

Spiritual Deadness Exposed

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Preacher: Rev RJ Campbell

[0 : 0 0] Welcome to our service and as we come together around the Word of God, let us seek His blessing upon His Word. Let us pray. Eternal and ever-blessed Lord, we give thanks unto Thee that Thou hast given to us this opportunity once again to come within the courts of Thine own house.

What a desire in our hearts to worship Thee and to acknowledge Thee as our Creator-Redeemer through the Lord Jesus Christ.

We give thanks that in and through Thy Son that we have boldness and confidence to come into Thy presence and to seek Thy mercy and to seek Thy grace to help us in our time of need.

And as we come before Thee, O Lord, in this act of worship, we are conscious that Thou art glorious in holiness, that Thou art fearful in praises, that Thou art a God who is of purer eye than to look upon sin.

But we give thanks that Thou art a God who art doing wonders in the hearts of sinners such as we are by Thine own grace.

[1 : 2 2] We give thanks that Thou art a God who is full of grace, that Thou art a God who is full of pity and full of compassion. We give thanks that Thou art a God who is full of grace, that Thou art a God who is full of grace.

We give thanks that Thou art a God who is full of grace, that Thou art a God who is full of grace. We give thanks that Thou art a God who is full of grace, that Thou art a God who is full of grace. For we are dependent upon Thee, for we can do nothing without Thee. O Lord, we acknowledge that.

We need Thy Spirit to enlighten our understanding. We need Thy Spirit to open our hearts. We need Thy Spirit to apply Thy Word to us in a way that would make Thy Word to be effectual in our lives.

We give Thee thanks, O Lord, for all the tokens of Thy goodness and kindness that Thou art so abundantly outpour upon us in things that are temporal as well as in things that are spiritual.

So we come at this evening hour and we seek Thy blessing upon our community, our homes and our families and all our loved ones wherever they may be.

[3 : 0 5] O Lord, Thou knowest and Thou knowest their needs. And we pray that out of the riches of Thy grace that Thou would be able to meet with their needs.

We give Thee thanks for the Gospel, for the good news of Jesus Christ. And we pray that as the Gospel is proclaimed this night, that it may go out in the power and demonstration of Thine own Spirit, in convicting and converting, and in the building of Thine own Church here on earth.

Remember us as a nation, we pray that as a new Parliament is being set up, that Thou would grant them wisdom in all that they endeavour to do.

O Lord, we need Thine own intervention, for we know that they go in a downward path, both morally and ethically.

But we pray that Thou would intervene and that Thou would bring them back to Thine own statutes, to Thine own law. That Thou would bring them back to a place where they would honour Thine own name.

[4 : 21] O Lord, Thou art the Sovereign God. Thou art the one who ruleth in heaven and in earth, and all things are in Thine own hands. Thou art working out Thine own purpose to the glory of Thine own name.

We remember those who are persecuted for their faith. O Lord, we bring them before Thee and seek that Thou would help them, that Thou would uphold them, that Thou, O Lord, would be their strength in their struggle.

O Lord, we give Thee thanks for the measure of freedom that we have in our own land, to come together and to worship Thee and to be Thy witness in this corner of Thine own vineyard.

We pray, O Lord, that Thou would remember those who are ill. May Thy healing hand be upon them. And those who may be mourning the passing of loved ones, we pray that Thine own comfort would fill their hearts.

Remember our young people and our children. We seek Thy blessing to be upon them as they grow up, that they may grow up in the fear of the Lord.

[5 : 36] We remember those who are indifferent and careless to the claims of Thy Word. Have mercy upon them, we pray Thee. O Lord, we pray that Thou would bless Thy Word this evening as we come to read and to meditate upon it.

Open our understanding, we pray Thee. Lead us into Thine own Word, that we may be encouraged and strengthened through Thy Word. And we pray, O Lord, that we may see the wonder of Thine own grace as we reflect and as we study Thy Word.

