

# Did Jesus Give Us a Blank Check for Our Prayers?

*“Jesus answered them, ‘Have faith in God. For truly I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, “Be removed and be thrown into the sea,” and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says will come to pass, he will have whatever he says’” (Mark 11:22-23, MEV).*

Did Jesus give us a blank check for our prayers? Shall we just fill in the amount of whatever we want and sign our name—and, so long as we do it in expectation, it will be done for us?

These verses seem to indicate a hearty yes to those questions. But wait a minute! Context is always vital to understanding the text.

What is the context of these verses? Jesus cursed the fig tree, and a day later the disciples noticed it had withered from the roots. In response to their amazement, Jesus used the incident as an opportunity to teach about faith. In the rest of the New Testament we see how the disciples understood Jesus’ teaching on faith.

It’s a two-sided coin. The side we like best is the faith that changes our circumstances. We certainly see that in the healing of the man who was lame from birth (Acts 3:1–10), the many miraculous signs and wonders done by the apostles among the people (Acts 5:12), the raising of Dorcas from the dead (Acts 9:36–42), and Peter’s supernatural release from prison (Acts 12:3–17).

The side of faith we may like least is the kind of faith where our circumstances do not change, but we are called upon to trust the Lord anyway. Examples from Acts show this side of faith as well: James’ untimely death (Acts 12:1–2); the stoning of Paul at Lystra (Acts 14:19); his beating at

Philippi (Acts 16:22–24); and his shipwreck at Malta (Acts 27:27–44).

Faith is not faith in faith, but faith in God. We are not at liberty to lift one or two sentences from Jesus and set them in opposition to what He taught elsewhere about prayer: we are to pray “Thy will be done” (Matthew 6:10), and our requests are conditioned by asking in His name (John 14:14).

Jesus refrained from asking wrongly—choosing to embrace the cross when He could have asked for help from twelve legions of angels (Matthew 26:53).

The illustration Jesus gives of the mountain cast into the sea is a form of speech called hyperbole—an exaggeration for effect. The disciples never took it literally (even as they didn’t take literally, “cut off your hand” or “pluck out your eye” in Matthew 5:29–30) since they never commanded a mountain to disappear.

Jesus’ teaching on prayer is a direct contrast to the prayers of the religious leaders. Those prayers lacked expectation. They were often done for show. Such prayers testified to the idea that God is not interested in us. They manifested no expectation.

Instead, Jesus wants us to pray with faith—a faith that first asks Him to change our circumstances. Why else would the early church have been praying fervently for the release of Peter from prison (Acts 12:5)? On the other hand, there is the fervent prayer that doesn’t change our circumstances. Instead, the Lord says to us as He did to the apostle Paul, *“My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness”* (2 Cor. 12:9, MEV).

We are not called upon to have faith in faith, but faith in God.

**A Prayer:** *Lord Jesus, forgive me for going through the motions*

*of prayer without awareness or expectation that You listen and answer.*

*Excerpted from Dr. Wood's book, Fearless: How Jesus Changes Everything, available from Vital Resources.*

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