The Paradox of the Mustard Seed

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Matthew 17:14

And when they came to the crowd, a man came to Him, kneeling down to Him and saying, 15 Lord, have mercy on my son, for he is a lunatic and grievously vexed; for oftentimes he falls into the fire, and often into the water. 16 And I brought him to Your disciples, and they could not cure him. 17 Then Jesus answered and said, O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I suffer you? Bring him here to Me. 18 And Jesus rebuked the demon, and he departed out of him. And the child was cured from that very hour. 19 Then the disciples came to Jesus apart, and said, Why could we not cast him out? 20 And Jesus said to them, Because of your unbelief. For truly I say to you, If you have faith like a grain of mustard seed, you shall say to this mountain, Move from here to there. And it shall move. And nothing shall be impossible to you.

- The mustard seed is one of the smallest seeds and yet Jesus says if you have faith even that small, you will be able to get great results
- Though the mustard seed is very small, yet When the seed has gone through its full cycle, it produces the largest of all herbal trees
- This is what I want to talk to you about this morning – “THE PARADOX OF THE MUSTARD SEED”
- It is a paradox because on one hand it is one of the smallest seeds of its kind but when it is sown and germinates, it produces the largest herbal plants of its kind

Matthew 13:3

1 He put out another parable to them, saying, The kingdom of Heaven is like a grain of mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field; 32 which indeed is the least of all seeds, but when it is grown it is the greatest among herbs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in its branches.

- When you get born again, through the working of the spirit on hearing the word, a measure of faith is given to you to believe in Jesus

Ro 12:3

For I say, through the grace given to me, to every one who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think. But set your mind to be right-minded, even as God has dealt to every man the measure of faith.

- God has given to each a “measure of faith” to use for Him. This “faith” is the gift from which all the other gifts flow.
- Faith is the first gift we receive (for justification), and faith is the gift that brings the other gifts of the Spirit into our lives

Eph 2:8

For by grace you are saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God, 9 not of works, lest anyone should boast.
• The mustard seed like any other seed carries potential (capacity to become something of great significance) to become a fully grown tree.
• In order to fully benefit from the seed, there is a process that needs to take place so as to unleash that potential – (illustrate using a real plant and some seeds)
• Jesus was referring to genuine faith and it comes in the form of a seed.
• As long as a seed remains in that state, it is not of much good to the people around it
• In order for your faith to move mountains (proverbial statement referring to challenges), it has to grow, mature, develop and increase
• The disciples understood this principle when they asked Jesus to increase their faith

Luke 17:5

The apostles said to the Lord, "Show us how to Increase our faith!"

What makes it possible for the mustard seed to become a huge herbal tree?
What makes it possible for that initial measure of faith to yield astronomical results?
The answer to this profound question is; THE ENVIRONMENT

1. THE ENVIRONMENT FOR THE SEED

• It is not every environment that is conducive for seed to germinate and for the tree to grow to its full stature
• Each year millions of seeds are dispersed from their parents but only a few of them will germinate and become fully grown trees.
  o Some will be eaten by animals or some may become diseased.
  o The vast majority of seeds will join the soil seed bank and remain there, waiting for a chance to germinate. These seeds are said to be dormant.
• Seeds do not live for ever. They will stay dormant for a while but if they do not germinate they will eventually die.
• Soil disturbance gives the seed an opportunity to germinate (if a fire sweeps across the land or if humans or grazing animals destroy the growing vegetation.)
• Seeds require the right temperature for germination to occur
• Seeds require the right amount of water to germinate
• Most seeds will germinate quite easily in the dark. Some seeds, however, need to be exposed to the light for a certain time before they will germinate.
• The soil need the right nutrients in order for the seed to grow – one of the major issues we are dealing with world over is soil poisoning.

This picture of the environment is so key to achieving ever increasing faith. When your faith does not grow, it can only achieve a little.

You can still eat seed but it does not taste in the same way that the fruit of a fully grown tree tastes!

So what environment should we develop in order to have an ever increasing faith?
2. ENVIRONMENT FOR YOUR FAITH
   a. Continuous exposure to the word of God

*Romans 10:13-17 (NLT)*

13 For “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”[a] 14 But how can they call on him to save them unless they believe in him? And how can they believe in him if they have never heard about him? And how can they hear about him unless someone tells them? 15 And how will anyone go and tell them without being sent? That is why the Scriptures say, “How beautiful are the feet of messengers who bring good news!”[b] 16 But not everyone welcomes the Good News, for Isaiah the prophet said, “Lord, who has believed our message?”[c] 17 So faith comes from hearing, that is, hearing the Good News about Christ.

- What you hear determines what you end up believing and what you believe determines the outcome of your life – that is why they say your theology determines your morality
- There has to be a hearing in order for faith to start and this is only the beginning. That initial burst of faith needs to be nurtured in the environment of the word.
- The word is like water on the seed of faith – hearing the word is like watering the seed.
  - The more you hear about something, the stronger your belief and resolve.

*Isaiah 55:10-11*

As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.

*Ephesians 5:26*

to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word.

