

The Triple Catch to Moving Mountains

Episode 1

This is our first episode of 5 dealing with the **Triple Catch to Moving Mountains**.

I am sure that every time you have come across some amazing promise in scriptures and get all excited that they are for you, suddenly you realize there is a catch, something that must happen to release that promise, and then as you start digging into the catch you realize that there is often a catch to that first catch, and in this case, there is a triple catch: a catch to a catch to a catch.

Throughout the years, God has been faithful to show me mysteries that I have otherwise struggled understanding; and He has done it again regarding the whole concept around removing mountains or shriveling up trees. I have to warn you, however, the whole thing is a bit convoluted in that the Holy Spirit, in His usual way, spread the necessary information across various books and passages that in-and-of themselves have always been problematic. But when connected together, like pieces of a lost treasure map, it all comes together quite beautifully.

In short, God has given me understanding of the mysterious passages which say that if we had even the smallest amount of faith, the faith of a mustard seed, we would be able to say to a mountain: "be removed and be picked up and thrown into the sea and it would obey."

I have always been frustrated when I have read the various renderings of that passage because I always walked away feeling like my faith must be soooooo small if all it takes is a mustard seed size faith, because, honestly, I don't see very many mountains in my life being uprooted and thrown into the seas, nor do I see trees immediately withering from the roots.

That feeling did not make sense to me. I know my faith has grown, and I believe it must be larger than a mustard seed. After all, I have been learning how to bet my life upon Yahweh in all the amazing ways that His name demands: as my sovereign Lord, my Refuge, my Shepherd, my Healer, my Righteousness, my Provider, my Peace, as the one who is Jealous over me and the One who will do whatever it takes to set me apart for Him, as the Commander of all the Heavenly Armies, and as the one who is always with me, the One who is always there. Still, there are plenty

The Triple Catch to Moving Mountains

of gigantic mountains in my life that I want removed, but they do not seem to budge.¹

So, what is the problem? Is it me or was Jesus just speaking hyperbole? Has anyone seen a tree wither immediately from its roots when cursed?

Let's start the journey by first looking at the various renderings in **Matthew**, **Mark**, and **Luke**.

Matthew 17:14-21

When they came to the crowd, a man came up to Jesus, falling on his knees before Him and saying, "Lord, have mercy on my son, for he is a lunatic and is very ill; for he often falls into the fire and often into the water. "I brought him to Your disciples, and they could not cure him." And Jesus answered and said, "You unbelieving and perverted generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring him here to Me." And Jesus rebuked him, and the demon came out of him, and the boy was cured at once. Then the disciples came to Jesus privately and said, "Why could we not drive it out?" And He said to them, "Because of [~~the littleness of~~²] your faith; for truly I say to you, if you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move; and nothing will be impossible to you.

Matthew 21:18-22

Now in the morning, when He was returning to the city, He became hungry. Seeing a lone fig tree by the road, He came to it and found nothing on it except leaves only; and He said to it, "No longer shall there ever be any fruit from you." And at once the fig tree withered. Seeing this, the disciples were amazed and asked, "How did the fig tree wither all at once?" And Jesus answered and said to them, "**Truly I say to you, if you have faith and do not doubt**, you will not only do what was done to the fig tree, but even if you say to this mountain, 'Be taken up

¹ Adonai Yahweh; Yahweh Nissi; Yahweh Raah; Yahweh Rapha; Yahweh Tsidkenu; Yahweh Jireh; Yahweh Shalom; Yahweh Qanna; Yahweh Mekoddishkem; Yahweh Sabaoth; Yahweh Shammah

² Note, some Greek manuscripts include a word which is translated "the littleness of" but many others do not.

The Triple Catch to Moving Mountains

and cast into the sea,' it will happen. "And all things you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive."

Mark 11:20-25

The next morning as they passed by the fig tree he had cursed, the disciples noticed it had withered from the roots up. Peter remembered what Jesus had said to the tree on the previous day and exclaimed, "Look, Rabbi! The fig tree you cursed has withered and died!" Then Jesus said to the disciples, "Have faith in God. I tell you the truth, you can say to this mountain, 'May you be lifted up and thrown into the sea,' and it will happen. **But you must really believe it will happen and have no doubt in your heart.** I tell you, you can pray for anything, and if you believe that you've received it, it will be yours. But when you are praying, first forgive anyone you are holding a grudge against, so that your Father in heaven will forgive your sins, too."

Luke 17:5-6

The apostles said to the Lord, "Increase our faith!" And the Lord said, "If you had faith like a mustard seed, you would say to this mulberry tree, 'Be uprooted and be planted in the sea'; and it would obey you."

Well, mulberry and fig trees are not quite mountains, but the concept is the same. With just a mustard seed amount of faith, we can do what otherwise seems impossible to our rational minds. We can remove great obstacles from our lives, and we can destroy that which should be bearing fruit in our lives but is merely taking up space.

