

Increase our Faith

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[0 : 00] Let's turn in our Bibles to the passage of Scripture which we read in the Gospel of Luke chapter 17.

And as God would help me, I would like to concentrate on verses 5 and 6. So if we turn to Luke 17, we'll read verses 5 and 6 again.

The apostles said to the Lord, increase our faith. And the Lord said, if you had faith like a grain of mustard seed, you could say to this mulberry tree, be uprooted and planted in the sea and it would obey you.

The apostles said to the Lord, increase our faith. It has been said that money can be like grace.

The more you get, the more you want. But of course, there is a big, huge difference. There are two reasons why we want more of something which we have.

[1 : 32] We often want more of something because it does not satisfy. The Bible tells us in Ecclesiastes chapter 5 verse 10, He that loves money will not be satisfied with money.

You can want more of something because it does not satisfy. But on the other hand, you can want more of something precisely because it satisfies.

Such as we have here. On another occasion, the disciples said to Christ, Lord, evermore give us this bread.

It satisfies. It fills us. It's the real thing. Give us more of this real thing that satisfies.

Now here are the disciples. And they want more faith. How does Jesus respond?

[2 : 50] He simply tells them an anecdote. And that's all. Then he moves on.

They come to him as we're pleading. Lord, give us more faith. And he just says, if you had faith as a grain of mustard seed, you could remove this tree into the sea.

End of answer. He always puzzled me. But the disciples got the message. It seems. It seems they understood.

How did Christ answer? Is he not more or less saying, look, you don't actually need more faith.

Just use the little bit you have properly. And it will grow. You see, faith is not like building blocks.

[3 : 58] You have a few blocks here and you say, I want to build a wall. And then you're halfway through and you say, oh, I need more blocks. Give us more blocks. Faith is not like a building block.

Faith is like a seed that grows and expands. And our Savior is telling us here, you only need a grain of faith.

as long as that grain of faith is in the proper source. As long as it has the right focus.

As long as it has the right object. It's not the question. It's not really how much faith do I have. That's not the question. The real question is, what is my faith in?

You see, the Buddhist got tremendous faith in Buddha. But ask Buddha, how do I have my sins forgiven?

[5 : 10] And the answer, you'll get it. That's not our realm. Nothing to do with us. But Christ, you see, it isn't faith that saves. It's faith in Christ.

It's Christ that does the saving. I always found an illustration very helpful. Supposing I'm crossing a river and there are two bridges there and one looks pretty shaky.

In fact, they both look pretty shaky. And I'm told, will these bridges carry my 17 stone over to the other side?

And I'm told, well, yes, there's one of them that are very reliable but I can't remember which one. Just put your faith in one. So I say, right, I'm going to put all my faith and I'm going to believe as hard as I can on the left-hand bridge.

And I go across the left-hand bridge. Halfway across, I drop into the water. That is not my faith that let me down.

[6 : 24] It's the bridge that let me down. There was nothing wrong with my faith. My faith was in the wrong object. The question is, what is your faith in?

Much more important than how much faith I got. But it is essential. Now, our Saviour is telling us here, one grain of faith in the right source is all you need.

And what the Saviour is saying in short here is, exercise the little bit of faith you have and that faith will grow and expand and develop through exercise.

Faith grows through exercise. And you remember, Peter, in his second letter, more or less said the same thing when he said, add to your faith or supplement to your faith a virtue and to virtue knowledge and to knowledge, self-control and so on.

Now, isn't it, first of all, isn't it interesting what sparks off this question? What was it that made the disciples say, oh Lord, increase our faith?

[7 : 46] What was it? Well, we read it. if your brother sins against you or rebuking and if he repents forgive him and if he sins against you seven times in one day and seven times in one day he comes to you and says, I repent.

you say, your duty is to forgive him. Now, I don't know about you but if somebody sinned against me seven times in one day and seven times he tripped up to me afterwards saying, I repent, I'd be very, very inclined to say it.

You're not serious, son. I'd be very inclined to say that. But our Savior instructs us here. You must forgive him.

That is the point at where the disciples said, Oh, Lord, increase our faith. Now, faith in Christ, as if faith in Christ increases, so does all the other graces.

And it's important for us to grasp that growth is actually a by-product of other things. You can't just grow.

[9 : 29] You grow in other things and growing in other things your faith grows. you cannot separate growth in faith, for example, from growth in knowledge, for example.

We are told, grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. how can we grow in faith in Christ if we don't grow in knowledge of Christ?

How do we find out about Christ? Where do we get our information about Christ? How can we grow in faith in him if we don't grow in knowledge of him?

And that's what the Savior, the Savior made it very clear about the scriptures. They testify of me.

