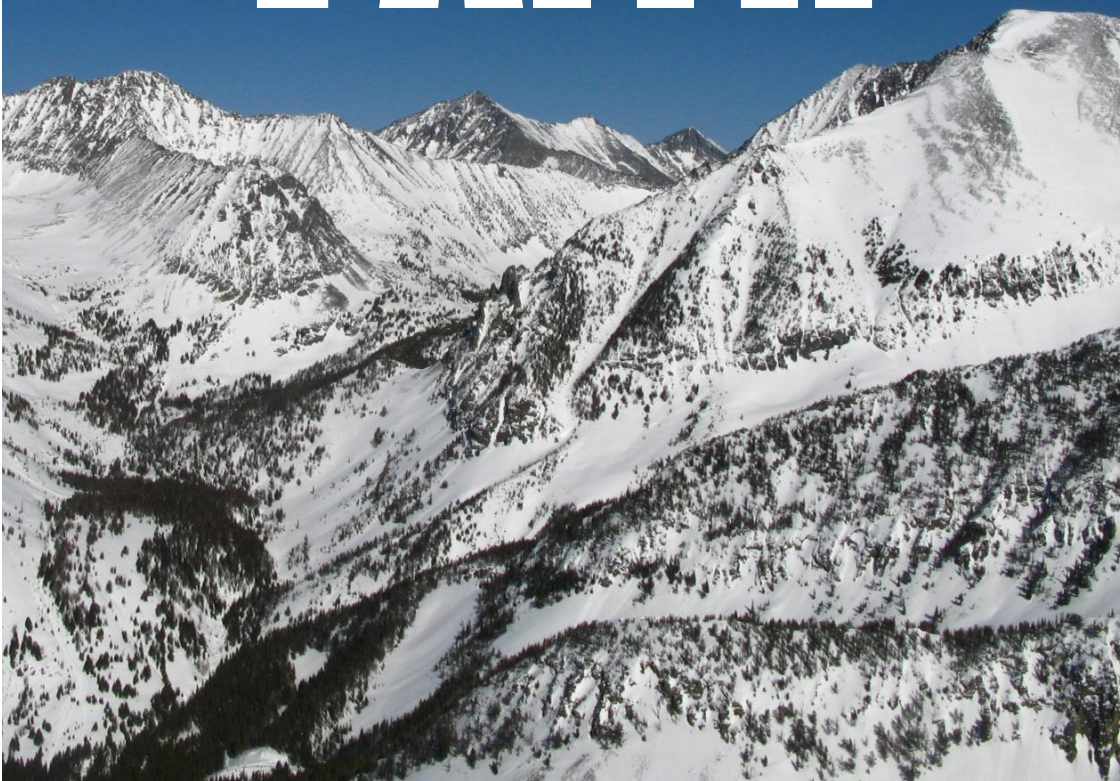


MOUNTAIN-MOVING FAITH



*Looking at some of the
attributes of Biblical faith...*

a series by David Legge

preachtheword.com



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Mountain-Moving Faith - Chapter 1

"Faith In God"

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I've been asked to speak on 'Revolutionised By Faith' - that was a wee while ago, and I didn't know whether I would do it or whether I wouldn't - but I felt the Lord wanted me to do that, although I am taking a different title: 'Mountain-Moving Faith'. So that's my title, you can take the official one if you want, it doesn't really matter - it's all the same stuff anyway! But I want you to turn with me this morning to Hebrews 10, we will be in Hebrews 10 again probably in the fourth session on Thursday, and then we're going to spend a wee bit of time in Mark 11 - where there is that famous passage where Jesus speaks about mountain-moving faith, and about asking in faith, and believing that we have the things we have asked for. It's hard to know when you're preaching - you know if you're in a pulpit ministry - you take big chunks and spend years going through them, but when you've only got four sessions and you're covering a subject like faith - I mean that's really what the Bible is all about - you want to home in on those aspects that are intrinsic to what true faith really is. So there's a lot that I will leave out, I hope you will understand that, and a lot of verses that are maybe springing to your mind right now that I will not touch on - but you understand that I'm given an opportunity, and I want to hit what I feel, before God, are the most important aspects of 'faith that makes a difference', that's really what we're talking about: faith that moves mountains, faith that revolutionises our Christian lives!

So let's read together verse 38, and then we're just finishing at verse 6 of chapter 11, so Hebrews 10 verse 38: *"Now the just shall live by faith; but if anyone draws back, My soul has no pleasure in him". But we are not of those who draw back to perdition, but of those who believe to the saving of the soul. Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. For by it the elders obtained a good testimony. By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible. By faith Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts; and through it he being dead still speaks. By faith Enoch was taken away so that he did not see death, 'and was not found, because God had taken him'; for before he was taken he had this testimony, that he pleased God. But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him".*

'Mountain-Moving Faith' - so what is this faith that moves mountains? Well, it's the faith that we are to live by. We read here in verse 38 of chapter 10 'the just shall live by faith', and if you have a good marginal reference version you will see that that is a quotation of an Old Testament text, Habakkuk chapter 2 and verse 4. It actually appears quoted three times in the New Testament, and each is very significant, and each emphasises a different aspect of faith. So you've got it here in Hebrews 10, you've got it in Romans 1, and you've got it in Galatians 3 - so Hebrews, Romans, and Galatians. Now you understand a bit of the context about each of those books, you understand the emphasis of the author, and the Holy Spirit through the author. For instance, take Romans, most people are agreed that Romans has within it an explanation of the

Gospel, it actually is a missionary epistle I believe, as a justification of why the Gospel should be taken all over the globe and not just reserved to the Jews. But in the midst of that he gives a treatise of how we are made right before God, how we become righteous before God - so the emphasis is 'the just' in that verse in Romans chapter 1 verse 17, 'the just' shall live by faith. If you want to be just, it's through faith, we are justified by faith, so that Paul's emphasis there.

Then we come to Galatians, and of course there's the whole controversy of the Judaisers coming in and saying: 'No, no, it's Christ plus, you've got to have Christ plus the law, Christ plus circumcision, Christ plus the rites and rituals of Judaism. You've basically got to become Jews as well'. The emphasis there is 'living', the just shall 'live' by faith - that we don't live by law, we live by faith. That's why Paul emphasised in that epistle that you began in the Spirit, and you're not made perfect by the law then, you've got to continue in the Spirit. So the just 'lives' by faith. Of course Hebrews chapter 11, preceded by verse 38 of chapter 10, is that great purple passage on faith, the great hall of faith and fame - these wonderful characters who were heroes of the faith. The emphasis here is 'faith', the just shall live by 'faith'. Now any text from the Old Testament that's repeated three times has got to be important. We know that it is by grace we are saved through faith, and this Christian life is from faith to faith - that's what the book of Romans says - which basically, I think one translation puts it, it's 'a faith exercise from beginning to end', it's all about faith. I was reading this morning: 'I am crucified with Christ. It is not I that live, but the life that I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me'.

So you could say about any subject we preach on that there is no more important subject, but relatively speaking this is one of the big ones! If we don't learn what true faith actually is - and so many of us as 'evangelicals' stop at saving faith, and that's as far as it goes, and we go on with that saving faith, faith to die and go to heaven, but that is just the start, that's just the threshold experience, that's just the beginning. Let me try and explain that by using an illustration for you. Many years ago I read a book by Ronald Dunn, I don't know whether any of you are familiar with his books, but he's an excellent writer and I would recommend him to you. One of his books on faith has a story in it under a chapter entitled 'The House That Grace Built'. He talks about how this life of ours is like a dual carriageway, and along the side of the dual carriageway is the House of Salvation. He talks about how people just go along in their merry business day by day, going around doing their errands, putting in their 24/7, and basically ignoring the House of Salvation. They have these burdens on their backs, but he talks about how one day he stopped and he stood at the door with this burden on his back - a bit like Bunyan's Progress - standing there with his burden outside the House of Salvation, and he said that written over the threshold of the door were these words: 'Whosoever will may enter in'. So he tried the doorknob and it was locked, and he thought: 'Why would there be an invitation over this door, 'Whosoever will may enter in', but the door is locked?'. Right away there was a gentleman behind him tapped him on the shoulder and hand him a key, and on the key were written the letters 'F-A-I-T-H', 'Faith'. He took the key, put it in the lock, turned it, and the door opened. He said that through faith he entered into this house that grace built, which is the House of Salvation.

He said that he went into this foyer and he noticed many other doors, corridors and doors around the house. So after a while, perusing the place, he decided to go over to some of these doors. Some of the doors read 'Answered Prayer', 'Daily Victory', 'Every Need Supplied', you know, various things that we would like to experience in the

Christian life - but when he went up to those doors and tried to turn the knob, they were locked as well. He noticed that in the foyer there was a multitude of people who were gathered, and he realised that a lot of these people had went in through the door into the House of Salvation, they were loitering around in the foyer, and they hadn't generally gone any further than that front door. He said: 'I have no desire to spend my life standing in a foyer. This is my Father's house, I was His child, and all He possessed was mine'. He said that he had acquired quite a number of keys in his pocket from having entered that house. He decided to try some of those, and he lifted them out of his pocket. One was called 'Doing Your Best', another was 'Religious Activity', another was 'Sincerity', and he said he even tried the one that said 'Tithing' on it - he said he was getting really desperate! He was beginning to understand why the foyer was so crowded, because none of these keys worked. Just about to despair, he heard a voice, and it was the Builder of the house behind him who said: 'Use the key that I gave you to get into the house'. He remembered that key with 'Faith' written on it, and he went up to those doors again - 'Answered Prayer', 'Every Need Supplied', 'Daily Victory' - and he tried that key, and every door opened, every single door opened. He realised, again I quote him: 'The Key of Faith is the Master Key that unlocks every door in the house'. This is his comment: 'That was the greatest discovery of my life: Faith is the master key of the Christian life. From start to finish salvation is by grace through faith. Everything we get in the Christian life, we get by grace through faith. Grace makes it available, faith accepts it. Grace is God's hand giving it to us, faith is man's hand receiving it. Faith possesses what grace provides. Grace is God's part, faith is man's part - it is our positive response to God's gracious offer. Everything that God demands of man can be summed up in one word: faith'.

I think that's a tremendous illustration of how faith really is the key in this whole Christian experience. If we don't understand what true mountain-moving faith is, we're going to be loitering about in the foyer. Let's face it: how many Christians, modern day 21st-century Christians in the West, does that describe their average experience? 'Loitering about in the foyer', not moving on any further than the threshold of the door of salvation. So in these four sessions I'm going to be breaking up key aspects, I believe, to mountain-moving faith. Today we're going to look at how true mountain-moving faith is 'Faith In God'. No gasps there? Is that too elementary for you folk? 'Faith In God'. Well, it sounds very profound, and it actually is as we will see. What a lot of us do: immediately we realise, 'Faith is the key, the master key for everything in this Christian life, I better get it, and it better be big and strong' - and we then start to focus on faith, when actually that will never work. We need not to focus on faith, but to focus on God. It's like your kid, if you have them, bringing home the watercress seed from nursery - remember that? It sits on the windowsill, and if you've got a very inquisitive child they might get a spoon every day and dig up the seed, and say: 'Nothing is happening here'. Every day they are digging up the seed, and if you dig up your faith every day and analyse your faith, it will never grow because your focus is on the seed rather than God who gives the power and the increase. Just leave faith alone, alright?

So we're emphasising faith this week, but we're really saying: don't focus on faith, leave your faith alone. If you focus on God, your faith will look after itself - got it? So this is really my emphasis in the message just now, it's: focus on God if you want your faith to increase. You remember the disciples came to Jesus and said: 'Increase our faith!'. We're very mechanical as Christians, aren't we? 'Look, this is what I need, give us it! Show me how this can be done!' - but you know, there's nothing, as I said last evening, everything happens in the presence of God, everything. Technique is not of so much

importance as atmosphere, alright? What we really need is the right climate for faith to grow, and the climate that faith grows in is the presence of God, where we become totally encapsulated by God's character, by God's person, by God's presence - and this faith is a byproduct of that. There is no virtue in faith per se, on its own faith is pretty useless - it's who your faith is in.

Yet there is a danger as we come to a subject like this that we could actually be saying: 'Oh, I need more faith, and stronger faith, and mountain-moving faith' - and we begin to focus on the faith, and our faith is in our faith. Are you with me? For some people their faith is in their prayer life. Now, I believe you should pray, I bet you're glad I said that! We ought to pray, but for some people faith is in prayer and their prayer life - you know, 'Have I done my hours for today? Have I gone down the list today? Because if I don't go down the list, God might not bless me. If I don't put in the time, God might not bless me'. Your faith is in your prayer life - I'm not saying prayer is wrong. Or your faith can be in your personal holiness. There's a great danger here - do we believe in holiness? Yes, we do - but be careful that your faith is not in your own sanctification, and how well you're doing, what you do do that God commands, or what you don't do that He forbids. Your faith can be in that, and do you know what happens then: when you make a blunder, which we all do, you crash because your faith was in how well you were doing, a performance-based relationship with God - it's not by grace at all. We're not discouraging people from holiness, but we've got to be on the right footing, and it's always God. Maybe this could be misunderstood - and I will explain it later on - but our faith is not in the Bible alone. I love that old hymn - it's good when you're saying controversial stuff to quote old hymns, you may have noticed that!

'Beyond the sacred page,
I seek Thee, Lord'.

The Bible is the revelation of God, the Bible is the conduit to get us to God, but if we stop at the Bible that is bibliolatry, where we worship the book and not our God. Do you understand? Faith in the Bible is intrinsic, and I'm going to spend a whole session on 'Faith in the Promises of God' - we're not bypassing those, but we've got to understand that the promises of God and the word of God is only the revelation of the character and the personality of God. We've got to get to Him. Are you with me? So it's not faith in prayer, it's not faith in faith, it's not faith in holiness, it's not faith in the Bible alone - but it is faith in God.

Do you remember encountering people who are in love with being in love? Did you ever have anybody like that? They're not actually in love with the person, but they are in love with the state of being in love. Are you with me? So they go through maybe a number of relationships, and every one is to die for, and then when it breaks up it's just total crisis - because it's not the person, it's the concept of being loved and loving another. Sometimes we can be like up with faith, and even the Christian life - we are in love with the process, and we are losing God in the midst of it. I'm convinced of this, utterly convinced that evangelicalism is jam-packed with people who are in love with the process, and they really don't know God and they're not getting to know God!

So really what I'm saying, before I digress down that one, is: don't measure your faith, measure your God. Did you get that? Don't measure your faith, measure your God, and your faith will look after itself. So here's the question that comes after that: how big is your God? That will fix your faith if you have any problem there: how big is your God? Now that might seem, again, another elementary question: 'Oh, we're all Bible-believing

Christians, and we know what the Bible says about God'. I'm not talking about what the Bible says, I'm talking about what you believe and what you experientially walk day by day in your conception of the God that you worship and you serve. How big is your God? How real is your God to you every day? J.B. Phillips did a contemporary translation of the New Testament years ago, and out of doing that - obviously the Greek language is much richer than English, and I think that's why we need so many English translations. The Amplified Version tries to give us every aspect of the Greek, but doesn't do it perfectly. He was so overwhelmed at the depths of the Greek language, and the revelation of God that there was in it, that he wrote a book entitled 'Your God Is Too Small'. Have you heard of that one? Basically what he was trying to say was: even from our limited translations of the Bible, we don't get a full-orbed view of the grandeur and the greatness, and the splendour and majesty, and the strength and the bigness of our God.