- When you receive the living word of God, it creates a picture of how your situation could change – this picture becomes clearer and clearer, the more you hear the word
- How much watering has been taking place over your mustard seed faith?
- Also the quality of water with which you water your seed determines whether it will germinate or not – toxic water will kill the seed, if not the seed the plant itself will die.
- This has an implication on who speaks into your life and the type of company you keep

b. Fellowship with the Holy spirit

- The absence of revelation equals the absence of faith – your faith can only grow based on the truth you have internalised
- It is not general truth that builds your faith, it is specific truth for specific situations that will build the faith you need for that circumstance – you cannot depend on borrowed revelation
- You need fresh revelation to grow the faith you need for the situation – “Give us this day our daily bread...”
**John 16:13**

However, when He, the Spirit of Truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth. For He shall not speak of Himself, but whatever He hears, He shall speak. And He will announce to you things to come. 14 He will glorify Me, for He will receive of Mine and will announce it to you.

- The spirit of God is called the Spirit of truth and one of His functions is to expose us to the truth – He is the revelator
- He exposes us to the fullness of the nature of God – what He hears God saying about us, He then comes and whispers to us

**1Corinthians 2:9**

But as it is written, "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard," nor has it entered into the heart of man, "the things which God has prepared for those who love Him." 10 But God has revealed them to us by His Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, yea, the deep things of God. 11 For who among men knows the things of a man except the spirit of man within him? So also no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God. 12 But we have not received the spirit of the world, but the Spirit from God, so that we might know the things that are freely given to us by God.

- Sometimes we don't know what is ours until the spirit of God reveals it to us – the father has so much for us. Our problem is that we don't know what has been freely given to us
- Unless you master the art of fellowshipping with the Holy spirit, your faith will be retarded over time
- This is all about engaging the Holy spirit in all that you, allowing Him to speak to you

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Our English word, “fellowship” is the translation of the Greek word, “koinonia.” This Greek word is derived from the root, “koinos,” which was a prefix in ancient Greek. If you were to add this prefix to words meaning “living,” “owning a purse,” “a dispute,” and “mother,” you would get words meaning “living in community together,” “owning a purse in common,” and “having a mother in common.” So we see that the root of the word, “fellowship,” means “to hold something in common.”

- When you are in fellowship with the Holy spirit, it means you share everything with the holy spirit – this is doing life with the holy spirit
- The work of the Holy Spirit works hand in hand with the amount of time you spend meditating on the word.
- It is in that moment of meditation and fellowship with the Holy Spirit that you get to ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you the mysteries contained in the word.

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**c. Operating in agreement with other believers**

- There is a multiplication of faith that comes when believers come together in agreement – there is a corporate anointing that kicks in.
- There are things that can only happen in the context of agreement
Ecclesiastes 4:9

Two are better than one; because they have a good reward for their labor. 10 For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow; but woe to him who is alone when he falls, for he does not have another to help him. 11 Again, if two lie together, then they have warmth; but how can one be warm alone? 12 And if one overthrows him, two shall withstand him; and a threefold cord is not quickly broken.

- When you are in agreement with faith filled people, your faith is boosted and the combined effect is huge.

Leviticus 26:7

And you shall chase your enemies, and they shall fall before you by the sword. 8 And five of you shall chase a hundred, and a hundred of you shall put ten thousand to flight. And your enemies shall fall by the sword in front of you.

- There are times when our faith fails and it is in those moments that you need your brothers’ faith to kick in as a result of agreement.
- Healing is made possible when your faith and the faith of the person praying for you converge.

Ac 14:8

And a certain man was sitting in Lystra, without strength in the feet, being lame from his mother’s womb, who never had walked. 9 This one heard Paul speaking; and Paul, looking intently at him, and seeing that he had faith to be healed, 10 said with a loud voice, Stand up on your feet! And he leaped and walked.

d. Exercise your faith

- What you don’t use you lose it – it’s a case of use it or lose it.
- When a muscle is not being used for some time, at some point it degenerates into fat. That is why people who used to do body building battle with their bodies the moment they stop.
- Faith works in the same manner – the more you use it the stronger it gets.
- Your faith grows in stages – if your faith was able to heal the headache, the next time you get a tumour, you will be motivated to believe God for healing.
- In order to exercise your faith, you need boldness to step out of your comfort zone.

Mark 16:17-18

“17 And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; 18 They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.”

- This scripture applies to everyone that believes, we therefore need to step out and cast out demons in the name of Jesus, lay hands upon the sick etc.
- Exercising faith means making radical prayers without doubting.
Jas 5:16

Confess faults to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous one avails much.

e. Bringing to memory past victories

- One of the ways of boosting your faith is to bring to memory what God did for you in the past.
- This is so powerful and faith building in that you are dealing with an unchanging God.
- That is why the bible says

Revelation 12:11

And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb, and because of the word of their testimony. And they did not love their soul to the death.

- They overcame the devil by their confession of the truth and the works of Jesus.
- There is power in our testimony because it speaks of the defeat of the enemy - we need to remind the devil of his past, his present and his future.
- When David was approaching his next challenge, which was the biggest of all that he had faced, he brought to memory God’s past exploits.

1Samuel 17:33

And Saul said to David, You are not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him. For you are but a youth, and he is a man of war from his youth. 34 And David said to Saul, Your servant kept his father’s sheep, and there came a lion and a bear, and took a lamb out of the flock. 35 And I went out after it and struck it, and delivered the lamb out of its mouth. And when it rose against me, I caught it by the beard, and struck it and killed it. 36 Your servant killed both the lion and the bear. And this uncircumcised Philistine shall be like one of them, since he has defied the armies of the living God. 37 And David said, The LORD who has delivered me out of the paw of the lion and out of the paw of the bear, He will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine. And Saul said to David, Go, and may the LORD be with you.

- If God has done it before, He will do it again – it might not be in the way you want Him to do it but He will do it.
- The issue is not whether He will do something about your situation, its about how He is going to do it this time around.