

Increase Our Faith

“And the Apostles said unto the Lord, Increase our faith” **Luke 17:5**

Four things to notice about these words, by way of introduction. **First**, these words were directed to “the Lord” Jesus and teach us that he is the source of grace and the object of worship. **Second**, these words “increase our faith” were spoken by “the apostles” and teach us that even the Lord’s disciples have their imperfections, feel them, and are concerned to be freed from them. **Third**, the reference to “our faith” teaches us that faith is not finished at once. There are degrees of faith, and a higher measure of it is attainable.

Fourth, the occasion of this prayer teaches us that an increase of faith is not only desirable but sometimes necessary. Observe what Jesus had been emphasising: “take heed to yourselves: if thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him: and if he repent, forgive him. And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him.” In response, the disciples prayed, “Lord, increase our faith,” because only faith can enable us to do this.

But why faith in particular? Why not increase our humility? love? patience? Because faith is the root from which these other graces grow, and as faith our faith grows strong, so these will grow. Because all things are possible to him that believes (Mark 9:23).

Forgiveness, so difficult in human nature, will be easy if it is by faith, and we can believe not only that if we don’t forgive, we will not be forgiven, but also the assurance that God, for Christ’s sake, has forgiven us. Can we, who have forgiven ten thousand talents, seize a fellow servant by the throat, who owes us only a hundred pence? (Matthew 18:21ff).

However, many other situations will lead us to feel that we need greater faith than we currently possess, prompting us to pray for its increase.

And does he require us to own and confess him before men? This

is the work of faith, and will only be easy as faith increases – Peter and John said, “we ought to obey God rather than men.” Think of Moses, also, “By faith Moses feared not the wrath of the king; for he endured as seeing him who is invisible.”

Are you called to sacrifice or let go of something that your human nature will not let go without a fight? By faith Abraham, when he was tried, “offered up Isaac.”

Are you called to confide in God alone, in a time of great difficulties—when no one else understands, and God’s providence seems to be against his promise, and there seems no way of escape – when he says, “Come, follow me through this dark period of life.”

Are you called to walk in the darkness, not knowing the way forward? To you, the Lord says, I know the way that you take (Job 23:10). Here is my arm, feel this, lean on this (Deuteronomy 33:27). The sorrow shall turn to your salvation, the trial shall be your triumph (John 16:16-22; 2 Corinthians 7:10; Psalm 126:5). The end will show that the Lord is very pitiful and of tender mercy, and constrain you to say, “It is good for me that I have been afflicted.” What is all this without faith?” (Psalm 119:71). We say therefore in these times, “Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief” (Mark 9:24).

Are you called to old age? How solemn was the order addressed to Moses, “Go up and die, and be gathered to thy people!” By years, infirmities, and disease, God is calling you in the same way to serve him.

He is calling you to be resigned and willing to go, to do well what can never be done again, to glorify God, to edify others, to be an example to the last, and above all, at the last, “Lord –Lord! increase our faith.” Lord, count us worthy of this calling, and fulfil all the good pleasure of thy goodness, and the work of faith with power.

This sermon is taken from William Jay’s devotional, *Morning and Evening Exercises* (January 7, Evening), first published in 1854.