I want to ask you here: is your God too small? Your faith problem here today, if you have one - and I think we all, if we're honest, have to say 'Well, I could do with a wee bit more' - if that's you: is your God too small? Have you limited your God? Have you got your God in a box? I have to be careful where I go here, because I could stray very very easily - but sometimes I hear people say this: 'Oh, God would never do that, God would never be involved in that'. I'm not telling you what 'that' is, by the way, it could be anything, for a lot of people it is different things - but just think of this for a moment: wee David Legge in Donegal, in Rosstown, where is that? Who am I? And I'm saying what God can and cannot do? God! Do you remember who He is? He's God! And I'm saying what God can and cannot do? It just is incredible! Our God is so big, His ways are not our ways, His thoughts are not our thoughts - as high as the heavens are above the earth, so much greater are His ways and His thoughts above us. I mean some of the stuff that God did in the Bible, it's weird, let's be honest! Some of it is really weird, some of it is very very strange. Some of the things He asks His servants to do are really strange. Me and a friend have been joking lately about what God asked Isaiah to do - He asked Isaiah to walk about naked for a couple of years, did you know that? This is in the Bible! Have you never read that? Have you ever read that? Come on now - this morning, did you? There you are! Proof! It's in the Bible! Now, don't worry, God has not been saying anything like that to me for this week - but this is the Bible, this is our Bible that we read, there's some very strange stuff! Ezekiel was told: 'Right Ezekiel, this is God speaking, Ezekiel, this is God now - don't be mistaken, this is God - I want you to cook a meal with your own excrement. Cook it over the fuel of your own excrement' - has anybody read that one? But God asking somebody to do that - I mean, if God asked somebody to do that today, what would you say? 'God would never do that. Do you not know the laws? Do you not know cleanliness and all the rest?'. Ezekiel knew it, and Ezekiel protested, and God said: 'That's OK, right okay, don't use that, use cow dung instead', because that was a wee bit more acceptable, so he did it.

But you know there are times that God asks us to do things, and God does things that don't fit in with our psyche - and especially when we've got our religious heads on. God is not restricted to our ways! We need to start, especially those of us in Christian ministry - we're all meant to be in Christian ministry, but in this full-time capacity of serving the Lord 24/7 the way you do in CEF - we need to start forgetting about a lot of the trash that we have learnt from religious tradition, and from the environments that we have been in and conditioned to, and start letting God be God, and start listening to what He is saying - and even doing some of the hare-brained stuff that doesn't seem to make sense, but as long as He is telling us to do it we need to do it! How did I get on to

that? I'm not sure! Yes, God being too small - read the Bible and find out who your God really is.

Verse 6 of chapter 11, let's get back to the script! 'Without faith it is impossible to please God, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him'. Now if you don't believe that God is - I mean atheists don't come to God, sure they don't? They don't believe that He is, except when they're in a bit of a fix, and then they go: 'Oh God, help!' - but that's another subject. You've got to believe in Him if you're going to come to Him, but I don't think that's the full weight of that statement. I think when it says, 'Believe that He is', it has a sense of that we've got to believe that He is active. So those who come to God to be rewarded, as the end of the verse shows is the outcome, if you're going to come to God for something you've got to believe that He is active, that He's doing something - otherwise what's the point in going to Him and asking Him for something? We need to believe that He is at work even - and this is the essence of true faith - even when it appears with the naked eye that He isn't, that's He's not doing anything. You come to Him because you believe that He is active.

Now, my question to you is: do you believe and perceive God as active? Do you perceive God as active? I'm going to talk later on in the seminar about the power of the Holy Spirit in ministry, and I don't want to steal my own thunder with that - but you've got to believe in the miraculous if you believe that God is active. There are problems today, I believe, in evangelicalism where there are certain theologies - and really I am not out to offend you, so please don't think that I'm going to go on a rant all week - but I just cannot any more talk about God or the power of God if He is not miraculous God, I just can't do it. I mean that is God - your Christianity and your faith is either supernatural or it is superficial. If you've got God limited to what He can and cannot do in the 21st-century, I'm going to say to you: honestly, you'd be better doing something else! Is that too strong? If you're going to limit God, what He can and cannot do - I don't know how I could wake up in the day when I had a semblance of a theology like that. I was open to God within reason, but it was on my terms, and it was with me saying: 'O God, You wouldn't do that, and You wouldn't do that, and how can they claim that'. Look: God is the God of the miraculous and the supernatural - period, that's it.

We will talk about that later, but there is a danger even when you believe in that, that you can only perceive God as active in the miraculous or the supernatural, and that can sap our faith. Now let me explain what I'm saying. We generally in the West have divided everything into the natural and the supernatural. The natural is what we can explain, and the supernatural is what we can't explain. So even in our education, our Western education - not all the world is educated the way we are - but we are educated to see, for instance if you see a tree, and you see an acorn planted. You watch, and our Western mentality, even those of us who believe in God, we see that tree as growing from natural laws. Our concept is: 'Well, God created everything in the beginning, but everything works on a natural level. God has set everything in motion, if you like, and everything comes out of these laws that He has created' - but that is not correct. We need to actually see God working in everything, so that even the blade of grass - God is pulling and shaping that leaf and that blade of grass. In everyday practice we need to start seeing God as active - not just in the miraculous, not just in creation when He started the ball rolling, but in every facet of life. That's what we need: we need to start seeing God - that's what faith is - start perceiving Him in everything, doing stuff around us.

John White, whose writings I highly recommend, said this: 'The God of the Bible runs everything. He created nature and super-nature, which are actually all of a piece with no division between them. Nothing in nature works by itself. God 'works' it. He intervenes unceasingly. Every musical note we hear, every sunrise and sunset we see, every birth we rejoice in, every exploding supernova we marvel at - all are expressions of His love' - now that's amazing! Are you walking about seeing God everywhere? There's a lot of pessimism - I've been talking about this with some of you over the tea table - there's a lot of pessimism in evangelicalism, particularly the wing that I have been in in the past. You know: 'Jesus is coming soon, the world is going to hell in a hand cart, everything is going down the tube, there's apostasy in the church - and well, let's just batten down the hatches, hold the fort and be as faithful as we can, because it's nearly over!'. Is that a good summary? That's pretty much it, isn't it? We're not looking for God, we're looking for Antichrist, we're looking for a New World Order, we're looking for the scarlet woman - and we're not looking for the Kingdom of God coming among us, we're not looking for what God is actually doing in our midst which He promised. There is such a pessimism, rather than starting to see God - 'Look at the sunrise, look at the beautiful beach, look at the sea, God, look at what You're doing in creation. But, Lord, look at my ministry, look at the church, look at that broken person that You have called me to invest in' - and start looking for God! We have been tuned and trained to look for the devil, we have been tuned and trained to look for error, we have been tuned and trained to look for mixture and contamination, rather than influence - that our God is bigger, His grace is larger, and His light is brighter, and it shines brighter in the darkness. We need to start looking for God again! You know, God turns up in the most unusual places!

Do you practice such perception? Looking for God? My wee girl had a CD - any of you with children will understand this - they get a CD that they really like, and they play it ad nauseam. Every time you're in the car: 'Daddy, put that on!', and you listen to these songs until you could say them backwards in your sleep. But there is one wee song based on one of those Bible series 'The Beginning', you know those cartoon children's Bibles, and there's a song in it: 'I Believe In Miracles'. There's a line in it that really captured my imagination, and it says: 'Heaven and earth are not that far apart'. Do you believe that? I could talk to you, not with much authority, but a wee bit about - scientists and physicists and astrophysicists are now talking about different dimensions, parallel universes and all sorts of things where there can be different realities that exist at the one and the same time. I think that's probably nearer to 'Pie in the Sky Way out There', you know 'Somewhere in Outer Space' - sorry about that, but you know what I mean. Just like that we could be in another dimension, there is a spiritual reality that is mixed up in our reality. We could talk about that, but heaven and earth are not so far apart. The ancient Christian Celts talked about a thin space between heaven and earth. In fact their monasteries, the ancient monastic system, the concept was that they would be a colony of heaven on earth, that people would be able to come and taste a bit of what the Kingdom of God is like - whether it was a sojourner resting, whether it was a person injured, whatever, that they could minister something of the Kingdom of God here because they believed that God was around, that God was real. We need to practice such perception.

Turn with me to Ephesians 1 - I'm not even halfway through here, this is bad - Ephesians chapter 1 verse 17. Paul is praying for these believers: 'That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and

revelation in the knowledge of Him' - now just pause. Were these Christians? Yes! So they still needed more of their eyes to be opened: 'the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places' - but let me just emphasise this: he's talking about the eyes of our heart. Do you know you've got eyes in your heart? Did you know that? Did you know you've got eyes in your heart? Did you know you've got ears in your heart? Western evangelicalism has been sold a pup, and it is an intellectual concept of Christianity, and it's very strong - particularly in conservative evangelicalism - and that is: that God speaks to your brain, and everything comes through your brain, and if it ever bypasses your brain it's of the devil. You remember that now - well, that is unscriptural, unscriptural, because in 1 Corinthians 12:13-14 you've got explanations of spiritual gifts, and some of them bypass the brain, and Paul says that. Some of them go straight to the spirit, and the mind doesn't understand - OK? This is a spiritual thing, you've got eyes in your heart - so you can study until you've got PhDs coming out your ears, and not know one iota more of God experientially. There are eyes in our heart that need to be opened. Sometimes there is a reason why they are not opened, sometimes there's damage, sometimes there's sin, sometimes the enemy has got us bound in certain areas and we're not seeing the unseen. But this is what we're talking about: if you want your faith to move mountains, if you want to have revolutionary faith that makes a difference and transforms your life, your family's life, your community's life, your ministry's life, you're going to have to start seeing the unseen. You're going to have to pray this prayer of Paul's - no greater thing could you do - 'Open the eyes of my heart, let me see things the way You see, the way they actually are - not the way materialism has conditioned me to think only of reality as what I can touch, what I can feel, what I can smell, what I can taste'. Those are physical senses, but there are spiritual senses of seeing in the spirit, of hearing in the spirit.

I'm going to tease that out a little bit more. We need to see the unseen, 2 Corinthians 4:18, the New Living Translation says: 'So we don't look at the troubles we can see now; rather, we fix our gaze on things that cannot be seen. For the things we see now will soon be gone, but the things we cannot see will last forever'. So we need to fill our spiritual senses with eternal realities, our inner ears, our inner eyes, our inner mind, our inner will, our inner emotions. 'He that comes to God must believe that He is' - so how is He? 'He that comes to God' - this is the essence of faith - 'He that comes to God must believe that He is', so how is He? How is He? Now, to be honest, for a lot of Bible-believing Christians He's asleep, He's gone to sleep, He's gone into hibernation. In the Acts of the Apostles He was doing some stuff, really, you read it yourself, it's all there and we believe it - we believe it! But He's gone to sleep! Do you see in the end times, oh there's all sorts of stuff is going to happen then, weird and wonderful stuff - if we started to go into it, trumpets and bowls being poured out, and these big scorpion things crawling out of pits, and signs in the sky, and the false prophet doing all sorts of miracles, and two prophets of God and they're performing miracles - wow! But at the moment He's gone to sleep!

So He's the same yesterday and He's the same tomorrow, but today He's not the same? Now, that really doesn't help your faith, does it? Let's be honest - but, you see, how is He? If I understand the Bible correctly, His name is the great 'I Am' - and that means 'The One Who Was, The One Who Is, And The One Who Ever Shall Be'. If I'm asking the

question: 'How is He today?', the answer, biblically, is 'He is the same as He always has been and always will be' - that's how He is! If I want my faith to increase, I need to believe that He is - Amen? Do you believe that He is the way He always was? I'm not asking what you experience, because this is often what happens, people say: 'See the folk that believe in God's supernatural power today, they argue from experience'. Au contraire, the ones who don't believe in argue from experience - the lack thereof: 'I've never seen that happen, I've never seen that happen, I've never seen a miracle'. So what we do is: we devise a theology that accommodates our lack of experience and actually contradicts the Bible - and then what do we expect? What do we expect?

Now, I'm not trying to turn you all into raving charismatics or anything like that, but this is fundamental to faith. If you want your faith to increase you've got to understand what your God is like, and what your God can do. There's a Psalm, you can turn to it - if you had the NIV you could turn to it, because it's a wee bit different in the NIV than other versions, but I like its translation. It's Psalm 68 verse 28, and enshrined there is the principle of the precedence of the power of God - if you like alliteration, there's one for you - principle of the precedence of the power of God. This is the way the NIV renders it: 'Summon Your power, O God; show us Your strength, our God, as You have done before'. 'Summon Your power, O God; show us Your strength, our God, as You have done before'. Now you know what a precedent is in common-law, it's a principle or a rule in a legal case that has been binding or persuasive for a court or tribunal in previous cases with similar issues and facts - we might say it's an established practice or custom, a precedent. To simplify it: it's a principle that once was that still applies today. This is the precedence of the power of God: that God's power is the same today as it always has been. The psalmist obviously believed that, or he wouldn't have prayed for it.

Now there may have been, experientially, an absence of God's power, otherwise why would he have prayed for it? But what did he do? Did he say: 'This isn't working, we better get a theology that says God doesn't do this type of stuff now, because this is embarrassing'? Is that what he did? Or did he say: 'No, Lord, we believe You're the same as You always have been! Summon Your power, O God; show us Your strength as You have done before'. In fact we know that all the great patriarchs, and all the prophets believed in the power of God - you only have to read Hebrews 11 that we're in. We know about Abraham, the father of faith, we're going to look at him in a bit more detail - but contrary to hope, he believed against all hope, a hundred years of age, I mean it's laughable! His body is dead, Sarah's womb is dead, but against all hope he believes God - He better be miraculous if He's going to give a 100-year-old man a baby! Paul, he believed and was persuaded that the scriptures were true - is that what it says? No, he believed and was persuaded that God was able to keep that which he had committed unto Him against that day.

Faith is faith in God - do you get what I'm saying now? It's not faith in faith, it's not even faith in the Bible per se, it's faith in the God that the Bible portrays and reveals. Do we have such faith? Faith that says: 'He has done it before, He can do it again'. There are plenty of Scripture to testify to this. Malachi 3:6: 'I am the LORD, I do not change'. Jeremiah 32:27: 'I am the LORD, the God of all flesh. Is there anything too hard for Me?'. Hebrews 13:8: 'Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever'. God's power hasn't changed! Is God still God Almighty? Is He still El Shaddai? Is He still the omnipotent One? Can Jesus Christ, the Son of God still say: 'All power is given unto Me in heaven and on earth, go therefore and make disciples of all peoples'? Is the

promise of Pentecost still being outpoured in the church: 'You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you shall be My witnesses'? I mean, is this all the same? Or am I in the wrong place today? So what has changed? Something has changed - what has changed? Surely it's our faith, our faith in this God as He really is.

In a lot of our biblical confessions, and a lot of our songs, a lot of our writings, there is a shortfall between our confession and the atmosphere of our churches and our gatherings; the impact of our witness and, let's be honest, our own personal experiences of God. There is a shocking absence of power. A.W. Tozer said many years ago: 'Imagine an angel visiting Moses, Paul, St Augustine, David Brainerd, and then he visits us' - poor angel! He is sitting in our Bible studies on Wednesday night, or whenever you have them, he's hearing what we claim to be our possessions in prayer and from the pulpit, and then he goes home with us and he observes the poverty of our own experience. Tozer says: 'Is there not a contradiction between what we think we are and what we really are? Well might the angel conclude that we trifle with words while our souls starve. He might well conclude that we are all spiritual liars, claiming possessions but never experiencing them'.

