



A just weight
and balance

are the
LORD'S:

Thus saith the Lord...

- **He's here and there,
and everywhere**
- **In all the ways I've trod.**
 - **I've never passed
beyond the sphere**
- **Of the providence of God.**
 - **—W. E. Brightwell**

- **Matthew 21:20**

**And when the disciples
saw it,
they marvelled,
saying,
How soon is the fig tree
withered away!**

- **Matthew 21:21**

**Jesus answered and said unto them,
Verily I say unto you,
If ye have faith,
and doubt not,**

- **ye shall not only do this
which is done to the fig tree,**
- **but also if ye shall say
unto this mountain,**
- **Be thou removed,
and be thou cast into the sea;
it shall be done.**

- **Matthew 21:22**

**And all things,
whatsoever you shall
ask
in prayer,
believing,
you shall receive.**

- One of the harmful features of the use of Scripture is the confusion of personal interpretation with the actual teaching of Scripture.

- Throughout history people **have taken a single verse,**
- Read it in light of **their own** experiences or needs,
 - And then taught that **private interpretation as** the truth of Scripture.

- There could be many examples of this, but one of the most prevalent in modern American religious culture is the....
- so-called "word of faith" movement.
- In which people assume that they can accomplish miracles by simply having enough faith and speaking what they want to happen.

- It is grounded in the observation that Jesus told his disciples that if they spoke to a mountain or a tree and commanded something of them that the command would be obeyed.

- The assumption then is that Christians today are able to "command" physical things like:
 - mountains or trees,
 - or tumors,
 - or pain, or cancer,
 - *in the name of Jesus*.
- And it will just vanish away.

- Prayer is never to be used for our own lust or desires, to enrich ourselves.

- James said,
"you ask and receive not,
because you ask amiss,
that you might consume it
upon your own lust"
(James 4:3).

- The purpose of prayer isn't really to get my will done;
- The purpose of prayer is to get God's will done.
 - The true disciple is more concerned for God's will, than his/her own will.

- The main biblical verse used to support the idea of Christians

"commanding"

physical things is

Matthew 21:21:

- On the surface and taken out of context, this verse sounds like a blank check for Christians.

- "Whatever" we want,
- if we just believe strongly enough, we can accomplish by just speaking a word.

- It seems there are **no restrictions** placed on this, since it says "**whatever you ask.**"
- Some prosperity preachers like to combine this verse with **Psalm 37:4-5:**

- **Psalm 37:4**

**Take delight
in the LORD,
and he will give you
the desires
of your heart.**

- When these two passages are taken out of context and used together,

"whatever you ask"

is then defined as

"the desires of your heart."

- In other words, whatever one's heart desires can be

accomplished if we

have enough faith.

- However, this is a classic **example of failing to understand a biblical text** in its own context.

- It's the old maxim:

A text out of context
is just a text.

- The failure to understand the text on its own terms leads one to projecting his/her own agenda onto Scripture and calling it the truth of God.

- It violates the message which scripture intended.
 - How are we to deal with suffering, disease, hardship and death?
- Are we to just wish them away.
- Which is contrary to scripture and human experience.
- Is there not another answer?

- We need to reject the idea that we can **combine**
- **separate** biblical verses
 - from **different** books,
 - from different **contexts**,
 - in order to make them **fit into a conclusion of our choosing.**

- We also must resist the temptation to group verses together without understanding the context.

- Each biblical passage **must first**
be understood
in its own context
for what it says
within that context
before we reach
a conclusion.

- Are we to group scriptures together like letters of the alphabet to make up messages that teach whatever doctrine we aspire too?

- In order to understand scripture **we must understand the meaning of the text** as it relates to the **entire context** of which it is a part.

- To give an example
note the following:
 - **Matthew 27:5**
Judas
- **“went and hanged himself”**
 - **Luke 3:11**
Go thou
- **“and do likewise”**
 - **Definitely**
out of context!

- The reaction of the disciples to the withering of the fig tree was amazement
- And the question, "How did the fig tree wither so quickly?"

- At first reading, Jesus response does not seem to answer their question.

- But with some study

- It gives us a window into the meaning of verse 21.

- **Matthew 21:21**

Jesus answered them,

**" if you have faith and do not doubt,
not only will you do what has been
done to the fig tree, but even if you
say to this mountain,
'Be lifted up and thrown into the sea,'
it will be done.**

- **21:22 Whatever you ask for in prayer
with faith, you will receive."**

- We also need to note that faith here is not some magical power that human beings can exercise on their own.

- Here, “faith” is linked with “in prayer.”

- The implication is that it is God and his will that govern how mountains are to be moved.

- The idea of moving a mountain was a common way of talking about doing seemingly impossible things (Job 9:5, Matthew 17:20)

- It does not necessarily refer to what we moderns might want to identify as "miraculous," meaning some fantastic supernatural feat.

- It simply refers to something that from a human perspective seems impossible.

- **And what task lies ahead of them**
that seems humanly impossible?
 - **The answer is found in**
Matthew 28:19-20
 - **Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:**
 - **28:20 Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you:**

- The power that is available to them in prayer is the power to fulfill their mission as God's people.

- If the words of Jesus are misunderstood, they can bring nothing but heartbreak;
- But if they are correctly understood, they can bring nothing but power.

