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Sermon Notes

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## **A Withered Fig Tree and Mountain-Moving Faith**

**Matthew 21:18-22**

### **It's impossible! It can't be done! Don't be ridiculous - what difference can one person make?**

Do you ever have voices like that that pass through your mind?

Perhaps God is calling on you to do some great thing for His Kingdom... to start a new pro-life ministry that could help end the greatest injustice of our day—abortion; perhaps God is calling on you to quit your job, get bible training and go overseas to reach an unreached people group for Christ; perhaps God wants you to sell your comfortable home, move to the inner city and begin a new urban outreach to reach single mothers for Christ; perhaps God is calling you to raise a million dollars to help establish a ministry for AIDS orphans in Sub-Saharan Africa

William Carey said “Expect great things from God, attempt great things for God!”

So you ask God to give you a “great thing” to attempt for His glory, for His Kingdom. As soon as the idea, your doubts start to crowd out any vision you may have of that “great thing” He is calling you to expect and attempt.

### **It's impossible! It can't be done! Don't be ridiculous - what difference can one person make?**

In our passage today, Jesus speaks of a faith that can “move mountains”... it is an expression that has captivated our imagination ever since and is used for numerous seemingly impossible human endeavor

Yet throughout history, simple Christians who trusted in God have seen different kinds of mountains move

- William Carey, the Father of the modern Protestant missionary movement, said we should “Expect great things from God and attempt great things for God”; he departed for India as a trailblazer, sailing to a completely pagan country of teeming millions, and lived to see
- What “mountain” did William Carey see God move?

- There was the mountain of his upbringing:

Undereducated, underfunded and underestimated, William Carey seemed to have everything against him. He was brought up in abject poverty and never had the benefit of high school. Carey's formal education ended in junior school. Yet, at age 12 Carey taught himself Latin. Then he went on to master – on his own – Greek, Hebrew, French and Dutch! He became professor of Bengali, Sanskrit and Marathi at the prestigious Fort William College in Calcutta (where the civil servants were trained).

- There was the mountain of his family troubles:
  - His wife went legally insane on the mission field and had to be restrained with chains for the last twelve years of her life; on several occasions, she tried to attack him with a knife
  - Their five year old son, Peter, died of dysentery when he was five
  - Another of his sons, Felix, caused much embarrassment when he backslid, adopted a lavish lifestyle and began drinking heavily. Ultimately Felix came back to the Lord and became fully committed to the mission.
  - Every member of the family suffered bitterly from malaria, dysentery, and other tropical diseases—frequently!

Somehow, while often sick, holding down a full time secular job surrounded by domestic turmoil, with an insane wife screaming from the next room, Carey mastered Bengali and Sanskrit and by 1797 the New Testament was translated into Bengali and ready for printing. Carey had also established several schools and was preaching regularly in Bengali. However, after seven years of tireless toil in India Carey still did not have a single convert!

- These were MOUNTAIN-LIKE obstacles that William Carey and his co-workers sought to move
- And in his lifetime, he was instrumental in ending wicked practices like the burning of widows with their deceased husbands, ritual infanticide as sacrifices to the gods, the burning of lepers to death to purify them through reincarnation
- AND Carey and his co-workers started over 100 Christian schools for over 8 000 Indian children of all castes and he launched the first Christian College in Asia – at Serampore, which continues to this day! Carey finally succeeded in translating the Bible into 6 languages and New Testaments and Gospels into 29 other languages!
- Perhaps there are hundreds of thousands of Indian Christians in heaven right now who can directly trace their spiritual ancestry to William Carey
- NONE OF THAT WOULD HAVE HAPPENED if William Carey had allowed doubt to crowd out that vision of a GREAT THING he wanted to expect from God and attempt for God

Can one single Christian make a difference in this sin-cursed world? Jesus says Absolutely Yes... but only if you have faith and don't doubt!

