

Luke 17:5

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And the apostles said unto the Lord, Increase our faith.

Analysis

The apostles respond: 'Lord, Increase our faith' (Κύριε, πρόσθες ἡμῖν πίστιν). Jesus' demanding teachings on forgiveness (vv.3-4) prompt this request. The verb 'prostithēmi' (πρόσθες, increase/add to) assumes faith is quantifiable. Jesus corrects this misunderstanding: faith's power is not its size but its object. 'If ye had faith as a grain of mustard seed' (v.6)—the smallest seed—'ye might say unto this sycamine tree, Be thou plucked up...and it should obey you.' The point is not faith's amount but its focus: even tiny faith in the omnipotent God accomplishes impossibilities. The disciples seek more faith; Jesus says use the faith you have.

Historical Context

Mustard seeds were proverbially tiny (see Luke 13:19). Sycamine trees (black mulberry) had deep root systems, making them difficult to uproot—hence the illustration's power. Jesus' teaching on faith's power appears throughout the Gospels (Matthew 17:20, 21:21, Mark 11:22-24), emphasizing prayer's effectiveness through trust in God. The disciples' request for increased faith reveals their misunderstanding—they sought something to add to themselves rather than recognizing faith as simple trust in God's character and promises.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Study Questions

1. How does Jesus' teaching about faith's quality versus quantity challenge contemporary emphasis on strong versus weak faith?
2. What would change in your prayer life if you truly believed that small faith in a great God can move mountains?

Interlinear Text

Καὶ	εἶπον	οἱ	ἀπόστολοι	τῷ	κυρίῳ	Πρόσθες	ἡμῖν
And	said	G3588	the apostles	G3588	unto the Lord	Increase	our
G2532	G2036		G652		G2962	G4369	G2254

πίστιν
faith
G4102

Additional Cross-References

Mark 9:24 (Faith): And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief.

Hebrews 12:2 (Faith): Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Philippians 4:13 (Parallel theme): I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.

2 Thessalonians 1:3 (Faith): We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet, because that your faith groweth exceedingly, and the charity of every one of you all toward each other aboundeth;

Mark 6:30 (Parallel theme): And the apostles gathered themselves together unto Jesus, and told him all things, both what they had done, and what they had taught.

Luke 7:13 (References Lord): And when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her, and said unto her, Weep not.

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