

## LUKE 7 MORE MIRACLES, ANOTHER QUESTION, AND A PARABLE

No more perfect picture of faith has been recorded than that in which Luke sketches the centurion of Capernaum, who sent Jesus a request to heal a favorite servant who was lying at the door of death (verses 1-10). This military commander – a heathen by birth – was evidently a man of a high character. It may be helpful to notice some features of his faith, which was so great that our Lord “marvelled at him.” First of all, the centurion was confident that Jesus could cure his servant, because of what he had heard concerning our Lord. This is the very essence of faith – namely, belief that is founded upon evidence. Faith is not blind credulity or imagination; it is a purely rational exercise of the mind, reasoning from the reports of credible witnesses! The centurion had heard enough of the power and goodness of Jesus to convince him of His ability to heal. Unbelief in the face of evidence is stupidity and sin.

Again, the centurion revealed the sincerity of true faith. He had accepted spiritual light as far as this had been revealed to him. He had been attracted by the pure worship of Judaism, and he had shown his sympathy for its adherents by building them a synagogue. When one lives in accordance with the light that he has, more light is sure to break upon him. Then, too, he revealed the humility of faith. He regarded himself as unworthy to come into the presence of Jesus to present his request; and when Jesus offered to come to his home, he sent word that he was not worthy to have the Master come under his roof. Most clearly of all, however, he expressed the trust in Christ and the dependence upon His power which characterize true faith. He said that it was unnecessary for Jesus to come to his house. As a soldier and an officer, he himself knew what could be accomplished by a word of command. He knew what it was to obey and to be obeyed; and he had accredited to Jesus such control over the unseen powers of disease, that he sent this surprising message: “Say the word, and my servant shall be healed!”

It was this very aspect of the centurion’s faith which so impressed our Lord, and it is such humble trust that He still regards with favor and is certain to reward. It is not strange that they “that were sent, returning to the house, found the servant whole.” The faith of this Roman centurion was prophetic of the blessings which faith was to bring to men, women, and children among all the nations of the world!

### Outline of the chapter:

- ❖ Jesus heals the Roman centurion’s servant – verses 1-10
- ❖ He raises the dead son of the widow of Nain – verses 11-18
- ❖ John the Baptizer’s inquiry about Jesus, and Jesus’ words concerning John – verses 19-35
- ❖ Christ’s feet are anointed, which leads to the parable of the two debtors – verses 36-50



If one of Luke's intentions was to impress upon his readers the human sympathy and tenderness of Jesus, it is easy to understand why he alone, of all the evangelists, records this touching story of the raising of the widow's dead son at Nain. No picture could be fuller of pity and compassion! Jesus had not been asked to perform the miracle; He was moved entirely by the mute appeal of human sorrow and distress. As He drew near to the gate of the little town, he met the sad funeral procession winding its way out to the place of burial. He was touched by the tears of the lonely mother who had just lost her only son; and being moved with deep compassion, He spoke to her the word of hope: "Weep not!" Then He came near and touched the bier upon which the lifeless body was being carried. It was a sign more eloquent than a spoken word. But then came the command: "Young man, I say unto thee, Arise." And he immediately sat up and began to speak, and Jesus "gave him to his mother."

As we read the record of such miracles, it is possible that we dwell too exclusively upon their purpose as authenticating the mission of Jesus, or as illustrating His Divine message. Indeed, it is good for us to remember these things; but we must never forget that such works were also manifestations of the merciful nature of the ministry of Jesus, and revelations of the very heart of our loving God. Such miraculous manifestations dry the tears of mourners, bind up broken hearts, and inspire the despondent with everlasting hope! Surely Jesus is the Lord of life, and He will yet wipe away all tears from the eyes of all those who trust in Him!

Due to the darkness of his dungeon, or to the long delay of Jesus in fulfilling his cherished hopes, it seems that the mind of John the Baptizer had become clouded with doubt. Hence he sent messengers to Jesus to ask whether or not He was really the Messiah that he had declared Him to be (verses 18-23). John had not lost faith in God or in His promises; for he believed that if Jesus were not the Messiah, the Messiah was still to come. But the Master lovingly reassured His great herald by sending back the report of the mighty works which He was accomplishing. John was already familiar with these acts, but the recital must have dispelled his fears. Jesus sympathizes with us also in our hours of darkness; and His relief often consists in reminding us of facts which we already know concerning His power and love and presence, which are recorded in His written Word. However, Jesus does not praise us for our doubts; He sent John a gentle and loving reminder that "blessed is he, whosoever shall find no occasion of stumbling in me" (verse 23). He pronounces this benediction upon all who – in spite of darkness, imprisonment, delay, and mystery – still confidently put their trust in Him.

