

Losing The Faith.

Text: Luke 17:11-19

Suggested Hymns:

178, 691LSB, 321, 395, 437

1) How Easily One May Lose The Faith

2) What A Terrible Thing It Is To Lose The Faith

3) How To Guard Against Losing The Faith

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is Luke 17:11-19, ***11 Now it happened as He went to Jerusalem that He passed through the midst of Samaria and Galilee. 12 Then as He entered a certain village, there met Him ten men who were lepers, who stood afar off. 13 And they lifted up their voices and said, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!"***

14 So when He saw them, He said to them, "Go, show yourselves to the priests." And so it was that as they went, they were cleansed. 15 And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, returned, and with a loud voice glorified God, 16 and fell down on his face at His feet, giving Him thanks. And he was a Samaritan.

17 So Jesus answered and said, "Were there not ten cleansed? But where are the nine? 18 Were there not any found who returned to give glory to God except this foreigner?" 19 And He said to him, "Arise, go your way. Your faith has made you well." (NKJV)

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

"Your faith has made you well." Our Lord says this to the Samaritan who returned and gave thanks to God. It is faith, then, which makes you well, and which saves.

Blessed is the person who has the faith! By our own reason and strength we cannot believe in the Lord Jesus, or come to Him.

Faith is not our own work; it is God's work in us. Although God ***desires all men to be saved,***¹ and desires to plant faith in the hearts of all people, yet not all people have faith.

How fortunate, then, is the person whom God has so led, and guided, and governed in this life that he is made a true believer. The flame of faith, and even if it was ever so small a flame, or simply but a tiny spark, was kindled in his soul by God.

For it is faith that makes us well; it is faith that saves; it is faith in Jesus, the Son of God and Saviour of the world, that upholds and comforts us in this vale of tears, and fills our souls with unspeakable joy, and removes from death its sting, and leads to a blessed hereafter.

Triumphantly the person who has faith can exclaim with David, ² *Bless the LORD, O my soul, And forget not all His benefits:* ³ *Who forgives all your iniquities, Who heals all your diseases,* ⁴ *Who redeems your life from destruction, Who crowns you with lovingkindness and tender mercies.*²

But O that all people would remain in the faith and keep it when they have it! Sadly, this is not the case. Many who are endowed with this sublime treasure do not guard it carefully, grow heedless and indifferent, and then make a shipwreck concerning faith, and lose their faith.

Let us then consider, with the help of God's Holy Spirit, *Losing The Faith*. May the Lord bless our meditation.

1. How Easily One May Lose The Faith

We read, ¹¹ *Now it happened as He went to Jerusalem that He passed through the midst of Samaria and Galilee.* ¹² *Then as He entered a certain village, there met Him ten men who were lepers, who stood afar off.* ¹³ *And they lifted up their voices and said, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!"*

All these lepers were true believers. Each and every one of them had faith in the Lord Jesus. Their attitude towards Jesus, their behaviour, and their prayer proves that. Shut out from the rest of human society on account of their loathsome contagious disease, which was considered incurable, they had no prospects of ever being healed.

They had, however, heard of the fame of Jesus, of His great miracles, and of His divine sayings. And what was the effect? They believed in Him, every one of them.

If this had not been the case, would they unanimously, one and all, have lifted up their voices, when Jesus came to the village where they kept themselves, and addressed Him, saying, “*Jesus, Master, have mercy on us*”?

No; this address of theirs plainly shows that they had built all their hope on the Lord Jesus, and did not in the least doubt His ability to do for them what God alone can do, to perform upon them the miracle of cleansing their leprosy.

Their faith is furthermore demonstrated by the fact that they obeyed Christ’s command. For we must know, when Jesus *said to them*, “*Go, show yourselves to the priests*” that He did not heal them by these words. They were still full of leprosy. But does that shake their confidence in Jesus? Do they say, *Why, what good will it do to go to the priests, that they might pronounce us clean?* We are lepers; the priests will drive us away.

No; they believe, even though they do not see. They do not question Christ’s command. And behold, “*And so it was that as they went, they were cleansed.*” Not before they started, but while they were on the way to the priests, in obedience to Christ’s command, their leprosy disappeared, and they were made perfectly healthy and sound.

All these ten lepers consequently had faith in Jesus. But did they all keep the faith? No; our Gospel contains the sad statement that nine of them did not return to the Lord Jesus to express their thanks. Nine of them did not give glory to God. It is almost incredible, but a stubborn fact, nevertheless, that nine of them again lost the faith, dropped the faith, and fell away from the faith.

From this sad case we may learn how easily one may lose the faith. Since the days of those nine lepers thousands upon thousands have made a shipwreck concerning faith. O how many of those who were baptised Christians and had solemnly promised, on the day of their confirmation, to remain true to their God and Lord unto death, afterwards discarded the faith, which at one time was their soul’s most precious gem!

Look around among your friends and acquaintances. How many a poor soul do you find that, although perhaps prosperous in life, has lost faith, God, hope, and is running along headlong upon the broad way that leads to eternal perdition!

O how easily a person gets there! The devil, the world, and his own flesh are continually besieging the Christian’s faith. Let misfortunes come, upsetting

your plans for the future, demolishing your hopes, and if you do not accept the strength which is offered to you from on high, and which will enable you to bear all your crosses with patience, if you do not resist and oppose those adverse feelings which arise in your own sinful heart against the divine Maker and His unsearchable ways, you will surely lose the faith.

And oh, how many have their faith talked out of them by seducers, by false friends that say, you fool, you idiot, what nonsense to go to church and to lead the life of a Christian! What foolishness to throw away your money for the church and get nothing for it! What sensible person in this day and age will believe what the Bible says!