Turn with me to a passage as I close, 2 Kings 6. This, if you like, is an illustration of Ephesians 1, what we read about the eyes of our heart being opened. I want you to pray that that will happen this week, that the eyes of your heart will be opened. This is quite funny this story, in ways. The prophet of God is being told what the King is saying in his own bedroom - what about that? It's driving the King mad, and he's had enough of it, and so he sends armies after the prophet of God. Verse 13: 'So he said, 'Go and see where he is, that I may send and get him'. And it was told him, saying, 'Surely he is in Dothan'. Therefore he sent horses and chariots' - this is the King of Syria - 'and a great army there, and they came by night and surrounded the city' - why? Because the prophet of God - I mean, imagine if we were so powerful in politics, not through politics but in politics, in shaping our society, in impacting our communities, that the Prime Minister and HRH had to sit up and take note! Imagine that, that would be something else! So they send armies to get this troubler.

Verse 15: 'And when the servant of the man of God arose early and went out, there was an army, surrounding the city with horses and chariots. And his servant said to him, 'Alas, my master! What shall we do?'. Now, what would you do? You're teaching children that many times, and I know what it's like too, preaching these stories - they become second nature to us. Imagine you walk up this morning here, and the whole of the Irish Army is around the complex with their guns, and a few tanks rolling up, what would you do? The prophet of God answers in verse 16: 'Do not fear, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them'. So if that happened, say that happened - I know it's comical - but imagine that happened, and David Jackson stands up and says: 'Do not fear, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them'. What did you say? 'Alright, David, will you go and sort them out then? We're away, see you!' - honestly! 'And Elisha', verse 17, 'prayed, and said, 'LORD, I pray, open his eyes that he may see'. Then the LORD opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw. And behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha'.

Now, you may think I've lost it - a lot of people do - but if God was to open your inner eyes right now, what do you think you would see? What do you think you would see? You would definitely see angels, definitely. There are angels in this room, there are.

There are angels with you wherever you go. I'm reading through Isaiah at the moment in my daily readings, and the phrase 'The Lord of Hosts' is repeated over and over again and again - and in the version I'm doing this year's readings in its 'The Lord of Heaven's Armies', that's who is with us! I get a wee tingle saying that! Is that not incredible? But we walk about with natural eyes, we wonder why our faith is famished and emaciated, why we are discouraged, why we are broken, why we are run down and burnt out - because we're seeing with the natural eye as natural men and women, we're not seeing the realities of God. When you start talking like this, Christians think you've lost your marbles - 'Oh, he's seeing angels now!'. Well, does the Bible not talk about angels? We need to start realising - real-eyesing - what God says is real. We need to start seeing what the world and the devil teaches us is real as the lie, what our own flesh tells us is real to discourage us and to drag us down, we need to see that as the lie.

So mountain-moving faith is faith in God, the God who is, who always was, and who will ever be the same. Let's pray. Now I've exceeded my time - get used to it! But let's spend just a moment, because what is equally important - maybe more - is that after we receive what God has said, we just spend a moment before God in His presence and allow Him to do what He wants to do. So you ask yourselves the questions - whether it's in your ministry or your own personal life, mountains - that's insurmountable, high eternal obstacles getting in the road - and I'm asking myself is: do I see these with the natural eye? Do I see them as bigger than God? Even when there aren't those obstacles, am I seeing the unseen around me that God tells me is true and real? What am I seeing as real? What eyes am I using? What eyes am I using? Do I even know how to use the eyes of my heart? We have a problem here in the West, because we emphasise the eyes of the head and the mind of the head, we have actually divorced ourselves from the mind of the heart and the eyes of the heart - which the Scripture has more to say about. The natural man does not perceive the things of God, they are foolishness to him - that's why a lot of what I'm talking about is utter foolishness to a lot of pulpits in our land, it's the natural man.

What are you going to operate on? You just come to the Lord now with your own thoughts, with your own heart, confess to Him if you have been in the natural, if you have been ministering in the natural - as we all do. If you just can't see beyond the natural, ask Him, whatever you don't have here, just ask Him for it - say: 'Lord, please, what is it that is blinding me to these things? Why is it that I am not hearing Your voice? Why is it that these things aren't real to me? When David talks about angels being in the room, I can't get that - I want to believe it, but it's not real to me. Lord, would You show me where the blockage is here'. Just ask Him to do this, we've got grounds from Paul in Ephesians 1 and grounds from Elisha with his servant - just ask God to open the eyes of your heart, just like the words of that song: 'I want to see You, I want to see You high and lifted up'. God bless you.

Mountain-Moving Faith - Chapter 2

"Faith In God's Promises"

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OK, I want you to turn with me to Mark chapter 11. Now if you weren't here with us yesterday morning, I was given the title 'Revolutionised By Faith', which I changed to 'Mountain-Moving Faith'. Yesterday we looked at what I think is probably the most foundational aspect to biblical faith, and that is that our faith is 'Faith In God'. It sounds a bit of a redundant statement and obvious, but as we looked yesterday we saw that at times our faith can be in our faith, or in our prayer life, or our faith can be in our walk of holiness, or our faith can even be in the Bible as a mere book rather than a conduit to bring us a revelation of the person of God. We have seen that we need to have the eyes of our hearts opened to the reality of eternal things that are unseen, and that as we do that we are actually using faith as God intends to engage with eternal realities that, to the natural man, don't exist and are invisible. So basically it is seeing the unseen, and the greatest unseen of all is the greatest objective reality of the universe: God. We need to start seeing as God sees, we need to start seeing eternal realities and believing that they are there.

So I'll not repeat myself on that. The second step today in finding out what true biblical faith really is, it's not only 'Faith In God', but it is 'Faith In God's Promises' - so that's what we're going to look at today, 'Faith In God's Promises'. We're going to read verses 22 through to verse 24 of Mark 11: *"So Jesus answered and said to them", to His disciples, "Have faith in God"*. Now, just as a wee bit of interest, because I think there's a few semi-scholars here - I'm not a Greek scholar at all, but I've read Greek scholars slightly on this verse, and they're saying two different things. Some say that this is literally is translated 'have the faith of God', and there's others who say 'No, that's definitely not what it says' - so I just gave up! 'Have faith in God' does me, but some are saying that this is actually the faith of God that He gifts us with, another say 'No, it's not, it's just believing God for who He is'. Maybe some of you can fill me in on that one, some of you Greek scholars in our midst. Verse 23: *"For assuredly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, 'Be removed and be cast into the sea', and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that those things he says will be done, he will have whatever he says. Therefore I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them"*. Amen.

Who wants to move mountains? One, do we have another hand? Two, any advance on two? Surely we all want to move mountains? Now what does this mean literally - do we go up to the Mourne and say: 'Be moved!?' Some have certain harebrained ideas, that they tend to look at these verses in the natural again and not see that there are spiritual connotations. Jesus never moved a mountain in His entire life. He stood on plenty of them and preached from them, but He never tried to move one - this is not literal. What did mountains speak of? Mountains speak of insurmountable objects, things that appear - well, they certainly outdate us as far as our longevity is concerned - but things that speak of not eternity, but everlasting ancient problems and obstacles that are there. We, in the spiritual battle that we are in and in ministry, we are called upon to move mountains. We are called upon to remove things that have been in the way in

generations, in nations, in communities. We are called upon, by faith, to move these things, and to speak to them by faith and to see them move.

Do we just believe something is going to happen? Is that what this faith is? We just decide: 'Right, this is going to be, these things that have been in my way for years, these barriers to blessing in the community or in ministry, they are just going to disappear'. Do we just say: 'I want a new car, and so I'm going to believe for that; or I need a new home; or I want the best looking girl in the world to marry' - and we believe these things (I'm already married by the way, that's just for you if you're in that bracket), but can we wish for anything, is that what biblical faith is? Asking anything, naming and claiming whatever we desire, and whatever we want? It's not, that is not biblical faith. I'm going to show you today, as I hope I did yesterday, and tomorrow and the next day, that we can realise so much more by faith - but we've got to understand that this is not a blank cheque. There is a caveat to asking God for things by faith, and it's found - if you keep a marker in Mark 11 - it's found in 1 John 5 verse 14, some of you will know this off by heart, and it's a good one to memorise for prayer purposes.

First John 5:14: 'Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him'. Now here's the difference - and sometimes people would point the finger at me and say: 'Some of the stuff you're saying sounds like 'New Age'', the problem with people like that is that generally anything spiritual or supernatural, they think it's New Age because they have relegated God to history. There is a distinct difference between what New Age teaches and what some extreme charismatic groups teach, and what the Bible teaches about faith. You see, New Age and some influences in Christendom try to bring into existence things that are not real, that are not true, and are not godly. Now it's important to remember this: it is wrong to try and bring into reality things that God does not bless and God does not sanction, things that are ungodly and therefore untrue. As you know, some Christians advocate that God wants you to have what you want - and that has actually been said recently from a very famous church. I don't want to be overly critical or anything like that, but the message that was sent forth was: 'God wants you to be happy, so whatever makes you happy is God's will'. Now let me say that I do believe God does want us to be happy, I don't think it's God's intention that we be miserable - but often what we think makes us happy is not what God knows will make us joyful in the Lord, do you understand? So we must never use our own desires, especially if they are rooted in the flesh and in humanity, to motivate what we seek and pursue in life, and certainly what we ask of God.

True faith is not wishful thinking. So it's not this New Age thing, where I believe something into existence that God does not sanction, that is not true and is not holy, but rather this is true faith: that I, by faith, realise what God has already said is true. Are you with me? So we talked about angels yesterday. Some people are so afraid of the New Age movement and the worship of angels, that they have gone completely to the other extreme, and if you should talk about angels or suggest that the angels are about, they freak out - 'You're getting all New Age, it's the presence of God you should be emphasising and not angels'. Well, I've got news for you: you see when God is around, it seems that the angels come along with Him. You look at Scripture, Bethel was a portal, a heavenly portal where there was an opening of heaven where it just seemed to come down like a shaft upon earth, and the ladder with the angels ascending and descending. God was around, and you find that wherever God is around, angels are

around - because He is, as we said yesterday, 'The Lord of Hosts', 'The Lord of Heaven's Armies'.

We need to say: 'Well, what does the Bible say about angels? What does the Bible say about the presence of God? What does the Bible say about the Holy Spirit? What does the Bible say about the Kingdom of God? What does the Bible say about all these unseen realities? I need to, by faith, I need to actually realise those with the eyes of my heart, I need to perceive those as being in this world. By faith, I need to be praying for more of a perception and a manifestation of those upon my consciousness; so that I might start seeing the Kingdom of God rather than the kingdom of darkness; so that I might start seeing that Jesus is Lord rather than the principalities and the powers and the rulers in the heavenly places' - do you understand? This is mind-revolutionising - because we are so pessimistic, and, let's face it: we live in a dark world, our country really is in dire straits spiritually and morally, the church is lukewarm if ever it was, and yet if we focus on that we're going to burnout and have a spiritual breakdown. What we need to do is set our minds and our affections on things that are above, that are the real real - so what is the real real for you? Is it what the enemy says is real? Is it what your flesh says is real? Or is it what God's word says is real? When we are moving by faith - and I advocate practising the presence of God, and I've been heavily criticised by some for doing this - but I believe God is everywhere, and I believe He is especially with His people, not only with them but in them. So is it wrong for me to start looking for that, and believing that, and start experiencing that?

Let's move on. I think there was a time in my past when I sort of thought of faith like standing in front of the mirror, and saying: 'I will believe, I will believe, I will, I do, I do believe, I do believe' - like working yourself up to believe what God has said. But, you know, that is not what faith is: faith is strength from God. There is a sense in which faith is a gift from God - and we will not look at the gift of the Spirit which is the gift of faith - but all faith is a gift inasmuch as Romans 10 verse 17 says: 'Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God'. So encapsulated, pregnant within God's word is faith, taking God at His word is the essence of what faith is, and acting upon what God has said - believing that He is as good as His word. We said yesterday, as we looked at 'Faith in God', that that is the focus of our faith - that there is nothing virtuous or meritorious in faith on its own, it's who your faith is in or what your faith is in. So our faith is in what God has said, and that means that all the glory goes to God. So people don't look at anybody and say: 'Oh, he's a mighty man of faith', but the glory has to go to God because God has given us the word of faith which we engage with, by our faith. We are simply presenting to God what He has already given to us.

So here is the rub, OK? Here's the distinction: if God hasn't promised a thing, all the believing in the world won't matter. So it's not this mystical, mysterious, New Age type thing, where we bring into being things that God doesn't say has to be - but it's having a word from God, and if you don't have a word from God on a matter, then you're not in a position to boldly exercise faith. I'm not saying that you can't pray about a thing if you don't have a word from God, I'm not saying you can't believe that God's hearing you and that God is going to answer in His own way, what I'm talking about is confidence regarding the answer to your prayer. You can only have confidence regarding the outcome of what you're praying about if He has spoken to you. So there is a sense in which faith is not a blank cheque, faith only stretches as far as the boundaries of what God has said. But, having said that, that's not a copout for you to think: 'Oh, that's okay, I don't need to have as much faith'. There's enough material in the Bible

concerning the promises of God, that I think it covers almost every area of life. So if your faith can only go to the boundaries of what God's word says, you need to know that God's word covers almost everything that you could possibly conceive of in life. Like the wee chorus says:

'Every promise in the book is mine,
Every chapter, every verse, every line,
All the blessings of His love divine,
Every promise in the book divine'.

The old puritan said: 'Tarry at the promise, and God will meet you there. He always returns by way of His promises' - I think that's wonderful. So what I do, or have done over the years, is: I scribble all over my Bible. I have a colour code which is a bit rare, nobody would understand it but me - but everything that is a promise is highlighted in orange, and I will write beside it what the promise is for. I once made a wee directory, a wee book of promises, alphabetical - I'm a bit of a freak - promises for this that and the other in alphabetical order, and listed them all. I'll tell you: it's amazing the amount of promises there are in Scripture that God invites us to take and to cash in, as Spurgeon said, like cheques in the bank of heaven, and drawing from that, from our heavenly glory.

Now the promises I have talked about cover the general will of God in Scripture for various areas of our life, but you might be sitting there and saying: 'Well, I know that, but what about the specific will of God for my life? What about having faith in an area to do with my destiny, to do with my ministry, to do with my life, being able to pray with confidence and knowing what the will of God is in that area?'. Well, let me say this, and people again might disagree with this but I believe it to be true biblically: we talk about the word of God, but in Greek there are at least two words for 'word' in Scripture. There is 'logos' in John chapter 1, 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God'. 'Logos' means 'word', but a word is the expressions of the thoughts and the heart of each of us, we express what we're feeling and thinking by our words. So God expressed His innermost being, His mind and heart to humanity, through Jesus - isn't that beautiful? If you want to know what God is thinking, if you want to know what God is feeling towards us, if we want to know what God is like: Jesus. That's 'logos', but there is another word in Greek 'rhema', and it speaks of the spoken utterance of God - what God is saying. Are you with me?

Now it's very instructive to distinguish that when we're reading certain scriptures - for instance, I've already quoted Romans 10:17: 'Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Bible', is that what you teach in your memory verse? 'Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Bible' - no, that's not what it says. It never did say it, by the way. 'Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the utterance of God' - because the word is 'rhema', it's not 'logos', the word is 'rhema'. So we have this concept, particularly in our country - just preach the word, just fling the Bible everywhere, verses left right and centre, stick them up on lampposts and everything. I'm not saying that's wrong, but some of us think that that is enough to get a return, to get a harvest, and I'm going to tell you that it's not - that's why we're not getting one. Because faith just doesn't come from the Bible, faith comes from hearing God - and usually it is through the Bible. But 'My sheep hear My voice, and they follow Me' - we've got to hear what God is saying.

