

Bite Size Bible Study

Jesus' Miracles part 2 #254

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In the last study we learned that Jesus acted out His teaching in the Miracles He performed. Now let's look at another example.

Jesus spent a lot of time teaching about faith. Sometimes it was the disciple's faith He was addressing, but other times it was someone else's. The fact that He spent so much time and energy on this, must tell us that faith was high on His priorities.

More often than not, His teaching went "in one ear and out the other": Even as He acted out this concept of faith in His miracles, it was only the physical aspect of faith of being healed of a physical malady that registered with most.

Rarely did it reach the level of being healed in their relationship to God. For the most part, the disciples, who traveled with Jesus, only had faith in Jesus as a conquering Messiah, not the Messiah who would save people from their sinful ways.

In order to understand what Jesus was concerned about, we need to understand the words used. In the Gospels the word most often used and translated as faith is the Greek *pistis* (Strong's G4102). Same as in Hebrew *emunah* (Strong's H530).

This word has the meaning of strong conviction, fidelity, faithfulness, and strength of character of the one with the faith. It is these characteristics in relationship to God, that Jesus meant when using this word.

When Jesus heard this, he was amazed and said to those following him, "Truly I tell you, I have not found anyone in Israel with such great faith" ^{G4102}.

Matthew 8:10 NIV

When Jesus speaks "of little faith" it is a different word, *oligopistos* (Strong's G3640), which is only used five times. This means just that – "of little faith" or "trusting too little".

If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith? ^{G3640}

Matthew 6:30 NIV

Unfortunately, one can have faith in different things, or even different amounts of faith. We can have faith that we will have our lunch today, but we may not have that degree of faith for our lunch a year from now.

When Jesus was teaching his own disciples, He tried to get them to see what faith in Him and His Father was like. They were so steeped in the culture of the day that they had trouble seeing what He meant. They were looking for a Messiah that would conquer and destroy their enemies, not one that would love their enemies.

True characteristics of a real Messiah

"Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me. My Father's house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. You know the way to the place where I am going."

Thomas said to him, "Lord, we don't know where you are going, so how can we know the way?"

Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you really know me, you will know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him."

Philip said, "Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us."

*Jesus answered: "Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'. Don't you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you I do not speak on my own authority. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work. Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; **or at least believe on the evidence of the works themselves.** 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. And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. You may ask me for anything in my name (character), and I will do it."*

John 14:1-14 NIV

Believe on the evidence of the works:

Just then a woman who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years came up behind him and touched the edge of his cloak. She said to herself, "If I only touch his cloak, I will be healed."

Jesus turned and saw her. "Take heart, daughter," he said, "your faith ^{G4102} has healed you." And the woman was healed at that moment. Matthew 9:20-22 NIV

Then he touched their eyes and said, "According to your faith ^{G4102} let it be done to you"; and their sight was restored. Matthew 9:29-30a NIV

Then Jesus said to her, "Woman, you have great faith ^{G4102} Your request is granted." And her daughter was healed at that moment. Matthew 15:28 NIV

Many of the Scribes and Pharisees had their faith in the Torah (Law) rather than in God. They didn't understand

that the Torah was only meant to lead them to God. It was not God but only a representation of His character.

“Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices—mint, dill and cumin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law—justice, mercy and faithfulness ^{G4102}. You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former.
Matthew 23:23 NIV

Even Jesus’ disciples had trouble with their faith and trust for Jesus.

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

He replied, “Because you have so little faith ^{G4102}. Truly I tell you, if you have faith ^{G4102} 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.”
Matthew 17:19-20 NIV

The apostles said to the Lord, “Increase our faith!”

He replied, “If you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mulberry tree, ‘Be uprooted and planted in the sea,’ and it will obey you.
Luke 17:5-6 NIV

Jesus was no doubt praying for His disciples at many moments, in Luke 22 we have an example of this.

“Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift all of you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers.”
Luke 22:31-32 NIV

As you have no doubt learned in your own life, faith is a difficult concept to master. It is hard when we place our trust in someone or something else, because it is often a misplaced faith. But our faith in Jesus, when it becomes full, is never a misplaced faith. He will always be there for us – to support us in trials and teach us to become like Him.

He is our strength, sustainer, and companion

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