***Matthew 21:21 I tell you the truth, if you have faith and do not doubt, not only can you do what was done to the fig tree, but also you can say to this mountain, 'Go, throw yourself into the sea,' and it will be done.***

## I. Lessons About Christ: Human and Divine

### A. An Unusual Miracle

1. All the rest of Jesus' miracles a redemptive in nature... or show His provision for man
  - a. They restore creation to its original intended state
  - b. The healings in particular... summarized last week
  - c. The feeding of the 5000
  - d. The calming of the storm
  - e. The great catch of fish, or the tax coin in the fish's mouth
2. The Only Destructive Miracle of Jesus in His First Coming
  - a. The fig tree is cursed by Jesus
  - b. And it immediately withers
  - c. It is a destructive miracle
3. YET a picture of the future destruction He will work at His second Coming
  - a. Revelation: After the Lamb takes the scroll and breaks open its seven seals one at a time, He unleashes a series of judgments on the earth one after the other
  - b. There is not a feature of earthly life that will not be ravaged by the judgments that Christ will unleash at that time
  - c. Seven seals, seven trumpets, seven bowls... all adds up to awesome devastation on the earth
    - i) Vegetation:

***Revelation 8:7 The first angel sounded his trumpet, and there came hail and fire mixed with blood, and it was hurled down upon the earth. A third of the earth***

*was burned up, a third of the trees were burned up, and all the green grass was burned up.*

ii) Seas/oceans

***Revelation 8:8-9*** *The second angel sounded his trumpet, and something like a huge mountain, all ablaze, was thrown into the sea. A third of the sea turned into blood, <sup>9</sup> a third of the living creatures in the sea died, and a third of the ships were destroyed.*

iii) Fresh water

***Revelation 8:10-11*** *The third angel sounded his trumpet, and a great star, blazing like a torch, fell from the sky on a third of the rivers and on the springs of water-- <sup>11</sup> the name of the star is Wormwood. A third of the waters turned bitter, and many people died from the waters that had become bitter.*

iv) Human life

***Revelation 9:18*** *A third of mankind was killed by the three plagues of fire, smoke and sulfur that came out of their mouths.*

4. Yet, in Jesus' first coming, He is explicit that He came for peaceful reasons of blessing

***John 3:17*** *God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.*

5. Judgments like the cleansing of the Temple and the Cursing of the Fig Tree were prophetic foreshadowings of the future judgments Jesus would pour out on the earth because of its sins

## B. Christ's Humanity

***Matthew 21:18*** *Early in the morning, as he was on his way back to the city, he was hungry.*

1. His hunger

a. Jesus was fully human

b. As a result, He was subject to the normal issues of bodily life... including hunger, thirst, fatigue, pain

i) After fasting forty days in the desert, Matthew 4 tells us He was hungry; here however, He is hungry just in the normal course of life

ii) So also we see Jesus tired from His journey to Samaria, sitting by the well when the Samaritan woman comes in John 4

- iii) We see Jesus asleep on a cushion in the disciples' boat in Mark 4
  - iv) We see Jesus thirsty on the cross, crying out "I thirst"
  - v) We see Him in physical agony, bleeding in the Garden of Gethsemane
- c. The physical hunger of Jesus that morning is a strong reminder of His humanity... His human dependence on food
  - d. So also is...
2. His expectation to get figs from this promising tree
- a. The tree stands alone... it is a solitary tree... a fig tree
  - b. He notices that, despite the fact that it is not the season for figs, it is covered with leaves
  - c. Agricultural experts help explain the situation to us

R.K. Harrison: "When the young leaves are appearing in spring, every fertile fig will have some underdeveloped fruit on it, even though the season for edible figs has not arrived. When the leaves are fully developed, the fruit ought to be mature also. But if a tree with leaves has no fruit, it will be barren for the entire season."

So, generally the underdeveloped figs PRECEDE the leaves... if there are leaves, there should be these underdeveloped fruit... if not, something is WRONG with the tree

- d. The omniscient Christ makes an effort to find figs on a tree that has none

C. Christ's Action: Cursing the Fig Tree

***Matthew 21:19 Then he said to it, "May you never bear fruit again!"***

D. Christ's Deity: The Power to Curse

***Immediately the fig tree withered.***

- 1. It was a visible display of God's power of judgment over every human being and every human nation:

***Isaiah 40:6-8 All men are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field.  
<sup>7</sup> The grass withers and the flowers fall, because the breath of the LORD blows on them. Surely the people are grass. <sup>8</sup> The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of our God stands forever."***

When God's breath blows on humanity, it withers immediately!!

