

FAITH
(Part Three)
"Its Action"

Text: Luke 17.1 - 6 (in pew Bible p. 1037 / in large print Bible p. 1614)

Intro:

-illust. Jumping Where We Cannot See

- the Action of faith frees us from barriers *that hinder our Christian walk.*

-faith is a firm conviction or persuasion *about God and his plan of salvation.*

-faith is indispensible for the Christian:

- saved though FAITH & live by FAITH.

-part 3 of series "*Faith*" = Action

- Object = faith grants us access to God (Hebrews 11.6).
 - must believe that God exists.
 - contra atheists & agnostics / *intelligent design.*
 - **we can know that God exists – but it is on His terms, not ours.**
 - must believe God rewards those who diligently seek Him.
 - contra deists & polytheists / *biblical teaching about attributes.*
 - **many sense God and seek him relationally – not scientifically.**
- Content = please God by keeping the faith (2 Timothy 4.1 - 8).
 - must know the content of faith.
 - system of biblical truth.
 - **judgment, sound doctrine & truth, ministerial duty, perseverance.**
 - must keep the content of faith.
 - run & fight **like a winner.**
 - **long for Christ's appearing to win a crown of righteousness.**

-today's text features Jesus' teaching about forgiveness *and the faith that is needed for such a challenge.*

- offender in v. v. 3 & 4 is highly offensive.
 - repetition of offenses *rubs salt into wound.*
 - multiple apologies seem insincere.
- takes great faith *to obey this teaching:*
 - ... forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you (Ephesians 4.32).
 - Love keeps no record of wrongs (1 Corinthians 13.4 - 6).
- interesting that disciples do not ask for an increase in love *but rather they ask for an increase in faith.*
 - while love motivates us to forgive, faith activates that forgiveness *so that God can use it to work his will.*
 - Jesus uses the image of a mustard seed *to describe the action of faith.*

Take Home Point:

-faith, though small, *can accomplish extremely difficult things* (v. 6).

LIFE OF FAITH

-mustard seed is very small but it has life in it *and it can grow and produce fruit.*

... faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead ... faith without deeds is useless (James 2.17, 20).

-mulberry / sycamine tree is one of the most common *timber trees in Israel.*

- root system is larger *and more extensive.*
- most difficult to root up.
 - **illust.** Lilac Bush.

Then Jesus told them, “I tell you the truth, if you have faith and don’t doubt, you can do things like this and much more. You can even say to this mountain, ‘May you be lifted up and thrown into the sea,’ and it will happen. You can pray for anything, and if you have faith, you will receive it (Matthew 21.21, 22).

-Jesus’ use of the mustard seed metaphor *teaches:*

- additional faith is not necessary.
- instead we should use the faith that we currently have.

-**illust.** It Can Be Done

For it is by believing in your heart that you are made right with God, and it is by confessing with your mouth that you are saved (Romans 10.10).

-believing in our heart & confessing our faith in God’s word *puts faith into action.*

- have your heart settled on the integrity of God’s word and your mind filled with the content of his word.
- expect God to work *on your behalf right now.*

GROWTH OF FAITH

-mustard seed is very small but it has life in it *and it can grow and produce fruit.*

Jesus said, “How can I describe the Kingdom of God? What story should I use to illustrate it? It is like a mustard seed planted in the ground. It is the smallest of all seeds, but it becomes the largest of all garden plants; it grows long branches, and birds can make nests in its shade” (Mark 4.30 - 32).

-**illust.** Faith & Works

But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit (Jude 20).

-take action by praying in the Holy Spirit.

- act on the reality of the fellowship we have with God the Father.
- act on the authority we have in the name of Jesus.
- act on the loyalty we have for God's Kingdom.
- act on the urgency that exists for rescuing the lost and the needy from our enemy's cruel grasp.
- act on the love that we have for seeing our Father glorified.

But don't just listen to God's word. You must do what it says. Otherwise, you are only fooling yourselves (James 1.22).

-God's Word calls us to have actions that correspond with faith.

That is why I tell you not to worry about everyday life—whether you have enough food and drink, or enough clothes to wear (Matthew 6. 25).

Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. Then you will experience God's peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus (Philippians 4.6, 7).

Conclusion:

1. Know what God wants.

-faith is indispensable for the Christian:

- saved through FAITH & live by FAITH.

-faith is a firm conviction or persuasion about God and his plan of salvation.

-please God by being strong in your faith (Hebrews 11.1 – 6).