- Jesus says two things;
 - # 1 That prayer can remove mountains,
 - It is abundantly clear that these promises are not to be taken physically and literally.

- Keep in mind that Jesus himself never removed a physical, geographical mountain by prayer.

- Many a person has prayed with passionate faith that something may happen or that something may not happen,
 - That special someone may be spared from death,
 - And in the literal sense of the words that prayer has not been answered.

- What then
is Jesus
promising us
through prayer?

- **# 2** He promises that prayer gives us the ability to do.

- Now, you are asking

- “What does that mean?”

- Let me illustrate.

- Prayer is never the easy way out;
- It is never simply pushing things on to God for him to do them for us

- It is not asking God to do something;
- It is asking him to make us able to do it ourselves.

- Prayer is the way
to receive power
to take
the hard way.

- Prayer

is the channel

through which comes

power to tackle

and remove mountains

of difficulty by ourselves

with the help of God.

- **If it were simply**
a method of
getting things done
for us,
- Prayer would be
very bad for us,
- For it would make us
lazy
spiritually speaking.

- Therefore, no one should pray and then sit and wait;
- We must pray and then rise and work.

- And when we do,
a new dynamic
enters our lives,

- And that
in truth with God

all things are possible,

(Mark 14:36)

- And with God's help the impossible becomes that which can be done.

- Prayer is the ability to accept,
- And in accepting,
to
transform.

- It is not meant to bring **immediate deliverance** from a situation.
 - It is meant to **bring the ability to accept it** and transform it.
 - There are **two great examples** in the New Testament.

- The one is the example of Paul.
- Desperately praying that he might be delivered *from the thorn in his flesh*.
(2 Corinthians 12:9)
- He was not delivered from that situation.

- This is not to deny **DIVINE PROVIDENCE.**
(James 1:17)

- For there are many examples of God's providence throughout the Bible.

- But rather to explain what responsibility we have while waiting on divine providence

- Paul was however made able to accept it;
- And in that very situation he discovered the strength that was made
 - “perfect in his weakness.”
(2 Corinthians 12:9)

- And the grace which was sufficient for all things
 - And in that strength and grace the situation was not only accepted,
 - But also transformed into glory (2Corinthians 12:1-10).

- What do we learn from Paul's experience?
- (1) Spiritual blessings are more important than physical ones.
 - Paul thought he could be a better Christian if he were relieved of his weakness,
 - But just the opposite was true.

- (2) Unanswered prayer does not always mean the need is not met.
- Sometimes we get a greater blessing when God does not answer our prayers as requested.
 - God always answers the need even though it may not be immediately recognized.

- (3) There is grace to meet every need.
- Grace enabled Paul to accept his weakness, glory in it.
 - Paul knew that his weakness would bring glory to Christ, and that was all that mattered.

- (4) The weaker
the instrument
the greater
the glory to God.
- For proof remember
- Gideon's pitchers,
 - David's sling,
 - Moses' rod.

- 1 Corinthians 1:27

But God hath chosen

- **the foolish things of the world**
 - **to confound the wise;**
 - **and God hath chosen the weak things of the world**
 - **to confound the things which are mighty;**

- The second example is Jesus himself.
 - In Gethsemane he prayed that the cup might pass from him
 - And he be delivered from the agonizing situation in which he found himself.

- That request **was not be granted.**
- **But in that prayer** he found the ability to accept the situation;
- And, in being accepted, **the situation was transformed,**
- And the agony of the Cross led straight to **the glory of the Resurrection.**

- We must always remember that prayer does not always bring deliverance from a situation;
- It brings conquest of it.
 - Prayer is not a means of running away from a situation.
 - It is a means whereby we may gallantly face it.

- Prayer brings the ability to endure.
- It is natural and inevitable that, in our human need and with our human hearts and our human weakness, there should be things which we feel we cannot bear.

- We see some grave situation developing;
- We see some tragic event approaching with a grim inevitability.
- We see some task looming ahead which is obviously going to demand more than we have to give to it.

- So long as we regard prayer as an escape, nothing but disappointment can be the result.
- But when we regard it as the way to conquer things take on a new light.

- Immovable mountains
are moved.

- And we have
accomplished that
which Jesus promised.

- We have
removed
that mountain.

- Prayer does not
remove the tragedy;
- It does not
give us escape
from the situation;
- It does not give us
exemption from the task.

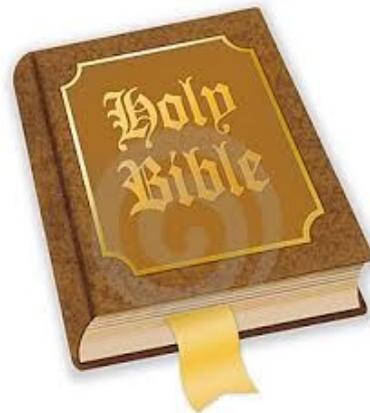
- But it does
make us able to
- Bear the unbearable,
- Face the unfaceable,
- Pass the breaking point
and not to break,
 - To remove
the unmovable mountain

**The doors of the church
are open.**

**The Spirit and the Bride
Say**

“Come”.

Revelation 22:17



- 08-19-2018 Tryon, NC