

## **Little or Great Faith Pt. 4**

### **Characteristics of Little Faith**

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Mt 16:5-12 And the disciples came to the other side of the sea, but they had forgotten to bring any bread. 6 And Jesus said to them, "Watch out and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees." 7 They began to discuss this among themselves, saying, "He said that because we did not bring any bread." 8 But Jesus, aware of this, said, "You men of little faith, why do you discuss among yourselves that you have no bread? 9 "Do you not yet understand or remember the five loaves of the five thousand, and how many baskets full you picked up? 10 "Or the seven loaves of the four thousand, and how many large baskets full you picked up? 11 "How is it that you do not understand that I did not speak to you concerning bread? But beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees." 12 Then they understood that He did not say to beware of the leaven of bread, but of the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees. (Mk 8:14-21)

### **The Story:**

The Pharisees and Sadducees asked Jesus [testing Him] to show them a sign (Mt 16:1-4; Mk 8:11-12)

His response to them - no sign will be given other than the sign of Jonah (Mt 16:4; 12:39; Lk 11:29).

Jesus and the disciples go to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, where the Gentiles lived (v. 5).

Jesus said to them, "Watch out and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees" (v. 6).

They reason that He said this because they forgot to bring bread (v. 7).

Jesus was aware of their reasonings:

Declares that their faith was little (v. 8).

He asks them four questions (v. 8-11).

He says again "Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees" (v. 11).

They then understood that He said to beware of the leaven of their teachings (v. 12).

### **Little faith comes from:**

1. Forgetting previous miracles (v. 8-11).

remember the feeding of the 5,000 and 12 baskets of leftovers (Mt 14:17-21).

remember the feeding of the 4,000 and 7 baskets of leftovers (Mt 15:34-38).

2. Not comprehending the implications of life experience and lessons (v. 8-12).

The disciples misunderstood Him; they thought He was talking about material bread. Often in the ministry of Jesus, people misconstrued His words by interpreting them literally rather than spiritually.

Nicodemus thought that Jesus was talking about an actual physical birth (Jn 3:4).

The Samaritan woman thought He was referring to material water from the well (Jn 4:11).

The Jewish crowd thought Jesus was speaking about eating actual flesh and blood (Jn 6:52) when He was describing a spiritual experience (Jn 6:63).

The underlying lesson remains: Why worry about hunger and want when we are linked with One who has infinite power and resources?

3. Introspection and blame – they thought He said this because of their failure to bring bread (v. 5-7).  
1Cor 4:3-4 But to me it is a very small thing that I may be examined by you, or by any human court; in fact, I do not even examine myself. 4 For I am conscious of nothing against myself, yet I am not by this acquitted; but the one who examines me is the Lord.

Eph 1:4 just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. (1Cor 1:8; Eph 5:27; Phil 1:10; 2:15; 3:6; Col 1:22; 2Pt 3:14; Jude 1:24)

4. Having a hardened heart.

Mk 8:17 And Jesus, aware of this, said to them, “Why do you discuss the fact that you have no bread? Do you not yet see or understand? Do you have a hardened heart?”

to be completely unwilling to learn and to accept new information - ‘to cause the mind to be closed.’  
(Jn 12:40; Rom 11:7; 2Cor 3:14) [from the Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament]

### **Leaven was the teachings of the Pharisees, Sadducees, and Herod** (Mk 8:15).

Their teaching was to reject Jesus as the Messiah. All three would soon combine to reject and execute Jesus, (Mt 16:21-23; Mk 8:31-33; Lk 9:22). Each group had their own reasons for their rejection.

The leaven of the **Pharisees** is hypocrisy (Lk 12:1). Their hypocrisy was to disavow Jesus as the Messiah on the false pretext that He did not meet the scriptural requirements for the office. Their rejection of Jesus was the result of them interposing their traditions between God’s word and themselves (Mt 15:1-20; Mk 7:1-23; Jn 7:1). They professed to adhere to the Word of God in minutest details, yet their obedience was external and shallow. Inwardly they were evil and corrupt.

The leaven of the **Sadducees** was rationalism. The freethinkers of their day, they, like the liberals of today, had built a system of doubts and denials. They denied the existence of angels and spirits, the resurrection of the body, the immortality of the soul, and eternal punishment. This leaven of skepticism, if tolerated, will spread and permeate like yeast in meal.

The **Herodians** were Jews of influence and standing who were favorable toward Greek customs and Roman law in New Testament times. Although the Herodians should not be equated with the Sadducees, they sided with the Sadducees in their pro-Roman sympathies and opposed the Pharisees, who were anti-Roman. The Herodians joined forces with the Pharisees, however, in their opposition to Jesus.

#### **References Used:**

Nelson’s Bible Dictionary  
Nelson’s Illustrated Manners and Customs of the Bible  
Believer’s Bible Commentary  
The Life of Christ (by M. S. Mills)