

Luke 17

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 24 March 2019

Preacher: David Murray

[0 : 00] Let's turn in our Bibles to the passage of God's Word which we read, the Gospel of Luke chapter 17, and let us read again, and as God would help me, we'd like to concentrate on verses 5 and 6. Luke chapter 17 verses 5 and 6. And the apostles said unto the Lord, increase our faith. And the Lord said, if you had faith as a grain of mustard seed, you might say unto this sickening tree, be thou plucked up by the root, and be thou planted in the sea, and it should obey you.

Now, there is one way how we can say that money is like grace, and that is by saying the more you get, the more you want. But it's helpful to remember that there can be two reasons why we want more of something. We can want more of something because it does not satisfy us, and we think more will.

But our Bible teaches us, he that loves silver will not be satisfied with silver. People want more money because they think it will satisfy us, but it cannot and does not.

But then there's the other reason why we want more of something. Because it does satisfy. And that's why the apostles said, the disciples said to Jesus on another occasion, evermore give us this bread. Now, here they have realized the tremendous value of faith.

And they say, we need more of it. Give us more of it. And it's interesting to note what we can learn from this. Now, it needs to be said, first of all, that the important thing about faith is its object. Faith does not save. It is faith in Christ that saves.

[3 : 09] Christ is the Savior, not faith. We all have faith in something. The Buddhist has, the average Buddhist probably has more faith than any of us in here. But his faith is in Buddha.

And you ask Buddha, you go to Buddha, you go to a Buddhist and say, look, I've sinned. How can I have my sin forgiven? I've sinned against God. How can I have it forgiven? They'll say, well, look, if there is a God, it's nothing to do with us.

They don't believe in God. Buddhists have tremendous faith in Buddha. But Buddha can't save because he doesn't believe. He doesn't believe in sin, doesn't believe in God.

What is it our faith is in? We can't exist without faith. You had faith. There was a meeting on here tonight. So you came along.

You have faith in your car. So you go to your car and turn the ignition key and start off. You can't live without faith. The important thing when it comes to religion is to remember it's Christ that saves.

[4 : 35] And unless our faith is in Christ, we're not saved. I remember when I felt called to the ministry first and, as it were, put in my notice, left the office. I remember the boys in the factory coming up and saying, no, I heard, I hear you.

I remember one customer coming in and saying, oh, he's just heard about you. He says, you're packing it all in and you're getting in for the ministry. Oh, he said, don't worry about me. I've got my faith.

So I said, Bob, tell me, what in? Oh, he says, I've got faith. Don't you be mistaken. I've a lot of faith.

I said, Bob, what in? Oh, he says, don't worry about me. I've got faith. Bob, what in? He didn't know. He hadn't a clue. The best illustration I can give.

I've used it often. Maybe I've used it here before, but it's worth repeating. Supposing I cross a river and there are two bridges. And I'm told, now, look, one of these bridges will not support your 17 stone.

[5 : 47] You have to get the right one. Examine the bridges. Put your faith in one bridge. And cross it. So I examine and say, well, I'm going to go for the one on the right.

I think it will support me. And I put my faith in the bridge. I go across the bridge. And I fall down into the water. That's not my faith that let me down.

It's the bridge that let me down. I put my faith in the wrong bridge. So keep that. It's what your faith is in. And that's why we sang Psalm 45.

A noble theme inspires my heart with verses for the King. Is it King Jesus we have faith in?

Is it what he accomplished at the place called Calvary? Is that what we're depending on? It's him that saves us. Not how much faith.

[6 : 53] You can have a whole lot of faith in our own bridge. It's Christ who does the saving. It's Christ who has paid the price of sin.

It's Christ who went to Calvary. It's Christ who says, No one perishes who trusts in me. Faith requires an object by definition.

Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures. How can God forgive you if he has not been paid?

I speak reverently. There was a problem in a past eternity. When Father, Son and Holy Spirit planned salvation.

We have sworn irrevocably that sin must be punished by death. And we want these sinners to be in heaven with us.