In this amazing encounter, then, we see both the humanity and the deity of Christ. And we see a Prophetic action by the Incarnate Son of God in Judgment, I believe, over a barren nation—Israel

## II. Lessons About Israel: A Parable in Action

### A. The Fig Tree: A Symbol of Prosperity

1. Fig trees are the most plentiful fruit tree in the Mediterranean region, and highly prized
  - a. Called the “poor man’s food”
  - b. It was not uncommon for them to grow to heights of over twenty feet, and equally as wide; thus they were excellent also for shade
  - c. Remember that, in John 1, when Jesus called Nathanael to follow Him, Nathanael was sitting under a fig tree
2. A Symbol of Prosperity
  - a. 1 Kings 4 speaks of the fig tree as a symbol of prosperity under King Solomon:

***1 Kings 4:25 During Solomon's lifetime Judah and Israel, from Dan to Beersheba, lived in safety, each man under his own vine and fig tree.***

- a. So also Zechariah pictures fig trees as a symbol of the prosperity of the future Messianic Kingdom:

***Zechariah 3:9-10 says the LORD Almighty, ... I will remove the sin of this land in a single day. <sup>10</sup> "In that day each of you will invite his neighbor to sit under his vine and fig tree,' declares the LORD Almighty."***

### B. A Barren Fig Tree: A Symbol of Judgment

1. Just as the abundant presence of fig trees represented prosperity and blessing, so also the barrenness of fig trees represented judgment and curse
2. John MacArthur: “Largely because of the many conquests of Palestine after the rejection of Christ, the land became greatly denuded and barren. Some invaders used the trees to build their war machines and others simply to fuel their fires. When lumber trees were gone, fruit and shade trees were cut down. During one occupation, the rulers began taxing according to the number of trees on a piece of property, with the predictable results that many landowners cut down some of their remaining trees in order to lower their taxes.” [Commentary on Matthew 21:19]

### C. The Fig Tree Itself: A Symbol of Israel

1. Remember the chronology from Mark's Gospel:
  - a. This is the next morning after the Triumphal Entry
  - b. The last evening, Jesus went into the Temple and looked around
  - c. He now returns to the city to cleanse the temple
  - d. The barrenness of Jewish religion is on His mind
    - i) They are filled with religious activity
    - ii) Jews are streaming into Jerusalem from all over the region
    - iii) The chief priests are running the animal sacrificial system full time
    - iv) BUT the whole thing is an empty show of religiosity, with no spiritual substance behind it

***Matthew 15:8 "These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me.***

***Isaiah 29:13 Their worship of me is only rules made up by men...***

2. Jesus' cursing of the fig tree no act of annoyance or passion... it was a symbol

Jonathan Edwards, 20 years old, Resolutions: Resolved never to allow himself to show the slightest motions of anger toward inanimate objects

Perhaps you have gotten angry at an inanimate object before... stubbed your toe on a rock and then felt tempted to kick the rock

Jesus NEVER sinned in this way

This cursing of the fig tree was no act of mindless annoyance or passionate anger

It was a PROPHEVIC SYMBOL... a PARABLE IN ACTION

3. Another Parable Makes it plain: Israel is the fig tree
  - a. Some Jews came to speak to Jesus about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mixed with their sacrifices
  - b. Jesus understood the Jewish mentality: they must have been terrible sinners, worse than any other Jews
  - c. Jesus told them they were not worse sinners... but unless they all repented, they would all likewise perish

d. Then He told this parable:

***Luke 13:6-9 Then he told this parable: "A man had a fig tree, planted in his vineyard, and he went to look for fruit on it, but did not find any. <sup>7</sup> So he said to the man who took care of the vineyard, 'For three years now I've been coming to look for fruit on this fig tree and haven't found any. Cut it down! Why should it use up the soil?' <sup>8</sup> "Sir,' the man replied, 'leave it alone for one more year, and I'll dig around it and fertilize it. <sup>9</sup> If it bears fruit next year, fine! If not, then cut it down.'"***

