

Text: Matthew 15:28

Theme: The Making of a Great Faith

August 20, 2017

Over the years, many of you have seen the behind the scenes look at one of Walt Disney's movies. Not only is the information intriguing, it also motivates you to watch the movie or buy the video. In today's text, Jesus makes a rather unusual, yet bold statement, a statement that's the opposite of His more frequent statement regarding faith. To the woman with the demon-possessed daughter, Jesus says, "Great is your faith!" Today, we take a few moments to consider the making of a great faith.

I. Because of the work of the Holy Spirit, we are capable of having a great faith. A. But frequently, we are numbered among those of little faith. 1. We are among those of little faith because we doubt. Two biblical individuals often come to mind when we speak of doubt - Doubting Thomas and Peter who doubted Jesus on more than one occasion. Doubters have existed since the Fall into sin and, yet today, we're surrounded by doubters. Even more disheartening, we are numbered among the doubters. We may not admit it out loud, but we doubt God and His activity more than we care to acknowledge. Because of our doubt, we are numbered among those of little faith.

2. We are among those of little faith because we are filled with worries. Why do we worry and fret? Why do we find Tums or Roloids in most homes today? Even though Jesus specifically tells us not to worry, we worry. Far more than we care to acknowledge, worry follows us around like a ball and chain. Whatever the event, we find something to worry about, something to create stress. Instead of seeing an opportunity for God to work, we see what could happen, what's in the realm of remote possibilities. By the time our thought process ends, we've worried ourselves into a frenzy over things that 99% of the time never come true.

3. We're among those of little faith because we forget. How many of you have ever forgotten to do what you intended to do or forgotten to follow through on a promise you made? To make matters worse, we forget what we need to remember most. We forget the promises of God, the power of God, the intentions of God, His miracles of the past, His promises to us in the present. Jesus says, "Fear not for I have redeemed you," but we forget. He promises to forgive in all circumstances, yet we insist on fixing it ourselves. He neither slumbers nor sleeps, but we lay in bed fretting over tomorrow. It's not surprising that He says, "O you of little faith."

B. Even though we are often among those of little faith, how do we function as those of great faith? 1. We function as those of great faith by believing God can. The Canaanite woman - why did she come to Jesus? Was she simply desperate? Was this her last hope because she had tried everything else? Was she hoping for a miracle? She came for one reason. She believed Jesus could heal. To be those of great faith, we believe Jesus can. What we put after those words doesn't matter as long as we first believe Jesus can do what we ask. When we believe Jesus can, that nothing is impossible, we stand on a great faith and boldly ask Jesus to step into our situation.

2. We function as those of great faith by being convinced God will. Go back to the woman in our text. Did she believe Jesus could heal her daughter? Absolutely! Now, was she convinced that He would? Believing Jesus can and believing Jesus

will are two different things. Those of great faith believe Jesus can and then take the next step and believe that Jesus will do what we ask. Jesus instructs us to ask without doubt and without wavering. Why? Because He wants to see conviction. He wants to see a faith that will not waver, a faith that believes God can and will move our mountain by the speaking of His word. Conviction-that's the making of a great faith.

3. We function as those of great faith by being persistent. Suppose you had been one of the disciples in our text. Would you have begged Jesus to get rid of her because her persistence was annoying you? Ever had a child or grandchild who stepped into that persistent mode? Don't they just drive us crazy at times? As much as we dislike others being persistent with us, Jesus calls for persistence because persistence gives evidence of great faith. The woman was persistent because of her conviction. She believed Jesus would and she did not stop asking until Jesus answered. We need a persistence that will not budge because it's built on conviction.

4. We function as those of great faith by expecting the impossible. How many times have you heard or used the statement, "It can't be done?" or "That's impossible?" To be those of great faith, we need to move all those perceived impossibilities from our list to God's possible list. Until we expect the impossible, we will not see the impossible. The woman could have concluded early on that it was impossible and left it at that. But had she done so, her daughter would have never been healed. Whatever we face, great faith say, "Expect the impossible because God can do the impossible whenever and wherever God chooses."

5. We function as those of great faith by being fervent in prayer. How frequently had the Canaanite woman brought her daughter to God in prayer? Did she act impulsively or with an intense faith that manifested itself in this moment? Where there is prayer, there is faith and where there is fervent, persistent prayer, there you will find great faith. When you find the one, you will have found the other. But there's a problem. We're in a hurry. Fervency requires time investment, focused moments where we set aside everything else on our plate so that we can stand in the presence of God. When prayer takes top priority, we see great faith in action.

6. We function as those of great faith by being unaffected by the crowd. The disciples wanted Jesus to send her away and if the disciples wanted it, imagine how many others wanted the same thing to occur. Great faith says, "I don't care what others think. What matters is what I know and what God thinks. I will not allow others to lessen my faith, my persistence, or my conviction. I will do what I know is right. As long as God agrees, it matters not what the rest of the world thinks." Call it peer pressure, crowd pressure, or whatever term you choose. Great faith doesn't care what it is because it isn't about to let it interfere with God's next miracle.

7. The making of a Disney movie may be intriguing and motivate movie sales. But the making of great faith can only be surpassed by our prayer to God, "Lord, give me that great faith!" Amen.