

Introduction

1. Last week began w/this. ([Show EKG reading](#))<sup>1</sup> Health pros determine heart health w/EKG.
  - a. They know a healthy functioning heart is one of our chief vital signs. ([Show](#))<sup>2</sup>
  - b. If heart is healthy, good sign the whole body is likely to be healthy. ([Show](#))<sup>3</sup>
2. Bible teaches are spiritual vital signs. Indicators of healthy spiritual heart.
  - a. It was these vital signs that Jesus came looking for in the nation Israel. Mark 11:11.
  - b. Last thing Jesus did on Palm Sunday was go into the temple and look around.
    - i. Was look of examination. Jesus was analyzing spiritual vital signs of the Jews.
    - ii. Temple = heart of spiritual life of Jews. Its condition revealed their condition.
  - c. Bible says we = temple of the Lord. What happens in our temple shows our condition.
3. ([Show Title & Text.](#)) ***We can test our spiritual health by analyzing our spiritual vital signs.***

I. **Prayerfulness, vv. 20-25.**

A. Peter's Observation, v. 20

1. On Tuesday morning of Holy Week as entered city, Peter saw fig tree Jesus had cursed.
2. What Jesus said, v. 14, ***May no one ever eat fruit from you again***, had happened.
3. And it happened in a most dramatic way, ***the fig tree withered away to its roots***.

B. Jesus' Application to Prayer, vv. 21-24

1. Jesus took the opportunity to teach a lesson about faith and prayer.
  - a. We can experience incredible things happen when we pray in faith.
  - b. ***Mountain, Be taken up & thrown into sea = Jewish phrase...for removing difficulties.***<sup>4</sup>
  - c. ***Mountain-remover = a good teacher who could remove difficulties in students' minds.***<sup>5</sup>
  - d. ***So the phrase means that if we have real faith, prayer is a power which can solve any problem and make us able to deal with any difficulty.***<sup>6</sup>
2. What problems do to our faith? Tell spiritual health by how faith reacts to problems.
  - a. Healthy Christians take their problems to God in believing prayer.
  - b. Elsewhere in Scripture ***to remove mountains = dealing w/problems of life.***<sup>7</sup>
3. So how does our faith react to these problems?
  - a. If see as obstacles only, then easy to complain, w/draw from God, afraid/discouraged.
  - b. If see as opportunities for God to solve, then problems draw us nearer to God.
  - c. Problems become a reason for hope/confidence/peace.
4. ***God does nothing except in response to believing prayer.***<sup>8</sup>
  - a. This is overstated some, because God often works apart from our prayers.
  - b. But Wesley by overstatement has caught the emphasis of Jesus. Prayer powerful.

<sup>1</sup> <https://s-media-cache-ak0.pinimg.com/736x/fd/cb/75/fdcb7554b6818b8767aa6a19f8ea4436.jpg>. Accessed 6/15/17.

<sup>2</sup> <http://sveccs.org/sites/site-4125/images/Screen%20Shot%202014-09-07%20at%205.30.36%20PM.png>. 6/15/17.

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.harvestgranger.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/2010-08-29\\_VITAL-SIGNS\\_title.jpg](http://www.harvestgranger.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/2010-08-29_VITAL-SIGNS_title.jpg). 6/15/17.

<sup>4</sup> Barclay, W. (Ed.). (1976). *The Gospel of Mark*. Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster John Knox Press, p. 276.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> 1 Corinthians 13:2: *if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains.*

<sup>8</sup> John Wesley. AZQuotes.com, Wind and Fly LTD, 2017. <http://www.azquotes.com/quote/1307147>, accessed 6/22/17.

### C. Conditions of Believing Prayer

#### 1. **AM I CONSISTENT IN MY PRAYER LIFE?**

- a. Jesus tied prayer to having **faith in God**, v. 22. This is where Israel was lacking.
- b. Because of no true faith, Israel turned God's house of prayer into merchandize mart.
- c. They were more interested in making money, than meeting with the living God.
- d. But Jesus said where there is real faith there will be real seeking God & real prayer.
- e. **Dallas Morning News** once surveyed over 1000 adults on their spiritual beliefs.<sup>9</sup>
  - i. 87% = prayer gets results, 80% men believe in prayer, 93% of women.
  - ii. One more question should've been asked. What? Do you actually pray?

#### 2. **AM I PERSISTENT IN MY PRAYER LIFE?**

- a. True faith does not give up. Confidence Jesus expresses in prayer keeps praying.
- b. How do we know how long to pray about something? Two answers:
  - i. Until God gives the answer, either yes or no. God said no about Ellen's brother.
    - (a) God make it clear He was not going to heal David of kidney disease.
    - (b) We didn't stop praying, but we prayed differently when God's will was clear.
  - ii. Or until God takes away the desire within us to pray for a certain thing.
  - iii. **For your desire is your prayer; & your desire is w/o ceasing; your prayer will be w/o ceasing.**<sup>10</sup>
  - iv. So as long as we have a God-given desire, we keep praying about that desire.