- i) This parable can be taken to represent any single sinner in the eyes of God
- ii) Certainly God will judge each person according to his fruit... according to his works
- iii) But this agricultural image is one of the most common representation of God's frustration with His people Israel

#### D. Israel's Long History of Fruitlessness

##### 1. Isaiah's Vineyard Song

***Isaiah 5:1-7 I will sing for the one I love a song about his vineyard: My loved one had a vineyard on a fertile hillside. <sup>2</sup> He dug it up and cleared it of stones and planted it with the choicest vines. He built a watchtower in it and cut out a winepress as well. Then he looked for a crop of good grapes, but it yielded only bad fruit. <sup>3</sup> "Now you dwellers in Jerusalem and men of Judah, judge between me and my vineyard. <sup>4</sup> What more could have been done for my vineyard than I have done for it? When I looked for good grapes, why did it yield only bad? <sup>5</sup> Now I will tell you what I am going to do to my vineyard: I will take away its hedge, and it will be destroyed; I will break down its wall, and it will be trampled. <sup>6</sup> I will make it a wasteland, neither pruned nor cultivated, and briers and thorns will grow there. I will command the clouds not to rain on it." <sup>7</sup> The vineyard of the LORD Almighty is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah are the garden of his delight. And he looked for justice, but saw bloodshed; for righteousness, but heard cries of distress.***

##### 2. The Prophets' Cry Against Fruitless Israel

###### a. Jeremiah's good figs and bad

***Jeremiah 24:1-3 the LORD showed me two baskets of figs placed in front of the temple of the LORD. <sup>2</sup> One basket had very good figs, like those that ripen early; the other basket had very poor figs, so bad they could not be eaten. <sup>3</sup> Then the LORD asked me, "What do you see, Jeremiah?" "Figs," I answered. "The good ones are very good, but the poor ones are so bad they cannot be eaten."***



The good figs represent the remnant of Israel whom God would protect from the Babylonians... but the bad figs represented the evil leaders and the wicked nation as a whole

b. Other prophets... crying against Israel's fruitlessness

***Ezekiel 19:10-12 [Israel] was like a vine in your vineyard planted by the water; it was fruitful and full of branches because of abundant water. <sup>11</sup> Its branches were strong, fit for a ruler's scepter. It towered high above the thick foliage, conspicuous for its height and for its many branches. <sup>12</sup> But it was uprooted in fury and thrown to the ground. The east wind made it shrivel, it was stripped of its fruit; its strong branches withered and fire consumed them.***

***Hosea 9:15-16 Because of their sinful deeds, I will drive them out of my house. I will no longer love them; all their leaders are rebellious. <sup>16</sup> Ephraim is blighted, their root is withered, they yield no fruit.***

3. At the end of this same chapter, Jesus takes up the same theme for Israel

***Matthew 21:33-43 "Listen to another parable: There was a landowner who planted a vineyard. He put a wall around it, dug a winepress in it and built a watchtower. Then he rented the vineyard to some farmers and went away on a journey. <sup>34</sup> When the harvest time approached, he sent his servants to the tenants to collect his fruit. <sup>35</sup> "The tenants seized his servants; they beat one, killed another, and stoned a third. <sup>36</sup> Then he sent other servants to them, more than the first time, and the tenants treated them the same way. <sup>37</sup> Last of all, he sent his son to them. 'They will respect my son,' he said. <sup>38</sup> "But when the tenants saw the son, they said to each other, 'This is the heir. Come, let's kill him and take his inheritance.' <sup>39</sup> So they took him and threw him out of the vineyard and killed him. <sup>40</sup> "Therefore, when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?" <sup>41</sup> "He will bring those wretches to a wretched end," they replied, "and he will rent the vineyard to other tenants, who will give him his share of the crop at harvest time." <sup>42</sup> ¶ Jesus said to them, "Have you never read in the Scriptures: "'The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone; the Lord has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes'? <sup>43</sup> "Therefore I tell you that the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit.***

