

The Power of a *Little* Faith

There is no doubt or argument that “*little*” faith was used by the Lord of his disciples in a condemning way; *i.e.* that *their* faith should have, at least by then, been significantly *larger*. Here are some examples of such: Those *anxious* regarding *food, drink, and clothing*, Matt.6:30-31; the disciples were *timid* and *afraid* of a *great storm*, Matt.8:24-26; upon seeing *the wind* and *water* (and the *impossibility* of the situation) Peter *doubted*, Matt.14:29-31; and, the disciples when *they took no bread*, Matt.16:5-8. Now think about it: Have you been *anxious, timid and afraid, doubting, or concerned* about what you *didn't have*? Even those closest to Jesus were, at least at times! But in each case, what *problem* did Jesus identify? He didn't talk about *physical necessities*, the *storms*, or the *wind* and *water* (seemingly *impossible obstacles*) of life. Instead, He spoke of *faith*- in fact, *little* faith.

But it is also true that at other times, He encouraged those with *no* or something *less than* “*little*” faith toward that as a goal, cf. **Matt.17:19-20** and **Luke 17:6**. If they had *even a “little” faith*, they, through it, could accomplish great things for the kingdom of God- both in their own lives, and in the lives of those whom they *could* influence for truth and righteousness. If they, or **we**, had just a *little* faith!

So, if you would, please think with me about **The (Inherent) Power of a *Little* Faith**. What could we/you accomplish in your life and the lives of those around you for the Cause of Christ with even just a *little* faith?

A Closer Consideration of Luke 17:1-6

- The *disciples* (the *Twelve*, not everyone) were concerned with two things: 1) *Causing Offence*- being a *stumblingblock* to others, v.1-2; and, 2) *Forgiving a repetitively sinning brother*, v.3-4.
- They correctly understood that they needed *more faith* to accomplish (or conversely avoid) the requirements Jesus placed before them, v.5. *Faith* comes by *hearing the word of God*, Rom.10:17. Therefore, if God *commands/requires* it, it *can be done*... with *sufficient faith*!
- We should note that the verbs are **passive** in this verse. This is significantly important. Though the disciples would say to the *mulberry* (literally, *sukaminus*- a tree with the form and foliage of the mulberry, but a fruit resembling a fig; it was very *deep-rooted*, which is probably why it was chosen for the point here), the **passive** form of the verbs indicate that they (the disciples *commanding*) are **not actually the ones doing the uprooting and planting**- obviously, **God is power or acting force**, cf. Matt.17:20 (the *mountain “shall” move*).
- Now get this: *God* issues the requirements/commands; *God* is the *source* of the faith required to obey; and *God's power* does the actual *work* to be done rather than the one who has the *faith* to *act*. Think about it: when “Peter” *performed a miracle* (cf. Acts 9:32-42 regarding *Aeneas* and *Dorcas*), he simply had the *necessary faith* to act, but **God did the healing**, Acts 9:34,42.
- Vv.7-10 further illustrate the *disciples' role* (what was *required/commanded* of them) and *how they should view* these things. Thus, in the *parable* of these verses, the *disciples* are the *slave who plows/sows and tends sheep* and the

Master is God who *commands*. The point is that they should never forget who is the *Master* and who is the *servant*! Though they will be given tremendous power to wield, they were to do so only in the ways and for the purposes of the Master, v.10. The tremendous *power* of even a *little faith*- even that as a *mustard seed*, is to be utilized to carry out the *commands* and *will* of the Master rather than for self-interests or self-glorification.

All of which should lead to some points of application for us:

1. **“Increase our faith!” is still the right response/request to difficult commands.** Whether it’s *forgiving* a repetitive but penitent sin, or having been or being or becoming a *stumblingblock* to others, *increased faith* is still the answer, precisely because God will supply the strength to *overcome*, 2Cor.12:9. We **can overcome** by God’s power through *faith*, 1John 2:13-14; 4:4; 5:4; or, we will **be overcome**, 2Pet.2:19b.
2. **Like the disciples, sometimes our problem is too much self-interest and self-will.** We tend to think in terms of “my” *life* and its *problems* and *obstacles*- its *mulberry/sycamine* or deep-rooted issues, Luke 17:6, and its seemingly *mountainous* obstacles, Matt.17:20. Remember who is the *servant* and who is the *Master*, Luke 17:6-10! During those times when your deep-rooted issues and your mountainous obstacles seem impossible, cf. 2Cor.12:7, have the *little faith* that you *serve* and *belong to* a “God of Impossible Things” (the week before last sermon)! If we will have even *mustard seed* (a *little*) faith, and remember that life for the Christian is not about “me” and “mine” but “Him” and “His,” then His *powerful grace* through *our faith* will be more than *sufficient*- it will be *strong enough to uproot* and *move* so that we can *overcome*, 2Cor.12:10!
3. **So, let’s go back to where we began in this lesson.** Are you:
 - a. **Anxious about the necessities of life?** Have a *little faith* and make a *priority of doing the right things* and let God take care of the rest, Matt.6:30-34!
 - b. **Timid and afraid about the storms of life?** Have a *little faith* and remember what God has planned for you to do, Matt.8:18,26! Jesus *“gave orders to depart to the other side,” v.18*; He did not give orders to “go to the middle and drown in a storm.”
 - c. **“Seeing” the winds, waters, and waves of life?** Have a *little faith* and focus on the Savior- He will *preserve you* if you “stick” with Him, Matt.14:27-29; Heb.12:1-2!
 - d. **Concerned with what you don’t have or didn’t bring to the feast?** Have a *little faith* in Jesus’ power to provide what is lacking, Matt.16:8-10! Just bring a *little faith*!

Conclusion:

“If you have faith as a mustard seed, you shall say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it shall move; and nothing shall be impossible to you,” Matthew 17:20.