

supposes that he has only to work himself up an expectation that God will hear his prayer, in order to obtain anything he wishes for. But it is a most plainly revealed truth, that believing prayer for promised blessings is sure being answered.

In the Old Testament, we have many such texts as these: Ps. 145: 18; Isaiah 45: 19. In the New Testament, we have 1 John 3: 22; John 5: 14, 15; James 1: 5, 6. There is so that remarkable declaration of the apostle, of the power of prayer: "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much,"—the fervent, inwrought prayer—the prayer wrought in the heart by the energy of the Holy Spirit—availeth much. And having made this declaration of the power of prayer, the apostle proves the power from the success of Elijah: "Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are,"—a man of faith yet not exempt from human infirmities; a man of the same frail, fallen nature with others. "And he prayed earnestly," etc., James 5: 17, 18. This, it is true, was success, in an extraordinary case,—in a case which respected miraculous interposition. Still it is encouraging, even in common cases, when it is considered that Elijah was a man of like passions with others. If Elijah, by prayer, could do such great and wonderful things, surely the prayers of no righteous man—of no man who is a true believer—of no man righteous in Christ,—shall return void. I might adduce as examples of the efficacy of prayer, the various cases which God has been pleased to record in his holy word, but the time would fail me, to speak of Jacob, of Moses, of Joshua, of Samson, of Hannah, of Samuel, of David, of Solomon, of Ezekiah, of Daniel, of Manasseh, of the Syro-phenian woman, of the apostles in reference to the great revival on the day of Pentecost, and of others, who all received signal answers to their prayers.

Having thus shown how abundant are the testimonies in the Scriptures, how numerous and positive the assurances of God, and how simple and signal the proofs in the experience of believers, of the power of prayer, I shall now, for a moment, direct your attention to the language of the Lord Jesus in our text and context, which is so wonderfully instructive and encouraging on this subject.

The words, as you know, were addressed to his disciples on the occasion of their expressing their astonishment at the sudden withering of the barren fig-tree, which he had cursed. We may take the words as we have them in the parallel passage in St. Mark, 11: 22-24.

Even believers may have often read these words without comprehending their true meaning. Passing over them in a cursory manner, they may have deemed them to be words addressed exclusively to men, to whom miraculous powers were given, and not to be understood in reference to believers at large. They may, therefore, have hastily concluded that they were words in which they had no personal concern. But when believers look deeper into

them, when they ponder them, they discover in them an unfathomable mine of the greatest riches. And then, they are not more astonished at what they find, than they are that they should not have found such treasure before. How they now dwell upon and apply for their own direction and encouragement every expression in the passage. That they may the better comprehend the whole, they consider the particular parts of it in due order. They begin with the words: "Have faith in God." They consider who it was that uttered these words. It was the faithful and true witness. They consider in whom the faith here enjoined is to be placed. It is to be placed in God, the omnipresent, omniscient, omnipotent, eternal Jehovah, the God of love, the faithful God. And thus considering, they feel persuaded that God will answer the prayer offered in faith; for they feel persuaded that "with God all things are possible," and that "all things are possible to him that believeth."

They consider next the word "verily," and see that the word denotes that Christ is inviting attention to a subject of vast importance,—that he is about to utter words which are fraught with the most important truths. They are therefore all attention; and being in the spirit of prayer, they are in a fit state to understand the meaning of the words that fell from the lips of their Lord. They do not put a literal construction upon the word "mountain." They do not suppose that Christ meant to say that his disciples, or other believers, were to go to the foot of a mountain, and say, "Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea;" and that God, in answer to the prayer of faith, should bring the thing to pass. They knew that there was no call for the disciples to go on and speak to the mountain, and that the removal of the mountain could answer no good purpose. And they know that now, in these days, such an event would not be at all consistent with the events of an age in which there is no such thing as miracles. They consider that what Christ's words were intended to express, was the exceeding difficulty of the thing to be accomplished, and that any difficulty could be removed by faith. They put, therefore, a spiritual signification on the word "mountain." They suppose that "this mountain," in the first instance, means a mountain of sin. They may justly compare their sins, their guilt, to a huge mountain. They believe that God is both able and willing to remove it, and cast it into the depths of the sea. They believe that he is both able and willing not only to pardon their sins—not only to remove them, but also to bury them out of his sight, so that they can never rise up in judgement against them. And in thus believing, their sins are forgiven. They find the assurance of pardon; they find peace, and joy, and gladness. They next consider "this mountain" to mean a mountain of difficulty. They compare the difficulty which lies between them and the accomplishment of a particular object, to a mountain. But though they may have