God, Homily 5.44, 46, 57, 58.

11:23b Believe that You Will Receive It and You Will

Full Confidence.

John Cassian: While we are praying, there should be no hesitation that would intervene or break down the confidence of our petition by any shadow of despair. We know that by pouring forth our prayer we are obtaining already what we are asking for. We have no doubt that our prayers have effectually reached God. For to that degree that one believes that he is regarded by God, and that God can grant it, just so far will one be heard and obtain an answer. Conferences 1.9.32.

11:23c It Will Be Done for Him

Divine Giving and Human Willing.

Augustine: Note that Jesus said “for him,” not “for me,” and not “for the Father.” Yet it is certain that no human being does such a thing without God’s gift and workings. Mark well that even if no actual instances of perfect righteousness may be found among humans, that does not rule out perfect righteousness as if it were formally impossible. For it might have been realized if only sufficient responsive willing had been applied, enough to suffice for so great a deed. On the Spirit and the Letter 63.