

## Faith and Faithfulness

Luke 17: 5-10

As we begin this morning, it is interesting to note, Jesus begins this conversation with the apostles dealing with personal offences and those who trespass against them. He wanted them to understand that all would not welcome nor receive them. In fact, there would be times of difficulty and opposition, but even then they were expected to respond with love and forgiveness.

The apostles knew this would be impossible within themselves, so they ask the Lord to increase their faith. This request leads into the conversation I hope to address today. As Jesus further communicates with the apostles, He speaks of two fundamental elements of their relationship with Him: Faith and Faithfulness.

Really this should come as no surprise to us. We know that faith is essential in our relationship with Christ. It is foundational in our salvation. [Eph.2:8a – For by grace are ye saved through faith.](#) We know that we cannot please Christ without faith. [Heb.11:6 – But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.](#) Faith is so essential to the Christian, our relationship with Christ is often described as: The Faith.

With faith in Christ comes faithfulness to Him. As we grow in the faith, our faithfulness to Christ ought to grow as well. This passage gripped my heart as I read it the other day in my devotional time. I knew that faith and faithfulness were essential aspects of our relationship with Christ, but I had never noticed that Jesus spoke of them together in the same context. I soon realized faith enables faithfulness, while faithfulness enhances faith.

I want to look at the specific [elements](#) Jesus spoke of as we consider: [Faith and Faithfulness](#). I trust our faith will be strengthened in Christ, as well as our faithfulness to Him.

**I. The Faith of a Servant** (5-6) – These verses deal with the faith any servant of the Lord should possess and the benefits of such faith. Consider:

**A. The Prayer for Faith** (5) – [And the apostles said unto the Lord, Increase our faith.](#) Keep in mind the context of this passage. Jesus had warned them of offences and trespasses that would come and how they were expected to respond to such circumstances. Clearly the apostles possessed faith in Christ or they wouldn't have forsaken all to follow Him, but they were honest enough to admit their faith was lacking. They knew what Christ desired of them and were unsure if they had the faith to carry out such a request.

- This is not the only time such a request is mentioned in Scripture. Others had faith, but knew their faith was not sufficient to please the Lord. **Mark 9:23-24 – Jesus said unto him, If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth.** <sup>[24]</sup> **And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief.** Surely we have all been in a similar situation. We have all faced times when our faith was lacking. Most of us would have to agree that we need our faith strengthened. Seek the Lord through prayer to strengthen your faith.

**B. The Presence of Faith (6a) – 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.** Jesus confirms that faith is essential in the life of a believer. We all understand that we must possess faith in Christ, but He reveals a significant fact as well. Many times we hear folks talk about great faith. There is nothing wrong in having great faith, but Jesus reveals it isn't the size of our faith that matters, but the substance of our faith. A mustard seed is very small, about the size of a pinhead, and that amount of faith is sufficient.

- Every believer possesses a measure of faith. I will agree the faith of some is much stronger than the faith of others, but even the smallest amount of faith in Christ is sufficient if we believe. I fear the major problem for most of us is that we have a small amount of faith in Christ, but we trust our judgment and ability more often than we depend upon the Lord. The substance of our faith is what makes the difference. A small amount of genuine faith in Christ will produce far more than an abundance of faith in anything else.

**C. The Practice of Faith (6b) – 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.** Here Jesus reveals the need to exercise our faith. Faith produces action. We know that we walk by faith and not by sight. The apostles would face many circumstances where their faith would be tested, and in those situations they must act on faith. There would be times when it seemed as if hope was lost. There would be situations that were beyond their ability to control. In those times they must respond in faith, trusting the Lord to meet their need, and move forward with Him.

- Many talk about faith, but few practice faith. I know that God is more than able to meet my needs and I am secure in Him. I am settled on my eternal existence, but often I have a problem with the here and now. I know that God always works for the good of those who love Him, and yet I doubt many times. That is not exercising faith. In fact, it is the exact opposite. We must learn to walk by faith, fully trusting and depending upon the Lord.

**D. The Power of Faith** (6c) – *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.* Now Jesus speaks of the power of faith. This would definitely be a miraculous event. The sycamine tree had a deep root system, which would have required much effort to pluck from the ground. *Mark 11:23 – 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.* This would be even more miraculous, revealing the true nature and power of faith.

- Some might question whether I take this passage literally. Do you think that could really happen? I have no doubt that it could, under the right circumstances. The problem is that the average Christian doesn't possess that type of faith. Another essential would be that such events glorify God and further His kingdom. We cannot expect to move literal mountains for our glory or gain. The basis of what Jesus is conveying is that faith in the Lord is powerful enough to sustain us, guide our path, and remove obstacles that hinder our walk with the Him. Faith in Christ provides victorious life in Him!