This is the spoken word of God, and you've got it in Matthew 4 and verse 4. Jesus in the

temptation of the devil in the wilderness for 40 days, Satan says: 'If You're the Son of God turn these stones into bread'. What does Jesus say? 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by the Bible' - is that what it says? 'But by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God', and the word for 'word' there is 'rhema'. Now what is that saying? Jesus had food that His disciples knew nothing about - I already said yesterday that Jesus, before He started His ministry every day, He went to the Father and He watched for what the Father was doing, He listened for what the Father was saying - isn't that right? He only did what He saw and heard the Father do - that's why He wasn't run ragged, that's why He didn't have an emotional breakdown, you never see Him in a hurry or a tizzy in the gospels. You see Him very busy at times, very busy, but you never see Him flustered do you? Because He only did what He saw the Father do - but how did that happen? His bread, His daily food was the word of God - not His Bible reading in the morning, He didn't have a Bible, He had synagogue and the scrolls - but He was feeding from Father God every day, He was hearing the voice of Father every day. I believe He is our model: we will thrive when we are fed by what God is saying to us today.

So the question I'm asking you is not: did you read your three chapters this morning and feel all great that you did that? I'm asking you - whether you read your three chapters or one verse - did you hear from God today, because that's what you will be able to operate on. So it's the proceeding word. Here's another one, Isaiah 55 verse 11 - does anybody know that one? Listen to what Isaiah 55:11 says: 'So shall My word be that goes forth out of My mouth; it shall not return to Me void, but it shall accomplish what I please, and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it'. That has been used, in our land in particular, with the inference that you just preach the word, and you hand tracts out left right and centre, and you just saturate the place with Bible. Listen: if a farmer sowed seed like that and had the returns that we are getting, what would he do? He would apply for a job in the Civil Service. Honestly: we are not getting a return - why? Because this is not speaking of Bible, this is speaking of what God is saying, we could say 'a prophetic word', what God is speaking to a present-day generation in their particular circumstances for the now - what is God saying now for us, for you? If God speaks a word, the word of faith into your life, and you hear it from God, that will be birthed, it will not return void but it will produce something - what God has intended.

Another verse where 'rhema' is used is Ephesians 6 verse 17 - you remember the armour of God, what is the sword? The sword is the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God - and again the Greek word there is 'rhema', it's not 'logos'. That means that in spiritual warfare, the battle you're in - whether it is personal temptation and trial, or whether it's on the big scale where you're trying to move into where the gates of the enemy are and take territory from him for Jesus - we've got to have words from God to rout the enemy and to thrust him through, that's what it saying. If you look at the temptation of Jesus in Matthew 4 - three temptations, and He gives three words that are specific to the actual temptation, all three of them from the book of Deuteronomy incidentally. That's an armoury - the Bible is not the sword of the Spirit in the context of Ephesians 6, it's the armoury where we take different daggers for different situations. Who is our armour bearer? Who gives us those? It is the sword of the Spirit - do you see this? So when you face a trial or a temptation or a situation, what do you do? Well, you can be like me and have your wee directory, and flick through and ask the Lord to help you to get to the verse that you picked up over the years, or you can just wait on God and say: 'Lord, would You please give me something, would You please give me a word for this that I can take to Your throne of grace and I can claim'.

Now, how do you get a 'rhema' word from God? Well, you do just that - like brother Joel quoted, I was going to quote Francis Schaeffer who had that book, 'The God Who Is and Is Not Silent'. We have to believe that God does speak - do we believe that God speaks, do we? Now I know things that I say tend to be a wee bit controversial at times - that's an understatement - but there is a very strong strain of theology within evangelical circles that teaches that God doesn't speak now. He has spoken once in the Bible, and He doesn't speak again. Usually the people that espouse that are contradictory, because often they have a very heavy view of conversion and the new birth, that it's the greatest miracle that can ever be - and I say 'Amen' to that. But when they stand up and give their testimony, you will hear them say 'And then God spoke to me'. They're not talking about the Bible, they may be talking about verse or a preaching message from the Bible, but they may well be talking about how they were walking down the road one day and all of a sudden a consciousness of God came to them, or God said something to them and they felt it in their heart.

We believe that God speaks to people in conversion, we also believe that God speaks to you when He calls you to your destiny of life, and what you're doing for a Him as your vocation in CEF. So I could pick two or three of you and say: 'How did God lead you into your ministry?' - and you would probably, I hope, all have a story of how God spoke to you, isn't that right? But for most of this type of Christian, that's where it ends - and some even take a very dogmatic view that God does not speak, it's the word of God and the word of God alone, it's what the Bible teaches and nothing more. The early church were constantly, if you read the book of Acts, they were constantly waiting on God for direction. They actually waited on God to be directed where to preach, they didn't just go preaching everywhere, did you know that? They sought God - you can look at it in Acts 8 and in Acts 10 - the Holy Spirit spoke to them and told them to go to certain places. He even miraculously whisked Philip away to a certain place, and then whisked him back again. They were dependent on the Holy Spirit. Peter went to Cornelius' house, guided by the Holy Spirit. But also the Holy Spirit told them where not to preach, and in Acts 16 we see that they were hindered going into certain areas because God had intentions of them going somewhere first. Not only did they get guidance, as they waited upon the Lord, where to preach and where not to preach, but they were also guided as to who should preach and who should lead - so the Holy Spirit separated certain people apart for certain works, and the Holy Spirit appointed elders in the churches.

So, how do you get this word from God? How do you be led by the Holy Spirit so that you have the word of faith, so that you can boldly come and claim things at the throne of grace in Jesus' name with the confidence to know that God has said it and He is going to do it? Well, this is where the hard stuff comes: you have to wait on God. You have to walk with God, you have to wait on God, you have to seek God. Like the old prophets, you have to stand before God, you have to listen for God, you have to learn to look for God in circumstances. This is where this perception of faith comes in - and you need to ask Him to speak, and you need to expect Him to speak when you ask Him to speak. The truth is, many of us aren't listening or looking for God, because we believe it's 'Read your Bible, pray every day if you want to grow, and that's enough'. Even if we don't espouse that theological premise, we live our lives practically as if that's all that is needed - and we're not listening for God.

Now there is a whole other series of sermons on how to listen for God, but here's where

faith really breaks through: it's faith in God, but it's faith in the promises of God - and the promises of God is not just the Bible in totality, the promises of God is when we hear what God is saying and we go to Him with that. Let me show you this more practically, if you turn to Galatians chapter 3 verse 2. You know a bit about the Galatian controversy I imagine, the Judaisers coming in and telling them it's not by grace alone, but you've got to add the Jewish law and the rites and rituals. Verse 2: 'This only I want to learn from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?' - now that's conversion, isn't it? 'How did you guys get saved?', that's what he saying, 'Was it through the law and fulfilling the requirements and regulations, or was it by the hearing of faith?'. That's a very interesting phrase, isn't it - 'the hearing of faith' - why? Because 'faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God'. So they heard God's voice, and they obeyed God's voice, and they repented and believed. So how were they saved? By the power of the Spirit through the hearing of faith.

Go down the chapter to verse 5: 'Therefore He who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you' - hold on a wee minute, there were miracles in this church? That's interesting, even with all their error there were miracles going on! The One who is doing this is God through His Spirit, working miracles in their midst: 'Does He do it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?' - there's that phrase again. So what is that saying? You need to be hearing from God - if you want to see the supernatural and the miraculous take place, you need to be hearing from God, you need to be listening to what God is saying: to go here, to pray for that one, to do this, to do the other. We need to be in tune with headquarters, this is the way we are meant to live. Just in case you doubt that, look at verse 6: 'Just as Abraham 'believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness''. How did Abraham believe God? 'Just as Abraham believed God', by the hearing of faith - isn't that what that's saying? He believed God through the hearing of faith: 'Therefore', verse 7, 'know that only those who are of faith are sons', and daughters, 'of Abraham'.

So, are you a son or daughter of Abraham? To be a son or a daughter of Abraham means that you need to be hearing the spoken word of God by faith. Abraham is described as 'the father of faith', so there must be something that we need to learn. In Romans 4 verse 11 it says that he is 'the father of all those who believe', and we saw yesterday in Romans 4 that Abraham, contrary to hope, in hope believed. His body was 100 years of age, it was dead you might as well say - certainly for reproductive purposes - Sarah's womb was dead, and yet he chose to believe God. He is the father of faith, and therefore he must be a model which we can follow as the children of Abraham - so how is faith seen in Abraham's life?

Well we're going to look at this quickly in the moments that remain. I want you to turn with me to Genesis 12 and we will go as quickly as we can. There are lessons here, and these headings I have borrowed from a gentleman called Mark Virkler, very helpful just in relation to Abraham here. Look at verses 1 to 3 of Genesis chapter 12: 'The LORD had said to Abram: 'Get out of your country, from your family and from your father's house, to a land that I will show you. I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed''. Now that is faith that began with a spoken word from God. This is how Abraham's journey starts, isn't it? 'Get out of Ur of the Chaldees and start following Me. Leave your idols behind and start following Me' - God spoke to him, isn't that it? Faith in Abraham was birthed through the spoken word of God - that is your spiritual hearing,

spiritual hearing. So faith began with a spoken word from God, and we need to be listening for what God is saying - and He will mostly speak through the Bible, but He will speak through other means. He will never contradict the Bible, but He will speak in other ways I believe.

Secondly, God adds a vision or a picture of the promise fulfilled for Abraham. If you turn to chapter 15, remember this is the father of faith, he is our example, chapter 15 verse 1: 'After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision, saying, 'Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your exceedingly great reward''. So this is a vision that God gives him. If you look down at verse 5: 'Then He brought him outside and said, 'Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them'. And He said to him, 'So shall your descendants be'. And he believed in the LORD, and He accounted it to him for righteousness'. You've heard the saying: 'A picture speaks a thousand words', and I believe this is the way God works: He often speaks in pictures. It says that, after this, then Abraham believed. Now the inner ear, the ears of our heart, is where we hear what God is saying - alright? But there are eyes, inner eyes of our heart, where we begin to envisage what God has promised, and we look for what God has spoken.

Now hold your horses here if you think I'm going down an avenue that's dangerous. Whether you realise it or not, you use your inner eyes, the eyes of your heart. Most naturally we are drawn to pessimism through our inner eyes. We often see what the devil tells us is real, we often see with the eyes of our heart opposition, decline, apostasy, rather than the promises of God. So let me ask you this diagnostic question: what do you envisage? What do you envisage with the eyes of your heart? Now be honest - we do this, I mean on a very basic level some of you right now are envisaging coffee time, you're thinking of that lovely filtered coffee and the tray bakes. What do you do when you do that? Do you think of prose in your mind, do you? Do you think of a word processor, and you're thinking of 'coffee', 'filtered', 'tray bake', 'marshmallows' - is that what you think of? What do you think of? You envisage the actual coffee, you see it, you maybe even smell it, you taste the tray bake - we operate in pictures without even realising it, but generally speaking we do it all day every day in every single area, and particularly pessimistically through worry and anxiety and fear - we envisage all that can go wrong and we actually walk through it and live through it, sometimes even feel it, but we never do this with regards to the promises of God and what He has spoken! Could that be right? Could it be right and OK to do it in all those things, and be wrong to do it with the promises of God? In fact it isn't right to do it with the negative stuff, it is godly to do it with the positive stuff.

What do you envisage? Have you received a word from God, have you heard from God in the inner ears of your heart, but do you fill your spiritual eyesight with those promises realised? This is spiritual sight, I talked about the spiritual senses yesterday - there is spiritual hearing whereby we hear a 'rhema' from God, and there is spiritual sight whereby God adds vision and picture to what He's going to do. Thirdly: we ponder this 'rhema' word from God and the vision of God and nothing else. Keep your finger there in Genesis for a minute, and go to Romans 4 verse 19 - this is Abraham again: 'And not being weak in faith, he did not consider his own body, already dead (since he was about a hundred years old), and the deadness of Sarah's womb. He did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God, and being fully convinced that what He', God, 'had promised He was also able to perform. And therefore 'it was accounted to him for righteousness''. In other words, to

paraphrase that: he would not entertain an alternative. Do you understand? God had spoken, he envisaged - God had shown him a picture of what He was going to do - and we need to choose to focus and meditate on what God has said.

Meditation is a lost art in Christendom - and of course, the folk that are afraid of the New Age, they don't like that word, because they think of somebody sitting on their knees, humming - that's not biblical meditation. Do you want one of the best illustrations of what meditation is? Meditation is almost identical to worry - and that really helps me. Who's got a problem with worry? What do you do when you're a worrier? You envisage what could go wrong, and you analyse it, you ponder it, you dissect it. It's like a wee titbit in your mouth, you roll it over again and again - that is meditation, but that's meditation on the negative. In Philippians 4 we are told to think on the good things. Can you imagine if you used your energies that you use in worry on envisaging and filling your spiritual senses with what God has promised, what difference that would make to your faith life? Worry is meditation on lies and falsehood. Do you know what fear is? Envisaging and expecting something bad, ungodly, and false. Fear and faith are very similar. Fear is expecting something bad to happen, and faith is expecting something good to happen. It's not just wishful thinking, you're expecting something that God has said to happen.

Whatever you fix your eyes upon grows within you; whatever grows within you, you become - that's your spiritual mind. So we've looked at spiritual hearing, spiritual sight, and this is your spiritual mind - what you fill your spiritual mind with. When you ponder the spoken word of God, the vision from God, and nothing else; you will become that vision. Then look fourthly at Abraham, we speak the 'rhema' word and the vision that God has spoken to us - we speak it. Now this is very interesting: when Abraham was 99, no children of his own - by his wife that is - God asked him to speak the word of faith. He asked him to speak out what He had spoken and shown him in vision, and to call the promise into being. Go to chapter 17 of Genesis. How did God ask him to speak this out? He appeared to him again, a God encounter, in verse 5: 'No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for I have made you a father of many nations', and 'Abraham' means 'father of a multitude'.

This is comical, isn't it? This guy, 99 and no kids - this is like rubbing salt in the wound. You see there's a part that we have to play in realising the dreams of God, the vision of God, the purposes of God - it's not all about just sitting around waiting for God to do it, that is a false view of the sovereignty of God, that is fatalism and it will end in defeat. There is a part that we have to play in this, and the part is: we receive the promise, He gives us - if we are open with the eyes of our heart to the vision of what He wants to do and what He's going to do - and then we decide to fill our spiritual senses with what He says, not what our flesh says, not what our environment says, not what the devil says, we decide we're going to fill our senses with what He says and then we speak it out in faith. Now how was this speaking it out? 'What's your name mate?'. 'Abraham'. You know the next question is: 'What do you do?'. 'Well, I'm a bit of a patriarch' - whatever that is. 'What about the family? What family have you?'. 'Well, I have a wee boy, but we'll not talk about him - Ishmael - but I have none with me and my wife'. 'What's your name?'. 'Abraham'. 'Abraham, that's your name, and your 99 and you have no kids of your own?'. What was Abraham doing every time he said 'Abraham', every time he heard somebody say 'Abraham, come here! Abraham, your dinner is ready!' - what was he doing? What was happening? The vision of God was being pronounced and declared in faith.