#### E. Israel's Future Judgment

1. God had blessed Israel richly with blessings no other nation on earth had enjoyed
2. God expected to see a harvest of righteousness from that nation... but all He got was wickedness
3. Therefore, Christ cursed the tree as a symbol of Israel's future judgment
  - a. Israel's wall would be torn down by the Romans

- b. The Temple would be destroyed
- c. The Jews would be slaughtered by the hundreds of thousands in a rage that reached up to heaven
- 4. The cursing of the fig tree is also a warning to the church... to Christians... WE MUST BEAR THE FRUIT OF THE KINGDOM or we also will be cursed
- 5. More on this in a moment

### III. Lessons About Prayer: A Faith that Moves Mountains

#### A. The Disciples Astonished

***Matthew 21:20 When the disciples saw this, they were amazed. "How did the fig tree wither so quickly?" they asked.***

- 1. Matthew's word: the tree "immediately withered"; Mark adds "from the roots"
  - a. The word "withered" means to shrivel up, frequently because of a lack of water
  - b. That a tree should wither is not a miracle
  - c. But that a specific tree full of leafy foliage should wither "immediately" as a result of words of a curse spoken by a man is a miracle
- 2. Mark's chronology
  - a. The withering took place at the roots immediately, but the disciples didn't notice until the next day, when they were returning to the city
  - b. Peter, as usual, spoke for them all:

***Mark 11:20-21 In the morning, as they went along, they saw the fig tree withered from the roots. <sup>21</sup> Peter remembered and said to Jesus, "Rabbi, look! The fig tree you cursed has withered!"***

#### B. Jesus' Lesson on Faith and Prayer

***Matthew 21:21-22 Jesus replied, "I tell you the truth, if you have faith and do not doubt, not only can you do what was done to the fig tree, but also you can say to this mountain, 'Go, throw yourself into the sea,' and it will be done. <sup>22</sup> If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer."***

- 1. Jesus seizes the moment to teach His disciples the value of faith and prayer
- 2. It is an astonishing statement, similar to this one:

***John 14:12 I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father.***

3. This is the centerpiece of His message to the human race:

***John 6:28-29 Then they asked him, "What must we do to do the works God requires?"  
<sup>29</sup> Jesus answered, "The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent."***

4. The nature of faith: perceiving and receiving
  - a. Perceiving the will of God as He reveals it
  - b. Receiving the will of God and He delivers it
5. Faith is the humble avenue by which the omnipotence of God flows into human history
  - a. It is not FAITH that moves a mountain... it is God who moves the mountain
  - b. But He chooses to do it through people who TRUST Him to do it
6. Concerning the removal of the mountain, it is best to understand that as a metaphor for some immense obstacle facing the people of God in their calling from God
  - a. "this mountain" literally was the Mount of Olives
  - b. God is not intending that the Mount of Olives be removed and thrown into any sea at all
  - c. An Old Testament prophecy makes it plain that the Second Coming of Christ will be to that precise mountain!!

***Zechariah 14:3-4 Then the LORD will go out and fight against those nations, as he fights in the day of battle. <sup>4</sup> On that day his feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, east of Jerusalem, and the Mount of Olives will be split in two from east to west, forming a great valley, with half of the mountain moving north and half moving south.***

God is not a slave to our faith, forced to do something contrary to His wisdom or His will

C. Warning Against Misunderstanding: Faith is NOT a Creative Force

1. Contrary to the prosperity gospel and the faith movement
  - a. A major heresy which plowed from the rise of Pentecostalism and the Revivalism of the 20<sup>th</sup> century

- b. Goes by many names: “Health and wealth gospel” “Word of Faith Movement”; “Name it and claim it”; “Confess it and possess it”
- c. At its core it is **WORLDLINESS**... fleshly lusts thinly painted over with New Testament terminology
- d. It claims that **FAITH** is some entity separate from the gift of God, something God has to honor as though it were some other force in His universe
- e. It makes faith-filled man the master, and faith-respecting God the slave

Creflo Dollar: When you pray the Word, believing you have already received what you are praying for, **God has no choice** but to answer your prayers. He honors His Word, not your emotions.