You want to grow in faith? Grow in your knowledge of the scriptures and what they teach of Christ. You want to grow in faith?

- [10 : 50] Grow in love. love and faith, I always like to think. The Bible tells us faith works by love. I see faith and love as the two sides of one coin. Grow in one and you grow in the other. If you want to know your faith in Christ, ask yourself, do you love Christ?
- Do you love him? Well, you're faithful. Because faith works by love. And if you want to increase your love, you have to practice it.
- You have to say to you, you have to practice loving the unlovable. That person that annoys you intensely, practice loving them more.
- Learn to forgive them quicker. That person that keeps on doing you harm, forgive them quicker, forgive them more fully, try to love them more.
- [12 : 09] And as you love, as your love increases, your faith will increase also. To grow in faith, grow in service.
- We're saved to serve. As we're told in the Bible, that having died to what we were held by, that was so that we could serve in the newness of the letter.
- We're saved to serve. Serve more, do more for Christ, do more for his kingdom, do more for his people, do more for the church.
- And as you do these things, your faith subconsciously grows and develops as you grow in other graces. Want to grow in faith?
- Grow in obedience, grow in submission. You will never grow in faith if you're disobedient. If there's something you know you should do, and you are not doing it, how are you going to grow in faith?
- [13 : 23] You're to obey the gospel. Believing the gospel is used interchangeably with obeying the gospel.
- You can't grow in faith without growing in obedience obedience and submission. You might ask, what is the difference between obedience and submission?
- Well, as far as I can make out, one obeys commandments and one submits to God's will. I might be keeping all the commandments.
- I might be doing nothing wrong, but then I get cancer and I'm not a happy bunny.
- I'm angry. if I'm angry with God, I'm not submitting to his will.
- [14 : 29] I might be breaking no commandments, but I might be angry that it was his will that I should be so ill. That's submission. How can we grow in faith if we're not growing in submission to his will?
- If we're not obeying all his commands, you can't have one without the other. I always remember being told it's a very dangerous thing to ask God to increase your faith because when you do that, very often, the way we increase in faith is to have more trials and more tribulations.
- tribulations. You remember Paul sent, revisited the churches he planted in the book of Acts, exhorting them to continue in the faith, saying we must, through many tribulations, enter the kingdom of God.
- What would you say of someone? In fact, I heard the illustration of a person whose uncle left them an inheritance on one condition, that they had to go over to America to receive it.
- But the girl said, oh, I can't stand sailing, sailing, and I will not go into any other place. Oh, well, there's only these two ways to get to America.
- [16 : 16] Sailing in a boat, or flying in any other place. Oh, I'm not doing any. Well, she can't go to America. You want to go to heaven? The way to America is through the Atlantic, over the Atlantic.

The way to heaven, it seems, is through much trouble. much tribulation. Christ promised his disciples, his followers, in this world, you will have tribulation.

But be of good cheer, I've overcome the world. And it's amazing how new converts often come to a minister and say, ever since I became a Christian, I have this problem, I that problem, I have this next problem, before I was a Christian, there were no problems.

What am I doing wrong? And the response has to be, you're probably doing everything just right. Through many tribulations, you must enter the kingdom.

It's the way God has appointed. He has ordained that through trials and tribulations were sanctified and equipped and made ready for heaven.

[17 : 43] That's his appointed will. Grow knowledge, grow in love, grow in service, grow in obedience and submission, grow in enduring tribulations tribulations cheerfully.

I mean, at the end of the day, the wicked endure tribulations. But we have to do it knowing, knowing that this is leading to our sanctification and this is for God's glory.

Grow in perseverance. patience. We're told through faith and patience we inherit the kingdom. Not just faith, faith and patience or endurance or steadfastness or commitment is probably the word we use today.

You know, I find it so encouraging, the Christian race. You don't need to be first. You don't need to be second.

And you don't need to be third. But you need to finish. You must finish the race.

[19 : 03] Isn't it wonderful? All you have to do is finish the race. And I often think Satan, all he wants you to do is pack it all in.

give it out. Give it out. If he can just get us to do that one thing, he's succeeded. So battle on.

Persevere. Lift yourself up again. God. Then, of course, growth, a byproduct, a byproduct of all these things, of course.

But surely at this time we can't speak about growing in faith without mentioning the very thing Christ gave to us for growing in faith.

faith. What's that? The sacral it's baptism for identification with the people of God, initiation into the kingdom of God.

[20 : 15] But for growth in particular, you have the regular constant feeding of the Lord's son. every week from this pulpit, you hear the gospel through ear gate.

This coming Lord's day, you will also see the gospel through eye gate. There's another sense involved.

We see the gospel being enacted out before our eyes by the people of God. There's three particular actions that are very important to know.