#### 3. **AM I PUTTING GOD 1<sup>ST</sup> IN MY LIFE?**

- a. Jesus spoke this to disciples – men committed to follow Jesus & do God's will.
- b. Mountains that stood in way, not mountians of selfish desires, but service to God.
- c. Crucial because w/o putting God 1<sup>st</sup> may ask for wrong things & with wrong reasons.
- d. James 4:2-3 = one of most important texts on unanswered prayer. (**Show**)<sup>11</sup>
- e. Very important because v. 23 has been twisted to say something Jesus not intend.
  - i. This is where **Name It & Claim It** teaching comes from. **Positive confession**.
  - ii. **If you can say it, you can claim it**, so the teaching goes. But contradicts v. 22.
  - iii. Principle of Bible study 1 verse cannot contradict another. Faith = submission.
- f. We can only claim those things in God's will. His will must always be sovereign.

#### 4. **AM I WILLING TO BE GOD'S SOLUTION TO THE PROBLEM?**

- a. Often God moves mountains thru our obedient actions. We become solution.
  - i. Praying for salvation? Do I invite to church or speak to them about Jesus?
  - ii. Praying to marry Christian spouse? Go places where can meet Christians?
- b. Someone told me recently about the man who stranded, prayed to be rescued.
  - i. Airplane came. **No, waiting for God to rescue**. Helicopter. **No, waiting for God**.
  - ii. Boat. **No. God will rescue**. Finally man died. When met Lord had question.

<sup>9</sup> Roy Zuck (1997). *The Speaker's Quote Book*, p. 293. Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications.

<sup>10</sup> St. Augustine. Quoted in Michael P. Green (1982). "Prayer, Perseverance in," *Illustrations for Biblical Preaching*, p. 280. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House.

<sup>11</sup> James 4:2-3. <https://www.slideshare.net/clarktorrey/063one-necessary-thing-we-may-be-missing-in-prayer>. Slide 22. 6/24/17.

- iii. **Prayed for rescue. Why not answer? What think plane, helicopter, boat were for?**
  - c. Sometimes we pray & then are passive. But prayer should lead to action.
5. **AM I AT PEACE KNOWING GOD WILL ANSWER?**
- a. Jesus gives 2 conditions for answered prayer: **does not doubt in his heart, v. 23.**
    - i. **Doubt = hesitate, debate, dispute, waver.**<sup>12</sup> James used analogy of waves, 1:6.
    - ii. **(Show)**<sup>13</sup> Waves are up/down; they are unstable; uncertain. When do we doubt?
    - iii. When take matters into own hands. When think must solve problem our way.
    - iv. When instead of waiting for God's solution, we manufacture our own.
    - v. James says that person can expect no answers. Double-minded game w/God.
    - vi. **I know what God wants, what's right, but this's what will solve it & make me happy.**
  - b. 2<sup>nd</sup> condition: **believe that you have received it.** Pray as if answer already sent.
    - i. Why? Because it already is, isn't it? God already has a solution. Just don't know.
    - ii. We know that we have prayed in faith when get up in peace that God is at work.
  - c. **George Mueller ran an orphanage for 2000 kids in Bristol, England in 1800s.**
    - i. One night realized no food for breakfast next morning. Called workers to pray.
    - ii. After 2-3 prayed, Mueller, **Now that's sufficient; let's rise/praise God for answer.**
    - iii. Next morning couldn't open front door. Went around back to see why.
    - iv. Stacked up against the front door were boxes filled with food. One worker said:
    - v. **We know Who sent the boxes, but we do not know who brought them!**<sup>14</sup>
    - vi. **God is already working; we just don't know how He is going to answer.**
  - d. When all the other conditions are in place, then we should pray w/this kind of peace.
6. **AM I WILLING TO FORGIVE?**
- a. Why does Jesus connect prayer w/forgiveness of others? When saved part of family.
    - i. Father loves us all equally & forgives us when we need it.
    - ii. If go to God & ask for mercy/grace, but not willing to give same to brother/sister...
    - iii. God will not approve of that attitude, and He will not listen to us.
  - b. **Forgive = cancel a debt.**<sup>15</sup> When someone wrongs, they are indebted to us.
    - i. When forgive, we cancel debt, set 'em free. When don't, holding 'em in bondage.
    - ii. We are seeking to maintain control over them and take revenge upon them.
    - iii. Lack of forgiveness is really revenge. It's a way of getting even.
  - c. There is a difference between forgiveness and reconciliation.
    - i. Sometimes because people will not admit wrongs, cannot reconcile.
    - ii. Bible does not tell us people should never be accountable for their wrongs.
    - iii. But where cannot reconcile, still must have spirit of forgiveness.
    - iv. I choose to set you free by not holding you in bondage to my grudge.

<sup>12</sup> διακρίνω [diakrino]. Strong, J. (1995). *Enhanced Strong's Lexicon*. Woodside Bible Fellowship. #1252

<sup>13</sup> James 1:6-7. [http://www.middletonbiblechurch.org/versesjh/james1\\_6-7.jpg](http://www.middletonbiblechurch.org/versesjh/james1_6-7.jpg). 6/24/17.

<sup>14</sup> Paul Van Gorder. *Our Daily Bread*. Galaxie Software. (2002). *10,000 Sermon Illustrations*. Biblical Studies Press.

<sup>15</sup> ἀφίημι, ἐναφίημι [aphiemí]. Strong, J. op, cit., #863.