“God has no choice...????” That is NOT the language of faith, but of arrogance!

- f. Many popular TV evangelists have espoused this kind of theology
  - i) Kenneth Hagin
  - ii) Oral Roberts
  - iii) Kenneth Copeland
  - iv) Creflo Dollar
  - v) Joel Osteen

Osteen: “I look at the great truths of Almighty God and with the sixth sense in my spirit man, I believe I have a consciousness that they are mine. I see and believe salvation is mine. Healing is mine. Prosperity is mine. All of God’s blessings are mine. On the basis of this information from the sixth sense of faith, I can confidently say, ‘I am healed! I am blessed! I am redeemed! I am prosperous!’”

## 2. Essence is that this group takes these kinds of statements by Jesus out of context and assumes that faith can **CREATE** a reality

Larry DeBruyn: Essential to the Word of Faith Movement is the delusion that people function as "little gods" endowed with the faith capacity to speak and create their own world. Faith is the power or positive force by which believers are first to imagine their perfect world, and then make it happen. As Kenneth Hagin once put it: "I'm a believer; I'm not a doubter. I have a measure of God kind of faith. I have a measure of the kind of faith that created the worlds in the beginning. I have mountain moving faith!!!!" Thus man becomes a god who creates his own world and controls his own destiny, a world and a destiny that include wealth and health.

The WFM advocates a super spirituality based upon visitations and visions of God, promotes the man is god doctrine, and views faith as a creative force by which Christians make their own world, a world of affluence and wellness. The Copelands, Ken and Gloria, are well-known exponents of a success gospel that promotes man at the center of his own little world. Ken says, "You are entitled to all the rights and privileges in the kingdom of God . . . health and wealth." Even more bluntly, Gloria says in her book *God's Will is Prosperity*, "Give \$10 and receive \$1000; give \$1000 and receive \$100,000 . . . Give one house and receive one hundred houses or a house worth one hundred times as much. Give one airplane and receive one hundred times the value of the airplane . . . In short, Mark 10:30 is a very good deal." Then Fredrick Price said in a sermon, "If the Mafia can ride around in Lincoln Continental town cars, why can't the King's Kids?"

3. The ultimate end of this "faith-heresy" is that we actually are little gods ourselves, creating our own universes by this powerful thing called "faith"

- Kenneth Hagin: "You are as much the incarnation of God as Jesus Christ was...the believer is as much an incarnation as was Jesus of Nazareth".
- Benny Hinn: "Are you ready for some real revelation knowledge....you are god" "You are a little god on earth running around".
- Kenneth Copeland: "I say this with all respect so that it don't upset you too bad, but I say it anyway, when I read in the Bible where he [Jesus] says, 'I Am,' I just smile and say, 'Yes, I Am, too!'" ... "You don't have a god in you, you are one."
- Paul Crouch: "Do you know what else that's settled then tonight? This hue and cry and controversy that has been spawned by the devil to try to bring dissension within the body of Christ that we are gods. I am a little god. I have His name. I am one with Him. I'm in covenant relation. I am a little god. Critics be gone!"  
[<http://www.biblebb.com/files/WRDFAITH.HTM>]

Friends, this is NOT what Jesus had in mind when He told His disciples,

***Mark 11:23 I tell you the truth, if anyone says to this mountain, 'Go, throw yourself into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart but believes that what he says will happen, it will be done for him.***

***Matthew 21:22 "If you believe, you'll receive whatever you ask for in prayer"***

D. What IS Jesus Teaching Here? I will Answer in a Moment in the Applications

#### IV. Lessons Applied to Us

A. Marvel at Christ's Power BOTH to Bless and to Curse

B. A Warning to Non-Christians: Seek the Ultimate Blessing of the Gospel

1. The Parable of the Fig Tree I cited earlier refers BOTH to individuals AND to the nation of Israel
2. God will assess every single person by His works... He will give to each one of us according to what we have done
3. YOU NEED A SAVIOR!!!
4. The greatest cursing is not sickness or poverty on earth... it is eternity in hell
5. Come to Christ!!!