The gracious provision that Thou hast made for sinners such as we are in and through Thy Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. We seek that Thy worship may be acceptable to Thee, not because of any merit that belongs to us, but in and through the merits of the One who is at Thine own right hand, who intercedes for us, the One who has promised that He will come one day and receive us unto Himself.

We give Thee thanks for all the promises of Thy Word. Give Thee thanks that they have all been sealed for us through the blood of the everlasting covenant. We ask, O Lord, that Thou would continue with us now as we come to wait upon Thee.

And O Lord, we ask with the forgiveness of our many sins and forgiveness for all our shortcomings. It is in the name of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. Amen.

[7 : 12] Let us now read the Word of God as we find it in the New Testament in the Gospel according to Mark, chapter 11 and at verse 12. Mark, chapter 11, verse 12.

And His disciples heard it. And they come to Jerusalem, and Jesus went into the temple, and began to cast out them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the moneychangers and the seats of them that sold doves, and would not suffer that any man should carry any vessel through the temple.

And He told us, saying unto them, Is it not written, My house shall be called of all nations the house of prayer? But ye have made it a den of thieves.

And the scribes and the chief priests heard it, and saw how they might destroy Him, for they feared Him, because all the people were astonished at His doctrine. And when He was come, He went out of the city, and in the morning as they passed by, they saw the fig tree dried up from the roots.

And Peter calling to remembrance, saith unto him, Master, behold the fig tree which thou cursest is withered away. And Jesus answering, saith unto them, Have faith in God.

[8 : 54] 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 receive 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.

And when ye stand praying, forgive if ye have ought against any, that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses. But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses.

And they come again to Jerusalem, and as he was walking in the temple, there came to him the chief priests and the scribes and the elders, and say unto him, By what authority doest thou these things?

And who gave thee this authority to do these things? And Jesus answered and said unto them, I will also ask of you one question, and answer me, and I will tell you by what authority I do these things.

[10 : 02] The baptism of John, was it from heaven, or of men? Answer me. And the reason with themselves saying, If we shall say from heaven, he will say, Why then did you not believe him?

But if we shall say of men, they feared the people, For all men counted John, that he was a prophet indeed. And they answered and said unto Jesus, We cannot tell.

And Jesus answering saith unto them, Neither do I tell you by what authority I do these things. May the Lord bless unto us the reading of that portion of his word, and seeking his blessing and help.

May we read again from verse 12. And on the morrow, when they were come from Bethany, he was hungry. And seeing a fig tree afar off, having leaves, he came, if happily he might find anything thereon.

And when he came to it, he found nothing but leaves, for the time of figs was not yet. And Jesus answered and said unto it, No man eat fruit of thee hereafter forever.

[11 : 07] And his disciples heard it. And they come to Jerusalem. And Jesus went into the temple, and began to cast out them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the money changers, and the seats of them that sold doves.

And would not suffer that any man should carry any vessel through the temple. And he taught them, saying unto them, Is it not written, My house shall be called of all nations the house of prayer, but ye have made it a den of thieves.

Last week we reflected upon Jesus as he entered the city of Jerusalem riding upon a colt. And after entering the city, the first thing he did was to enter into the temple.

And he inspected the temple. We read, And Jesus entered into Jerusalem, and into the temple, and when he had looked round about upon all things, and now the eventide was come, he went out unto Bethany with the twelve.

I think it would be right for us to assume that he, along with his disciples, lodged in his favourite home in Bethany, that is, the home of Lazarus and his sisters.

[12 : 33] And we read here that on the next day that they came from Bethany, and that Jesus was hungry. And seeing a fig tree afar off, having leaves, he came, if happily he might find anything their own.

And when he came to it, he found nothing but leaves, for the time of figs was not yet. And Jesus answered and said unto it, No man eat fruit of thee hereafter forever.

And his disciples heard it. The action of Jesus upon the fig tree has come in for much criticism. Why should he destroy a tree?