Given the first rendering in ***Matthew***, which came on the heels of the inability of the disciples to remove a demon from a boy, we can understand **mountains** to be a picture, a metaphor, for large seemingly immovable obstacles in our lives that we just do not have the ability in our

The Triple Catch to Moving Mountains

humanity to conquer, whether that obstacle manifests itself in sickness, brokenness, weakness, addictions, restraints, control, etc.

In contrast to these large obstacles, what is unique about both the mulberry and the fig tree is that they are fruit bearing trees. In the case of the fig tree, there was no fruit on it, and so it was cursed. Perhaps there are situations in your life in which you fully expected to obtain “delicious fruit,” but have ended up with nothing but barren branches and leaves, be it in work, relationships, or in all the dreams and desires in your heart.

This is what Jesus experienced when He came to Israel (which is imaged by the fig tree). He came to His very own people, but they bore little to no fruit of true faith, and so the tree, a metaphor of the nation, was cursed for having no fruit. And not only did the tree wither, but before long the religious nation ceased to exist. The point is that Jesus used these metaphors to speak of very real struggles in our lives.

The common element of these passages is that they say, “If you **now** have faith” (rendered in the *present* tense). And two of the renderings add that your faith must be at least the size of a mustard seed. The imagery and humiliation are not lost on us. We all know that a mustard seed is tiny. So, what does that say about our faith? Was Jesus rebuking us, declaring that we do not have enough faith? Do we need more faith?

I do not think so; many of us have walked some exceptionally long and treacherous roads with God, and it has taken great faith to endure. Far from a rebuke, I think Jesus was making the point that truly little faith is needed to do amazing and unfathomable things. In other words, Jesus is affirming that everything is possible with God, and therefore nothing is impossible for us with God³, and it does not take a lot of faith.

This gives rise to His statement: “I tell you, you can pray for anything, and if you believe that you've received it, it will be yours.”⁴

So, what is the problem? Speaking for myself, this has not been my experience. Has God

³ *Matthew 17:20, 19:26; Mark 9:23, 10:27, 14:36; Luke 18:27*

⁴ *Mark 11:24*

The Triple Catch to Moving Mountains

moved mountains for me? Absolutely yes! Has God answered outlandish prayers? Absolutely yes! But have I just commanded those mountains to be gone from my life and they were tossed aside? No! That has not been my practical reality; therefore, it is also not my expectation when I pray, especially the whole “immediately” or “at once” affect. In my horizon I see mountain after mountain that I have rebuked, prayed against, and still it stands there seemingly immovable.

Honestly, I have been conditioned by my practical experience to, more-often-than-not, act like that woman who had to beg the unjust judge over and over and over to grant her request, and finally, out of annoyance, he did it.⁵ I would venture to guess that many others have had the same conditioning and are not all that confident when it comes to “immediately” or “at once” responses to our prayers. After all, when I am praying and I am hoping for the thunder to rumble and the Spirit to move, I tend to experience the exact opposite – an uncomfortable amount of silence. What about you?

THE CATCH

Ah, now we get to the **CATCH**, there is always a **CATCH**.

Jesus addressed this issue of what we can expect from our prayers on four different occasions, but if that is not our experience, it leads me to believe that there is a pre-condition, something vital we are missing in our understanding of prayer and the outcomes we should expect. And yes, there is a **CATCH**; and it is this **CATCH** that starts our journey of assembling a vital piece of the treasure map.

Jesus clearly said that **we must not doubt** or **have no doubt in our hearts**.⁶ Ok, that is a pretty big requirement, kind of a huge **CATCH**. This clearly begs the question, does having doubt mean we do not have enough faith? Remember, in *Luke* the disciples asked Jesus to increase their faith; they obviously did not think they had enough faith to get the job done. Should we be asking God for more faith so we can overcome all that doubt?

No! Jesus answered their request by saying that just the tiniest amount of faith is needed.

⁵ *Luke 18:1-6*

⁶ *Matthew 21:21; Mark 11:23*

The Triple Catch to Moving Mountains

They did not need more, they had enough—the amount of their faith was not the issue. In fact, we will find that faith and doubt are not opposites of each other, rather antagonists. The presence of doubt does not mean that we need more faith; it just means we need to learn how to exercise the faith that we have been given.

There is a significant difference between faith and doubt. I do not think many of us who have walked the pathways of faith doubt that God is big enough or powerful enough to do anything that we ask Him to do. We believe He is El Shaddai, God Almighty and El Gibbor, the mighty God. However, we tend to doubt that He will actually do what we ask of Him. After all, we have been conditioned by all those unanswered prayers we have cried out to Him over the years, not just to move mountains, but sometimes to move just a few little stones.

But since we often experience nothing remarkable, we take a deep dive into how much we have disappointed Him and failed Him. That has to be the reason that He will not answer us—we simply have not been good enough for God. Does that explain all our unanswered prayers? Do we need to be less sinful to earn the right to His ear, to earn the right for Him to act on our behalf? Sometimes it feels that way, at least that is what our doubt tells us.

