

13. Lessons about faith

September 9, 2007

There was a man who was lost in the desert, just dying for a drink of water. He stumbled upon an old shack. As he glanced inside he saw an old, rusty water pump. He stumbled over to it, grabbed the handle, and began to pump up and down, up and down. Nothing came out.

Disappointed, he started to stagger back. He noticed off to the side an old jug. He looked at it, wiped away the dirt and dust, and read a message that said, "You have to prime the pump with all the water in this jug, my friend. P.S.: Be sure you fill the jug again before you leave."

He popped the cork out of the jug and sure enough, it was almost full of water! Suddenly, he was faced with a decision. If he drank the water, he could live. But if he poured all the water in the old rusty pump, maybe it would yield fresh, cool water from down deep in the well, all the water he wanted or nothing at all.

He studied the possibility of both options. Ignore its message? Or should he try it as the flimsy instructions written?

Reluctantly he poured all the water into the pump. Then he grabbed the handle and began to pump, squeak, squeak, squeak. Still nothing came out! Squeak, squeak, squeak. A little bit began to dribble out, then a small stream, and finally it gushed! To his relief fresh, cool water poured out of the rusty pump. Eagerly, he filled the jug and drank from it. He filled it another time and once again drank its refreshing contents.

Then he filled the jug for the next traveler. He filled it to the top, popped the cork back on, and added this little note: "Believe me, it really works. You have to give it all away before you can get anything back."

A faith that costs nothing and demands nothing is worth nothing.

We are going to see several situations that involve several groups of people's faith this morning. Some have great faith, some little, or some none whatsoever. It is our desire that we all learn from these people's good and bad examples that we may have total faith in our Savior Jesus Christ for everything in our lives.

A. THE WOMEN WHO HAD FAITH IN JESUS

Luke 8:1-3 Now it came to pass, afterward, that He went through every city and village, preaching and bringing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God. And the twelve were with Him, 2 and certain women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities--Mary called Magdalene, out of whom had come seven demons, 3 and Joanna the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others who provided for Him from their substance.

These women were unsung heroes of the faith that Luke includes a special mention of Christ's key supporters at the beginning of chapter 8.

When former fishermen or tax collector turn into disciples no longer have means to support themselves, these people came along their side to support our Lord Jesus and His disciples with their own finance. Why would they go to so much trouble?

Because Jesus had changed their lives. His power had embraced them, delivered them of demon possession or sickness, and given them a second chance. Gratitude flowed out of their hearts in a steady stream of generosity and devotion.

Mary who was called Magdalene was from the town of Magdala, located on the western shore of the Sea of Galilee. Once possessed by seven demons, she found release in Jesus and peace for her tortured soul. In loving response, she would cling to her Savior all the way to the foot of the cross and beyond to His burial and His empty tomb.

There were so much controversy regarding this sister in the Lord. Somehow Hollywood directors, producers and other liberal scholars always try to connect her with Jesus romantically. They have no historical proof to back their silly assumption.

B. THE FAITH TO TAKE TRUTH AND SHARE IT

Luke 8:16-18 "No one, when he has lit a lamp, covers it with a vessel or puts it under a bed, but sets it on a lampstand, that those who enter may see the light. 17 For nothing is secret that will not be revealed, nor anything hidden that will not be known and come to light. 18 Therefore take heed how you hear. For whoever has, to him more will be given; and whoever does not have, even what he seems to have will be taken from him."

The disciples were perplexed because Jesus taught in parables, so they asked Him for an explanation. His reply seems to suggest that He used parables in order to hide the truth from the crowds, but just the opposite is true.

It is easy for someone to think he is "spiritual" because he listens to one preacher after another from Christian radio programs, or iPods, takes notes, marks his Bible, but never really practices what he learns. He is only fooling himself.

C. JESUS' FAMILY THAT DID NOT HAVE FAITH IN HIM

Luke 8:19-21 Then His mother and brothers came to Him, and could not approach Him because of the crowd. 20 And it was told Him by some, who said, "Your mother and Your brothers are standing outside, desiring to see You." 21 But He answered and said to them, "My mother and My brothers are these who hear the word of God and do it."

Jesus indicates that His closest family is made up of those who hear and obey God's word. How can I draw close to God? By hearing His word and doing it.

Doesn't it sound like Jesus had a closer relationship with His followers than with His mother and brothers? Mark says in his Gospel that Jesus' family did not believe His messianic claims.

Mark 3:21 But when His own people heard about this, they went out to lay hold of Him, for they said, "He is out of His mind."

As His disciples, we must take heed of what we hear and how we hear, because God will hold us accountable. Listening to the wrong things, or listening to the right things with the wrong attitude, will rob us of truth and blessing. If we are faithful to receive the Word and share it, God will give us more. But if we fail to let our light shine, we will lose what we have. It is a solemn thing to hear the Word of God.

D. THE DISCIPLES WHO DIDN'T HAVE FAITH IN JESUS

Luke 8:22-25 Now it happened, on a certain day, that He got into a boat with His disciples. And He said to them, "Let us cross over to the other side of the

lake.” And they launched out. 23 But as they sailed He fell asleep. And a windstorm came down on the lake, and they were filling with water, and were in jeopardy. 24 And they came to Him and awoke Him, saying, “Master, Master, we are perishing!” Then He arose and rebuked the wind and the raging of the water. And they ceased, and there was a calm. 25 But He said to them, “Where is your faith?” And they were afraid, and marveled, saying to one another, “Who can this be? For He commands even the winds and water, and they obey Him!”