## **I. The Faith of a Servant** (5-6)

**II. The Faithfulness of a Servant** (7-10) – Now Jesus turns His focus to the faithfulness of those who follow Him. Faithfulness is directly associated with our faith. If we lack faith in Christ, there is little hope in faithfulness to Him. Notice:

**A. The Service in Faithfulness** (7) – *But which of you, having a servant plowing or feeding cattle, will say unto him by and by, when he is come from the field, Go and sit down to meat?* Jesus says a lot in this verse, but we cannot miss the simplicity regarding service. The apostles followed Jesus; they were actively engaged in service to Him. It is interesting that Jesus speaks of those who plow the fields and feed the cattle, literally *shepherding*. These were not easy tasks, but they were essential. It was hard work, but it was necessary.

- The modern church needs a recommitment to service. I am not speaking of that which is noticeable and necessarily easy, but service that pleases the Lord. We must be faithful to the call we have received. Simply, we need to be busy for the Lord. He speaks of plowing and feeding, two essential elements to kingdom growth. We cannot expect to fulfill the Great Commission if we are unwilling to plow the fields, preparing to sow the seed and reap a harvest. Hard work is essential. We must also be faithful in feeding the sheep, discipling and encouraging other believers.

**B. The Sacrifice in Faithfulness** (7-8) – But which of you, having a servant plowing or feeding cattle, will say unto him by and by, when he is come from the field, Go and sit down to meat? <sup>[8]</sup> And will not rather say unto him, Make ready wherewith I may sup, and gird thyself, and serve me, till I have eaten and drunken; and afterward thou shalt eat and drink? What a precious truth Jesus reveals here. He speaks of the master expecting the servant to serve him before he eats himself, even though he has labored in the field all day. The servant was responsible to fulfill every aspect of service, even though it was tiring. He was obligated to serve his master according to the master's wishes.

- My how that needs to be emphasized in our day. We live in a “me” centered society. Most are more concerned about their needs and life of ease than they are fulfilling their obligations or helping others. Many are looking for the easy way out. This mentality has permeated the modern church. Many today seek a church that provides the most for them. They judge churches based on what they offer. This modern thinking is contrary to Scripture. Jesus didn't teach us to be served of others, but rather serve Him as our Master, as well as others. It isn't about what the church can do for us, but what we can do for Christ and His church.

**C. The Satisfaction in Faithfulness** (9) – Doth he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I trow not. After a hard day's work in the field and meeting the master's needs at the end of the day, the servant didn't receive praise or a lavish bonus. He was simply doing what was expected, and it is apparent that the servant was happy to do so. There is no mention of hostility or discouragement because he wasn't bragged on for his hard work. He took satisfaction in being faithful to his master and fulfilling his obligations.

- That is not to say that our Lord will never reward us for our faithfulness. Clearly He does in this life and we are promised more than we can imagine when this life is through. The point is the servant's faithfulness wasn't driven by recognition; it was driven by love and devotion. I pray that our faithfulness to Christ is motivated by love for Him rather than selfish desires.

- It is not a burden to serve the Lord, it is a privilege and honor. I was hopelessly lost and undone prior to Christ. He purchased my redemption on the cross of Calvary, bearing my sin, and giving His life for mine. I am pleased and honored to be used of Him however He chooses. My life is no longer my own; I have been bought with a price and am obligated to serve at the leisure of my Master and Lord. Being faithfully submitted to Christ brings satisfaction in life.

**D. The Sentiment in Faithfulness** (10) – So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do. Jesus speaks of the sentiment of a faithful servant. He admonished the apostles to never think more highly of themselves than they should. At the end of the day, when they have considered all

their labor for the Lord, they were to realize that apart from Him they were nothing and they were simply doing that which was their duty. They were not to be resentful for the labor required, but thankful for the salvation received.

- What a challenge that presents to us as well. It is easy to allow pride to enter our hearts. It is easy to allow resentment to build as we see others who seem to be doing nothing. Rather than complain about what is expected of us, we ought to rejoice that Jesus is our Master. Apart from Him we are nothing and would yet be lost in sin. We could live each waking moment of our lives for Christ and still be indebted to Him for His great sacrifice. Regardless of where the Lord leads or uses my life, I am nothing but a sinner saved by His marvelous grace. My service to Him is simply fulfilling my duty to my King!

**Conclusion:** I am convinced that the Lord has spoken to hearts today through His Word. Is your faith in Christ all it should be? Are you living fully surrendered, depending solely upon Jesus? Has the Spirit revealed that your faith is lacking? If so you need to come before the Lord, seeking His help and guidance to strengthen your faith.

How is your faithfulness to Christ? Are you living for the Lord each day? Do you view your service to Him as a blessing or a burden? Remember all that He endured for us. Surely He is worthy of our commitment to Him. If you have failed in faithful service, why not come and repent of that, seeking the strength to faithfully serve from this point forward?

Maybe you don't possess faith in Christ or faithfulness to Him because you have never been saved. Apart from Christ there is no hope. You may feel as if you are in control of your life and your destiny, but we are all servants to one of two masters. If the Spirit has revealed your need of salvation, please respond to the call of Christ!