It was upon this occasion that Jesus pronounced upon him unparalleled praise (verses 24-28) – declaring that "among them that are born of women, there is none greater than John." He vindicated this reasoning, and thereby showed wherein true greatness lies. He spoke first of the character of John, and



then of his real greatness, which consisted in his mission. He was the messenger whom Malachi had predicted would prepare the way of the Lord. Not only was he sent to declare that Christ would come, as other prophets had done before him; but he was also given the privilege to actually point to Him and say, "Behold, the Lamb of God!" No greater dignity had ever been conferred upon a human soul, and no higher privilege can now be enjoyed than that which John enjoyed – that of turning the thoughts and hearts of men to Jesus Christ, the Savior of the world! Nevertheless, the present followers of Christ have a larger knowledge of Him than that which was possessed by John; and it is in this sense that "he that is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he" (verse 28).

Jesus' praise of John is sharply contrasted with the condemnation of the Pharisees, which Jesus now turned to express (verses 29-35). He declared that these supposed spiritual leaders were like children sitting in the marketplace, complaining to one another that they are not willing to play at either mock-funerals or mock-weddings. When John came, they refused to follow him because his lifestyle and message were too severe; but then when Christ came, they criticized Him as being too genial – "a friend of publicans and sinners." The trouble with the Pharisees was that they made an excuse of the demeanor of John and the conduct of Jesus for refusing to believe and obey the essential points of their mission and message. They were unwilling to repent at the command of John; and they were equally unwilling to put their trust in Christ, in response to His promises of grace and eternal life. Sadly, it is the same way with many people today. They still refuse to accept the salvation which is freely offered to them because of some fault that they find with a purely external point in Christianity. They fail to appreciate its true essence. But thankfully, there were people in the days of Jesus, and there are still people today, who are willing to accept both the call to repentance and the offer of life. God will be glorified in the salvation of a chosen remnant. Those whom the grace of God brings to submit to the conduct and government of true Wisdom shall justify her in the

various methods of grace which she employs, so that they may be brought to that submission – and ultimately, to eternal life!

The Gospel of Luke places special emphasis upon the grace and forgiveness that was manifested by our Savior. Luke's record alone details His sympathy with the sorrowing widow of Nain, and he alone also narrates the expression of sympathy which Jesus felt for the sinful woman who anointed His feet in the house of Simon the Pharisee (verses 36-50). However, this particular narrative is not only a picture of the loving mercy of our Lord, but also of the unbounded gratitude that was felt by one who truly appreciated the priceless gift of His pardoning grace.





This woman apparently had a reputation of being a great sinner. It seems that she met Jesus on some previous occasion, repented of her sins, and received His word of forgiveness. And now her gratitude gave her courage to enter – uninvited – into the house of Simon, where Jesus was being entertained as a guest. She had come to anoint His feet; but as she beheld Him, she thought again of her sins – and her hot tears of repentance fell upon the feet of her Lord. She hastily unbound her hair; and with it, she dried His feet. And then she poured upon them a flask of fragrant ointment. No truer expression could have been given to her gratitude and passionate devotion! The fact that Jesus allowed such a woman to express her love for Him made Simon conclude that He could not be a prophet; for otherwise, He would have been able to discern the nature of her depraved past. But by His reply, Jesus showed His ability to read even the secret thoughts of His host! His words not only answered the silent criticism of Simon, but they also rebuked him for his own impenitence and lack of faith. Jesus proposed to His host a parable of two forgiven debtors, illustrating the fact that the degree of one's gratitude depends upon the amount which has been forgiven them. And then He applied this principle to Simon and the woman whom he had been regarding with scorn. Jesus showed his host how keenly He had felt the lack of love which he had shown Him, and He contrasted it with the affection shown by this woman. When He had entered the house, Simon had neglected the customary service of providing a bath for His feet; but she had washed His feet with her tears. Simon had withheld the kiss with which a host usually welcomed His guests, but she had passionately kissed His feet. Simon had not furnished the perfume with which it was usual to anoint an honored guest, but she had come to the house with the special purpose of pouring fragrant oil upon the feet of her Lord.

In view of the parable, the message of Jesus is plain: "Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much." Jesus did not mean to say that her pardon was contingent upon her love; rather, He meant that her love resulted from her pardon. As for the remainder of the sentence, it was devoted to Simon: "To whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little." Then Jesus turned to the woman with a word of benediction: "Thy sins are forgiven." He thus assured her of the pardon which she had already received; but even more than this, He vindicated her in the eyes of the guests – assuring them of the new life upon which the woman had already entered. Last of all, He gave her a final word of blessing: "Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace." This is a clear statement of the fact that faith had secured pardon, and pardon had awakened gratitude, and gratitude had been expressed by a deed of devoted love. Such a repentant person can rightfully go away "in peace" – that is, to its present and continual enjoyment!

*Lord Jesus, we thank You for being unchangeable; for Your merciful pardon is still extended to us, just as it was for the repentant woman in Simon's house! Amen.*