

How Faith Grows

In our ongoing study of faith and its various qualities we've learnt some important principles with regards the application of faith. And this has probably created in us a desire for more faith. But how can we get more faith? Is it possible to get more faith? Can our faith grow? And if it can, how does it grow?

In the gospels we often find Jesus referring directly to the kind of faith people possess. He makes statements like; "*How is it that you have no faith*" (Mark 4:40), "*O you of little faith*" (Matthew 6:30, 8:26), "*Great is your faith*" (Matthew 15:28); and to the centurion Jesus marvelled and said, "*I have not found such great faith, not even in Israel*" (Matthew 8:10).

The Lord also related faith to a mustard seed, making it clear that with genuine faith size does not matter. In New Testament times the black mustard plant grew wild along the roadsides and in the fields, and it was cultivated for its seeds which were used for seasoning and oil. The mustard seed was the smallest seed known to that society. Nonetheless, Jesus said that if you have faith like a mustard seed, you can move mountains (Matthew 17:20), or transplant a mulberry tree into the sea (Luke 17:6).

From this we can ascertain that intrinsically, even in the tiniest measure of "perfect" faith, there is enough power to do miraculous exploits. So the problem can't be faith itself, or its measure.

Provided a measure exists, it has to do with the calibre of faith being exercised. Therefore, when Jesus said, "*O you of little faith,*" He couldn't have been referring to the quantity but rather to the *quality* of faith He was witnessing, and the Greek word confirms this.

Jesus was describing a faith that lacks confidence or is void of trust in God. It is a faith that's filled with doubt and borders on unbelief it is "weak" faith – having no real substance. A literal translation would read, "*O you with not much faith!*" So in this instance, the progression is probably; no faith, not much faith, enough faith and great faith.

No faith Mark 4:40 But He said to them, "Why are you so fearful? How is it that you have **no faith**?"

Not much faith Matthew 8:26 But He said to them, "Why are you fearful, O you of **little faith**?" Then He arose and rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm.

Enough faith Mark 5:34 And He said to her, "Daughter, **your faith** has made you well. Go in peace, and be healed of your affliction."

Great faith Matthew 8:10 When Jesus heard it, He marvelled, and said to those who followed, "Assuredly, I say to you, I have not found such **great faith**, not even in Israel!

But the million dollar questions remains, "How can my faith go from little, or not much, to being truly great?"

The first thing to understand is that it has nothing to do with the quantity of your faith but only it's quality. Poor, feeble or weak faith cannot go anywhere as this kind of faith is on the road to 'nowhere-land' where doubt and unbelief preside. However, when your faith is perfect, and complete, size doesn't matter!

Perfect faith is founded and grounded on an absolute trust in the faithfulness of God. Yet *perfect faith* can increase its intrinsic characteristics and become great faith. However, this process is totally dependent on the very essence of your faith - it's true substance. Without the right inherent qualities, your faith cannot increase!

To understand this principle we must examine three verses of scripture:

Luke 17:6 *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.*

The disciples felt the need for greater faith in order to meet the high standard Jesus had demanded. The thought of forgiving seven times in one day posed a real problem. How could they continuously display such a sizeable portion of grace? It seemed way beyond their capabilities. So they took the easy way out and asked the Lord to miraculously increase their faith. The reply Jesus gave them indicated that it was not so much a matter of the quantity of faith but of its inherent quality. Also, it was not a question of getting more faith but rather, of *using* the faith they had. If you genuinely want to increase the quality of your faith and make it more effective, then make a point of using what you already possess. Size doesn't matter!

The mustard seed was the tiniest seed around at that time, yet with the same miniscule measure of faith Jesus said you can uproot a mulberry tree and replant it in the sea. And according to **Matthew 77:20**, you can also move mountains.

So Jesus said to them, "Because of your unbelief; for assuredly, I say to you, if you have faith as a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you.

The next and most important thing to understand regarding both these verses is that they are centred on *authority*. Jesus said that if you command this tree to be uprooted and replanted it will obey you. And in the previous text He said that if you command this mountain to move from here to there, it will move! In other words, the mountain will obey you. Therefore, understanding authority is a very significant element of your faith. It is what characterises the quality of your faith and makes it grow.

When you understand authority, you can have faith as small as a mustard seed and even mountains will move at your command. Size does not matter!

Matthew 8:10, When Jesus heard it, He marvelled, and said to those who followed, "Assuredly, I say to you, I have not found such great faith, not even in Israel!"

Jesus turns to the crowd and says, *"I tell you the truth, I haven't seen faith like this in all Israel!"* What amazed Jesus about this Roman soldier was his understanding of authority. (Lets read the whole passage)

The centurion was a military officer in charge of about one hundred men, and was probably stationed in or near Capernaum. He came to Jesus to seek healing for his servant who had suffered violent and painful paralysis. This in itself was an unusual display of kindness and compassion as most Roman officials would not have such concern for a servant.

When the Lord offered to visit the sick servant, the centurion showed the reality, depth and quality of his faith. He said, in effect, *"I am not worthy that You should enter my house. Anyway, it isn't necessary, because you could easily heal him by simply saying the word. I know about authority. I take orders from my superiors, and also give orders to those under my command. My words are obeyed implicitly. Therefore, how much more would Your words have power over my servant's affliction!"*

Jesus marvelled at the faith of this Gentile. And this is one of only two times when Jesus is said to have marvelled. The other time was at the unbelief of the Jews. But there was another Gentile who was

commended for having great faith and this was the woman from Canaan whose daughter was demon possessed (Matthew 15:24-28).

Again we find a situation where the person desiring to have the power of God manifest, gets Jesus' attention by acknowledging His Lordship (authority). Listen to her own words, "*Yes, Lord but even little dogs eat the crumbs which fall from their masters table.*"

We often miss the true meaning of this story. It wasn't about humility. This woman recognised the Lord's authority by admitting that she was not worthy of Christ healing her daughter. All she asked for were the crumbs from the Master's table. She knew that there is enough healing power in a single crumb that falls from the Bread of Life to restore her daughter completely.

Jesus commended her for her *great faith*, and in spite of her "doggie" mentality, she got exactly what she desired. When you too can grasp the importance of authority when exercising your faith, the quality of your faith will increase dramatically. But so will the results of your faith increase. If perfect faith, as small as a mustard seed, can move mountains, what can such faith with a greater understanding of authority achieve?

I believe that Jesus still marvels at great faith. He is still amazed when His people recognise and exercise authority when applying their faith! Yet most believers have never been taught the importance of understanding authority. The more you use your faith, and the more knowledge you acquire about authority, the more the quality of your faith will increase. Remember, understanding authority is what characterises the quality of your faith.

The centurion understood authority because he had become so familiar with it. To him it was a way of life. Joining the military may be one way of understanding authority, but understanding who you are in Christ Jesus is a better and more powerful option.

God made Jesus both Lord and Christ (Acts 2:36). This means that He is not only God's anointed - the Christ - but Lord, Master, Supreme Ruler and King of Kings. When Jesus was made Lord, He was given ALL authority! Purpose to recognise this truth every time you operate in faith and you will be amazed at what transpires. Even the smallest portion of faith, a seed or a mere crumb, will have great effect!

If we could test the quality of your faith, what would it be like? Would it be weak or feeble faith, or would it be great faith? The difference is not about size, but the depth of understanding you have concerning authority.