



“What’s my Motivation?”

Luke 17:5-10

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5 And the apostles said to the Lord, "Increase our faith." 6 So the Lord said, "If you have faith as a mustard seed, you can say to this mulberry tree, 'Be pulled up by the roots and be planted in the sea,' and it would obey you. 7 "And which of you, having a servant plowing or tending sheep, will say to him when he has come in from

the field, 'Come at once and sit down to eat'? 8 "But will he not rather say to him, 'Prepare something for my supper, and gird yourself and serve me till I have eaten and drunk, and afterward you will eat and drink'? 9 "Does he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I think not. 10 "So likewise you, when you have done all those things which you are commanded, say, 'We are unprofitable servants. We have done what was our duty to do.'"

“Increase our faith...”

First, it seems we must ask, “What is faith?” Faith according to scripture is “... *the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.*” (Heb 11:1) But what does THAT really mean? What does faith look like in the real world? Is it “*I think I can...I believe I can*” like the “little engine that could?” Or is it rather “**HE** can and I trust Him to do it as He promised?” In truth, faith is the belief...the acknowledgment, that God is all powerful and intimately involved and in control and will handle things for the best of His **cosmic** plan...and His plan for you personally, and His long term objectives, *even if that means an event does not go our way in the worldly scheme of things.* Faith is not a belief that something is going to happen in a certain way, but rather that God “has our backs” and will handle it...*whatever it is.* Faith is not wishful thinking or “mind over matter.” It is trust, and further a *trust in the Lord and HOW HE CHOOSES TO HANDLE A SITUATION.*

Often it is the common practice of many Christians to echo the words of the apostles herein and will also send up a prayer with those incredible words... “**Increase our faith!**” Those words go hand in hand with other such prayers within the same genre....prayers like “Lord, *show me my heart*”... “Lord, *give me wisdom*” ... “Lord, *help me to grow.*” The list is potentially long and varied, but I think we all are familiar with that category of prayer. Remembering again the context of our Lord’s words, one cannot help but hear...albeit if only in our own heads, the marginally indignant voice of the Lord here in response. The apostles asking “Lord! Increase our faith!” and Jesus answering, effectively, “*why...?*”

“Excuse me? What’s that Lord....?”

“You want your faith increased, and I’m asking you why!”

I wonder if we are so bold to ask ourselves that question. I wonder if we are so willing to seek our true hearts on such matters. The ‘matters’ of spiritual vernacular and the mo’ behind our requests.

1 Sam 16:7 “...man looks on the outward appearance, but the LORD looks on the heart.”

1 Chron 28:9 “...for the LORD searches all hearts, and understands every intent of the thoughts.”

Psalms 44:21 “...He knows the secrets of the heart.”

Psalm 139:2-23 “...You know when I sit down and when I rise up; You understand my thought from afar. You scrutinize my path and my lying down, And are intimately acquainted with all my ways. Even before there is a word on my tongue, Behold, O LORD, You know it all.”

Jesus goes in here in a seeming allusion that acquiring such faith is not herculean task...not something we must search the 4 corners of the earth for. Such apparently is not reserved for the spiritual elite, but is appears to be readily available to us all. The apostles request...*and ours too so often*, is “increase our faith.” Jesus then stated that while those may be noble words, it in truth only takes a quantity the size of a mustard seed...incredible small even as far as seeds go, in order to *say to this mulberry tree, ‘Be pulled up by the roots and be planted in the sea,’ and it would obey you*. That’s some incredible results with such a small amount! What can we gather then? Are we not left to understand rather that it is not the *quantity* of our faith that is the critical element? If we accept that premise, then what IS the magic key to bring result?

Again, if we look at the context of the events as they have been playing out, we see Jesus has been dancing around this subject for some time. He said back in 16:15 that “*You are those who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts.*” We can often be so blind it seems, to the realization that God not only knows what we do but He knows *why we do it*. Why do we want our faith increased? Why do want more wisdom? Why do we want any of these seemingly noble aspects increased and manifested from our lives? Is it for *Him* and the furthering of the kingdom? Or is it in fact, for ourselves and our own self-promotion? Are we willing to “look down that well” to see the bottom?

Jesus of course, now elaborates further on his remarks. He tells of an account or situation that may leave us scratching our heads, but in it lies the cusp of His remarks. Jesus presents a scenario: “...*which of you, having a servant plowing or tending sheep, will say to him when he has come in from the field, ‘Come at once and sit down to eat’? ‘But will he not rather say to him, ‘Prepare something for my supper, and gird yourself and serve me till I have eaten and drunk, and afterward you will eat and drink’?*” What was His point in such a story? Is it not that Jesus is clearly saying that it is not about *us* but rather about *Him*?

The sad reality concerning Christianity is that people we come to Him for a lot of different reasons. In John 6:26 Jesus deals with the same issue: “*Truly, truly, I say to you, you are seeking me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves.*” Those people were there and seeking Jesus because He fed them. A lot of folks come to Christ because of what they hope to gain on the worldly scheme. They want security and stability and comfort and an easy road through life. Ironically, not only does Christ and the Bible not make such promises, but in fact in many cases promises the opposite!

In Mark 10, verse 30 it says that we will indeed “*receive a hundredfold now in this time—houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands...*” Yea! Sounds great! But then He gives the next words, “*with persecutions.*” Oh. Well, there is **that** I guess!

And before we leave that passage, let's note how one acquires that hundred fold: (vs 28-29) Peter began to say to Him, "See, we have left all and followed You." *Well that's nice Peter, but can I ask you why? What's your mo' Peter?* Because (verse 29) says "...assuredly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, **for My sake and the gospel's,**" that will not receive those great blessings..." Clearly it matters *why* we do what we do, and further we cannot expect the blessings of belonging to Christ if we are there for selfish or self-entitlement reasons!