But the destruction of the fig tree was a symbolic act. Mark reminds us that the time of figs was not yet.

That is, it was not the season for figs. However, fig trees put out their leaves in the spring, at the time of the Passover, which was the time that this took place.

[13 : 42] And with the leaves comes small fruits, which mature, and eventually ripen, as mature figs. And these small fruits, you can eat them, although we are told that they are not delicious, but they will provide food for a hungry person.

Now the leaves promised that there would be some fruit upon the tree, even if they were not ripe figs. But when Jesus inspected the tree, when he lifted the leaves and inspected the tree, it was barren of fruit, or even of these small fruits.

And so he said, No man eat fruit of thee hereafter forever. Now, we shall leave the fig tree for a moment, but we shall return to it before the end of our service.

Jesus made his way to Jerusalem. And again, he along with his disciples entered the temple. Now, this temple was the one that we reflected upon recently.

It was built over 500 years before by Serubbabel when the children of Judah returned from their captivity in Babylon.

[15 : 07] Now, I do not want to go into Jewish history of what took place between the Testaments, between the Old Testament and the New Testament.

In our Bibles, it is just a blank page. But that blank page is for 400 years. And a lot took place between the Old Testament and the New Testament.

And in fact, there are some things in the New Testament that we cannot properly understand unless we know something of what took place those 400 years between the Old Testament and the New Testament.

And I know for some people that history can be dry and boring. However, history is important.

For instance, where did the Pharisees and the Sadducees come from? We do not find them in the Old Testament. We do find them at the very beginning of the New Testament.

[16 : 15] So it was during the period between the Testaments that they came. To find out their origin, we need to enter into history.

We need to enter into those 400 years between the Testaments. Many changes, as I've said, to place those 400 years among the Jews.

During that time, Judah became part of the solicit empire. And during that time, the temple was saluted and its religious services stopped.

Judaism was effectively outlawed. There was a notorious leader by the name of Antiochus Ephiphanes.

The pronouncement might not be quite perfect. But in 167 BC, he ordered an altar to Zeus to be set up in the temple.

[17 : 17] And he also, according to Jewish historians, compelled Jews to dissolve the laws of the country, to keep their infants uncircumcised, and to sacrifice the flesh of pigs upon the altar.

And any who opposed these laws were put to death. It was a terrible time among the Jews. And during this time, there was what has become known as the Maccabean revolt against this illicit empire.

And following the Maccabean victory, the temple was rededicated. This period of rule became known as the Hasomian period. Now, this period of rule came to an end because of civil war.

And the Romans intervened under Pompeii and took over Judea. And they set up Herod the Great as king of Judah. Now, Herod the Great was interested in building projects.

And during his time, the temple was completely refurbished. The temple of Zerubbabel was completely refurbished. And the original structure was totally overhauled into large and magnificent building.

[18 : 45] Actually, it was not completed until 64 AD, just six years before Jerusalem was again destroyed in 70 AD.

Now, that is just a brief summary of the temple building that Jesus entered into at this time.

The temple itself was surrounded by four coats. First, there was the inner coat called the coat of the priests. And in the centre was the altar.

The second coat was only accessible to the Jewish men. The third coat was known as the coat of the women, which was accessible only to Jewish women.

As you know, in those days, men and women were kept separated. So, there was a coat for the men and then there was a coat for the women. And the fourth coat was the coat of the Gentiles.

[19 : 48] And it was in this coat, in this outer coat, that the merchants set up their stalls. Now, these merchants were extremely busy during the three great festivals of Judaism, that of Pentecost, trumpets and Passover.

Because big crowds would come to Jerusalem to hold these feasts. and the merchants were involved in two types of business.

There were the selling of animals for the sacrifices and secondly, there were the money changers. The animals which were sold were, of course, those required by the law.

Cattle, sheep and goats, also doves. It was hard for the Jew in coming up to the Jewish festivals to bring an animal with them, especially if they had to travel some distance.