Relationally, each one of those unanswered petitions causes our heart to cringe every time we come to Him and ask Him for something—especially those things about which we desire “immediate” results and need answers now.

So, on-the-one-hand we have faith in Yahweh, believing that all things are possible through Him; after all, we come to Him with our requests and do not seek the answer in some other god, in man, in ourselves, or in anything that comes from this world. Yet, on-the-other-hand, we are *flooded* with doubt because, as I said before, the immediate withering of the fig tree or the casting of the mountain into the sea has simply not been our reality.

And to say we are *flooded* with doubt is not just a metaphor, doubt tends to scream loud through every part of our being. And as much as we try “in faith” to claim the truths of the Bible, doubt still attacks.

Let's summarize this first part.

The Triple Catch to Moving Mountains

Jesus says that with just a modicum of faith, just the tiniest amount, we can move mountains, literally cast these huge obstacles in our lives into the sea. He also said we can whither the barren fig tree or the mulberry tree and watch it immediately dry up from the roots. In fact, all things are possible to the one who believes.⁷

But there is a **CATCH**. Jesus clearly said that **we must not doubt** or we must **have no doubt in our hearts**.⁸ I don't know about you, but this issue of doubt is huge, it is always spinning in the back of my mind, and when I pray, it tends to leap forward and scream at me: "it's not going to happen."

So, do we rebuke doubt? Is doubt a mountain or a tree? How do we wrangle up the ability to control our doubt since it seems to have a life of its own? Oh, so many questions and so few answers. And this leads us to the **DOUBLE CATCH**—the **CATCH** to the **CATCH**.

THE DOUBLE CATCH

For years, I felt like there was nowhere to go with these verses. I always tried not to doubt, but somehow, I never mastered having no doubt in my heart. Therefore, I would read these passages and just flip the pages, all the while hoping that one day I would understand, that one day I would have "enough faith" to live a life of power filled with dramatic deliverance—a life without doubt.

Then, as if catching a glimpse of light in the dark of night, I realized that "without doubt" in both passages was rendered in the *passive* voice. Hallelujah! What a revelation! What a powerful unveiling of truth! The *passive* voice means that an outside force, a 3rd party, is the one who is responsible for the act. And we are a passive receiver. So, what does that really mean?

The doubt which floods through our being when we pray is God's responsibility and not ours. If it was rendered in the *active* or the *middle* voice, it would in one-way-shape-or-form fall on our backs to remove, but since it is rendered in the *passive* voice, it is 100% God's responsibility.

⁷ **Mark 9:23**

⁸ **Matthew 21:21; Mark 11:23**

The Triple Catch to Moving Mountains

Moreover, the Spirit says that God has already allotted to each person a measure of faith.⁹ Therefore, everyone has the potential (the appropriate amount of faith) to exercise the moving mountains kind of faith. In our passages in both *Matthew* and *Mark*, having faith is rendered in the *present* tense and *active* voice. Thus, it is clearly our responsibility to exercise our faith—something we do with what we have been given. **BUT** (and that is a huge “**but**”) we still need God to give us hearts that do not doubt.

Again, this is the reason why I think Jesus was not so much rebuking the disciples for their lack of faith as He was making a statement about what is possible with their faith if it was properly understood and utilized.

The “**DOUBLE CATCH**” however is that God is the only one who can cause our hearts to not doubt; that is something not within our ability, nor is it our responsibility. Oh, and “not doubting” is also rendered in the *aorist* tense and not the *present* tense. Thus, it is not just dealing with a decision we are to make in our now; rather, having no doubt in our heart is to be our overall reality. If someone were to take a video of us, it should reveal that having no doubt is our way of life!

Let's quickly summarize what we have learned

If we want to have great obstacles removed from our life, if we want to instantly experience the dead and dying trees withering before us, there is the requirement for each of us to have faith. **Check**, God has given each of us a measure of faith (presumably bigger than a mustard seed). Therefore, we are fully equipped for action; we have been given what is necessary.

Next, when we pray for things to be done in our life, we must not doubt, or we must not let anything cause us to doubt. But being in the *passive* voice, we do not have control over that part of our experience. Therefore, we have the requirement for God to give us **hearts that do not doubt**.

As for me, I cannot check that one off the list yet. That is a big one. So how does this happen? Like the woman with the unjust judge, do we beg God over and over and over and over to give

⁹ *Romans 12:3*

The Triple Catch to Moving Mountains

us a heart that does not doubt and just wait and wait for Him to answer?

Personally, I think the answer to this question is right in front of our faces, but it comes from an angle we would never expect, and so I believe we have, for the most part, missed it. And this leads us to the **TRIPPLE CATCH**.

BUT WE WILL HAVE TO SAVE THAT FOR OUR NEXT PODCAST.