

Liberating Your Faith

A Little Is a Lot

How much faith is necessary to meet your need? If you are like most Christians, you would say, "A lot." Yet this is simply not true. Jesus said that in matters of faith, a little is a lot!

Think about it. The biggest miracle you ever received was the new birth. The tiny amount of faith you used when you received Jesus as your Lord moved you from Satan's kingdom into God's, from spiritual death into eternal life, and from satanic darkness into the kingdom of light. Nothing will ever compare with the power demonstrated by God when He removed you from Satan's family and made you His own child. Any other need you may have in your life is eclipsed by your deliverance at salvation. Any other miracle is a lesser miracle.

So why do you need more faith to receive a lesser miracle? Why do you need a mountain of faith to be healed or to receive deliverance from oppression?

More Faith Is Not the Answer

We have all been guilty of telling someone who did not receive healing, "You needed more faith." We have also condemned ourselves when we failed to receive an answer to prayer, saying, "I guess I didn't have enough faith." We spend time trying to build up our faith, when this isn't the answer at all. We are not in need of more faith, but of liberating and setting free the faith we have.

In foreign countries, we see people receiving Jesus as Lord and then immediately being healed of incurable diseases, receiving their eyesight or hearing, or having missing limbs restored. What's even more mysterious is that many are healed of incurable diseases and then become saved. These people have not had time to build up a great amount of faith – but what little faith they have is unhindered.

The Day the Disciples Failed

In Matthew 17, Jesus was called on to cast the devil out of a young boy. His disciples had been unsuccessful, and the father now looked to Jesus for the answer.

"And Jesus rebuked the devil; and he departed out of him: and the child was cured from that very hour. Then came the disciples to Jesus apart, and said, Why could not we cast him out?" (vs. 18,19).

The disciples were bewildered when Jesus was successful after they were not. They were confused because they had been successful many times before. When Jesus first gave them power over unclean spirits and every type of sickness (Matthew 10:1), they went out, two-by-two, using their new-found authority over Satan. They came back rejoicing that demons were subject to them (Luke 10:17). This instance in Matthew 17 was not the first time they had come up against demons — it was only one of many times. So why were they not successful?

The story is told again in Mark 9:14-27. Mark fills us in on many details Matthew did not give. Mark tells us the disciples were surrounded by a large multitude of people who were watching them. There was also a group of scribes who were questioning the disciples and antagonizing them. It didn't help matters when the young boy who needed deliverance fell to the ground wallowing and foaming from his mouth.

The disciples were really put on the spot. Before, when they had gone out two-by-two, a multitude did not follow them. They were able to cast out devils without so many distractions, often in the privacy of a home. Now all eyes were on them. They felt the pressure of the worried father, the on-looking crowd, and the critical attitude of the religious leaders. Under this great pressure, they failed for the first time.

What Was Jesus' Answer?

Then the disciples asked Jesus why they could not cast out the devil. He did not tell them they did not have enough faith.

"And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, 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." (Matthew 17:20).

Before speaking with Jesus, the disciples had apparently tried to analyze their failure among themselves and had come to the conclusion they didn't have enough faith. This explains why Jesus mentioned the small amount of faith needed to remove problems in the Christian life. Between the last successful case of casting out a devil and this occasion of failure, something unnoticed had crept into the faith life of the disciples.

The problem with the disciples was not more faith, but less unbelief. In fact, Jesus said a very small amount of faith, the size of a mustard seed, would not only move a mountain, it would also guarantee no impossibilities from that time on. But to work, the mustard seed has to be unhindered. A little bit of unbelief will nullify the power of faith.

Faith was never designed to be a tug of war. When unbelief is absent, a mustard-seed amount of faith will carry a mountain into the sea. Unbelief acts as an opponent to faith and pulls on the mountain from the other side. Faith is nullified and the mountain remains. Jesus told the disciples that unbelief was why they were unable to cast out the devil.

Although Jesus was in the same situation as the disciples, He was not moved by the attention of the crowd or the critical attitude of the scribes. He was not intimidated by the young boy who fell on the ground wallowing and foaming. He cast out the devil and set the young boy free. Jesus was a man of faith. He had no unbelief, so His faith was free and unhindered.

The Power of a Mustard Seed

Do you remember the song a number of years ago about the ant who wanted to move a rubber tree plant? With high hopes, he did. Have you ever been on a picnic and watched a piece of popcorn or cake crumb go walking off? When you lifted the popcorn, you found an ant underneath. The ant can move objects much larger and heavier than itself. But faith is even more powerful.

Imagine a mountain moving along without anything visible pushing it. If you

could lift up the mountain, you would find a measure of faith the size of a mustard seed carrying the mountain toward the sea. And after the mountain is gone, this tiny speck of faith just keeps on working, guaranteeing absolute success in every situation from then on. This speck only asks one thing: "Keep me unhindered and free from unbelief."