[8 : 10] How can we get them to heaven when we have sworn irrevocably sin? Sin must be punished by death. And what was the solution?

A substitute. If the second person of the Godhead become human, then he can die. His death will be the equivalent payment for all the sins of everyone who will be in heaven.

That's the basis for our salvation. Has our sin been paid for? If we believe in Christ, if we trust in Christ, then our sins were paid for at the cross of Calvary.

Now that's the basis. That's the basis. That's the bottom line. Is our faith in Christ? Now, it's interesting, isn't it?

Here's the apostles. And they come. And they say to him, increase our faith. This faith has saved us.

[9 : 20] We want more of it. This faith is what we're looking for. This Christ. This atonement for sin. This is what we need. We need more of it.

So, here they are. And they come in verse 5 to the Son of God. And they say, Lord, increase our faith.

And what's Christ's reply? It's all in verse 6. The Lord said, if you had faith as a grain of mustard seed, you might say to this sycamore tree, be plucked up by the root, be planted in the sea, and I'll obey you.

And that's all he said. That's all he said. And the disciples were satisfied. I'd have to confess, I couldn't get this. I just couldn't get this for years until it was explained to me.

What is the Savior saying there? Is he not effectively saying, look, you don't need more faith. If you have a grain of mustard seed of faith, if that faith is in me, you'll be able to remove a mountain.

[10 : 41] You'll be able to remove a sycamore tree. You don't need more. What you need to learn is how to use that little grain of mustard seed of faith which you have.

You see, it's helpful to understand that faith is not like building blocks. You want to, you've got some blocks and you decide to build a wall.

Oh, and then you run out of blocks. And you say, oh, I need more concrete blocks. Faith is not like a concrete block. Faith is like, as we're told here, a seed.

A grain of mustard seed. And you remember on another occasion the Savior said, The kingdom of heaven is as a grain of mustard seed, which is the smallest of all seeds.

Yet, that small mustard seed grows to be the biggest, the largest.

[11 : 47] A small grain. And is that not what the Savior is saying? You have a grain of faith in me. Learn to exercise it properly and you'll grow.

Is that not what he's teaching us here? Now, faith grows through two things.

As we said, exercise. You have to use a child. A child, they say three things are necessary for growth. Food, exercise and oxygen.

Air. However, we'll just look at how, well, we'll just mention food. I want to concentrate on the exercise of faith.

We grow in grace. We grow in faith by exercising the little bit we have. But first of all, there's also food. We're told to grow in grace and the knowledge of Jesus Christ.

[12 : 56] You'll never grow in faith unless you grow in knowledge of Christ. I've maybe mentioned here before, there's no verse in the Bible that says we're predestined to salvation.

What the Bible says is we're predestined to be conformed to the image of Christ. Now, the first step, of course, in becoming Christ-like is, of course, to be saved, to be forgiven, to possess eternal life.

And then we develop on. So, if the Christian life is about becoming Christ-like. Now, tell me, how in this world can we become like Christ if we don't know what Christ is like?

You can't possibly grow in grace and in the likeness of Christ unless you know more about Christ. So, you'll never grow in Christ-likeness.

You'll never grow in faith unless you grow in knowledge of Jesus Christ. I think I mentioned this morning. There is such a gulf between God in heaven and we on earth that we need something in between to identify with.

[14 : 30] And Christ is the human version of God. We want to become like God. We want to please God.

Well, look at Jesus. Look at Christ. And by looking at Him, there's a wonderful verse in 2 Corinthians 3.18.

Is it 2 Corinthians 3.18? But we all, with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image.

By beholding Christ, we are changed into the same image. That's how we become Christ-like.

Now, where are we going to get information about what Jesus is like? Is it from a dream? Is it from an idea? Is it by what someone has said?

[15 : 38] How, where do we get reliable, concrete information about Jesus? We want to become Christ-like. We need knowledge of Him.