C. A Warning to Christians: Produce the Fruit of the Kingdom

1. God did not spare Israel when they did not produce Kingdom fruit
2. He will not spare the Gentiles either if we don't produce the Kingdom fruit

***John 15:5-6 "I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. <sup>6</sup> If anyone does not remain in me, he is like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned.***

A fruitless Christian is NO CHRISTIAN AT ALL!!!

Such branches undergo the same result as the fig tree... cursed by God, they wither... in the end they are gathered up and burned

D. What is "Fruit"?

1. Internal Journey Fruit
  - a. Knowledge fruit: knowing God's word better than ever before; experiencing more in ministry than ever before
  - b. Faith fruit: trusting God more certainly, having a more vivid sense of His presence in your life and of the reality of the invisible heavenly realms around us, having a deeper conviction of indwelling sin, having a more potent sense of your future inheritance in Christ, having a more intense sense of what Judgment Day will be like; and having a greater certainty of the will of God for you, of Christ's leadership of you as a Shepherd leads His sheep
  - c. Heart fruit: having a more intense love for God and hatred of sin than you have ever had before; having a deep hunger and thirst for righteousness and for the plans of God to be consummated in the Kingdom of Christ; having a will totally yielded to the will of God; having a thought-life dominated by whatever is pure, lovely, admirable, excellent or

praiseworthy; having emotions that are Christlike, rejoicing over what brings Him joy, grieving over what brings Him grief.

- d. Action fruit: becoming increasingly obedient by the power of the Spirit to all the commands of God for you

In short, this kind of fruit is to be increasingly more and more conformed to Jesus Christ

## 2. External Journey Fruit

- a. Being active in sharing your faith; boldly confessing Christ to lost people; seeing people actually converted and brought into the Kingdom
- b. Being committed to the world Christian movement... in prayer, giving, going

This is the fruit God wants to see from you individually and from FBC corporately

He comes to us hungry to see this fruit in us... This is the very thing the Spirit is working in us

## E. Lessons in Faith and Prayer

1. God has a plan, a perfect plan, extending to the smallest details of life
2. There is nothing we can add to that plan... God's wisdom is perfect, and He knows what we need before we ask
3. God's power is infinitely greater than we can ask or imagine

***Ephesians 3:20 Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us***

4. The more common error on the part of believers is to ask TOO LITTLE of Jesus and not trust Him to do the GREAT THINGS He said He would do; So Jesus is counteracting the most common error: allowing our doubts to cloud our doctrine
5. Faith focuses rather on the Promises of God revealed in His word; It asks God to do what God has said He would do or is revealing that He is going to do
6. Faith does not CREATE spiritual reality: it PERCEIVES it based on God's word... it SEES what God is TRULY DOING based on His word and joins in that sovereign activity
7. Some blessings God will give whether we believe or not, whether we ask or not
  - a. Clear example: the sunshine and the rain

- b. God freely bestows these blessings on the righteous and the wicked alike
  - c. He has already promised that the cycle of sunrise and sunset that so blesses the earth will not cease until the end of time (Genesis 8)
8. Some blessings, however, God has made conditional on the faith of His people
- a. God is ABLE to do immeasurably more than all you can ask or imagine
  - b. God IS DOING LESS in your life than He would do if you believed Him more and trusted Him more
9. Our failure in faith does not derail God's sovereign plan... but it does reduce our enjoyment of it and participation in it
- a. So faith does not force God to change His stated plans
  - b. Faith PERCEIVES what those plans truly are
  - c. And faith RECEIVES from God what He is planning on giving
10. SO Grow in faith and ask for more than you've ever done before

F. Perfect Summary: John 15:7-8

***John 15:7-8 If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you. <sup>8</sup> This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.***

G. Mountain-Moving Faith

1. Christ said if we believe, we can say to a mountain "Move" and it will move
2. William Carey said "Expect great things from God, attempt great things for God."
3. What great mountain do you want to see move? What great thing are you seeking from God in prayer?
4. Don't let doubt crush that hope, that vision, that faith