When Jesus met resistance to His healing and miracle power, He did not blame it on a lack of faith, but a presence of unbelief. The Scriptures tell us as much about ridding ourselves of unbelief as they do of increasing our faith. Let's look at a few of these verses:

"He [Jesus] did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief" (Matthew 13:58).

"And he could there do no mighty work, save that he laid his hands upon a few sick folk, and healed them. And he marveled because of their unbelief" (Mark 6:5,6).

"Afterward he appeared unto the eleven as they sat at meat, and upbraided them for their unbelief...." (Mark 16:14).

In Hebrews, we find instructions for us as New Testament, Church-age believers:

"So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief" (Hebrews 3:19).

"...They to whom it was first preached entered not in because of unbelief" (Hebrews 4:6).

"Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief" (Hebrews 4:11).

So How Do I Get Rid of Unbelief?

Jesus said, "Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting" (Matthew 17:21).

Jesus was not referring to the demon in the young boy. There is no demon which is not subject to the name of Jesus (Luke 10:17-19, Ephesians 1:21,22). Jesus was talking here about unbelief: "this kind [of unbelief] goeth not out but by prayer and fasting."

There are two types of unbelief: rebellious unbelief and passive unbelief. Rebellious unbelief comes from sin. It openly defies the Word and power of God. The Exodus generation was guilty of this type of unbelief. When confronted with the promises of God, they hardened their heart and spoke out against God and Moses.

This was not the kind of unbelief the disciples had when they tried to cast the demon out of the young boy. They were not hardening their hearts against God's plan. No, they faced the second type of unbelief — passive unbelief.

The disciples were truly believing God, but their faith was nullified. As soon as they could, they took Jesus aside and asked in all honesty why they could not cast out the devil this time as they had before.

The Lord's answer cut right to the heart of the problem: "This kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting." Passive unbelief comes from over-occupation with legitimate things of life. In Mark 4:7, Jesus warns of the thorns which choke the Word and make it unfruitful. In verses 18 and 19, He describes the thorns of unbelief as "...the necessities of this age, the deceitfulness of wealth, and the lusts of other things...."

Necessities are not bad, wealth is not wrong, and things are a legitimate part of life. But if we spend too much time concerned with them, our fruitfulness is choked out.

God wants our time to be taken up with prayer and the Word of God. He knows that His Word is our source of life. Jesus said, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4). Passive unbelief takes us away from the Word as we fill our life to overflowing with other activities.

Second Corinthians 10:5 gives us an insight into passive unbelief: "Casting down imaginations [reasonings], and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God...." Unbelief comes with reasonings which set themselves up against

the Word of God.

Jesus gave His disciples the remedy for curing this type of unbelief: it has to be starved to death!

Relief from Unbelief

Do you remember a time in your Christian life when you rarely listened to the radio or watched television? Do you remember when the Word was the most important thing to you? Your car was filled with cassette tapes and your home and workplace contained books on the Word of God. You filled each spare moment with the Word.

In those days, your faith worked every time. You were growing daily toward maturity, and each mountain you faced seemed to head toward the sea. Your faith may have been small, but it was completely free from unbelief.

But now, when you get into your car, you listen to pop, country, or oldies music and the news. If you are in your car during the afternoon, you have to listen to Rush Limbaugh. The Word of God and the teaching tapes have to fight for a slot in your life along with everything else.

When you come home after work, you sit in front of the television for hours at a time. Your home is filled with movie video tapes instead of Bible teaching tapes. Your computer is no longer just a device to use at work, it now allows you to surf the worldwide web or explore the internet all evening long and into the morning hours.

Is it any wonder that the demons who used to flee and the mountains which used to head for the sea, now won't budge? The faith which used to be unhindered is now stifled by human reasonings. The thorns of unbelief have rendered your faith unfruitful. Relief from this type of unbelief demands prayer and fasting.

You must starve unbelief. Unbelief feeds off input from the world. I recommend "fasting" from such input for a beginning period of one to two weeks. Buy yourself a couple of set of tapes for your car and a couple of teaching books for your office and

home. For the next two weeks, don't listen to the radio on the way to work, the mall, or grocery store. Instead, listen to the teaching of God's Word. When you come home, don't turn the television on. Instead, read a teaching book. This will begin to starve your unbelief to death. Your faith will find a freedom it has not experienced for years.

After only one day you will notice a great difference. Your car will become a sanctuary of learning and praise. After a few days, you will find yourself meditating on the teaching you have heard and read instead of songs and news which only produce human reasonings, doubt, and unbelief. Human reasonings will be starved to death and will no longer exalt themselves against the knowledge of God.

You will have liberated your faith. And once again, it will be unhindered, free from unbelief, and ready to carry mountains off into the sea!

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