

“Facing Attitudes of Faith” Luke 17:5-18

Context: Luke weaves the question of faith into the fabric of the previous parables. Mindful of parables like the lost coin, the Prodigal Son, the unrighteous steward, and the rich man, Luke draws upon an account where the disciples requested that Jesus increase their faith. He recounts an eighth and final parable in this series as Jesus’ response and gives a real-life example to concretize Jesus’ answer. Following this account is a teaching on the Kingdom’s in-breaking and Christ’s second coming. It is an account which will truly test believers’ faith in things unseen. In this account, Luke fulfills the purpose of his Gospel: to steady the God-lover’s wobbly faith by revealing evidence indicating that faith has increased unto salvation.

Life Principle: Faith that is increased overflows in humble thankfulness (cf. Luke 17:15-16).

1. A question of faith - Luke 17:5-6

The crescendo of God’s love and forgiveness culminating in a demand that the disciple forgive his brother repetitively and perfectly left the disciples requesting that Jesus place greater faith within them to obey such a heavy command. In response, Jesus appeals to the mustard seed, depicting how even the smallest change in nature can do the impossible which far surpasses the burden of obedience.

2. An attitude of faith - Luke 17:7-10

With God’s incredible response to mustard seed faith comes an admonition to maintain a humble and realistic attitude. Faith-filled service requires insight into our unclean state as we labor for Him. This is why Christ calls the servant to clean up and gird himself properly for service to the Master. Meeting the demands of Kingdom work provides no edge on God that earns us adulation by Him; rather, the outworking of our faith is our reasonable service.

3. An example of faith - Luke 17:11-19

Jesus uses the example of a lone leper as an example of just what saving mustard-seed faith looks like. Leprosy represents sin and being a Samaritan represents the sinner’s foreignness to God’s Kingdom. The cleansing of the ten lepers signifies the cleansing potential of Jesus’ unlimited atonement for sin. The lone cleansed leper who glorifies God and thanks Jesus for his healing symbolizes the humble attitude of a sinner who is aware of his unworthiness before God. He acts in faith, receiving Christ’s cleansing atonement and recognizing no personal merit, and is saved.

For Further Study:

- As a **Bible study method**, look up verses describing leprosy in a concordance (especially Numbers 12:10; 2 Kings 5:27; 2 Kings 15:5) and its description at <http://www.bible-history.com/isbe/L/LEPER%3B+LEPROSY/>. How does leprosy symbolize sin? Why is leprosy not a type of sin?
- Luke 17:10 and 17 reveals our lack of merit for salvation gained and that Christ’s payment for humanity’s sin covers it all. What personal consolation do you find in the Biblical fact that salvation does not depend on our personal merits?
- Luke 17:17 signifies the doctrine of unlimited atonement. Our doctrinal statement describes this doctrine as “substitutionary atonement for the sins of the world” (see our **doctrinal statement ‘On Salvation’** under **what we believe**, footnote 9 at <http://www.gracepointfellowship.org/files/DocStmnt.pdf>). What is the doctrine of unlimited atonement? How does the number of lepers (10) support this doctrine? What changes the potential for salvation into actualization?

Transformation exercise:

Reflect on Luke 17:10; 15. Consider your attitude toward your service to God. Do you expect something for what you do? Do you return to Him in thanks when cleansed by His grace? Intentionally practice gratitude for healing from sin and thanks for the opportunities to serve Him this week.