

## USE WHAT LITTLE FAITH YOU HAVE

Luke 17:1-10

**TEXT:** *Jesus said to his disciples: "Things that cause people to sin are bound to come, but woe to that person through whom they come. It would be better for him to be thrown into the sea with a millstone tied around his neck than for him to cause one of these little ones to sin. So watch yourselves. "If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him. If he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times comes back to you and says, 'I repent,' forgive him." The apostles said to the Lord, "Increase our faith!" He replied, "If you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mulberry tree, 'Be uprooted and planted in the sea,' and it will obey you. "Suppose one of you had a servant plowing or looking after the sheep. Would he say to the servant when he comes in from the field, 'Come along now and sit down to eat'? Would he not rather say, 'Prepare my supper, get yourself ready and wait on me while I eat and drink; after that you may eat and drink'? Would he thank the servant because he did what he was told to do? So you also, when you have done everything you were told to do, should say, 'We are unworthy servants; we have only done our duty.'"*

In Jesus' name, my fellow redeemed:

Jesus sets before His disciples a most distressing measurement of faith: the ability to do a miracle. He said: ***If you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mulberry tree, 'Be uprooted and planted in the sea,' and it will obey you.*** If you have just a little bitty-bit of faith, you can tell a tree to uproot and plant itself in the sea: ***it will obey you.*** I can't even get our dog to obey me!

What does this say about my faith? It tells me exactly what it told those early disciples: it is weak. When Jesus' disciples heard Jesus talking about faith, they cried out: ***Increase our faith!*** One of the signs that a person has any faith at all is that he will be concerned over the fact that it is weak. If he has any faith at all, he will feel that weakness and often cry out such a prayer: ***Lord, I believe! Help me in my unbelief!***

In fact, if we COULD see faith, we might see something like what is charted on a seismograph during an earthquake. The needle jumps up and down, back and forth, indicating high peaks and low valleys. So it is with the Christian's faith at any given time. Only the Lord knows where it is in the chart of strengths and weaknesses. In fact, the Lord even warns us not to put our faith and confidence in how weak or strong we think our faith is. Scripture says: ***...if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall!*** 1Co 10:12 If and when you THINK your faith is strong, watch out for the fall!

What, then, shall we do? Look to Jesus who has wrapped Himself up in the pulpit, water, bread and wine. There your faith, weak or strong, will find forgiveness of sins, life and salvation. On the promise of forgiveness through Jesus you stand firm, and faith cannot fail because it is founded on Jesus. So then, what shall we do? **USE WHAT LITTLE FAITH YOU HAVE** I. To forgive sinners who repent; and II. To continue in humble service to the Lord.

Some people believe that the purpose of the church is to improve life in this world; to eradicate sin and immorality; to make this world a better place in which to live. Such people will lose whatever faith they have because that's never going to happen. In

fact, what alarmed Jesus' disciples was when He said: *Things that cause people to sin are bound to come, but woe to that person through whom they come. It would be better for him to be thrown into the sea with a millstone tied around his neck than for him to cause one of these little ones to sin. So watch yourselves.* It's going to get worse before it gets better at the End of the Word. Jesus described the Last Days: *Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved.* Mt 24 We are a people whose eyes have seen an increase in wickedness unparalleled in history. And as love grows colder and colder, man's inhumanities against man will increase proportionately. And nothing is going to change this fact revealed by the Lord.

But you are to *watch yourselves...* Focus on the cross and the forgiveness of sins. How? As soon as Jesus rose from the dead, He announced the WORK OF THE CHURCH: *If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.* Jn 20:23 Here again He says: *If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him. If he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times comes back to you and says, 'I repent,' forgive him.* Can any of us be so forgiving that if your fellow Christian commits the same sin seven times in one day, and each time repents, that we will keep saying "I forgive you"? Would we not begin to call him a liar and say, "How can you say you are sorry when you keep doing the same thing?" (NOTE: We are not speaking of an IMPENITENT sinner who defends his sin and tries to justify himself; but a sinner who is so weak that he sins often). Can any of us be so forgiving? We had better be, since each of us sin MORE than seven times a day and yet pray, "Lord have mercy on me, a sinner!" And Jesus promises: *...whoever comes to me I will never drive away.* Jn 6:37 Will I not be like Jesus, the One whose mercy endures forever toward me -- the Chief of Sinners?

Based upon this Scripture, I guarantee that if each of us will concentrate our lives upon the forgiveness of sins, not only for ourselves, but in proclaiming this gracious forgiveness to others, even the to most wretchedly weak sinners among us, our faith will remain powerfully strong.

Weak or strong, we can do that. We can forgive others just as we have been forgiven. And then, together, as an army of forgiven sinners who are declared by God to be saints in God's eyes through the blood of Christ, we can continue to offer ourselves in humble service to the Lord who has saved us.

The disciples cried out: *Increase our faith!" (Jesus) replied, "If you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mulberry tree, 'Be uprooted and planted in the sea,' and it will obey you. "Suppose one of you had a servant plowing or looking after the sheep. Would he say to the servant when he comes in from the field, 'Come along now and sit down to eat'? Would he not rather say, 'Prepare my supper, get yourself ready and wait on me while I eat and drink; after that you may eat and drink'? Would he thank the servant because he did what he was told to do? So you also, when you have done everything you were told to do, should say, 'We are unworthy servants; we have only done our duty.'" "OK" says Jesus. "You want to have faith that moves trees into the ocean, mountains into the sea? You want to have faith that parts the Red Sea like in the days of My servant Moses? You want to heal the sick, walk on water and raise the dead? Then remember who you are: sinners elevated to the status of saint by*

the blood that I, your Lord and Master, will shed to make you holy.” Remember who you are: servants of the Almighty God.

Then simply do what the Lord has commanded you to do. If and when the Lord needs to part the Red Sea in order to carry out His work, know for certain that He will do it, right before your eyes! In the meantime, just do what I have called you to do: obey the commandments; love Me above all things; seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness....; children, obey your parents; husbands and wives, love each other; serve one another; and proclaim to the world the forgiveness of sins through the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ.

Our world today is in a panic. Politicians are urging compassion and sacrifice. Our church bodies are calling for sacrifice, service and our money. But our Lord says, “Love God above all things; love and serve one another; and preach the Gospel to everyone.” If you do these things, your faith in Jesus will never fail because you will be too busy forgiving one another, just as God in Christ has forgiven you.

Use whatever little faith you have to do this, and one day, when God is all done with using you to serve Him, you will discover that your faith, weak or strong, has saved you. You will, for Christ’s sake, be in heaven. Amen.