Jesus had a divine appointment with a couple of demon possessed men in Gadarenes, so He had a complete peace in His Father. This also shows Jesus’ true humanity that requires sleep while God doesn’t slumber.

Psalm 121:3-4 He will not allow your foot to be moved; He who keeps you will not slumber. 4 Behold, He who keeps Israel Shall neither slumber nor sleep.

What the disciples of Jesus - like the rest of us - did not realize is that faith must be tested before it can be trusted. It is one thing to learn a new spiritual truth, but quite something else to practice that truth in the everyday experiences of life.

The disciples’ problem was not the storm around them but the unbelief within them. Actually, their unbelief was more dangerous than the storm.

The disciples failed this test of faith because they did not lay hold of His word that He was going to the other side. Faith is not believing in spite of circumstances. It is obeying in spite of feelings and consequences. The disciples looked around and saw danger, and looked within and saw their own fear. But they failed to look up by faith and see God. Faith and fear cannot coexist in the same heart.

E. THE DEMONS THAT HAD THE KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS COULDN’T BE SAVED

Luke 8:26-33 Then they sailed to the country of the Gadarenes, which is opposite Galilee. 27 And when He stepped out on the land, there met Him a certain man from the city who had demons for a long time. And he wore no clothes, nor did he live in a house but in the tombs. 28 When he saw Jesus, he cried out, fell down before Him, and with a loud voice said, “What have I to do with You, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg You, do not torment me!” 29 For He had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. For it had often seized him, and he was kept under guard, bound with chains and shackles; and he broke the bonds and was driven by the demon into the wilderness. 30 Jesus asked him, saying, “What is your name?” And he said, “Legion,” because many demons had entered him. 31 And they begged Him that He would not command them to go out into the abyss. 32 Now a herd of many swine was feeding there on the mountain. So they begged Him that He would permit them to enter them. And He permitted them. 33 Then the demons went out of the man and entered the swine, and the herd ran violently down the steep place into the lake and drowned.

According to the Book of Matthew chapter 8, two demonized men met Jesus when He landed at Gadarenes, but one of them was the more forward and did all the speaking. Both were pitiful cases: naked, living in the tombs, violent, dangerous, a menace to the area, and controlled by many demons. No amount of man-made authority or restraint can control or change the devil’s servants. Their only hope is in the Savior.

Demons have a great deal of knowledge about Jesus, because they have seen Him before they fell from heaven. But the knowledge about Jesus would not and can not save them from the future inevitable final judgement. Just like that, there are millions of people in America who have knowledge about Jesus, yet they are not born-again Christians. They, too, will not enter into the kingdom of God. It is not about the knowledge of Jesus, rather it is about the personal relationship with Him.

James 2:19 You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe—and tremble!

Demonic possession can be happened when a demonic spirit resides in a human body, and at times will exhibit its own personality through the personality of the host body or his vocal chord. Demonic possession is a reality today, though we must guard against either ignoring demonic activity or over-emphasizing supposed demonic activity.

We are not told specifically how a person become demon possessed. I believe that it is the same way we invite the Lord Jesus into our hearts, a person makes himself available for demonic possession through getting into superstition, fortunetelling, occult games - ie, Ouija board and Dungeon and Dragon games and practices, spiritism, New Age deception, magic, etc.

All the demonic forces around the world is no match for a simple command by the Lord Jesus. Note that they had to ask for a permission from Jesus to enter into the herd of pigs. Without the Lord's permission, these demonic forces cannot do a thing unless they end up in the Abyss.

What is the Abyss that all these demons are so afraid? It is a bottomless pit described in Revelation 9:11. Apparently, it is some kind of "holding cell" for certain demonic spirits. I guess that is not a fun place to be.

F. THE PEOPLE WHO HAD MORE FAITH IN THEIR WEALTH THAN JESUS

Luke 8:34-37 When those who fed them saw what had happened, they fled and told it in the city and in the country. 35 Then they went out to see what had happened, and came to Jesus, and found the man from whom the demons had departed, sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in his right mind. And they were afraid. 36 They also who had seen it told them by what means he who had been demon-possessed was healed. 37 Then the whole multitude of the surrounding region of the Gadarenes asked Him to depart from them, for they were seized with great fear. And He got into the boat and returned.

In my opinion, this is one of the saddest sections of the Scripture. These people were seized with great fear that they might lose more money if Jesus sticks around in their city. So they asked Him to leave. Like these people, many people today, they'd rather be owned by the gods of this world – power, fame, riches, drugs, sex, alcohol, you name it – than being filled the joy, peace and love that come from Jesus Christ. All those things will perish, but eternal life will continue - either in heaven or hell. Our choice to accept or reject the truth of God will decide our ultimate destination.

G. THE FAITH OF A BRAND NEW BELIEVER

Luke 8:38-39 Now the man from whom the demons had departed begged Him that he might be with Him. But Jesus sent him away, saying, 39 "Return to your

own house, and tell what great things God has done for you.” And he went his way and proclaimed throughout the whole city what great things Jesus had done for him.

The one former demoniac kept pleading with Jesus to be allowed to travel with Him and help Him. What a noble desire from a newly converted man! He had more spiritual discernment than all the other citizens put together.

H. APPLICATIONS

1) Faith and fear cannot coexist in the same heart.

Either we submit to our own worry and fear and let them torture us as long as we let them, or we can run to our Mighty God and find a shelter in His stronghold and have faith in His power and promises.

2) The devil can sure shake our faith, but he cannot make us something we don't want to do. We make a conscious choice to do so.

3) Our God stands next to us and is ready to give us His strong righteous right hand to guide us through any temptation and trial. But we are the ones who have to take that first step toward Him.