

"INCREASE OUR FAITH"  
Luke 17:5

Intro: Years ago it was pointed out to me that Habakkuk 2:4b is quoted three times in the NT, and that there is a different emphasis on that statement in each quotation.

Habakkuk 2:4 says, "The just shall live by his faith."

You will find it in:

- 1) Rom. 1:17.
- 2) Gal. 3:11.
- 3) Heb. 10:38.

(Point out the emphasis in each one.)

So faith is extremely important. There can be no salvation without faith, without believing. Cf. Eph. 2:8, 9. And, as Christians, "we walk by faith, not by sight" (2 Cor. 5:7). "Without faith it is impossible to please God, for . . ." (Heb. 11:6).

Faith is a mysterious thing. Sometimes we can be very strong in our faith; soon after we show no faith. Example: Peter walking on the water. See Matt. 14:22-33. In a storm the Lord rebuked His disciples because they had "no faith" (Mark 4:35-41). Gentiles manifested "great faith" in the Gospels on at least two occasions: (1) the centurion (Matt. 8:10), and (2) the Syrophenician woman (Matt. 15:28).

We all know that we are saved by faith, but where does our faith come from? And, after we are saved, do we still need to be concerned with our faith?

Where does our faith come from? Is it something that comes from us, something that has its roots in the human heart?

The answer is, NO! Faith does not originate with us. Faith comes from God. It is a gift. Cf. Eph. 2:8, 9;  
Rom. 10:17;  
Heb. 12:2.

Let me give you another verse: Acts 3:16,  
And his name through faith in his name  
hath made this man strong, whom ye see and know:  
yea, the faith which is by him  
hath given him this perfect soundness  
in the presence of you all.

Faith is a gift from God.

After we are saved, do we still need to be concerned with faith? The answer is a very positive, YES! "We walk by faith." See 2 Cor. 5:9.

What is faith? Faith is ability to trust God.

So, we are saved by faith, but that faith needs to grow!

Paul rejoiced over the Thessalonians saying this: "We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet, because that your faith groweth exceedingly . . ." (2 Thess. 1:3a). Jude spoke of "building up yourselves on your most holy faith" (Jude 20). And, in our text for tonight we read of the Apostles saying to the Lord, "Increase our faith."

Note the context of Luke 17:5.

Now the question I would like to pose is, How is our faith increased? Let us look at our text, and examine other passages of Scripture, to find our answer.

I would like to suggest four answers to that question--two are in the text, and two are elsewhere in the Bible.

#### I. FAITH IS INCREASED BY PRAYER.

Any time a request was presented to the Lord while He was here on earth, you can consider that as prayer!

This is obviously a proof that faith comes from the Lord. It is both proper and necessary that we pray for the strengthening of our faith. No one but the Lord can do this for us. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are all involved in strengthening our faith.

On the Holy Spirit's part, cf. Gal. 5:22, 23.

So we need to pray that our faith will be strengthened. Listen to a good OT verse: Psa. 138:3,

In the day when I cried thou answeredst me,  
and strengthened me with strength in my soul.  
That is faith!

#### II. FAITH IS INCREASED THROUGH "LOOKING UNTO JESUS."

That is what they were doing here. They were not depending on each other. They did not ask where they should go to have their faith strengthened. They said, "Lord, Increase our faith."

This is what Heb. 12:3 teaches us to do. But what does it mean to look to Jesus?

It means that we pray, that we realize that He alone can help us. But it also means that we are learning of Him so that by our "looking" our faith is increased.

Note, first of all, the Name used in Heb. 12:2--"Jesus." This points to our Lord in the flesh, our Lord as a Man!

Cf. Heb. 4:14-16. Whatever our circumstances may be, He is able to enter with us into our trials.

But we know that this "Jesus" is the eternal Son of God, One Who shares the same nature as God, One Who is God.

Now as we learn of Him there are four main things about Him that will strengthen our faith:

- 1) His love for us--never changing, never ending.
- 2) His power, His ability to meet our needs.
- 3) His wisdom in what we are passing through.
- 4) Closely related to His wisdom, a part of it, and yet deserving of separate mention: His purposes--the fact that He has infallible reasons for bringing the things into our lives that He does.

Daily we need to feast our souls upon the Lord Jesus Christ. And the more we look, and the more we learn, the greater our faith will be.

### III. FAITH IS INCREASED THROUGH THE WORD.

This cannot be separated from what I have been saying already because you cannot look at the Lord Jesus without the Word.

But note again, Rom. 10:17.

It is called in Rom. 10:8, "the word of faith."

The Word is a revelation of God. The Word contains His promises. He has never broken a promise, and He never will! We need to feed our souls on the promises of the Word, and we will find that our faith will grow, that faith will come.

This is such an important part of faith that a growing faith is impossible without it.

But remember that "hearing" in Scripture means:

- 1) Understanding it.
- 2) Believing it.
- 3) Obeying it.

And this all comes about through reading, hearing, and meditating on the Word. What wonderful things take place in our hearts when we are exposed to the Word of God!

Let me mention one last thing, and you will always find that this is a part of what God does to increase our faith.

IV. FAITH IS INCREASED THROUGH TRIALS.

Untried faith is weak faith.

We all have our trials. Salvation does not make us immune to troubles. And, let it be said that God is not seeking to destroy our faith by our trials, but He is strengthening our faith.

What kind of trials do we have?

- 1) We have physical trials. Sometimes they persist. Some of the Lord's greatest servants have been troubled with physical problems that stayed with them.
- 2) We have financial trials. What a story is that of George Mueller!
- 3) We have opposition from others because of our faith. This takes various forms--from isolation to active persecution.
- 4) We have trials due to a lack of blessing upon our work, our service in the Lord's work.

Sometimes we do not know enough to ask the Lord for more faith. And we may allow ourselves to get so busy with other things that we are not reading the Word, and we are not, therefore, looking daily at the Lord. And so what happens? The Lord brings special trials into our lives.

Often these trials reveal weaknesses in us that we were not aware of. We think we want the Lord's will, but when God acts, then we are not so sure. And we have to go to Him to sustain us when we would falter and fail. Illus: Carolyn's surgery. I told the Lord that whatever He did was all right, but when the news came, then I wasn't so sure! The impact of it swept over me like a mighty wave of the sea, and I felt that it would take me down!

Some time before we left the other church, I had read Knowing God by James Packer and in the chapter, These Inward Trials, I found a poem written by John Newton which I had been looking for for a long time. I read it at the last service I had at the other church, and I want to read it tonight, because it expresses how God through our trials increases our faith. Incidentally, this book which I hold in my hand is probably my most treasured book in my library because it was given to me by my brother, M. L., who died in 1977--which was another trial of my faith.

But listen to these words, and see if it does not fit into your experience--although our trials may be very different. (Read.)

Concl: But some will say, But is it worth it? Is the price not too high? If I ask the Lord to increase my faith, what will He do?

Let me ask the Apostle Peter to answer that question for us tonight. Please turn to 1 Peter, chapter 1, and listen while I read verses 3 through 9. (Read.)

You see, we are not just living for time. We are living for eternity. The people who live to earn money are in danger of coming to the end of their lives only to find that they have nothing. But when the Lord works to strengthen our faith, we have riches which can never be taken from us!

Let us trust the Lord. Let us love Him more. He only hurts to heal, and to make us stronger. He works to make us trust Him more, and He works to make us more like He is.

Cf. Rom. 8:18. And so let us pray, and let us look to the Lord, and let us spend time in the Word, and trust the Lord to use our trials, whatever they may be, to make us trust Him and love Him more and more.