Romans 4:17 says: 'God calls those things which do not exist as though they did'. So every time Abraham is confessing his name, he is confessing the promise of God - and that's spiritual will. So if you've got spiritual hearing, hearing the spoken word of God; and spiritual eyes, seeing the vision that God is giving; and you got spiritual mind, pondering and filling your spiritual mind, your heart, with what God says and nothing else; this is spiritual will, where you are prepared to declare what God has promised. Now you need to make sure He has promised it, OK? We're not talking about being foolhardy. In Hebrews 11 verse 3 we read: 'By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible'. God spoke, and it was His word that brought all this universe into being - and there is power in word.

Fifthly: we act on the 'rhema', the spoken word of God, and the vision God has spoken to us. We don't just speak it out, we do something about it. It says in Romans 4:20: 'Abraham grew strong in faith', and that was because he acted upon the promise. He went and circumcised his children, as God had commanded him - and we know from James 2:17 that faith without works is dead. A lot of us just have this conceptual faith, and maybe God has spoken something to us, and maybe we have some kind of a vision - but we're afraid to proclaim it, and we are afraid to act out upon it. It's like Peter putting his foot out over the side of the boat and walking on the water, there's something required for us to do. I've got news for you: this isn't comfortable. This isn't a passive thing where we sit back and wait for God to do everything for us, He requires that we be involved. Do you know how you spell faith? 'R-I-S-K' - risk! Now immediately the theologians in us will say: 'How is it a risk? If it's God's word, and if God says it, how can it possibly be a risk?'. Right, well I'll come down the shore with you today, and you can walk on water - you just do that, put one foot in front of the other. You say: 'Well, God hasn't promised me to walk on water' - that's all right, but you tell me that in the natural human psyche of Peter that he didn't fear when he stepped out of that boat? Of course he did - why? Because in human terms, there is risk walking on water - that's the way we think where I come from! Walking on water is risky! We're talking about the human level, according to natural human instincts and reasoning - faith often is a risk, because faith-sense and common-sense are not always the same thing. God asks us to do things that can be risky at times, and if we're not prepared to do it, we're not prepared to see what God wants to execute come to pass.

There's a story I read of a tourist driving through the countryside, and he saw an old farmer rocking on his rocking chair on his porch. Behind him was a farmhouse with 75 acres of land, and the tourist asked him: 'Is that your land?'. He said: 'Yep'. 'Well, what are you doing with it? Are you thinking of growing cotton?'. 'No, I'm afraid of boll weevils, they might get it'. 'Oh, well, what about corn?', the tourist asked. 'No, I'm afraid of locusts, they might get it'. 'Well', the tourist asked, 'what about raising cattle?'. The farmer said: 'I'm afraid of the price of beef, that it might go down'. 'So what are you going to do with all this prime farmland?'. He said: 'Nothing, I'm just going to play it safe'. How many of us, when it comes to faith, are just playing it safe? Is it not better to risk failure - that's a big statement, but maybe that actually is the nub of our problem: we don't want to fail - and at the core of that can be pride: 'What will I look like if it goes belly up, if I fall flat on my face?'.

Now, you need to be hearing from God. I'm not encouraging people to go out and do mad things when they have no sanction from God. We need to be hearing from God, we

need to be seeing what God is showing us - but do you know what the greater risk is? Not ending up with egg on our face, the greater risk is living below the intentions of God, God's purpose and destiny for our lives - surely that's the bigger risk? This is spiritual emotions if you like, really embracing the risk. Not listening to fear, but stepping out in faith upon the promises.

Now I'm nearly finished. We need to die to self-effort - just in case you think this is 'name it and claim it' type of stuff, it isn't. Do you know how long Abraham waited? Do you know how long? Twenty-four years - that's a bit long for me! When God gives me a word and gives me a vision, I would like it today please - and then I want the next word and the next vision. This is what tests our faith: it was 24 years before Sarah became pregnant. We do live in an instant age, but there's often an incubation period for this to take place. We're not good at waiting, are we, for the realities of the Spirit to break in on time - but in the meantime we are to trust His promises. The last thing you want to do is to birth an Ishmael. We want to wait on the promise being fulfilled - and that's the danger, when we're overenthusiastic to see what God has promised come to pass, we birth an Ishmael.

Seventhly and finally, in the fullness of time God brings forth His promise. You know those verses, Genesis 21 - 25 years later the miracle would be born. But wait a minute: was Isaac the complete fulfilment of the promise, was he? Who was? Jesus. Twenty-five years for Isaac - how many years? 1500 years for this promise to be completely fulfilled, and of course you're the fulfilment because you're sons and daughters of Abraham.

Let's pray: Father, we declare and acknowledge that You are the same God as You have always been. You are the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and You are the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our Lord Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever - so if You can speak to a pagan like Abraham, and speak in to his spiritual ear and say 'Get up and move out of Ur of the Chaldees and follow Me', and You can show him a vision of stars in the sky and say, 'This is what I'm going to do', You can take us and speak into our heart and say 'This is what I want to do in Ireland'. Lord, help us to have ears to hear, eyes to see, wills to move, emotions in our heart to embrace what You're saying, what You're showing us. Help us to have the patience to labour on, believing that we haven't seen anything yet and that the best is yet to be - and that You, in a moment, are going to break out on our people, Catholic and Protestant, pagan, Muslim, Hindu, atheist; and You're going to do something that has never been seen before in our histories. Lord, we believe, help our unbelief; but give us eyes to see that will birth faith in our hearts to trust You. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Mountain-Moving Faith - Chapter 3

"Faith Expressed In Praising Prayer"

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Mark 11 verses 22 to 24 - it's the same verses we read yesterday, but we're going to take a different approach to it today: *"So Jesus answered and said to them, 'Have faith in God. For assuredly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, 'Be removed and be cast into the sea', and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that those things he says will be done, he will have whatever he says. Therefore I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them'"*.

Now I was given this title 'Revolutionised by Faith', which I changed to 'Mountain-Moving Faith'. We began on Monday morning talking about how the essence of faith is that it focuses on God, faith is 'Faith in God'. We saw that that is not as elementary a statement as it might seem, because sometimes our faith and confidence can be placed - if we've even got any confidence - it is placed in other things other than God and His character and personality etc. So we need to focus not on our faith, or try and work it up, but we need to focus on God and get completely overwhelmed with God in order for our faith to grow. If we focus on that, our faith will look after itself. So if you weren't here, that's the gist - these are being recorded, and I'm going to give them to the folk, so you can get that if you weren't here - but that is a vital thing, and it's probably the essence of faith. It's who are faith is in, faith per se is worthless - and the world is filled with people who have faith. Now of course, it's not saving faith, it's not faith from God, but nevertheless it is genuine belief - but it is belief in error, or it is belief in false gods.

Yesterday we saw that biblical faith that moves mountains is also 'Faith In God's Promises'. So there is God's person, but there is also what God says. I just need to clear up - because I've been talking to a few people, and they've been asking me questions - I believe that the primary way that God speaks is the Bible, through the word of God, the written word of God, the logos of God. Of course the 'Logos' is Jesus, but Jesus, by His Spirit has inspired these pages - and even when getting a 'rhema' word from God, which is what we were talking about yesterday, a word proceeding from the mouth of God to us for our particular situation now or generation, I still believe that the primary way that usually comes is through Scripture. So you're reading the Bible, but you're not reading the Bible for the sake of reading - you're not reading the Bible the way you read the newspaper, or the way you read a novel or textbook, but you're reading the Bible with your ear cupped - that is the way to read the Bible. Read the Bible with your ear cupped, listening for the voice of God to your spirit.

Now, a lot of Christians don't read the Bible like that - they do read the Bible as an exercise, or as a mental learning process, rather than listening for the voice of God. You need to know how to get a 'rhema' word from God, and I would encourage you to take up - if you haven't already done so, and I don't want to put this on you as some kind of extra burden or legalistic thing, I don't do this every day, but I do do it regularly - the

practice of journalling. What I mean by that is: when there's something springs of the page to you, or something you hear when someone is preaching and a verse comes to you or a truth, that you journal that, that you record it, and that you process it and assimilate it through prayer. Pray it, declare it, but also - here's a thing that has helped me, it mightn't be everybody's cup of tea but I actually think it's a thing to do - whereby in journalling, if I read a passage of Scripture, and verses just jump out at me for my specific situation, I write them out; and then I will write them out as God speaking to me. Do you understand? I hear it as God speaking to me, because that's what is happening, isn't it? But it makes it so much more personal, and then I pray through that and so on and so forth. So that helps - but I do believe that the same Bible that is our foundation, and there is no rival to the Bible, so if we believe in the gifts of the Spirit and we believe in prophecy and things like that and that God can speak in other ways, there's nothing that is equivalent to the more sure word of prophecy of the Bible. Let me make that clear: the Bible is in a realm all of its own, and anything else that God will say through these other means - whether it's creation, whether it's conscience, or whether it's circumstances, whether it's through gifts that He communicates things - it will always be to confirm, and it will never contradict, what the Bible says.

But we do need specific things communicated to us, don't we, that the Bible doesn't speak about? So the Bible doesn't tell me where I ought to live, the Bible doesn't tell me what car I should buy, the Bible doesn't tell me what woman I should marry - OK? So we need specifics, and we need to be hearing from God in various ways. I hope that clears up any misunderstanding regarding that.

Today we're going to look at 'Faith Expressed In Praising Prayer' - alright? So 'Faith in God', 'Faith in God's Promises', 'Faith Expressed in Praising Prayer'. This is vital. There is a quote attributed to Archimedes - do you know who Archimedes was? Who knows who Archimedes was? What? Was he? I thought he was a mathematician. Did you know there are only three types of people in the world? Those who are good at maths, and those who aren't! Oh the penny has dropped over there - he's got it! Well, Archimedes said: 'Give me a place to stand on, and I will move the earth'. Have you heard that before? This was the concept of mathematics and physics that is of course true, that if you have a lever, and you have the right place to stand on with that influence, you can move anything. Having a firm place to put your feet on, anything is possible. Now, if our feet are on the truth of God, the word of God, and God communicating that to us in our own personal experience - and that's what matters, I mean the Bible tells us how to be saved, but if we don't get saved, what does it matter? It's not doing us any good. So the promises in the Bible have to be taken by faith, and we've got to work out what God has worked in, potentially, into our lives - but that is the firm place on which we stand. We can move mountains if we have the right vantage point, and the right leverage - and the leverage is faith. Jesus said - it's a remarkable verse, and I'm not going to dwell too much on it, I'm going to look more at verse 24 - but look at verse 23: 'Assuredly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, 'Be removed and be cast into the sea', and does not doubt in his heart' - the only way that's possible is if God has told you that this mountain is going to move - 'does not doubt in his heart, but believes that those things he says will be done, he will have whatever he says'.

We're going to home in on verse 24 here: 'Therefore I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them'. One type of faith says 'God can', and that's pretty good because a lot of people are still at 'God can't' or 'God doesn't'; but another type of faith says 'God will'. Biblical faith is even

better than that - did you know there was an alternative from 'God can' and 'God will'? It's this: God has. Now that's the type of faith that is spoken about here in verse 24: whatever you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them. You see, true biblical faith that moves mountains doesn't say, 'I'm going to get', but it says 'I have got' - I have it! Now that might initially seem new, but if you think about it: anybody can believe that you have something after you've received it - think about that. Is it such a big thing to believe that you've got something after you've received it? Of course it's not! That is walking by sight, not by faith. Biblical faith is believing that you have something before you have it. Now I know that's a contradiction, but let's say believing that you have it in spirit, before you actually tangibly see it in the natural and the physical.

So this, really, I believe, comes to the nub of one of the problems that we have - particularly in our prayer lives - as Christians. You know prayer is a struggle, and even corporate prayer, getting people together to pray - I mean it's not the easiest thing in the world to do. But even when you do motivate people to get together, often our prayers can be unbelief in disguise; where we are begging God - now don't misunderstand me, I believe in all the parables, and we will talk about them tomorrow, the importunate widow and the neighbour asking for bread and all that - I believe that we've got to ask, seek, and knock, and persevere, but we must not do that out of the vantage point of unbelief, that must be done through the perseverance of faith. The place on which you stand, like Archimedes, will determine the leverage that you get. Are you standing on a firm foundation, confident in the promise that God has given you, or are you standing on this sinking sand of unbelief - the more you lever, the more you sink? That is often how we pray - and you can discern it almost. There can be broken prayers, there can be really strong crying and tears like Jesus, but you know that they are prayers of faith that say: 'Lord, this world is crumbling around my ears, but I believe You and I will not be refused, and I will not allow what I'm seeing in the natural to pull me down and to rob me of what You have given me confidence of'.

Now praise God for that, and I believe God hears desperate prayers - but there are other prayers that are: 'Oh, Lord, please, my back is to the wall and everything is disastrous. Lord, Lord, Lord, where are You?'. I know we can pray honestly, I'm not suggesting we don't pray honestly, but if our prayers are continually this despairing, negative, pessimistic - of that type of spirit - we're not actually entering into faith. It often is disguised unbelief. So what I'm saying today is: our pleading - even if our pleading is in faith - our pleading has to turn to praising if we're going to see mountains move. It was George Mueller, that great man of faith who fed hundreds of thousands of orphans through faith - he was a remarkable man you know, a remarkable man - I mean, you want to read his biography. The stories that are there are incredible, of his faith, believing God. God had given him a promise that God would provide, but you know his faith wasn't just putting the breakfast on the table in the morning when there was not enough bread. This was a man who was able to go out on the deck of a boat and speak to the weather - and it changed! - when there was a storm coming. Now Mueller said: 'Here are two parts of sure-to-be-answered prayer' - so you want to listen to a guy like Mueller - 'two parts of sure-to-be-answered prayer. One: prayer for the promise' - OK? So you've got a scenario, and I know that I told you about the directory that I have from the Bible of all the promises in the Word - you could look up promises that God has given you, but maybe you're wanting to really know the thing is coming from God to your heart for this specific situation. You say: 'Lord, please give me a promise, confirm to me that this is Your promise'. Like Abraham, it might be that He

speaks through the Word to your heart, but He will confirm it through another means as well - a threefold cord is not easily broken - maybe He confirms it through other people, maybe He confirms it through circumstances, various ways God can do that. When you're sure that you've got the promise, you've prayed for the promise, then you praise from the promise - OK?

So if you're not sure what God's will is in a certain area, what do we do? Generally we say, 'Lord, Your will be done', and that's a copout because that gets us out of the process of waiting on God. It's easy to say 'Your will be done', but He wants us to know what His will is - and to know what His will is, we have to wait on Him and we have to seek Him. So when He then gives us the promise and He confirms it, we then stop praying for it. But what we often do is we keep praying the promise, 'Lord, You gave me this promise and I ask that You will fulfill it' - but is He a liar? If He gave you a promise, why would you ask Him to fulfill it? He promised!

So you then move, and your pleading changes to praising, and you praise from the promise. Like Spurgeon said, these promises are like cheques, and you go to the bank of Heaven. You've got this great treasury in the Scriptures, but when He takes and breathes on a promise for you, and He confirms it, you take it to the bank of Heaven and you cash it in - and you praise Him for it.

