

FL107 Mustard Seed Faith

Jesus spoke of three kinds of faith - little faith, faith, and great faith. Before discussing these, let's examine a symbol that Jesus used relative to faith. In Lk. 17:5, the disciples asked the Lord to increase their faith. Jesus didn't address this, but He gave a parable instead:

Lk 17:6: *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.*

The mustard seed is the smallest of all seeds, but it grows into the greatest of herbs. Herbs grow large enough for birds to sit on their branches [Mt. 13:32]. So when exercised, this small measure of faith gives off more power than several sticks of dynamite. A large explosive will uproot a tree, but faith will plant this tree in the sea after pulling it up by its roots.

Suppose your situation requires an even greater work than moving a tree. Maybe there's a mountain in your path. And thousands of sycamine trees grow on this mountain. If the smallest seed on earth is large enough to move one tree, how large must a seed be to move your mountain? Another of Christ's parables answers this question:

Mt 17:20: *If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you.*

These two parables show the faith that moves a tree will also move a mountain — even one that hosts a thousand sycamine trees. So then, the size of the seed has nothing to do with the measure of faith. There is no difference between *little faith*, *faith*, and *great faith*.

The measure of faith is not the mustard seed message. The Zondervan Parallel New Testament In Greek and English reads, "*Add to us faith*" and not "*increase our faith*." You cannot increase faith, you either have faith or you don't have faith. So, when Jesus says "*O ye of little faith*," He means that you have no faith at all.

Now, is there a difference between *faith* and *great faith*? The answer is both no and yes. The faith is the same, the difference is the strength of the faith.

Now, the strength of faith has nothing to do with increasing faith. The only way to increase faith is to add more needs to what you already believe God will do for you. For example, if you have faith for food but no faith for healing, you can increase your faith by believing scriptures that teach divine health.

Again, there is only one "measure of faith." You can increase from *no faith* to *faith*, and you can increase the number of things you believe. But faith does not increase from *faith* to *great faith*. Yet Jesus distinguished between *faith* and *great faith*. And the simplest way to explain this is by example.

A Centurion's Servant

A centurion tells the Lord of his servant who's sick with palsy [Mt. 8:5-10]. When Jesus says, "*I will come and heal him*," the centurion says this:

Mt. 8:8-9: *Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldst come under my roof: but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed. For I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me: and I say to this man, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it.*

Jesus marvels and says, "*I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel*." I will explain why this man's faith was great after the next example. presenting a second witness of great faith.

A Gentile Woman's Daughter

The faith of the woman in this story [Mt. 15:22-28] is even greater than the faith of the Centurion. The Centurion was a Jew; this woman was a Gentile. God sent Jesus to the Jews, not to the Gentiles. Not only this, but Jesus had told the twelve not to go to the Gentiles:

Mt. 10:5-6: *Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans ... But to rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.*

Nevertheless, this woman of Canaan had a "sycamine tree problem" and the "mustard seed faith" to solve it. Her daughter was being vexed with a devil. She knew nothing about the restrictions on Jesus and His disciples. She just wanted her daughter healed.

She cried out to Jesus for mercy, but He ignored her. More than likely, she repeated her request several times. And His disciples suggested that He send her away. Then Jesus said that He was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel. In desperation, she worships the Lord and says, "*Lord, help me*."

But the heavenly command has forbade Jesus to do what she wants. So He says, "*It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs*." To which she answers, "*Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table*" [Mt. 15:26-27].

Now, we could talk about this woman's humility, how

FL107 Mustard Seed Faith

she's willing to be compared to a dog, but then we would miss the primary intent of this story. The next verse reveals the intent:

Mt. 15:28: Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour.

This parable, and the one about the Centurion's servant, reveal the difference between faith and great faith. The difference is the foundation on which this faith rests. Not the foundation in the scriptures, but the foundation in the heart and mind of the believer.

Notice that the faith of the both believers was great

because of their understandings. The Centurion understood that Christ's words brought healing; The woman of Canaan understood the same, but she formed a parable that changed the Father's mind.

Thus, faith comes by hearing and believing; and great faith comes by parables in the Word and in the believer's understanding.

Even with all this teaching, there is a scriptural way to acquire an even stronger faith than you saw in these two parables. The scripture that explains this powerful faith does everything but name it. Moses could have called it, "Forever Faith." You can learn about this greater faith in the Lesson FL108.