

Big Faith

Matthew 17:14-20 New International Version (NIV)

¹⁴ When they came to the crowd, a man approached Jesus and knelt before him. ¹⁵ “Lord, have mercy on my son,” he said. “He has seizures and is suffering greatly. He often falls into the fire or into the water. ¹⁶ I brought him to your disciples, but they could not heal him.”

¹⁷ “You unbelieving and perverse generation,” Jesus replied, “how long shall I stay with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring the boy here to me.” ¹⁸ Jesus rebuked the demon, and it came out of the boy, and he was healed at that moment.

¹⁹ Then the disciples came to Jesus in private and asked, “Why couldn’t we drive it out?”

²⁰ He replied, “Because you have so little faith. Truly I tell you, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you.”

BIG FAITH

The first thing we need to understand is that God is challenging us to have big faith. Some mistakenly assume that Jesus says that we only need a small amount of faith as indicated in the translation I shared with you this morning (as small as)

But let's look at the context of this verse as well as some different translations in order to give us a better understanding of what Jesus is telling his disciples.

1. Transfiguration
2. Healing of a demon possessed boy
3. "Like" "in the manner which" "As" (But not small as)

Matthew 17:20 English Standard Version (ESV)

²⁰ He said to them, “Because of your little faith. For truly, I say to you, if you have faith **like** a grain of mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it will move, and nothing will be impossible for you.”^[a]

Matthew 13:31-32

He told them another parable: “The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field. Though it is the smallest of all seeds, yet when it grows, it is the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds come and perch in its branches.”

4. Notice the beginning rebuke of verse 20 -

Matthew 17:20

He replied, “**Because you have so little faith.** Truly I tell you, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you.”

Jesus would not tell them to have a little bit of faith after rebuking them for having little faith. And this is not the only time he rebuked them for their lack of faith.

You have to wonder what they had faith for.... Perhaps a temporary reprieve, maybe more patience for the dad, or could it be they prayed that he would be led to better doctors that could help. I've even imagined them praying, *"O Lord, please protect him from fire and water."* But that's not what he needed. He needed to be cured, healed, set free.

Sometimes the size of our request (faith) limits the size of our answer. Hear me, why pray for the headache to go away when we know that there's a cancerous tumor causing the pain.

Matthew 13:58

⁵⁸ And he did not do many miracles there because of their lack of faith.

That's why he used the picture of a mountain. In the understanding of the day a mountain was not only big above the surface, but was deeply rooted below the surface with equal or greater mass, thus making it an impossibility to move.

Matthew 19:26

Jesus looked at them and said, "With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."

John 14:12

Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father.

Illustration: Corrie Ten Boom

She and her family saved almost 800 Jews during WWII, before her efforts were exposed and she was arrested and put in a concentration camp.

What Big Faith she had to embark on such a journey

In a live interview I heard her retell the story of how she arrived at Ravensbruck.

Corrie ten Boom: When I was brought into that concentration camp, Ravensbrück, I had a small Bible, but whole Bible, Old and New Testament, specially printed for what they called, "the underground workers." But when we entered, I saw that we all had to be searched. I saw that they took away everything that the prisoners had hidden under their clothing. I got scared. I said, "Oh God. God, these people may not see me. God, send your angels and let them surround me." But then I thought, "Yes, but angels are spirits and you can look through a spirit."

I said, "God, make your angels un-transparent today." You can pray very unorthodox when you are in great need, but God did it. God did it. The woman who stood in front of me was searched and then Betsie, who stood behind me and they did not see me. I came with my Bible in the prison.

The Bible was a forbidden book, but twice a day we had a Bible message in barrack 28. God had used for that: God can use everything. Hallelujah. God can use everything. Many of the people around me were killed, or died, but many died with Jesus' name on their lips. That was worthwhile. Even Betsie's death and all the suffering that I had to endure.

But beyond a faith that asks for the impossible, what is God asking of us?

Hebrews 11:6 deals with the two most important aspects of faith...

Hebrews 11:6

And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.

BIG GOD

When Jesus uses the image of a mountain being moved, He is first and foremost focusing our attention on the bigness of our God.

Faith focuses on the bigness of our God

Remember His statement in Matthew 19.... *"...with God all things are possible."*

Faith is complete confidence in God

Faith focuses on God's ability not our inability. When Jesus told the disciples that he was going to be crucified and Peter rebuked him, Jesus told Peter that he did not have in mind the things of God, but the things of man

Faith... believes that He exists.... And because He exists all things are possible

Our faith is not in the event itself but in the one who is in control of all events.... My faith need not be placed in the how but in the who...

John 12:37

Even after Jesus had performed so many signs in their presence, they still would not believe in him.

Mark 6:1-4, 6

Jesus left there and went to his hometown, accompanied by his disciples. When the Sabbath came, he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were amazed. "Where did this man get these things?" they asked. "What's this wisdom that has been given him? What are these remarkable miracles he is performing? Isn't this the carpenter? Isn't this Mary's son and the brother of James, Joseph, Judas and Simon? Aren't his sisters here with us?" And they took offense at him. Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not without honor except in his own town, among his relatives and in his own home." He was amazed at their lack of faith. Then Jesus went around teaching from village to village.

Romans 4:20-21

Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised.

BIG PICTURE

...And that he rewards those who earnestly seek him not, ...with whatever they demand that he give them

God sees the whole picture.... We see only the temporal, He sees the eternal. We see only the moment, He sees the beginning and the end.

1 Corinthians 13:12

For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.

2 Corinthians 4:16-18

Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So, we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.

We had to live with 700 prisoners in a room that was built for 200. It was terrible dirty and very soon our clothing were full of lice. Those lice have caused many sicknesses, but in some way they have helped us for the guards would never come into our room. They were afraid to get lice from us. That was good.

On December 16, 1944, Betsie died at Ravensbruck of starvation and lack of medical care. Corrie later recounted the following lines as Betsie's last words:

"... (we) must tell them what we have learned here. We must tell them that there is no pit so deep that He is not deeper still. They will listen to us, Corrie, because we have been here."

Two weeks after Betsie's death, ten Boom was released from the camp due to claims of a "clerical error." Ten Boom often called this occurrence a miracle. Shortly after ten Boom's release, all of the other women in her age group at Ravensbruck were executed.

Hebrews 11:13

All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance, admitting that they were foreigners and strangers on earth.

"Faith is like radar that sees through the fog—to the reality of things at a distance that the human eye cannot see." "Faith sees the invisible, believes the unbelievable, and receives the impossible." ~ Corrie Ten Boom