Have you ever gone to a grocery store with a coupon cut out of the newspaper? You want a bag of sugar or a bag of flour, but you've no money for it, and you give the coupon over the counter - now why do you do that? Because the coupon gives you credit equivalent to the money, isn't that right? Abraham believed God, and it was accounted toward him as righteousness, or you could say 'credited to him' as righteousness. He believed God! Now what do you call that, when you cash in a coupon? It's called 'redemption', you redeem it. What God is calling us to do is redeem the promises that He has given us in His Word, and the promises He has personally given to us in our lives - but how do we cash them in, what's the best way? Now God answers desperate prayer, I believe that, but not desperate prayer coming from unbelief - desperate prayer based upon the promise.

Now here are a few principles that might help you. We need to stop asking God to give us the assurance of what He has already promised. We need to stop saying: 'Lord, give us Your presence', the correct prayer is 'Lord, make us more aware of Your presence; Lord, intensify a sense of Your presence'. But He promises it - how many times do we hear, 'Where two or three are gathered together, there am I in the midst', then Sunday morning in church 'Lord, please come into our midst'. There are things God has said and promised, and we're asking Him to do them - and that keeps us back, that keeps us behind because we're asking Him to do things He's already said He would do. Rather, what we need to do is claim what He promised by faith: 'Lord, You have said 'Where two or there are gathered', we claim a consciousness of Your presence, we want everything that is blocking Your presence and quenching Your presence to go, Lord. We want our eyes to be opened, our ears to be opened, we want our spiritual senses to be sensitive to Your presence'. Then, when we claim by faith what He has said, we praise Him for the answer: 'Lord, we praise You that today You're going to show us Your presence; You're going to fulfill Your promise to us' - and you praise Him for it, for the answer.

So here is a principle - maybe 'faith', because it's bandied about so much and we're so familiar with the term, doesn't really give us the full import of what we're talking about

here. A term which we could use for faith is 'committal'. Let me show you this from Psalm 37. Now you're very familiar I'm sure with this Psalm, it has blessed us all at one time or another. Verse 5 - and the NIV is a wee bit different than the New King James and the other versions: 'Commit your way to the Lord; trust also in Him and He shall bring it to pass', the NIV says 'He shall act' - I think it says that. 'Commit your way to the Lord; trust also in Him and He shall bring it to pass, He shall act'.

Now let me illustrate it to you like this: how many of you were brought up in Christian homes, your parents were Christians? Stick your hand up. Right, put your hand down. How many of you got saved every night for about five years? Put your hand up - come on, be honest, you asked the Lord into your heart over and over and over again? A few of you, you know what I'm talking about. That's what I did, but there came a time, at 8 years of age, when I said: 'I can't keep asking Him for this' - and sometimes it was at the behest of other people who were well motivated and all. But I decided, after Sunday School on 3rd November 1984, 'I'm going to draw a line here today, and I'm going to ask Jesus' - went up to my bedroom, kneeled down, and I confessed my sins, trusted in Christ, and asked Him to save me. Now, I'll be honest with you, I don't know whether it happened before that - I hope it didn't happen after it - but I look to that time, because that was the time when I committed the thing, I committed it to the Lord and left it there. Now that is the essence of faith, I believe: committal - do you understand? Often we don't do that. When we're doing this pleading thing all that time, and our pleading doesn't break into praising, we haven't actually committed the thing to the Lord. You see a lot of people, even adults, ask the Lord to save them, and they don't feel a sense of assurance, they don't know that witness. It's the same with the fullness of the Spirit, they may have asked the Lord to fill them, but they couldn't tell you: 'I know that I am filled with the Spirit'. One of the reasons is: they haven't committed it, and they haven't believed that they have the things they received of the Lord because they asked according to His will.

There is a sense in which faith is committal - a brilliant illustration of it that I heard once is like this. You write a letter, you stick the stamp on, you go down to the Post Office or the postbox, and you post it. Effectively what you do is, you commit it to the postal system - and it's just as well God is more reliable than the postal system, isn't it? But that's a bit like faith, isn't it? Committal - where you have done your bit and written down or spoken out to God in faith, and you're trusting God to deal with it. I like the NIV rendering here, that if you commit it to the Lord, He will act. You remember Abraham, poor soul, 25 years waiting on this child; and then, if we take the fulfillment completely as Jesus, 1500 years; and if you're the seed of Abraham, which you are, promised as children of Abraham, you're a fulfillment of that promise as well, so another 2000 on top of that - 3500 years. The promise is still being fulfilled, and still to be fulfilled. So we're not saying there isn't a time-lapse here, and there isn't gestation and incubation of God's promises, but there can be confidence of praising Him that He has given the promise and He's going to come through, and thanking Him for it before it.

Sometimes we try to win battles over darkness that Jesus has already won, rather than claiming and appropriating the victory. You know, we are under an open heaven, we are under an open heaven now - right now. If you go to Ephesians 1, you see what you already have now. I do believe it's erroneous to teach people you've got everything when you get saved, but everything is yours in a sense when you get saved. You've to walk it out by faith, you've to work out your salvation, you've to realise out and encounter it all by faith - but it's all there for you. It's like the Promised Land. The

Israelites were promised the Promised Land, but they had to walk in by faith and take it. God said: 'Every place that your foot shall tread, I will give it to you'. They still had to fight, but God had given them the promise that it was theirs. We still have to cash in what our inheritance is in Christ, but it's ours! Ephesians 1: 'We are blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus'. We are raised with Him, we are seated with Him in heavenly places! We are meant to be heavenly people living in a heavenly realm on earth, we are under an open heaven!

If we just got a grip of what is already ours, I think that would revolutionise our Christian experiences and our Christian communities. There is a danger sometimes in our psyche as Christians, even those who believe heavily in revival - which I do - but revival theology can be quite negative and pessimistic, and there is a sense of trying to strive and achieve when it's not about achieving, it's all about receiving. Some of you need to hear that today in Christian work: it's not about achieving, it's about receiving. Faith, as we said on Monday: grace is God giving what we need, faith is our hand receiving it. All that God requires of us as human beings is summed up in that one word: faith. The battle belongs to the Lord, and we need to rest in faith.

Let me put it this way: the strength of our prayers is not in the length of our prayers - you do know that now? I mean, I used to have a stopwatch mentality - you will laugh, you will laugh. I have a digital watch - not now, but I have one at home - I left it for the wife for the alarm, to get her up. Do you know why I bought that digital watch? Three guesses: to time me praying - isn't that sad? I thought, 'I need to ratchet up the amount of time that I'm praying here', and I would have my quiet time or whatever, but then I'd be walking down the street and it would go 'beep', and I'd pray away there 'That's another five minutes!'. Seriously! Sitting in the car, waiting on them in school, 'beep'. I was counting all these minutes up - I mean it's just crazy, that is not what it's about it all. Now I'm not suggesting that time in prayer is wasted, but we must get away from timing - it's about relationship. Imagine if you were sitting with your wife over the dinner table on Valentines, and you're going 'beep' - you're meant to be enjoying it! It's a relationship, a loving relationship that we are meant to have with the Lord, it's not meant to be an endurance. Now don't get me wrong: sometimes I feel, when I'm in prayer, that it's like holding my breath beneath the water. Sometimes that's because we don't have a strategy in prayer, and we're not doing this - promises and praise, and doing biblical prayer.

But it's not the length of our prayers, and it's not the loudness of our prayers - did you know God isn't deaf? And the devil isn't deaf either - you know, some people in deliverance situations are shouting and roaring - even the spirit of deafness isn't deaf. Now don't misunderstand me: I do believe that sometimes in the spirit, there is power and boldness sometimes when we do raise our voice - but we've got to understand that that is not how God measures the weight of prayer. Not by the length - and I have a hunch, by the way, that people that go on and on in prayer meetings, it's because they don't pray at home - that's a theory of mine, I could be wrong. It's not the language of your prayers either, it's not the language of your prayers. It's not whether it's Jacobean English, or whether it's a three-point sermon, or whether it's Cook's Tour of the World covering every missionary region that you could possibly imagine. You know, it's not the language or the content - how is the weight of our prayers measured? Three guesses: faith - that's how your prayers are measured, in faith.

Let me help you: faith expressed in praising prayer moves things on towards this

mountain-moving stuff. So let me give you a bit of summary on the power of praise. The word 'praise' in our English comes from the old French origin 'preisier', which means 'to prize' - so to praise God, effectively, is to prize God, to cherish God, to value and esteem Him. You know, if we prize something we count it as precious - so when we praise God, we are estimating the worth of God. In praise we mentally, if you like, gather together what we know about God, and we put those facts into words. Now it figures, therefore, that you need a revelation of God, you need to the scriptures, you need to know what God says about Himself and what He says about us. We need to be meditating on that for that to come out. Put it like this - this is a good way for you to remember it: we need to appraise in order to praise. We need to appraise the character and the promises and the ways of God, we need to know those and be proficient in understanding and articulating those in order to praise God for what He is worth.

Now here are some of the things that, when we appraise God and His promises, and then praise Him from it, what will happen: praise accelerates answers to prayer. What are the first ten words of the Lord's prayer? 'Our Father, which art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done...' - it's praise. Jesus is teaching us how we ought to pray, and also at the end of the Lord's prayer it's praise as well - so praise accelerates answers to prayer. So ask yourself in your own personal life, and corporately whether it's in your church prayer meeting or whether it's in your gatherings as CEF, how much percentage of the praying is praise? Is the start and is the finish praise - now you don't want to become legalistic, that you always have to start and finish with praise, that's not what I mean - but how much of the content is praise? It accelerates answers to prayer. John Livingstone many many years ago said - listen to this, this is profound: 'A line of praise is worth a leaf of prayer', so one line is worth a page of prayer, a line of praise, 'An hour's praise is worth a day fasting and mourning' - and I think he was right. Praise accelerates answers to prayer.

Secondly: it encourages the miraculous. Acts 16, Paul and Silas in jail - what are they doing? Singing praises unto God, and what happens? Our old friends the angels come and let them out! It encouraged the miraculous - and there are Old Testament examples of this as well, where praise wins battles. You remember in 2 Chronicles 20, Judah faced a huge army from across the Dead Sea. Jehoshaphat proclaimed a fast, and the people sought the Lord for the way ahead - you see they were looking a word from God. The Spirit spoke, and what did the Spirit say? 'The battle belongs to the Lord'. So now they had something to go with, and early the next morning the people were to go out and see what the Lord had done. At dawn they marched to the battlefield as if they were going to a festival - we would have had the SAS at the front, they put the musicians at the front and the singers, they led the way! It says God heard the people's singing and their praises, the song of faith, and the enemy turned against one another and destroyed each other. When Judah arrived on the battlefield all they had to do was collect the spoil, and it took them three days to collect all the spoils of battle. With unbounded joy they praised the Lord in singing on their return to Jerusalem. It says in 2 Chronicles that as they praised, God set ambushes for the enemy - isn't that a brilliant verse? 2 Chronicles 20:22, because praise sparks victory.

So praise accelerates prayer, are you getting this? Encourages the miraculous, and wins battles. Fourthly: praise drives the devil away - did you know that? First Samuel 16:23, do you remember Saul, a tormenting spirit came from the Lord toward King Saul. You remember he got young David to come and play the harp, and that was praise - and by the way there were no words to it, as far as we are aware, he just played the harp - but

holy music basically exorcised this spirit from off him temporarily. Satan is allergic to praise. Where there is jubilant praise, Satan is paralysed. Praise is the antidote to Satanic oppression. So if you want to strengthen your immunity to the enemy's attacks on your life and on your work, you need to learn to praise as a spiritual warfare weapon.

It drives the devil away. Something else: it heals and calms the troubled spirit, praise heals and calms the troubled spirit. Elisha in 2 Kings 3 was angry at the adulterous King of Israel, and he calls a minstrel, a musician, to play for him. It says that: 'His spirit calmed and he began to prophesy'. Maybe it's only me - I don't think it is - but there are times when I need to sit down, and stick my headphones on, and I need to listen to worship to have an effect on my spirit and calm me. It's not psychology, it's spiritual, and it works - because the soul is healed and calmed through praise.

Finally: praise brings an entrance into God's presence. I'm not saying this list is exhaustive, we've got that it accelerates answers to prayer; encourages the miraculous; wins battles; drives the devil away; heals the soul and calms the troubled spirit - but this is perhaps the most important one, certainly for corporate gatherings: it brings an entrance into God's presence. One verse, Psalm 100:4 - you could quote it, who can quote Psalm 100:4? 'Enter His gifts with thanksgiving, into His courts with praise'. Now, have you ever thought about that verse, or do you just quote it or maybe sing it? Do you actually think about what it's saying? What's it talking about? It's talking about the Tabernacle, it's talking about the Temple - and where do we want to get? Where does Hebrews say we are, we can be boldly? Where? The Holy of Holies - we can be right into the immediate presence, the place that the High Priest can only go once a year - we can go in there every day. We can dwell and abide in there every moment - isn't that incredible? Through the blood of Jesus there is a new and living way. But don't you think for one moment that we can just switch it on and off like a light. It is our right in Christ, but we've got to understand that there is a progression, and the progression is very similar to the progression in the Tabernacle and the Temple. We need to be cleansed in the laver and so on. If going to have intimate communion with the Lord, we need to deal with sin and keep short accounts, the light of the world and all the rest inside the Holy Place.

But before you even get there - enter His gates with thanksgiving, and enter His courts with praise. You come in the gate and you move into the court, before you even wash in the laver - now, what gets you through the gate? Thanksgiving! What gets you into the court? Praise! So if you have not learned to thank as a practice and praise, guess what? You're not going to realise the presence of God as you ought to. So there are two degrees of access: first, through God's gates; and then into His courts. In Isaiah 60:18 God's gates are called 'praise'. This is the way into God's presence. Psalm 22 verse 3: 'God inhabits the praises of His people'. So is hymn singing - and there is a lot more praise than just singing, and there's a lot more to worship than just singing - but is singing in our gatherings, or even in our private devotions if you do that, but especially in our gatherings or in churches, is singing a sandwich filler? Is it something we do before the real important thing, getting down to the Word, is it? Is it something that we ought to endure, because sometimes that's how it looks! I love the old hymns, I love old hymns and I really love the way some of the new tunes have been put to them, some of the old hymns are timeless - but, having said that, you've got to understand that there is such a thing as the new song in the Bible, the new song. When God is doing something in people's hearts, He stirs up a new song. Every generation has felt the need to articulate praise in a language and a melody that was current to their

generation. If you don't allow that, you stifle the new song, and you stifle what the work of the Holy Spirit is. So I personally find - and I love the old hymns, and I rejoice in them - but there's something about biblical, godly new praise that just does something, it just does something because of the generation that we are in. But we've got to recognise the presence of God coming in the midst of our genuine worship - you detect that, don't you? You know that that is happening. What do we put that down to? Some people would say it's emotionalism, and there are some people say 'Ach, I'm not into the singing, you know, I'm not into the singing'. Well, I'm not saying you have to be Daniel O'Donnell, does he sing? I'm in Donegal, I better be careful, the roof will fall in. Do you understand what I mean? I'm not saying you have to be a mighty musician, but it's the song from within, it's a song from within, it's praise, giving back to God.

I remember when I was preaching more in the pastoral role in the pulpit in a church, especially in Gospel meetings, you had a singer maybe - if you could class them, sometimes, in that category! But honestly, some of you will have experienced this: if they are rubbish, the preacher has an uphill climb; but if they are excellent - and when I say excellent, I don't mean in their gifting necessarily, but in spiritual gifting as well and in communicating - as a preacher I just was able to right away just come right in there, because they had set the tone. It wasn't an emotional tone, it wasn't anything like that, it was a spiritual tone - God had anointed their singing, and had come in their singing to the people. So praise - don't for one minute think it's incidental. You need to start glorying in it, you need to start welcoming it, you need to give your whole self - let all that is within me bless His holy name. I'll tell you: God loves that, God loves that, and God will come all the quicker.