So, instead, they would bring cash with them and when they got to the temple, they would exchange the cash for Jewish currency and then they would buy the animal and then they would offer it on the altar.

[21 : 04] So that the court of the Gentiles was a very busy place, a very noisy place, and sometimes it would be chaotic to be there.

However, on arriving at Jerusalem and having entered the temple the first time, Jesus took in the scene at a glance. He looked around and he saw what was happening.

He saw that the court of the Gentiles were full of merchants who were exchanging money into Jewish currency and others who sold the animals.

Of course, Jesus had been in the temple before, but on this occasion, amongst the impressive buildings, he saw those merchants doing a roaring trade and his heart burns within him.

You know, in the book of Acts chapter 17, we read about Paul, how his spirit was stirred in him when he saw the city of Athens given over to idolatry.

[22 : 10] glory. If that was true of Paul, how much more here as Jesus scans what is going on in the temple.

Jesus sees into the hearts of men and he saw their covetousness and their greed. He knew that they saw the religion as a very profitable thing where good money was to be made.

Besides their covetousness, there was the sheer profanity of it all. The love of money was bad enough, but here in God's holy temple, these merchants were not interested at all in serving the Lord.

For them, this was just a business. The Passover was a great time because there was more business to be done. it was a money making machine and Jesus knew that.

Now, there was a time when these people would have done their business nearby and that was fine. There was absolutely nothing wrong with that.

[23 : 24] There was a time and they would be outside the temple prisons and that was fine, but what has happened is that slowly and gradually they came within the temple prisons.

They were no longer to be found outside the temple prisons but they were to be found inside the temple. They were to be found in the court of the Gentiles.

And Jesus enters and the seal of his father's house consumed him. Jesus finds some loose rope out of which he made a scourge or a whip and he struck the money changers and the merchants who fled away.

We are told that he began to cast out them that sold and bought in the temple and overthrew the tables of the money changers and the seats of them that sold doves and would not suffer that any man should carry any vessel through the temple.

In fact, he closed the temple off. This is the only time in the Gospels that Jesus uses foch against people.

[24 : 36] And we may ask why is he using foch at this time? Well, he gives us the reason why. Is it not written, he says, my house shall be called of all nations the house of prayer, but ye have made it a den of thieves.

Now, what Jesus is doing here is he's quoting from the Old Testament. Is it not written, he says? And then he quotes from Isaiah chapter 56 verse 7, which reads, even them will I bring to my holy temple and make them joyful in my house of prayer, and their bond offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon mine altar, for mine house shall be called a house of prayer for all people.

And the second quotation is from Jeremiah chapter 7 verse 11. Is this house which is called by my name become a den of robbers in your eyes?

Behold, even I have seen it, saith the Lord. Now, for a moment, we're going to look at these two quotations. Is it not written, my house shall be called of all nations the house of prayer, but ye have made it a den of thee?

Well, the first quotation, as we said, was from Isaiah chapter 56. And the context of the quote is that no one is excluded from the membership of God's people.

[26 : 20] those who have joined themselves to the Lord are always to be welcomed and to be received. So let us reflect on the beginning of chapter 56, verse 3.

There we read, Neither let the son of the stranger that hath joined himself to the Lord speak saying, the Lord hath utterly separated me from his people.

Neither let the eunuch say, behold, I am a dry tree. All those who have joined themselves to the Lord are to be welcomed to the place where the Lord is to be found.

You might say, does not Deuteronomy chapter 23 exclude the eunuch from joining the people of God? Well, the physical defects that pertained to the eunuch were possibly done in paganism.

It was probably due to pagan culture. But if such came to join themselves to the Lord, they were to be welcomed and they were to be received.

[27 : 36] The emphasis of Isaiah chapter 56 is upon covenant loyalty. for thus saith the Lord unto the eunuchs that keep my sabbath and choose the things that please me and take hold of my covenant even unto them will I give in my house and within my walls a place and a name better than of sons and of daughters.