Don't you see that most of those people who are highly educated and well up in this world no longer believe those old Bible stories? It is not unlikely that the nine lepers had their faith talked out of them by the priests.

Surrounded by temptations of every description even the best of Christians may easily lose the faith. St. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 10:12, ¹² *Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.*

2. What A Terrible Thing It Is To Lose The Faith

It is a terrible thing to lose the faith. This is the second part of our sermon. The nine lepers knew well the benefit which faith brought them, but they did not consider what a terrible thing it is to lose the faith.

And this they did not consider, because they were not immediately punished for their ingratitude. Their leprosy did not return after they had ceased to believe in the Lord Jesus. They remained perfectly healthy and sound. And so they were indifferent about the faith which they had lost. They did not mind losing it.

To this day it is characteristic of those who lose the faith that they are very indifferent about it. They make no effort to regain what they have lost.

As long as a person feels troubled about his own faith, and is afraid that his own faith might not be true and sincere, it is a true sign that he is a Christian and that true faith is dwelling in his heart.

But when a person has arrived at such a stage as not to care, to be indifferent about his soul's salvation, it is a very bad sign indeed. Such a person very often

thinks that God does not mind either, because He does not punish him at once. He does not consider what a terrible thing it is to have lost the faith.

Had he wasted his money and property, he would soon feel the dire results. But in most cases no evil consequences seem to follow in the wake of dropping the faith.

Yet we could not conceive of a thing more terrible than to lose the faith. For what must we say of him who has lost the faith? He has taken leave of God and His grace. He has despised the good Word of God. He has renounced Christ. He has joined the host of Christ's enemies.

He has placed himself under God's wrath and the terrible judgement to come. He has delivered himself over to the power of Satan. He casts himself into eternal condemnation.

Do you think God does not mind that — He who loved you so dearly that He gave His only-begotten Son for you into death?³ who longs and yearns for your salvation,⁴ and who has no pleasure in the death of the wicked?⁵

He does mind it, even though He often delays with His punishments. Does not Christ say to the Samaritan, "*Were there not ten cleansed? But where are the nine? ¹⁸ Were there not any found who returned to give glory to God except this foreigner?*"

Take note, then, the same kind of language Christ will use on the great day of judgement. He will say to those who lost the faith and died faithless, *Where is the faith which I gave and entrusted to you? What did you do with it? And upon their silence the stern Judge will pass the verdict, as written in Matthew 25:30, ³⁰ And cast the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'*

3. How To Guard Against Losing The Faith.

O how watchful should Christians be, how careful to keep the faith! How to guard against losing the faith is the third part of our sermon.

We are told of the Samaritan, "*when he saw that he was healed, returned, and with a loud voice glorified God.*" He glorified God. In this way he guarded against losing the faith.

This man, undoubtedly, was beset by the same temptations as the rest. And his temptations were made all the greater when he saw that all the rest of his companions turned their backs on Christ, their Saviour.

But what was it that kept him steadfast in the faith? It was the grace of God which led him to value what Jesus had done for him. It was that deep sense of gratitude which, by the grace of God, had firmly taken root in his soul.

He was thankful to the Lord, and nothing, not even the bad example of his comrades, could deter him from showing and expressing his thankfulness.

Take note, my dear Christians, that this is the proper way to guard against losing the faith. Be thankful and show your gratitude openly by praising the Lord, glorifying God. And even if your best friends and nearest kin should turn their back on Jesus, let this not influence you in the least.

See that you save your own soul. Come into the house of the Lord with thanksgiving. Be a regular worshiper at the house of God, and diligently hear and ponder the divine Word. The Word of God is the means whereby faith is produced⁶ and kept in the soul.

If you keep away from the church and the sacraments and cease searching the Scriptures, you will soon lose the faith. But if you diligently hear the preaching of the divine Word, and come to the Lord's Supper, and glorify God, yes you will receive strength to overcome all temptations, all your doubts will be removed by the power of God, and you will keep the faith.

Another means whereby to guard against losing the faith is prayer. We read of the Samaritan, "*and [he] fell down on his face at His feet, giving Him thanks.*" He expressed his thanks in prayer. Pray without ceasing, my dear Christians, and you will not lose the faith.

Do not only give thanks to the Lord in your prayers, because He is good and His mercy endures forever. Ask Him, implore Him in your prayers not to let you stray away from Him, but to keep you in the narrow way.

Of our own power we can do nothing to keep the faith. Daily we must ask the Lord, our God, *to watch over us and keep us, so that the devil, the world, and our sinful self may not deceive us and draw us into false belief, despair, and*

*other great and shameful sins. And we pray that even though we are so tempted we may still win the final victory.*⁷

In conclusion one more word to those who have lost the faith. You have heard what a terrible thing it is to lose the faith. O make haste, make haste to regain what you have lost! Let me tell you that there is hope for you still. Jesus is willing to receive you back. Come to Him in true repentance, and He will not cast you out. He will gladly receive you, even though your sins be ever so great.

Did Jesus not receive the greatest sinners, while He was walking in the flesh, and does He not distinctly say in John 6:37 ***that the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out.***?

May the Lord grant us all, His grace to remain faithful unto death, that finally we may receive the crown of life. Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

¹ 1 Timothy 2:4

² Psalm 103:2-4

³ John 3:16

⁴ 1 Tim 2:4

⁵ Ezek 33:11

⁶ Rom :10:17

⁷ *Luther's Small Catechism*, The Sixth Petition