

Luke 17:5-10

- 5 The apostles said to the Lord,
“Increase our faith!”
- 6 The Lord replied, “If you had faith the size of a mustard seed, you could say to this mulberry tree,
‘Be uprooted and planted in the sea,’
and it would obey you.
- 7 “Who among you would say to your slave who has just come in from plowing or tending sheep in the field, ‘Come here at once and take your place at the table’?
- 8 Would you not rather say to him, ‘Prepare supper for me, put on your apron and serve me while I eat and drink; later you may eat and drink’?
- 9 Do you thank the slave for doing what was commanded?
- 10 So you also, when you have done all that you were ordered to do, say, ‘We are worthless slaves; we have done only what we ought to have done!’”

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- Luke 17:5-10 follows Jesus’ stern warning to his disciples concerning causing “little ones” to stumble.
 - Bible.org writes,
“The disciples felt overwhelmed by Jesus’ teaching in Luke 17:1-4... The disciples instantly realized that these were tough demands... but... more faith is not really the issue. Faith is not measured by its quantity, but simply by its presence... The real need, Jesus says (17:7-10), is for more obedience and humility.”

5 The apostles said to the Lord, “Increase our faith!”

- Notice the progression from “disciples” to “apostles.”

- Did Christ's teaching on forgiveness in verses 3 and 4 sound so challenging that the apostles realized they needed to step up their faith? Even today, it is difficult to forgive!
- This is the only circumstance I could find where the group of followers specifically asked Jesus for spiritual help.

6 *The Lord replied, “If you had faith the size of a mustard seed, you could say to this mulberry tree,
‘Be uprooted and planted in the sea,’
and it would obey you.*

- The tree was not a mulberry, but a type of sycamore, with black berries. This is distinct from the sycamore fig tree which Amos “dressed” and Zacchaeus climbed.
- This particular tree has deep roots, which made it a perfect illustration for the power of faith.
- This is a sharp response to a spiritual request!
 - > Jesus could have sensed that the apostles were looking for an easy way out of such a challenging commandment!
 - > Perhaps Jesus felt that spiritual growth must be derived through obedience, humility, and love.
- The Working Preacher commentary writes, *“With a twinge of irritation (indicated by the Greek syntax in 17:6) he tells them in so many words that they have all the faith they need.”*
- We tend to place faith into two categories: one, a conduit to miracles; and, two, a countenance of trust and obedience.

- A true and sincere faith—implicit trust in the Lord—has a power that transcends wealth, fame, power, knowledge or status.
- This teaching is not a promise of dramatic “magic tricks,” but a reminder of what is possible within the embrace of Jesus Christ.

7 *“Who among you would say to your slave who has just come in from plowing or tending sheep in the field, ‘Come here at once and take your place at the table’?”*

8 *Would you not rather say to him, ‘Prepare supper for me, put on your apron and serve me while I eat and drink; later you may eat and drink’?”*

- Ellicott writes, *“They were looking for the crown of labour before their work was done, for the wreath of the conqueror before they had fought the battle.”*
- In other words, there are no shortcuts! Serve and obey, and faith will increase!
- We should never imagine that we have fulfilled the demands of faith or earned our reward.
- Note that our faith rewards are those of a servant!
- Jesus drew from the everyday experiences of the disciples and the people, thus, slavery is a teaching tool rather than an endorsement of the institution.

9 *Do you thank the slave for doing what was commanded?*

- We are expected to obey. There is no merit in reaching the “minimum daily requirements” of the Christian walk. All in a day's work!

- Perhaps as the disciples were advancing, it was important to Christ to stress that they had earned nothing.

10 *So you also, when you have done all that you were ordered to do, say, ‘We are worthless slaves; we have done only what we ought to have done!’”*

- The concept of “slave” in the time of Jesus was more fluid than we understand today. Also, a slave could mean someone totally devoted to another.
- If we recited this verse as a statement of faith during worship, how do you imagine people would react?
- Jesus is not in any way denying the need for rest, food, or recreation. The master is foolish if he breaks the body or spirit of the slave.
- In your life, consider how many of the most satisfying moments have come from engaging hard work or difficult challenges.
- What a joy it is that the people of God will always have purpose and a calling!
- As we strive after the Lord with tireless devotion and obedience, we discover that, after all, the prayer of the apostles is answered, because the immeasurable love of God has bathed us every step of the way—increasing our faith and blessing our lives.
- God as “taskmaster” is, of course, only one facet of the heavenly crown. Mercy, forgiveness, love, redemption, and life are the gifts of God which shine through Christ into our lives.
- It’s important to remember that Jesus graciously reversed these roles by washing the disciples’ feet, and, of course, by sacrificing himself in our place.