Let me on a personal note, as I finish, sum all this up. Praise dispels despair and engenders joy. Who could be doing with a wee bit of joy? Joy, real joy - we could do with a good dose of that, couldn't we? The joy of the Lord is our strength - I'm not talking about 'everything is wonderful, everything is awesome', that wee song the kids are always singing - everything is not awesome! Yet we can have joy deep down within our hearts, deep down in the bowels of the boat in the midst of the storm. It's not circumstantial, it's not happenstance. But you're sitting there, and you're maybe saying: 'I don't feel like praising at the moment, and I don't feel that I have much to praise about right now'. Listen, this could be the most important thing that you will hear: we do not have to joy to praise, we do not have to rejoice to praise. Praise gets us the joy - do you receive that? If you wait until you feel like praising, just the way if you wait until you feel like praying, you're never going to do it - but, do you see if you make the choice of the will, according to the promises of God, to praise? Joy will come. The more you praise the greater will be your joy. The command in Scripture is: 'Rejoice always in the Lord, again I say rejoice'.

Here's one for you, Isaiah 61 verse 3: the Lord Jesus Christ, this is the Messiah it's speaking of now, gives us the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness. Now I have preached on that, and I have a theory about it. There are many things in the New Testament, we talk about putting things off and putting things on, metaphorically speaking about clothing. So we put off the works of the flesh, and we put on Christ and the garment of light - but I have a theory, and it's only a theory, that with the spirit of the despair you have to put on the garment of praise in order to put off the spirit of despair. Do you understand? So there are times when I am as down in the dumps as you can go, and I make a conscious, determined, wilful effort to go into my study and to choose to praise God, and to choose to put

praise on and join in and sing until I have no voice. I've learned that the spirit of heaviness - and it's not just the human spirit, I believe there is a demonic force called 'the spirit of heaviness', and a lot of Christian workers come under it regularly because he doesn't like you and he wants to pull you down, he wants to discourage you, he wants to give you despair - but when you choose to praise, it dispels that spirit of heaviness, and you know what else? Bonus: it brings joy!

Handel, when he was composing Handel's Messiah, do you know that he barricaded himself into his room and practically neither ate or slept as he wrote. I'm not saying Handel's Messiah is equivalent to Scripture, but it is Scripture, all of it - but there's something heavenly about that piece of music, and I think he got it from heaven to be quite honest with you. Of course the Hallelujah Chorus is the great climax to the masterpiece, and 'hallelujah', what does it mean? 'Praise the Lord'. Later he told a friend about his experience, listen, this is what he said about his experience in that room: 'It seemed as if heaven came down and filled my soul'. That's the power of praise. Now listen to me: faith is expressed in praising prayer. A little faith will take you to heaven, but great faith - faith in God, faith in God's promises, faith in praising prayer - will bring heaven to you.

Let's pray. I don't know what God is saying to you in your own personal circumstances. Maybe what He is saying to you is: you need to take time out - now I don't mean time off, in case I get into trouble there! - but you need to take time out, and maybe you do need to take time off, to wait on God for His word for this situation that you're in. Maybe you've been praying a lot about a particular thing, but you really don't know how you ought to pray. There are situations that we don't know, and the Spirit with groanings that cannot be uttered - you know, there's room for that - but this is a situation that you really could do with knowing how to pray. Why not take time, and rather than doing all the prayer somersaults and things that you try to do, just wait on God and say: 'Lord, please, I'm going to empty the trash can here in my brain of everything that I've accumulated about this, and I just want to have a clean slate, Lord, please speak to me and tell me how I ought to pray'. Do we do that in our prayer meetings? Before we even ask in praying, do we say: 'Lord, would You show us, tell us how to pray here about this' - a situation in the work, a situation in the country, in the district, a problem - 'Lord, would You teach us how we ought to pray about this', and wait on Him and listen for Him.

So maybe some of you need to wait to get that word, some of you maybe have had that word - but you've been pleading for the word over and over again even though He has given it to you. You need to move now, you need to shift from pleading to praising Him for the promise that He has given you. As that verse says: you need to consider that you have the things that you've asked of Him, and then you will get them. That seems a contradiction, but that is faith sense. Go and read Mark 11 again, those verses 22-24, especially verse 24, you need to believe that you receive the things that you've asked from Him, and then you will have them. So you come to God and you say: 'Lord, this is Your promise that, I'm asking You by faith, I'm claiming it - I thank You that You have heard me, and I praise You that I am going to see this. Whether I see it or not, it's going to happen, because You have given the word of faith and I claim it'. Maybe that's where you are now - I don't know where you are, but just in the moment before I hand over, just take a moment to talk to the Lord and to receive. Remember, it's not about achieving, receive what you need from Him. Why not make a resolution, even, from today, that praise is going to be more a part of your prayer life, thanksgiving. How do

you do that? Do you know what I did once? I would do it from time to time when I feel the need. I would keep a notepad at the side of my bed and a pen for various reasons, but I took on this practice for about a month of writing down, every night before I went to sleep, three things that I could be thankful for. It wasn't always seismic things, it could have been somebody getting saved or somebody helped in prayer ministry, it could have been a nice cream bun and a cup of coffee with a friend - but it was something that blessed me, something that I could say 'Thank You, Lord' for. Three of those a day, and just thank God before you go to sleep - and do you know what you're doing? You're creating a culture of thankfulness and appreciation, and it actually shifts your mindset, and it can lift you out of the doldrums - maybe you need to do that? Maybe you need to put on more praise music, and stop listening to all the bad news? Maybe you need to fill your house with an atmosphere of praise? I don't know, whatever God is saying to you, you respond.

Father, thank You for helping us, and coming to us here today again, and for speaking right into our lives. Lord, help us to have ears to hear what the Spirit is saying to the church, what the Spirit is saying to each of us as individuals, and what You're saying to CEF. Lord, forgive us for our unbelief in prayer, forgive me, forgive me for when I am incessantly negative. It's not to not be real, Lord, You want us to be real and You want us to be honest - but forgive me when I wallow in selfish pity, and look in my boots rather than looking up to You Lord. Lord, even as we sing, would You even prove to us now, would You come behind what I have said, believing it's on the authority of Your word, and would You lift off some people here this morning a spirit of heaviness, would You even deliver them of things they have been struggling with. Lord, we could spend sessions of hours with people in prayer and counselling and all, but Lord in a moment of praise, as You inhabit those praises, You could come and just mightily release them. Would You come in a very special sense of Your presence as we praise You now? Lord, we want You, we want to be gathered around Your presence and Your name, we want to encounter You and see mountains moved for Your glory. Thank You, Lord. Amen.

Mountain-Moving Faith - Chapter 4

"Faith As Proof"

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We've covered 'Mountain-Moving Faith'. Mountain-moving faith is: 'Faith in God', 'Faith in God's Promises', 'Faith Expressed in Praising Prayer', and today we're going to look at 'Faith As Proof'. Hebrews 11 verse 1: *"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen"*.

Now, if you're honest, some of you will be saying - having heard the ministry over the last couple of days - 'Well, that's all well and good, but what if nothing appears to change and nothing happens? I'm believing, and I feel that I've got the promises, and God has given me a measure of vision, and I'm trying my best to fill my spiritual senses with that and not negativity, not what the world is saying, not what the devil is telling me - and I'm seeking to speak that out and believe it and act upon it' - but nothing changes in one circumstance or another, or in ministry. Each step we've been taking, I believe the first one is a fundamental foundation, but each is bringing us nearer to a full-orbed understanding of what biblical faith is that moves mountains - and today it is 'Faith As Proof'. I know that may not make sense to you just at the moment.

If God has given the faith, and I think that has to be our starting point - is what we are believing something that God has actually spoken? As I said yesterday or the day before, all the believing in the world will not make something come into being if God hasn't said it. So there is the general sense of all the promises that are in the scriptures, and there's also this 'rhema' word that comes to us personally for our circumstances. He can give us a picture of vision, some demonstration of how He's going to do it and the way it's going to happen and turn out - but if God has not done that, we don't really have the authority, or at least the confidence, to come and claim things - we can pray about them. But if God has given the faith, the promise, and added vision to it, we can believe that we have it - we can believe that we have it, past tense.

Let me remind you of Mark 11, if you want to turn there, Mark 11:24: 'Therefore I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them'. Believe that you receive, and you will have them. I talked about committal yesterday, that is key to getting saved and having assurance with your salvation. I believe you can be saved and not have assurance, but God wants us to know that we have eternal life, and so there has to be the committal of faith whereby we actually say: 'God, You have said it, I believe it' - but that doesn't settle it, you have to actually say 'I believe I have it, and I'm going to thank You for giving it to me, I'm going to thank You that I have it'. It's exactly the same with the fullness of the Holy Spirit: God wants you to have it, you must take it by faith, but you must thank Him and believe. Now there are subjective witnesses which are necessary to the assurance, just the way there is a subjective witness to the assurance of salvation - but it must be taken by faith, and you must believe that you have it already.

Another text is 1 John 5, and I think I have referred to this before - 1 John 5 verses 14-15: 'Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know

that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him' - past tense. When we ask according to His will, we know that we have what we have asked. Now, how many of us walk away from prayer feeling: 'Oh, it'll be great when I get this', but that's not what that's saying. The prayer of faith, spoken by God in the word of faith - that's vital, it's gifted to us in the word of faith - but the prayer that claims that yesterday, moves from pleading for the promise to praising for the promise, thanking Him and believing that we actually have what we have asked of Him - even if we're not seeing the evidence of it in the natural.

Now let me show you Hebrews 11:1 in the Amplified Version, and this is profound: 'Faith is the assurance (the confirmation, the title deed) of the things we hope for, being the proof of things we do not see and the conviction of their reality, faith perceiving as real fact what is not revealed to the senses'. Now that's amazing! Right there in the middle it says: 'Faith is the proof of things we hope for'. So you might be a bit like me, you're naturally cynical and question things that you hear from the pulpit, and you want to really make sure it's true - because, I mean, we're putting a lot at stake when we invest ourselves emotionally and spiritually in faith, and believing that God is really going to come through and do this. The reaction can be: 'But where is the proof? Where is the proof that if God promises this, and we're sure He did, and He gives us this vision, and we venture our all on it, where is the proof that He is actually going to come through?'. The faith is the proof! Are you getting that? The faith that God has given in the promise is the proof, that's what that says, and it's correct.

Do you understand what I'm getting at? Faith is like a sixth sense - excuse the expression, but it is like a sixth sense that enables the believer to move into the unseen. I think it's The Message paraphrases it: 'Faith is our handle on things we cannot see'. When we do see with the naked eye, or we hear with the ear, we then receive that as fact, don't we, through our five natural senses? We've been talking about spiritual senses, but faith is like another sense whereby we accept as absolutely real and tangible what is in fact invisible - it is our handle on the unseen. Another phrase used here in the Amplified - and if you know anything about the Amplified, you will know that all these are taken from different renderings of translations, and usually they are cited in the footnote - so somebody has translated Hebrews 11:1 as 'the confirmation, the title deed' of things we hope for. You know what a title deed is, it's documentation to say 'I own something'. So what is the proof that God is going to come through on this? It is the title deed of faith. Before I can take possession of a property, for instance, in experience, before I move in and live there, I must prove my ownership, I must produce the title deed. So you might not have moved in to the fulfilment, in actual real-time space terms, to the fulfilment of the promise - but if you've got the word of faith from God on it, you've got the title deed, you own it even though you don't hold it in your hands. That is the proof.

Faith is the title deed of things hoped for, and so it is faith that enables us to possess our possessions. So if you think of it like this: God has deposited in Jesus Christ all the riches of heaven into our account, but unless we know how to write cheques on that account we will spend our days in spiritual poverty - and how many Christians does that describe? God has invested everything, all the riches of heaven - and I would love to talk about spiritual adoption, and it's incredible, because we are joint heirs with Jesus. So imagine four individuals in a family, and Daddy has died, and now Mum, she has passed on. The will is being read, and the four siblings are there. The solicitor might say: 'You are all joint heirs' - what does that mean? Everybody gets the same. You have

Jesus and David Legge, and legally I'm told: 'You're joint heirs'. 'Jesus, do you see what You get? He's to get that as well' - isn't that incredible? We are heirs of God, and joint heirs with Jesus Christ - so whatever is in the will for Jesus comes to us; whatever He gets in the future, I get; whatever His destiny is, is my destiny - that is incredible!

All the riches of heaven have been deposited, because of Jesus, into my account - but listen: it's all there, but if you don't know how to write cheques it's going to be no use. If you don't know how to draw on that account - and how do you draw? You draw by faith, and you draw knowing that it's already yours - and the proof is the faith itself, it's the title deed. Now what do we say in our natural realm, we say: 'Seeing is believing', isn't that right? But we've been learning this week that God's truth is the opposite: believing is seeing. When we choose to believe what God says is real, we start to see it with the inner eyes of our heart. The New Living Translation of Hebrews 11:1 says: 'Faith is the confidence that what we hope for will actually happen; it gives us assurance about things we cannot see'. Is that not what we need? Assurance about things we cannot see! That is what enables us to pray boldly and confidently, and even act when everything around us says the opposite - we are able to say 'No'. Like Paul, this is often what gives me encouragement - you know the shipwreck - he had the word from God how? An angel of the Lord appeared to him and said: 'Nobody will die in this shipwreck if everybody does what they're told'. He stands up, now think about this, would you do this? He stands up in a skiff that's about to be completely shattered into pieces across the water, and he stands up and he tells them this message from God: 'No life will be lost if you do what I tell you to do, but I believe God that it will be as He told me'. What's the proof? The proof is - now we would all love an angel to appear, but let's face it if an angel appeared to you, you would start to question that probably. We do, we question everything, when God does anything we start to question it - but we have a more sure word of prophecy, we have the Living Word of God and we have the Holy Spirit living within us. The things that He is telling us and speaking into our lives, and giving us vision for, we can believe that - that's more certain than an angel standing beside you telling you. We can believe God.

This is seeing the invisible - giving us assurance about things we cannot see. If you look at Hebrews 11, the whole of it, verse 27, and this is about Moses: 'By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured as seeing Him who is invisible'. Isn't that amazing statement? I mean that's crazy, isn't it? You can't see something or someone who is invisible - but you can. You can't with the natural eyes, but you can with the spiritual eyes of your heart. That's how Moses endured, and that's how you will endure, by seeing Him who is invisible. I want to encourage you to do a wee exercise at some time when you get a chance. Go through Hebrews chapter 11, you know the great passage on heroes of faith, male and female, who did great exploits for God - and I want you to replace the word 'faith' with 'seeing the invisible', and that will just blow your mind and open your consciousness to what 'seeing the invisible' does for you, and enables you to do for the Lord in great boldness.