There's bread representing the body of Jesus. But there's a very important action with that bread, you know. You can't just give him the bread.

The bread's broken and given to you. It's important. You see, it's not the body of Christ that saves.

[21 : 37] It's the broken body of Christ. Similarly, the wine. I've often wondered, it's referred to as the bread and the cup.

Not the bread and the wine, but the bread and the cup. Now, the wine represents the blood of Christ.

But you see, it's not really the blood of Christ that forgives. it's the shed blood of Christ that forgives. And that's why the wine is poured out into a cup.

The bread broken, the wine poured out, it's the shed blood of Christ that is represented. And of course, the third action, the bread is eaten and the wine is drunk.

We are to feed upon Christ. Not just behold him, not just look at him. He's given us that, he's given us the bread, he's given us the wine, and he says take, eat, it's for you.

[22 : 59] Was it not one of your own old ministers who said to some poor trembling woman, was it but a cake or carrots? And when she was trembling, worried about taking the bread and the wine, and he said, take it woman, it's for sinners.

You see, the supper, the supper for you, for us in the western world in the 21st century, supper is usually that little cuppa, that little snack that you have before you go to bed.

In the Bible, the supper was not a little snack, the supper was a feast. It was at least the main meal of the day.

And if we are not taking the main meal of the day, for all our vitamins and proteins and nutrients, for our health, if we are not taking that, don't dare complain, you're weak in the faith.

one of the first questions the doctor will ask you is, how's your appetite? Are you taking your food?

[24 : 21] The supper is the main meal for the growth and development of Christians, with a grain, a grain of faith.

The worst hero is for believers who have sins to repent of and who have a saviour to depend on.

some people think that when we are told to examine ourselves that the expectation is that there will be no sins to repent of.

As far as I understand it, when the apostle tells us to examine ourselves and so let a man eat, the expectation is you will find plenty to repent of.

But repent and come. He does not say examine yourselves so that a man may abstain.

[25 : 35] That's not what he says. Examine yourselves so that you may partake and come. You see, it's very important actually, that we do examine ourselves because we might be going around the completely wrong exercise.

If we do not examine ourselves, we actually might be praying for more faith when the problem with us is lack of knowledge. We are praying for more faith.

There's not more faith you need at all. It could be if you don't examine yourself, you could be praying for more love. More love is not the problem. The problem is a sin you have not confessed or repented of.

If you don't examine yourself, you might get all that mixed up completely. if you don't examine yourself, you might be praying, oh, that I'd be more obedient.

And the problem is unthankfulness and ingratitude. all these things have unnecessary parts and are to be exercised in them.

[26 : 52] And in the exercise of these graces and these exercises, our faith is subconsciously and spontaneously grown, as it were.

well, that's the provision the Saviour has given his church for growth.

Do this, do this to remember me. And whatever you do at the table this weekend, remember him.

it's not about yourself. It's not about you. It's not about me. It's about him. And isn't the devil wily?

Isn't he subtle? A very institution designed and given to us so that we will focus on him. The devil gets in so piously.

[27 : 57] Ah, look at the way you're living. Look at your life. Look how sinful you are. Look at little growth there's been since the last communion. And he's got you, what's he got you doing? He's got you thinking of yourself.

Focusing on yourself. What else can you get but depressed when you're focusing on yourself? Focus on him. Do this to remember me, not yourself.

Do the exercises you do. Do examine yourself. But remember your right to be there is in him, not in yourself.

It's in him. He commands, he instructs, come and die. Take it, take it, he says. It's for such as you.

Well, just as we close, what if you're here tonight and you're unconverted? You're not a Christian.

[29 : 00] You're unsaved. Well, there's only one thing for you to concentrate on. Concentrate on Christ.

Concentrate on repenting and believing. If you're not a Christian, the supper is not for you. Forget about it, forget about growing in your case.

In fact, forget about becoming holy. Concentrate on getting to Christ. He's the only one that can equip you.

He's the only one that can forgive you. He's the only one that can put you right with God. God. So you focus on Jesus.

Remember, whoever believes on the Son, whoever, whoever, whenever, wherever, whoever believes on the Son has everlasting life.

[30 : 07] He does not say you will obtain everlasting life. you believe on the Son, you have it. You have it. Present tense, you have it.

So, if you're not a Christian, repent tonight. If you're not a Christian, believe tonight.

But remember the Lord's death at the weekend. Because it's all about him. it's not about you. Lord, increase our faith.

Do not despise what he has given us for the increase of faith. May God, the Holy Spirit, make his word effectual to every one of us.

Let's bow our heads. Our gracious Father, thank you. Be pleased.

[31 : 18] Would zab