I will give them an everlasting name that shall not be cut off. also the sons of the stranger that join themselves to the Lord to serve him and to love the name of the Lord to be his servants everyone that keepeth the Sabbath from polluting it and take hold of my covenant loyalty.

Now as we noted the fourth court was the court of the Gentiles and it was in this court that the merchants set up their stalls and by locating their business in the court of the Gentiles they were taking away the one place where the Gentiles could meet to worship God.

The leaders of Israel had forgotten that the temple was for all nations to worship. It wasn't exclusively for the Jews it was for all nations to worship.

A house of prayer for all people. You see we are not called upon to be exclusive in our worship but inclusive of all people.

[29 : 29] There is to be an openness to all those whose faith comes to rest in Jesus Christ who joins themselves to God in Christ and who practice loyalty to the Lord.

So the foreigner and the eunuch the son of a stranger who joined themselves to the Lord were not to feel themselves to be excluded from the worship of God.

Tonight whatever your past may have been whatever your past may have involved whatever pagan rites you might have been involved with. You might not have a church background.

You might have deep personal reasons that you don't want to talk about but do not say God will not receive me.

Do not say that you are excluded from the worship of God. The one thing that matters is that you join yourself to the Lord by faith that is by trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ.

[30 : 41] To rest in Christ and choose those things that please him and to hold fast on to the Lord that is what matters.

Sadly Israel had forgotten. the leaders of the temple had forgotten and this is a warning for me and for you lest we exclude people by our man made roles.

Jesus knew that his father had put his name and revealed his glory in this house but these people who were in the court of the Gentiles they despised him.

let us draw lines of exclusion let us not I should say let us not draw lines of exclusion that is offensive to God he wants us to erase such exclusion lines Jesus said to other sheep by hand which are not of this fold them also I must bring and they shall hear my voice and there shall be one fold and one shepherd remember our gospel stories the wise men came all the way from Persia to worship the Lord the Roman centurion who came to Jesus pleading for the healing of his servant trusted in Christ and you know and as thou believed so it be done unto thee the

Roman centurion came to faith in Christ while many children of the kingdom those who had the privileges of the law and the privileges of sacrifices and the privilege of the ordinances of God the Jewish people he said they will be cast out into outer darkness men from Persia a Roman centurion Samaritans and many more came to trust in Jesus Christ and to follow him in covenant loyalty the church of Jesus Christ is inclusive not exclusive now the second quotation that Jesus uses is from Jeremiah chapter 7 where God called Israel to repentance and warned them of impending judgment now I knew that I had preached on this chapter a few years ago so I looked up and it was in 2018 but if you are like me you will have probably forgotten that sermon so let me just give a brief summary the chapter belongs to what is called

[34:10] Jeremiah's temple sermon because God commanded Jeremiah to preach it at the temple it is a sermon that is reprinted in Jeremiah in chapter 26 with some additional detail the main text of the message is amend your ways and your doings and will cause you to dwell in this place that the message was delivered to a religiously observant people who could we could say about them that they were true church goers they were walking up the temple steps possibly bringing a sacrifice with them in order to worship God they were very devout people and yet it is to them that Jeremiah was to preach and to say to them amend your ways you see the people of Judah had come to put their trust in the outward observation of religion they had put their faith in a building instead of the living

God trust ye not in lying words saying the temple of the Lord the temple of the Lord the temple of the Lord are these they thought that outward observation of religion would save them they thought that as long as they went to the temple as long as they brought their sacrifice to the temple that that was suffice to save them they thought that as long as they fulfilled their religious obligations that they could do whatever they wanted with the rest of their lives it is as if we could say in our own day coming to church on a Sunday but doing whatever you want Monday to Saturday as long as you kept coming to the temple to the church on the Sabbath but do the rest of the week whatever you want there was certainly nothing wrong with the temple in