One must wonder just who **is** the Lord of our lives? Do we see Him as the King that we humbly serve, or do we see Him rather as a means to an end? A "lucky rabbit's foot?" A "magic elixir" to add to our lives? An "ace up our sleeve"...a "get-out-of-jail-free" card? Just what is our motivation in following Christ? The answer to that crucial question eventually becomes evident in each of our lives. Because if we are not in the game for the right reasons, we are sure to eventually bow out, passing the flame for another different "elixir"...be it a well-paying job, a new man or woman in our life, a new philosophy or a new life system. Inevitably, the "new choice" will be far more socially acceptable and less controversial! We always eventually "show our hand."

What are some early signs of such a heart? Tacit commitment for one. Meaning I *participate* but am reluctant to *completely throw in*. Then when the day comes to take a stand for Christ, we claim publically like Peter that "I don't know the man..."

Another sign would be that I seek to do and be what places me in the limelight. I have experienced a lot of folks who want to be in the ministerial community, or maybe even the leadership community, but truthfully not to serve but moreover to look good to the church and to their fellow man. It was about *position* not *participation*. It was about a *title*.

A reluctance to take any heat is also a sure sign that one's 'mo is wrong. Meaning, when I am called upon to defend the faith, my Lord, and my church, I am slow to man up.

Another would be the practice of *adding* Christianity to my current lifestyle: I hold back and don't give Him everything nor do I sacrifice my own plans and agenda for King and Kingdom. I just try to squeeze God in where I have a few minutes to spare. How is it that we fail to see that real faith is "all in." Jesus wasn't merely *scorned* for us, He *died* for us. Christianity is innately extreme and radical in its manifest. Anything else is just a moral club I attend on the weekends. That's why He says we too must "die" to ourselves and to this life if we want to be His disciple!

Jesus, in his textual account, goes on to say (verse 9) "*Does he (the master) thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I think not.*" Jesus wasn't trying to be cold or calloused with those words. He is not insinuating that we are merely drones to dig ditches in obscurity. We know scripture has much to say about the joys of fellowship, the blessings of community, and the loving care that comes with being a part of His family.

Ruth 2:12 "The LORD repay your work, and a full reward be given you by the LORD God of Israel, under whose wings you have come for refuge." And Ps 91:4 "He shall cover you with His feathers, And under His wings you shall take refuge; His truth shall be your shield and buckler." However, such care and "reward" is at His discretion in the midst of testing, maturing, and growing you into a spiritual adult. And ultimately, to belong to Him means you **belong to HIM**. We are servants... "bond-slaves" in eternal service to the king!

Verse 10 of our text says...as if a period at the end of the sentence, *"So likewise you, when you have done all those things which you are commanded, say, 'We are unprofitable servants. We have done what was our duty to do.'"*

I wonder if that is our understanding of our relationship with Him. Is that how we see our walk of faith? Or is this all about us? We must recognize that even Jesus Himself had a heart of service for His Father. In His prayer in John 17:4 He says *"I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do."* I wonder if we can pray that prayer at the end of OUR lives?

Does all this mean I cannot or *should not* seek God on a matter wherein I have a desire or a perceived need for a certain outcome? Oh no! Not at all! God *"loves to give good gifts to His kids."* (Matthew 7:11) James 4:2 tells us that *"You do not have because you do not ask God."* But James goes on therein to warn us that when we DO ask, our hearts must be righteous! (Verse 3) *"And even when you ask, you don't get it because your motives are all wrong--you want only what will give you pleasure."*

So **asking** is not sin! But our reason in asking and our response to His answer may be! Even Jesus in the garden sought the Father that "this cup may pass from me": that what was waiting for Him could in some way be avoided. But note that the answer was "no." So Jesus obeyed anyway. So did Jesus lack faith? If I can be so daring to say, it seems that Jesus also, *in His humanity*, was to have HIS faith increased. For truth be told, often that is just how our faith IS increased...*with a hearty but simply "no" from the Master of the house.*

So when we ask "Lord, increase my faith" the result will no doubt include some "no's" and some results that are unexpected and maybe even quite uncomfortable. And those events will either increase our faith or will thrash it beyond recognition! Because again...if faith is trusting in HIM and HIS ways and HIS plan, then often the "no's" will affect us and our faith much more than the "yes's."

Coming to an understanding of our place in the grand scheme of things is crucial not only to our lives as believers, but our ultimate survival in the world around us. If we forget our place, we are apt to do as so many have, and that is to attempt to use God's power as our own and for our own pursuits and agenda. The truth is that **all that we are, all that we have, and all that we have done** is because we are simply doing our duty.

Sadly, we often struggle our whole lives to muster up service to God, but it is in truth much greater than even that. For it is not *service* that we owe, but rather *duty* for our life, breath, blessings, and salvation! Our constant excuses and attempts to exempt ourselves are nothing short of worldly selfishness. It is a shame upon those that claim His redemption and further, call Him Lord!

We are to serve and obey all that He asks. We are to work until all the work is done. Not for our gain or position, but for **His** gain and position! We, as bond-*slaves* (that is the correct rendering of the word "servant"), are to start earlier and work later than all the rest. This is not *optional*. It is our *duty*. Few ever truly understand this truth, and even fewer embrace it!

So then...what IS your motivation? Why are you in this Christian thing, and who is ruling the roost? *"We are unprofitable servants. We have done what was our duty to do."*