If you step into this realm of considering and reckoning faith as the proof, what will happen is: what you cannot see will become more real to you than what you can see. I could talk a long time on Western materialism - and that isn't the car you drive, or the house that you're in, or the brand names that you wear or anything like that. When I'm speaking of materialism in this context, I'm talking about philosophically, the way we have been educated and conditioned to reckon matter as reality, but the unseen as fairytale. It doesn't just go through primary and secondary and further education, it

actually impacts our theological education in our Bible colleges and our preaching from the pulpits. You don't see the wind, do you? Jesus said that: 'The wind blows, and you can tell where it comes from or where it goes, so is everyone that is born of the Spirit'. We can't see the wind, but we know that it is real, and we see the effects of the wind. We live in an incredible technological age as you are aware, and radio waves are everywhere. I don't know if it's possible somehow to see radio waves, but they are invisible to the natural eye - but if you could somehow see radio waves, some of you tech geeks will be able to tell me about this, they are everywhere. They must be everywhere, aren't they? Wi-Fi, it's not everywhere around here, but you know, it's incredible. You can watch TV with Wi-Fi, you can talk on FaceTime and all this stuff - but these waves are everywhere, aren't they? It's invisible, but they are real. I can't see your brain - no, let's forget about that one, we will move on!

Bad theology has taught us really to believe more in what we see, rather than to believe to see the unseen, to see the invisible. Even our theology has taught - I mean, expectancy draws God, that's no surprise. When you start looking for things you will see it and, in the realm of faith, when you start opening your eyes and looking for God, you're going to see Him, you're going to see Him everywhere. I'm just warning you: you will be overwhelmed, you will see Him everywhere! Expectancy, I suppose, is another nuance for faith: to expect things, to expect God to show up, to expect changes to happen - but we actually, if we're honest, in our churches we teach caution. 'Now be careful, just be careful you don't go off at the deep end now, be careful, don't be too enthusiastic, don't get too zealous, be careful'. Now I know we have to be balanced and all the rest, but we need to see as God sees. We need to stop once and for all looking at things through our own eyes with intellect, looking at things from the world's point of view, listening to social and political commentators and taking their spin on things. We need to stop once and for ever listening to Satan's commentary on our lives, and we need to start hearing God, seeing God, obeying God.

Yet, at the same time, saying all this, you can't underestimate how in real life experience there is an apparent absence of many of the things that we are asking for. Where is the proof that God is going to do anything, that God is going to break through for me? Now, listen again: the proof is faith, the proof is faith. If you have that word of faith, and that vision of faith, the proof is the faith. Let me show you again, 1 John 5 again. I was preparing this last Thursday or Friday, and I made a phone call to a lady who is a very godly woman, a woman of faith, she's in touch with God. I had this portion of Scripture open on my desk, and she happened to refer to it. She pointed out to me verses that I was looking at, but something that I had never seen, and she was just saying that she had never seen this before herself. Verse 3 of 1 John 5: 'For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome' - Amen, thank God for that. Have you ever heard that preached on, by the way? His commandments are not burdensome, I wonder why that is? But it's true, isn't it? 'For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world; our faith. Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?'. I've been touching these days on how we can read things out of verses, or leave things out of verses for generations and not realise what we're doing. This is one of those verses, at least for me in my experience, verse 4 - have you ever read verse 4 before? 'For whatever is born of God overcomes the world'. Well, I want to contend with you that you haven't read that verse - certainly I hadn't. Here's how I read that verse: 'Whoever is born of God overcomes the world'. Is that what it says? What does it say? 'Whatever is born of God overcomes the world'. Now, yes,

verse 5 says: 'Whoever' - and I haven't had time to look at this in the original languages or anything, but I'm hoping that most of your translations say in verse 4 'Whatever is born of God' - does it? It doesn't? You've got the wrong translation! Well, the New King James says 'Whatever' - but the thought that came to her, and again, I don't want to build a house on this if I'm reading wrong here, but this is true: faith comes from God, faith is birthed of God. In the sense that faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God, it is gifted to us - so in that sense it's not a 'whoever' it's a 'whatever', although it's in a 'whoever' - and that vision that is birthed of God overcomes, it will overcome, because it comes from God. If we're sure it's from the heart of God in the beginning, we can be sure it will prevail - and the proof of its prevailing is the faith.

Now, if the faith is the proof then something is called for. Perseverance is called for. As Abraham, when he received the 'rhema' in the vision, he pondered the vision and nothing else, and he spoke out the promise and he acted on it, and he died to himself and self-effort - and then in the fullness of time God brought forth His miracle. We pondered that it took 25 years for that to happen, it took 1500 years in order that Jesus would be born, the seed of Abraham, and now we are the fulfilment of that in utter completion, and that's 3500 years - and it's still being fulfilled until Jesus comes. So there is a long incubation period, and it says in Romans 4 verse 18 of Abraham: 'Through faith and patience he inherited the promise'. So if I'm not seeing with the naked eye in the natural, the fulfilment of all these promises taking place, and I'm holding on with my fingernails by faith, you're saying: 'Lord, I'm prepared to persevere, and I believe and am willing to go to my grave believing in Your word and in Your vision that You've given me. I will be a worshipper until the day I die, and then I will continue worshipping You in heaven - but I'm not going to doubt Your promise to me'. That's perseverance! Have you got it? I don't have much of it!

We live in an instant age, don't we? We want everything now, and if God gives us the word we are expecting it today. Of course there are stories of perseverance in the Gospels, we don't have time to look at them - Luke 11, the persistent friend, you know, rapping up his neighbour at night looking for bread; there is the importunate widow that comes to the judge, and that's not to say that God is tight-fisted, it's actually to contrast the heart of God toward us - that He wants, shall He not avenge His own elect that cry unto Him day and night. Now this is not a contradiction of grace, it's not a contradiction of grace. I was quoting this statement from a well-known preacher to someone just yesterday: 'What we need will come to us', isn't that wonderful? 'My God shall supply all your needs' - what we need will come to us, but what you want you've got to go and get. The Kingdom of Heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force. If we have this passive attitude, the 'que sera sera, whatever will be, will be', and some kind of warped view of the sovereignty of God that is just tantamount to fatalism, we are not going to take the Kingdom of Heaven with violence and force. We need to actually take these promises, these virtues that God has given us to bring to Him, He wants us to be a part of the process - that's not something to get down about, and think: 'Oh, more to do!'. He actually wants us to have pleasure in the process of birthing His kingdom here on earth.

We are a generation of quitters, if we're honest. I often have said that if there was a video footage of my life up there in heaven, and particularly my prayer life - if you could see what my prayer life is like, I reckon often it would be: prayer, prayer, holding on, holding on, holding on, and then just a little bit before the answer I quit, I give up. Anybody with me on that? You just wonder, don't you? How many times have we given

up before the end? George Mueller, I mentioned him yesterday, a great man of faith, a man of God, he said this, listen: 'The great point is never to give up until the answer comes. I have been praying' - this is George Mueller, the weatherman, remember I told you yesterday, speaking to the weather and it changing - 'I have been praying 63 years and 8 months for one man's conversion. He is not saved yet, but he will be. How can it be otherwise, I am praying!'. What do you think of that? But the 'I am praying' is not arrogance being expressed there, it is confidence in God. He had seen God come through, and God had given him the word of faith, and he believed God - and he believed that God could not have sustained him in prayer for 63 years and 8 months if God was not in it, and whatever is born of God, in whoever it is born of God, will overcome! Amen?

But Mueller died, and his friend did not get saved. But as Mueller's body was being lowered into the earth, that man was standing around the grave and he trusted Christ. It came, it had to come because he was praying, in faith he was praying. A persevering prayer won the battle, and Mueller's prayer success could be summed up in four powerful words: he did not quit. So faith is the proof, but if it's the proof our response is perseverance. Those gathered in the Upper Room in Acts chapters 1 and 2 with the work of the evangelisation of the world before them - I mean, try and compute that for a moment: 120 there, and Jesus has told them to go to the four corners of the globe. They have a promise, thank the Lord that they had their promise of the Father and the Son, of the Holy Spirit coming - but they didn't engage in fatalistic resignation, and they didn't say: 'Well, God has promised it, so we will just get on with our lives until it happens. We'll just wait around until it happens'. Neither did they simply usher up the odd request to God in accordance with the promise. They continued in prayer in that Upper Room, and persisted until the answer came. So the Lord had promised it, but it didn't exonerate them of responsibility, it didn't extract the process that is involved of us persevering in prayer - it continued.

Delays are not denials, the prayer of faith that is birthed with the word of faith and the vision of faith - now I'm not saying we won't be discouraged, but ultimately it will not be completely discouraged and give up with God's delays. So if you're saying: 'Why do I have to wait so long? Why do I have to cry day and night if this is truly of faith and truly of God, and it's the proof that it's going to happen?'. Well, as Jesus said, 'My Father is the husbandman', the gardener, the farmer. A wee fellow or a wee girl might see in good old County Armagh the orchards, they might see an apple and think, 'Wow, I would love to get my teeth into that!' - but the farmer says, 'No son, no dear, leave it, it's not ripe, it's not ready'. He knows that if he or she waits, it will taste all the sweeter. 'My Father is the husbandman', we are on a path of growth, but there are times and seasons that are in our Father's hand - and we can be sure that whenever we are ready, when circumstances are ready, when that loved one is ready, God will answer. Faith is like a mustard seed, but there has to be the conditions, the environment, the atmosphere, in order for that mustard seed to grow.

Some of these missionaries - I mean, missionaries really take you to the fair, some of the things they say, yourselves included! Adoniram Judson, are you familiar with him? Burma. Listen to this: 'I never prayed sincerely and earnestly for anything, but it came at some time. No matter at how distant a day, somehow, in some shape, probably at the last I would have devised, it came'. Now he was either a liar, or he was a great man of faith. Listen to C.H. Spurgeon, and this, I think, is the test of our faith - if the proof is the faith, the test is the perseverance and the preparedness to keep asking, and

believing in praise and in faith. Spurgeon said, listen, this is profound: 'Whether we like it or not, asking is the rule of the kingdom. Ask and ye shall receive. It is a rule that never will be altered in anybody's case. Our Lord Jesus Christ is the elder brother of the family, but God has not relaxed the rule for Him. Remember this text: 'Jehovah says to His own Son, 'Ask of Me, and I will give You the heathen for Your inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for Your possession'. If the Royal and Divine Son of God cannot be exempted from the rule of asking that He may have, you and I cannot expect the rule to be relaxed in our favour. Why should it be? What reason can be given why we should be exempted from prayer? What argument can there be why we should be deprived of the privilege and delivered from the necessity of supplication? I can see none: can you? God will bless Elijah and send rain on Israel, but Elijah must pray for it. If the chosen nation is to prosper, Samuel must plead for it. If the Jews are to be delivered, Daniel must intercede. God will bless Paul, and the nations will be converted through him, but Paul must pray. Indeed he did pray without ceasing; his epistles show that he expected nothing except by asking for it. If you may have everything by asking, and nothing without asking, I beg you to see how absolutely vital prayer is and I beseech you to abound in it'.

Hebrews 11:6: 'Without faith it is impossible to please God, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him'. Remember what Jesus said to that unbelieving father who said: 'If You can heal my son'. What did Jesus say? 'If you can believe'. He turned the tables. It's not about what He can or cannot do, it's never been about that, it never will be about that - that's not the issue. The issue is: if you can believe, all things are possible to those who believe. If you've got faith in God, faith in His promises, faith expressed in praising prayer, and you consider faith as the proof and persevere in it - whether you live or die, whether you see the fulfilment or not - you will persevere and believe God.

Let us pray. Let's take a moment or two. 'Faith the mighty promise sees, and looks to God alone; Laughs at impossibilities, and cries: it shall be done!' - that's faith, isn't it? Now we're not talking about wishful thinking, we're talking about things that God has spoken and given the assurance and the word of faith for. Are there folk here today, and that has been your question: 'But what if things don't seem to ever change?'. Would you be prepared to step out today and say: 'I know God has given me the promise, I know I have His word - not just in the Bible, but His word straight to me from the Bible, the confirmation of His word from witnesses of His Spirit in my life, He has spoken to me, He has promised me, He has called me - and I'm going to take that as the proof, and I'm going to speak it out, and I'm going to step out and act upon it. I'm going to fill my spiritual senses with that, nothing else, nothing negative, what goes wrong, what the devil says is going to happen, or how the world summarises my life as a complete and utter waste of time - I'm not going to listen to that. I'm going to believe God, live or die, see it or not'. Are you prepared for that? It will revolutionise your life.

Just pray now to the Lord yourself, maybe you need to make a recommitment of a vision that He gave you once - and, if you're honest, it has grown dim; or maybe you have, with disappointed resignation, you have shelved some of those original promises that you had when you were on fire for God when you went into ministry. If you're honest, you've sort of become a wee bit cynical, and said: 'Well, that never happened, and to be honest I don't think it will ever happen. Maybe I read it wrong, or maybe I just got it wrong' - you know, the way we do. Now we do get things wrong, don't misunderstand me, but one thing that isn't ever wrong: God is able, God is able, and

God wants to bless, He just can't wait - but what He's waiting on is us, because He wants us to work with Him, and He wants us to enjoy it, and He wants us to be a part of it. Like the disciples handing out the loaves and fishes, they had to be a part of it. He wants us to be a part of the miracle that He is going to birth.

So why not talk to the Lord, just tell Him what's on your heart, and receive from Him - receive what you need. You say: 'Well, what do you mean?'. Well, what do you need? Ask for it! D.L. Moody on one occasion was preaching, and the guy that was leading the meeting was going all around the world in his prayer, all over the place, flowery extempore oratory. He pulled his coattails, and he said: 'Just call Him 'Father', and ask Him for something!'. He is your Father, and you're His child, and if you need something you ask Him - you ask Him, but you need to receive it by faith. You need to believe He hears you. If you're asking for bread, He's not going to give you a stone - what do you think He is? A cruel, sadistic abuser? If you need spiritual bread today, ask Him. Whatever it is you need for life, for your marriage, for your ministry, for temptations that you have, for decisions you've got to make, for your children, for your church fellowship - what do you need? Just ask Him, but ask Him in faith, believing that He's hearing you, and receive from Him.

Father, I thank You for this company of dear, precious people. Lord, when I came here, I would have communicated from my heart the love in an expressiveness of the love of God, but Lord, over these days I have grown to love these people. I thank You for the kindred spirit, I thank You for their hearts, I thank You for their lives. I thank You for their honesty and their reality, and I thank You for how You've been meeting so many. Lord, I pray that You will continue to do a work just now. Maybe there are some who have hardened themselves a little - Lord, I'm not talking now about whether they agree with me or not, that's irrelevant - but they have hardened themselves in some area of their life to You; or through disappointment they are protecting their emotions because they don't want that to happen again, and they just can't bear the thought that they should open their hearts again and then somebody should damage them or they should get hurt or broken again. Lord, would You please begin to minister to those people. For those who have grown tired in service, feeble knees, and their hands are hanging down, Lord, it's not easy, it's not easy. Those who are discouraged, those who feel they don't have support that they would like, who are isolated, even geographically - we thank You for the good support that is there, but Lord, none of us can be everywhere across the land. We need You, Lord - if our intimacy with You does not satisfy us, and does not fill that gap, we will be looking to idols, we will be looking to substitutes for Your presence and Your intimacy. Lord, please, just come and minister now to people where they are at. Holy Spirit, come and open eyes, the eyes of hearts, spiritual ears of hearts, fill them with a sense of Your being. Give them a sense of identity, I pray that You will deliver some of these Christian workers from seeking identity in their work, rather than their identity in You and being in You. I pray for them that their doing will come out of being - like Your disciples, Lord Jesus, that they would be called to be with You, and then You would send them out, in that order. Liberate them from a performance mentality, and may we all seek first the Kingdom, seek You, Lord Jesus. I bless these people, Lord, in Your name. I bless them with peace, I bless them in Jesus' name with joy, I bless them with security, I bless them with healing, and I bless them with eyes to see what You're doing in this world. In Jesus' name, Amen.

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