Jerusalem the people were supposed to go there for worship there is nothing wrong with going to church being baptized being a member in a particular church or doing daily devotions but the problem comes when you put your trust in those things instead of the Lord Jesus Christ we must trust in Christ alone for salvation now sadly although these people were outwardly observant on coming to the temple to worship they also were a people who followed other gods they burnt incense to Baal they were a people who neglected their social responsibilities to the fatherless and the widow and so on you see God requires not merely attending the temple but he also requires a right behaviour from the people and it is only when that is present that the worship of the temple becomes meaningful and not just an act of pretense the people of

Jeremiah's day were robbing God they were robbing God by neglecting the poor they were forsaking the widow they were abandoning the orphans and yet they came to the temple to worship as they had done nothing wrong the temple had become a safe house for them and Jesus says to the leaders of his day quoting Jeremiah but ye have made it a den of thieves there should have been a holy carefulness regarding all that pertained to the place of the divine presence Jesus was purging the temple of what should not have been present there he was purging the court of the Gentiles of what should not have been present there their attitude towards people the temple and worship was improper their attitude towards the

Gentiles was improper they filled their court with merchants therefore not allowing them to worship God that was the attitude that they had towards the Gentiles so improper attitudes were not simply confined to Jeremiah's generation it was there in the days of Jesus and we have to be examining ourselves as individuals as a church and congregation that we will not be exclusive and that we would be pleased with just an outward show of religion let us remember that the place of worship is nothing less than the worldwide mission of the gospel the place of worship is reaching out to people who are outside the community of faith and we are to remember them and to show them love and mercy and to show love and mercy to those that society has forgotten to come to the place of worship with a passion for worshipping

[40 : 01] God with the sincerity of a true heart that is what God requires of us when we come to worship him yes to come with a passion for worshipping God with the sincerity of a true heart well what was the response and the scribes and the chief priests heard it and saw how they might destroy him for they feared him because all the people were astonished at his doctrine Luke tells us in chapter 19 that Jesus taught daily in the temple he threw out these people he closed the temple for a time and when he reopened the temple he began to teach the people Jesus by example was teaching that the temple was the place for teaching the word of

God there in the temple Jesus was giving the gospel to the poor teaching them to show mercy and Matthew recalls for us that while he was there the blind and the lame came to him in the temple and that he healed them now the Jewish leaders had no time for such had no time to show such love and mercy these people were excluded but Jesus says they are included temple worship is inclusive not exclusive so when the blind and the lame came to him in the temple he healed them and he was calling them to worship God of course the scribes and the chief priests were not happy for he had turned their entire livelihood upside down they were making great profit there now Jesus and his disciples left the temple and presumably returned back to

Bethany and in the morning as they passed by they saw the fig tree dried up from the roots and Peter calling to remembrance saith unto him master behold the fig tree which thou cursest is withered away and Jesus answered and he saith unto them have faith in God now we said we would return to the fig tree and remember what we said about the fig tree that the fig tree was symbolic it was a picture of something else the prophets often spoke of Israel by the symbol of a thick tree in this instance the temple and the worship of Israel was like the tree it had leaves as it were and it looked healthy but it bore no fruit to God that was the way the temple and the worship of Israel was at this time looking at it it looked so healthy it looked so good just like the leaves of the fig tree but when the

Lord inspected the temple and the worship of Israel it was sparing no fruit to God symbolically the fig tree represented the spiritual deadness of Israel who while deeply religious outwardly with all the sacrifices and all the ceremonies they were spiritually barren because of their sin by cleansing the temple and cursing the fig tree causing it to wither and die Jesus was pronouncing his coming judgment of Israel he was demonstrating his power to carry it out it also teaches that the principle that religious profession and observation are not enough to guarantee salvation unless there is a fruit of a genuine salvation unless there is a fruit of genuine grace evidenced in the life of a person the lesson of the fig tree is that we should bear spiritual fruit not just the appearance of being religious

