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The Possibilities of God

by A. T. Pierson

A sermon given at the City Hall in Glasgow, Scotland in 1907

The God of the Bible is the God of limitless possibilities. The Lord stated, "With men it is impossible," then added, "With God all things are possible." He went on to say, "All things are possible to him that believeth." There is no limit to the possibilities of God; there is a very serious limit to the possibilities of man, but when man is joined to God by faith, then God's possibilities become man's possibilities. This is so great a theme that I scarcely dare to touch it. If there is anything that is appalling in the church today, it is the wealth of the promises of God and the poverty of our faith in these promises. The Bible contains nearly nine thousand promises, the majority of which are addressed to the believing soul. The scope of these promises is both inexhaustive and universal. Let us confine our attention to the promises that are addressed to our faith. You will find three passages which speak of these great possibilities of God.

Scripture and the Possibilities of God

Firstly, in Matthew 17:14-21, the context of this passage is immediately following the transfiguration. When our Lord came down from the mount, He was met by a man whose son was possessed of a demon. He had brought this son to the disciples, and they found that it was impossible for them to cast out the demon. Then the man brought his son to our Lord.

Jesus rebuked the devil, and he departed out of him; and the child was cured from that very hour. Then came the disciples to Jesus apart, and said, "Why could we not cast him out?" And Jesus said unto them, "Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, *If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible to you.*"

Secondly, if you turn to Mark 11:22, you will find another lesson of a very similar character. Our Lord had cursed a barren fig tree on His way from Bethany to Jerusalem at the eventide, and when He came to it again in the morning His disciples observed that the tree was dried up from the roots. Notice the emphasis, "Dried up from the roots." Clear down to the bottom of the tree this withering curse had penetrated. And Peter calling to remembrance saith unto Him, "Master, behold, the fig tree which Thou cursed is withered away. And Jesus answering saith unto them, *Have faith in God. For verily I say unto you that whosoever shall*

**Attempt
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so great for
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to failure
unless God
is in it."**

Dr. A. T. Pierson
(1858-1911)

—Missionary statesman,
preacher, and author

say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith. Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them.' "

Once more, in Luke 17, our Lord had been teaching His disciples that they must exercise almost unlimited forgiveness toward their brethren who were offending them. "If he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shall forgive him. And the apostles said unto the Lord, "Increase our faith." We do not readily see the connection between such a petition and the answer, why should they ask for increase of faith when He was asking telling them not to exercise resentment? They had the sense to see that faith was the source the power that is exhibited in grace. Now, he says, "If ye had faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye might say unto this sycamore tree, 'Be thou plucked up by the root, and be thou planted in the sea'; and it should obey you."

Impossibilities of Man and Possibilities of God

You see all these Scriptures are similar in the lesson they teach, and yet dissimilar. They are similar in this; they tell us that what is impossible to man is possible to God and possible to a believing child of God. They differ in the circumstances under which these sayings were given to them. In one case it was a natural obstacle, a mountain in the way, and faith can remove that natural obstacle, a hindrance of nature. In the second instance, it is possession by a demon. Here faith enters the world of spirits and deals with malignant, wicked spirits. In the third case faith enters into the domain of the human soul and deals with forgiveness.

These are the whole of the realms of the universe in which faith could exercised any power. In the natural world dealing with natural forces, in the spiritual dealing with fallen spirits, and in the human spirit dealing with that little world that is within every man. Yet our Lord says, if ye have faith you can remove a natural obstacle, you can cast out a demon, and you can root up a deeply-rooted temper. What marvelous promises these are! Truly, "(God) is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think..."(Eph. 3:20).

Faith and the Mustard Seed

Notice this grain of mustard seed. Why is it introduced here? "Oh! on account of its size," some would say. I don't believe any such thing as to the size of the seed. How easy it would have been for the Lord to say "as a grain of sand." It is rather that the mustard seed differs from the mountain in the fact that the mountain is a dead mass of matter, while the mustard seed has the secret of life in it. That is a great lesson for us. Here is an obstacle in the natural world, but no life; here is the demon in the spiritual, but no divine life; here are your evil dispositions, but no divine life in them, it is the life of the Devil. Get the life of God once within you, in truth, and all these things will be vanquished.

It is not because of anything in me, it is because of something in God; and it is because God is in me that such things become possible—things that without Him would be absolutely impossible. You

***"Attempt
great
things for
God,
believe
great
things
from God,
ask great
things of
God."***

J. Hudson Taylor
(1832-1905)

*Pioneer missionary to China and
founder of China Inland Mission,
now known as OMF Int'l.*

become “godlike” when linked by faith to God’s power, and the power that is in God comes into you, and things become possible to you that were impossible before. As you lay hold of the power of God by interceding prayer in the USA lives are changed in India and Africa!