- consider the Object of our faith to understand whether or not we are truly Christian.
 - **illust.** Unseen Player

-please God by keeping the faith (2 Timothy 4.1 – 8)

- Know and Keep the content of faith.
 - to win the Crown of Righteousness by longing for his appearing.

-faith, though small, can accomplish extremely difficult things (Luke 17.6).

2. Know how to do what God wants.

-Jesus' use of the mustard seed metaphor *teaches*:

- additional faith is not necessary.
- instead we should use the faith that we currently have.

-the Action of faith frees us from barriers *that hinder our Christian walk*.

-like the African impala exercise your faith:

- Faith is the ability to trust what we cannot see, and with faith we are freed from the flimsy enclosures of life that only fear allows to entrap us.

-mustard seed is very small but it has life in it *and it can grow and produce fruit*.

- growth & fruit of faith will:
 - glorify God & extend His kingdom.
 - cause you to experience God's will *for yourself and for others*.
 - enable you to stand with joy when you appear before the Judgment seat of Christ.
- **illust.** Jumping Into Our Father's Arm's
 - God rewards those who diligently seek Him (Hebrews 11.6).
- **illust.** Tires & House In Weyburn

3. Know that you will do it.

-**Final Hymn:** # 408 Have Faith In God (all verses).

Jumping Where We Cannot See

The African impala can jump to a height of over 10 feet and cover more than 30 in its leap. Yet these magnificent creatures can be kept in an enclosure in any zoo with a 3-foot solid wall. The animals will not jump if they cannot see where their feet will fall.

Faith is the ability to trust what we cannot see, and with faith we are freed from the flimsy enclosures of life that only fear allows to entrap us (Craig Brian Larson *750 Engaging Illustrations*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1993, p. 157).

It Can Be Done

We have only to think of the number of scientific marvels, of the number of surgical operations, of the feats of endurance which today have been achieved and which less than fifty years ago would have been regarded as impossible. If we approach a thing saying, "It can't be done," it will not be done; if we approach it saying, "It must be done," the chances are that it will be done. We must always remember that we approach no task alone, but that with us there is God and all the power of God (William Barclay "The Gospel Of Luke" in *The Daily Study Bible*. Edinburgh: St. Andrew Press, 1953 / '71, p. 224).

Faith & Works

Trees can teach us an important lesson about the balance between faith and works. The leaves use up nutrients in the process of photosynthesis. As the leaves consume nutrients in the sap, a suction is formed, which draws more sap from the roots. Without sap, the leaves and branches would die. But the continual flow of this sap comes only as it is used up by the work of the leaf.

Likewise, through faith we draw life from Christ. But a continual supply of fresh spiritual nutrients depends on our willingness to "consume" the old supply through our acts of obedience, through our works (Craig Brian Larson *750 Engaging Illustrations*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1993, p. 156).

Unseen Player

Imagine a family of mice who lived all their lives in a large piano. To them in their piano-world came the music of the instrument, filling all the dark spaces with sound and harmony. At first the mice were impressed by it. They drew comfort and wonder from the thought that there was Someone who made the music – though invisible to them – above, yet close to them. They loved to think of the Great Player whom they could not see.

Then one day a daring mouse climbed up part of the piano and returned very thoughtful. He had found out how music was made. Wires were the secret; tightly stretched wires of graduated lengths that trembled and vibrated. They must revise all their old beliefs: none but the most conservative could any longer believe in the Unseen Player.

Later, another explorer carried the explanation further. Hammers were now the secret, numbers of hammers dancing and leaping on the wires. This was a more complicated theory, but it all went to show that they lived in a purely mechanical and mathematical world. The Unseen Player came to be thought of as a myth.

But the pianist continued to play (Craig Brian Larson *750 Engaging Illustrations*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1993, p. 159).

Jumping Into Our Father's Arms

Donner Atwood, in *Reformed Review*, writes: During the terrible days of the Blitz [in W.W. 2], a father, holding his small son by the hand, ran from a building that had been struck by a bomb. In the front yard was a shell hole. Seeking shelter as soon as possible, the father jumped into the hole and held up his arms for his son to follow.

Terrified, yet hearing his father's voice telling him to jump, the boy replied, "I can't see you!"

The father, looking up against the sky tinted red by the burning buildings, called to the silhouette of his son, "But I can see you. Jump!"

The boy jumped, because he trusted his father.

The Christian faith enables us to face life or met death, not because we can see, but with the certainty that we are seen; not that we know all the answers, but that we are known (Craig Brian Larson *750 Engaging Illustrations*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1993, p. 158, 159).