God judges fruitlessness and he expects as he tells the disciples in the upper room recorded for us I think it's in John chapter 15 that those of our relationship with him will bear much fruit and we have to look at this and examine ourselves we have to examine ourselves individually am I like the fig tree having leaves but no fruit now I can get through this world with being a fig tree with leaves that is not the point the point is that there is one who will come to inspect the one who will such my heart who will such me thoroughly the world cannot do that no one in the world can do that but the Lord does that he will come and inspect each one of us we may show leaves but are we showing genuine fruit of grace in our lives

[45 : 48] Jesus told them to have faith in God 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 those things which he saith shall come to pass he shall have for soever he saith now in the Bible mountains are often symbols of political power and also of things that tender we saw this recently when we studied serubible and the building of the temple we remember these words who art thou o great mountain before serubible thou shalt become a plain and he shall bring forth a head stone thereof will shout and cry grace grace unto it in our English language we often use the expression faith can move mountains it is thrown actually from the scripture a lot of expressions in our

English language that is actually drawn from scripture and people use them and don't realise that they are drawn from scripture faith can move mountains although there is a bit of distortion there we know where it came from and what they mean but notice Jesus did not say that faith remove mountains that's not what Jesus said we say faith can move mountains but that is not what Jesus said look at the words that he says he said that faith removes this mountain whosoever shall say into this mountain not whosoever shall say into a mountain but this mountain be thou removed he's very specific what mountain is he talking about well as they travel from we say

Bethany to Jerusalem they could see the Mount of Olives but they could also see Mount Sion and what was on Mount Sion the temple the temple was built on Mount Sion and Jesus has just cleansed the temple the fig tree has withered and now he is talking about the removing of this mountain again he is not here speaking of the removal of honey mountain but this mountain in other words he is saying to his disciples as Mount Sion and the temple comes into sight that faith can remove this mountain where dead religion is flourishing he was reinforcing the lesson of the fig tree as it were he is really telling them of the destruction that was to come upon Jerusalem and to come upon the temple at

Jerusalem on Mount Sion now very briefly we have to deal with this last portion but he is telling them that although the temple be destroyed their future without a temple does not bring an end to effective prayer now we have to understand something about the Jewish mindset regarding the temple you see the Jews regarded the temple as a place where prayer was particularly effective but the temple is going to be destroyed what about prayer Jesus in the next few verses places emphasis on faith and prayer have faith in God we are to pray confidently and we are to pray expectantly therefore I say unto you what things whoever you desire when you pray believe that you receive them and you shall have them and also we are to pray with a forgiving spirit and when you stand praying forgive if you have ought against any that your father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses when we pray we are not only to trust in

God's power to give us what we ask but we are also to trust in God's wisdom that he will give us what we stand in need of well let us make sure that we are not like the fig tree having leaves but no genuine fruit towards God let us make sure that the root of the matter is in us and what is that faith in Jesus Christ alone faith in Jesus Christ alone followed by covenant loyalty followed by covenant let us put our trust not in a building let us put our trust in nothing but in Jesus Christ alone let us have not only the leaves but let us have the fruit the genuine fruit that when the Lord inspects us that he will find genuine fruit of grace in our lives may the

[51 : 38] Lord bless our thoughts to us let us pray eternal and ever blessed Lord we come before thee as thy servant of old who sought that thou would such as ways and that thou O Lord would such our ways and if there be anything that is wrong that thou by thy grace in thy mercy would put it right we give thee thanks for thy word and as we come before thee at this hour we plead O Lord that it may please thee to come among us in a day of thy power to convince us of our need to convince us of the sufficiency of the provision that thou hast made in Christ to meet with that need and that we may put our faith in him and in him alone and that we may follow that with covenant loyalty we ask

O Lord that thou would continue with us during the coming days and now may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all now and forevermore Amen