I have seen a man, a victim of drink, get down on his knees in my study in Detroit, confess his sin, accept Christ as his Savior, and rise up an utterly changed man. I have seen an adulterer going to the woman with whom he lived in sin, and saying, “There must be no more sin,” and then bring that woman to Christ. I have seen wonderful things done. When a man gets hold of God, that which was impossible to him becomes possible.

I call your special attention to the expression, “Have faith in God” (Mark 11:22). (Gk. “εχετε πιστιν θεου”) It is a peculiar form of expression nowhere else used. It means, “hold the faithfulness of God.” Not “exercise the faith,” but “get hold of the divine faithfulness of God.” He never promises without performing. Command this sycamine-tree, command this demon to leave this child that is possessed, and what God can do He will do. What tremendous power there is in faith, faith is that bond of union with God, faith that holds the “faithfulness of God.” It is a wonderful thing.

Faith and Prayer

And now, let me say, the whole power of prayer depends upon the faith that offers the prayer. Believe that ye shall receive them and ye shall have them. “This is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask any thing according to his will, He heareth us: and if we know that He hears us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of Him” (1 John 5:14-15). Now, James has more lessons on prayer than, I think, can be found in any of the other epistles in the New Testament. In the first, fourth, and fifth chapters you will find the faith that is exhibited in prayer. “If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him” (James 1:5). But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea, driven with wind and tossed. The peculiarity of a wave is that it cannot stay anywhere. How like a double-minded man, up he goes, and down he goes.

Look at that scene on Mount Carmel. It is a great lesson about faith. Elijah was in the spirit to call down floods. There had been no rains for many days; now the time comes for rain, so he cast himself down upon the earth, and puts his head between his knees, shutting out everything but God. He wanted to know nothing of the outside world. Then he said to his servant, “You go and take an observation look towards the sea.” The servant went up and looked, but nothing appeared to the servant’s sight, and the servant came back and said, “There is nothing.” Well, that’s just what I had expected; I have been asking and I did not get anything at all. But Elijah says, “Go again.” And again and again he went, till it came to pass at the seventh time, that the servant said, “There ariseth a little cloud out of the sea, like a man’s hand.” Why like a man’s hand? Because a man’s hand had been raised in supplication and left its shadow in the sky! And he said to his servant, “Go up, say unto Ahab, ‘Prepare thy chariot, and get thee down, that therain stop thee not.’” There’s an example of faith. There had been three

*“Far better to
dare mighty
things, to win
glorious
triumphs,
even though
checkered
with failure,
than to rank
with the poor
spirits who
never
attempt much
at all.”*

Theodore Roosevelt
(1858-1919)

Twenty-sixth President of
United States



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years of drought, but Elijah went right on praying in absolute confidence, and when there was only a shadow, like a man's hand on the firmament, he knew that in an incredibly short space of time the heavens would be black with rain. You are to hold fast to your faith till you get an answer. The prayer of faith can only be answered in the realm of faith. We must be careful that the life of faith does not come down to the level of sight. We must "Walk by faith not by sight." Oh! how little we know the sublime rest of faith, that takes all to God and leaves it there, and brings no burden away from the throne of Grace. That is when we begin to sound the depths of the possibilities of a prayer-answering-God.

What a stupendous witness to our prayer-hearing God was George Muller, who had but a shilling to start. When he died he had only £180 to his credit in the bank, but in his life he received and distributed £1,500,000, yet never appealed to a man. Go see those buildings with their 1,700 windows sheltering 2,200 human beings. I asked him two years before he died, "Did you ever have to miss a meal because God had failed you?" "Never." "Did you ever have to postpone a meal more than a half an hour?" "Never." "Did you ever go to bed without enough provision for the morrow?" "No less than five thousand times have I gone to bed with no provision for the morrow." "Did you sleep soundly?" "Every time."

Conclusion

My friends, it is a most serious matter that calls for the profoundest prostration, that in all this multitude of possibilities and practical knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ, there should be so few of us who know what it is to make a splendid venture of faith on the omnipotence and omniscience of the unchangeable God. Surely, surely, we ought to fast and pray that we may know something more of the possibilities of God.

Note about Dr. A. T. Pierson - (1837-1911) A pastor, missionary statesman, editor, and author. In 1891 he filled the pulpit of the Metropolitan Tabernacle, London, for the ill C. H. Spurgeon. He authored the biography of George Muller: *George Muller of Bristol*. He was the editor of *Missionary Review of the World* and later he was a consulting editor on the Scofield Reference Bible.