Where do we get that knowledge of Christ? From the Word. He, in fact, is, as we read this morning, the Word made flesh.

So, we grow, we increase in faith by feeding on the Word.

Learning about Jesus. What Jesus did in certain situations. What He said when He was asked certain questions. We'll never grow in faith until we grow in knowledge of Jesus Christ.

Now, do you notice the context? The context. What was it that made the disciples, what was it that made the disciples ask the question?

[16 : 47] Lord, increase our faith. Well, tells you here. Verse 6, verse 4, sorry. Verse 4 comes before verse 5. If your brother trespass against you seven times in a day, and seven times in a day, he turns to you again saying, I repent, you will forgive him.

Now, I don't know about you, but if somebody did the same thing to me seven times in a day, I'd be rather inclined to say, you don't mean it.

You don't mean it. Seven times today you did it. But it's not what I feel. It's not what I think. It's what Christ says.

Your brother offends you, sins against you, seven times in a day. There's no question about it what you're to do. If he repents, you are to say for the seventh time in 24 hours, I forgive you.

I forgive you. Seven times a day. But isn't it interesting? That is what made the disciples say, Lord, we need more of faith in Christ.

[18 : 12] We need to keep looking at Christ so that we'll be able to say, I forgive you. I forgive you, Fred. And all you did it six times already, but I'll forgive you the seventh.

Did the Savior not teach us? I find it very salutary. What Christ says, how Christ taught us to pray in the Lord's, what we call the Lord's Prayer.

Forgive us our debts as, as, the same level as we forgive those who trespass against us. how forgiven are you? If we are forgiven only as much as we forgive others, how forgiven are we?

I'm not saying that. I'm repeating what Jesus said. We have to learn forgiveness. You want to grow in faith?

[19 : 31] Learn to forgive. Learn to forgive. Now, as I've been trying to say, you cannot grow in faith alone.

You grow in faith by growing in other things. And as we grow in these other things we're commanded to grow in, our faith increases.

is it Peter who says, add to your faith virtue, knowledge, self-control, love, brotherly kindness, what have you.

But our Bible also tells us that faith works by love. Want to increase in faith, do you? increase in love for your brother. Practice loving someone you don't like.

[20 : 47] You don't need to like a person to love them. You don't need to say, that person's lovely, therefore I love them.

not if it's God's love. God so loved the world, he gave his son. Was the world lovely? Were we beautiful?

The word used, the New Testament word used for God's love for us is agape. And that is the ability, God has the ability to love something that's not nice.

and if we're Christians, if we have God's love in us, we have to learn to imitate God's love for us.

By showing it to people we naturally don't like. By showing love to those who are not nice people, we have to admit it, Christians, Christians, we're not nice.

[21 : 56] Yet God loves us and we're to love one another. You see, in the Bible, love is not a feeling. It's not like Hollywood romance. In the Bible, love is an action.

You measure love not by how much sleep you lose over your love for someone, not by how beautiful you think they are. In the Bible, your love is measured by what you do for that person.

The famous verse, John 3, 16, God so loved the world, he loved the world so much, he gave, he gave what?

He gave his perfect son, which we mentioned this morning. The price of adopting a larger family was the sacrifice of that one perfect, only begotten son.

son. If we want to grow in faith, learn to grow in love, practice loving, practice forgiving.

[23 : 08] If you want to grow in faith, you grow in other virtues, other graces, other exercises. Exercise the faith you have. Launch out and do something you have never done before.

Love that person. grow in faith, you grow in love, by growing in love. You grow in faith by growing in obedience.

Jesus said, if you love me, keep my commandments. obedience. We grow in faith by growing in obedience, doing what we're told.

We grow in faith by growing in submission. Now you might say, look, what's the difference between obedience and submission? well, we obey commands.

We submit to God's will. You see, we might be keeping all the commandments.

[24 : 17] Might be keeping all the commandments and then God gives us cancer. We're not happy about that.

we're disagreeing with God over that. You submit to God's will. You obey commands.

