

Matthew 17:20

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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 unto you.

Analysis

Jesus' explanation '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 unto you' addresses the disciples' failure to cast out the demon (v. 16). The problem was 'unbelief,' not lack of ability. The mustard seed analogy emphasizes faith's quality, not quantity—even tiny genuine faith accomplishes impossible things. The mountain-moving metaphor represents seemingly impossible obstacles overcome by faith.

Historical Context

The disciples had previously cast out demons (10:1, 8), so their failure here confused them. Jesus diagnoses unbelief—perhaps presuming on past success rather than trusting God presently. The mustard seed, proverbially tiny, illustrates that even small genuine faith accesses infinite divine power. Mountain-moving was rabbinic imagery for overcoming great difficulties.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. What 'mountains' in your life need mustard-seed faith to move?
2. How does unbelief limit God's power working through you?

Interlinear Text

ὁ	δὲ	Ἰησοῦς	εἶπεν	αὐτοῖς	Διὰ	τὴν	ἀπιστίαν	
G3588	And	Jesus	said	unto them	Because	G3588	unbelief	
	G1161	G2424	G2036	G846	G1223		G570	
ὑμῶν·	ἀμὴν	γὰρ	λέγω	ὑμῖν	ἐὰν	ἔχητε	πίστιν	ὥς
of your	verily	for	I say	unto you	If	ye have	faith	as
G5216	G281	G1063	G3004	G5213	G1437	G2192	G4102	G5613
κόκκον	σινάπεως	ἐρεῖτε	τῷ	ὄρει	τούτῳ			
a grain	of mustard seed	ye shall say	G3588	mountain	unto this			
G2848	G4615	G2046		G3735	G5129			
μεταβήσεται·	ἐντεῦθεν	ἐκεῖ	καὶ	μεταβήσεται·	καὶ			
Remove	hence	to yonder place	and	Remove	and			
G3327	G1782	G1563	G2532	G3327	G2532			
οὐδὲν	ἀδυνατήσῃ	ὑμῖν						
nothing	shall be impossible	unto you						
G3762	G101	G5213						

Additional Cross-References

Luke 17:6 (Faith): And the Lord said, If ye had faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye might say unto this sycamine tree, Be thou plucked up by the root, and be thou planted in the sea; and it should obey you.

Mark 11:23 (Faith): For verily I say unto you, That whosoever shall 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.

Luke 18:27 (Parallel theme): And he said, The things which are impossible with men are possible with God.

Luke 1:37 (Parallel theme): For with God nothing shall be impossible.

Matthew 21:21 (Faith): Jesus answered and said unto them, Verily I say unto you, If ye have faith, and doubt not, ye shall not only do this which is done to the fig tree, but also if ye shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; it shall be done.

Mark 9:23 (Faith): Jesus said unto him, If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth.

1 Corinthians 13:2 (Faith): And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing.

Matthew 13:31 (Parallel theme): Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field:

Mark 4:31 (Parallel theme): It is like a grain of mustard seed, which, when it is sown in the earth, is less than all the seeds that be in the earth:

John 11:40 (Faith): Jesus saith unto her, Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?