

So You Can Forgive!

I believe this passage is one of the most frustrating in the Bible because of the way it talks about how simple our faith should be. I don't know about you but I have never been able to move a Mulberry Tree just by telling it to move, nor have I ever been able to move a mountain by thought. When I first read this passage and found that I could not do these things I began to question just exactly how much faith I had. If faith the size of a mustard seed could move a tree or a mountain, then how little faith do I have? Is it the size of a gnat or smaller? Do I only have the faith of a hydrogen molecule or is it even less than that? Is my faith only the size of an electron or proton or smaller still? Do I have any faith at all?

The answer I have found is yes, I do have faith and so do you. Our faith is a gift from God and we receive it as needed to help us carry out the will of God. That is the key to understanding what Jesus is trying to teach the disciples and us. Carrying out the will of our creator is our ultimate task in this life. As we turn our lives over to God and let God become our master—as we willingly submit ourselves to the will of God, we become in a sense the slaves of God. We do our master's bidding and as Jesus points out, even when we have done all that God requires of us, we are still only doing what we have been told to do. And yet some day, God may want us to move a mountain or a mulberry tree and then when it is God's will it will happen.

This passage of scripture is connected to a passage on forgiveness. Jesus has just told his disciples that they need to forgive each other as often as necessary. They, knowing how

hard it is to forgive someone, said to Jesus, "Increase our faith".

That's when Jesus straightens them and us out about how much faith is needed to carry out the will of God. We are called to be God's humble servants and it is God's will to provide service to those who need it. That service can take many forms. It may be that we are asked to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, visit the sick and those in prison, give something to drink to someone who is thirsty. Our service may be in the form of witnessing to our faith to someone who has none because they don't know about Jesus Christ. Someday the service we are asked to provide for God might be to pray for someone who is blind so that God's glory can be revealed through a miraculous healing. It will be God that actually answers the prayer and does the healing, but it will happen because you are carrying out the will of God.

This then is the paradox of Christian faith. We are to do the will of God, but we don't always know what exactly it is that God wants us to do. Some things are pretty straightforward and easy to understand, such as supporting the work of God's church through monetary donations, or by simply being kind and loving to everyone we meet. But sometimes God's will is not so clear-cut. An example might be the kind of career we choose, or the spouse we pick for ourselves. How can we know the purpose God has for us in this life? We can know through prayer, Bible study, fasting, and action. If we prayerfully read scripture, if we prayerfully seek God's will, and if we go ahead and do something that is not motivated out of hate, anger, or self-glorification, then we can be pretty sure we are doing what God wants us to do.

And someday Mulberry Trees and mountains are going to be falling like October leaves.

Let us pray, Almighty God ruler of the universe and master of our lives. We are here today to join with you in communion with all the saints who love you and worship you and who wish to do your will. Bless us with your presence today in the bread and in the cup. Lead us in your truth, and keep us safe from those who do not know you. We ask for your power to preserve, enlighten, and direct us in the name of your son our Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.