We can be obeying commands, but very angry with what God is doing in providence to us. But we have to learn. And you can become Christ-like.

Submit to God's will. submit to his providence. God has a purpose for these adverse providences.

God's got a purpose and the purpose is good. But you see, do you believe it? Do you really believe it? Are you growing in faith? Do you believe this adversity, this problem, this trial, this difficulty, it's going to work out for good?

[25 : 28] Do you believe it's making you Christ-like? One of the things, I always remember an old Christian saying to me, be very, very careful before you ask God for more faith.

Be very careful because you're praying for more tribulation. You're praying for more trouble. God has ordained that through much tribulation we shall enter the kingdom.

Not a little, but much. He's ordained it. we're appointed thereunto. I don't know how it works, and that doesn't matter, but God has appointed it.

That's how we're to grow. He gives us trials and tests, and if you want to grow in faith, it's through serving him, submitting to his will, putting up with trials and tribulations.

We'll never grow in faith further unless we grow in service. And you see, that's exactly what the Savior goes on to speak about in verse seven.

[26 : 46] Which of you having a servant? And he goes on to say, when you've served, you're to say you're unprofitable service. Servants, you can't grow in faith unless you grow in service.

what are you doing for the Lord? What are you doing for him? Do you ever find people coming back from the mission field saying, I'm not sure about my salvation?

They're the strongest in faith. The ones who've sweated it out for Jesus. By serving, your faith grows.

Doing something for the Lord, faith increases. You'll never grow in faith if you despise what he has given us for growth in faith, for growth in grace.

What has he given us? I said, we grow through exercise and through food. Well, he's given us a meal. We'll never grow in grace as long as we despise the sacraments, the supper, despising it.

[28 : 12] The solemn warning to those who despise it, and you can despise it not simply by abusing it, but by saying, oh, it's not important. I can grow without that.

I don't need that. It's not for me. And he told you, talk about obedience, do this. Do this to remember me. Ignore what he has provided for our growth, and you will never grow if you ignore it.

It's provided there for our increase. They're designed for our increase, and how foolish it is to complain that we're weak Christians when we're not taking our food.

What's one of the first questions the doctor asks you? How's your appetite? Are you taking your food? He gives us food.

If we ignore it, despise it, minimize it, say it's not important, then that's abusing it in another sense, in a real sense too. We grow by persevering.

[29 : 25] The Bible tells us through faith and patience we inherit the kingdom. Through faith and patience. I find it hugely encouraging running the Christian race.

I think the older it gets, the harder it gets. But, you know, I'm hugely encouraged by this. All we have to do is finish the race.

You don't have to be first. You don't have to be second. But you must finish. You must finish the race.

Through faith and endurance, faith and perseverance, we enter the kingdom. Well, increasing our faith.

Just in conclusion, if you're here tonight, and you're not a Christian, you have to get this grain of faith first.

[30 : 30] What we've been saying, well, do you no good if you haven't got the grain of faith in Christ. So you say, how can I get it?

How do I get that grain of faith in Christ? Well, you get it by looking at the object. You get it, not by looking at faith, but by looking at Christ, looking at Jesus, seeing him, reading about him, speaking to him, praying to him.

Our Bible tells us, faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. faith comes by hearing a report of Jesus such as this, such as this report, this man welcomes sinners.

That's a report of Jesus. Jesus. Do you believe it? Do you like it? are you going to ask God for it?

The Savior tells us in Luke 11, 13, if you been evil, if you know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask?

[32 : 08] And as he said, if you been evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, wouldn't you think that what he would say was how much more he'll give the Holy Spirit to his children?

But that's not what Luke 11, 13 says. What Luke 11, 13 says, if you being an evil person will ask God for his Holy Spirit, he will give it to them who ask.

You can get the Spirit, you can get this grain of mustard seed of faith in Christ by asking for it. And may God, the Holy Spirit, make his word, his truth, effectual to every one of us.

Let's pray. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.
Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.
Amen. Amen. Amen.