

LORD, INCREASE OUR FAITH

February 17, 2019

Luke 17:1-19

“And the apostles said unto the Lord, Increase our faith.” Luke 17:5

In this request one finds the mark of a true believer in Jesus Christ. A true believer is never satisfied that his faith is what it should be. He knows it is deficient, that he is still far, far from a faith that is appropriate to Christ's worthiness.

Christ's worthiness to be the object of undiluted, all-consuming faith is prominent among the factors that make unbelief damning. It is our duty to believe, and that duty is not without warrant. That worthiness is evident in His response to the disciples: “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” (17:10).

Reader, when did you last pray, “Lord, increase my faith?” Do you ever request this of our Lord? It is lamentable that among modern “believers,” this matter is given very little attention. We pray for many things: health, favor, prosperity, etc., etc., but do we pray, “Lord, increase my faith?” It is a day of religious action and self-assuredness, but not of self-examination. Ponder Christ's warning: “Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not . . . in thy name done many wonderful works?” But Christ will say unto them “I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity” (Matthew 7:22, 23).

Those who are Christ's do not tell Him of their “wonderful works.” They do not think to themselves, “I'm not all that bad.” They do not make excuses for their sin: “This is a tight spot. God will understand if I lie in order to get out of it.” They recognize rather that their righteousness is as “filthy rags” (Isaiah 64:6). And if that is their righteousness, how much worse their sin is. Rather, those who re Christ's pray, “Lord, increase our faith.”

1. What prompts this prayer? Recognition of the magnitude of our duty, and of how far short we fall.

Christ had just delivered a very weighty message: A person would be better off to suffer a most terrifying, miserable death than to become a spiritual distraction to one of God's children. Therefore, every measure should be taken in every instance to never put any stumbling-stone in another's path. Repeated forgiveness of others offenses, sincere and grudgeless living toward all must be the norm for God's people. The disciples recognized that in a world filled with grudges, rivalries, self-service and hatred, the capacity of a believer not to respond in kind is tested sorely. A gracious and forgiving response does not come naturally. If they are to keep from offending, they will need great grace, great faith, and thus they pray, “Lord, increase our faith.”

2. What is the answer to this prayer? Have faith as a grain of mustard seed.

Jesus taught, “The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field: Which indeed is the least of all seeds: but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree” (Matthew 13, 31, 32). The tiny mustard seed has only a germ of life, which lies dead within it. God sends rain and the sun's warming rays to effect its germination. So God's gift of faith, given to His people, grows from the light and water of His Word. Faith increases by clinging to Christ as He is revealed in His Word, and His Word applied

to every circumstance of life. As the mustard seed produces a great plant, such faith grows to spiritual stature, strength and fruitfulness. Jesus taught, “If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you. Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples” (John 15:7, 8). The life wholly submitted to Christ, will be one of continual growth in faith.

3. What lesson accompanies this answer? “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” (Luke 17:22, 23).