

Increased Faith

Key Verse: *“The apostles said unto the Lord, Increase our faith.”*
—Luke 17:5

Selected Scripture:
Luke 17:1-10

the prince of this present world. The majority of mankind is more or less under his influence—blinded by error, superstition, and disposed to sin.—Eph. 2:2; II Cor. 4:4

Jesus warned that some, under the influence of Satan, might attempt to deliberately ensnare his followers. He said concerning such a one that it would be better that a “millstone were hanged about his neck, and he cast into the sea.” (Luke 17:2) To be drowned in the sea would mean the loss of present life, but not the opportunity for future life in Christ’s kingdom. However, those who now intentionally persecute the Lord’s followers and seek to turn them aside from following righteousness, pervert their own conscience and so degrade themselves, that it will be much more difficult for them to come into accord with the conditions of the kingdom, when they are raised from the grave.

In verse 3 of our lesson, Jesus shows the importance of repentance and mercy. “If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke [admonish] him; and if he repent [think differently, or reform], forgive him.” We all need God’s

IN THE OPENING VERSE OF

today’s lesson, Jesus said to his disciples, “It is impossible but that offences will come: but woe unto him, through whom they come!” (Luke 17:1) “Offences,” or ensnarements, exist at the present time because Satan is

mercy, because we are imperfect. However, we must “reform” our thoughts, words, and actions, and bring them into obedience to God’s principles and standards to the greatest extent possible.

The disciples realized how difficult it would be to apply these lessons in their personal life. As stated in our Key Verse, they requested of Jesus, “Increase our faith.” His reply to this request has been greatly misunderstood by many. He said, “If ye had faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye might say unto this sycamine tree, Be thou plucked up by the root, and be thou planted in the sea; and it should obey you.” (vs. 6) Certainly Jesus did not want his followers to literally command trees to miraculously be uprooted and thrown into the sea. Rather, the lesson is that we are to have absolute confidence in the instructions and promises given to us in the Word of God. Thus, we should go forward with “tree-moving” faith, accepting all the promises of which God has assured us in his Word.

The work of God’s grace in our life is a favor toward us, and our obedience to his commands is primarily for our growth and development. Any service we might render for the Lord is a privilege. When we have done all he has commanded us, we cannot boast. At best, Jesus says, “we are unprofitable servants,” because we have only done that which we are morally obligated to do. (vs. 10) God could perhaps more easily do his work by some other method. He could use someone else, or the angels, or other providences of his vast realm. None of us is indispensable to God’s work.

Thus, the opportunity for entering into the Lord’s vineyard and laboring therein is chiefly for our own advantage. Such service provides joys and blessings which we could not otherwise have. Additionally, it brings us certain experiences necessary to our spiritual development. May the Lord help each of us as we strive to increase our faith in him and in all his promises. ■