

Great Faith .?!

Matthew 8:5-13; Mk.6:45-51; Jn.6:16-21

PBC Sun.PM 3/28/2021

Introduction:

1. Have you ever heard someone say to another person, “Keep the faith!”? Or “You gotta have faith.”?
2. Further Thoughts: Great Faith.?!
 - The Statement – It is a Biblical reality. It is possible for a person, besides the Lord Jesus, to have “great faith”
 - The Question – What is it? Do you have it? How can it be obtained?
 - The Exclamation – If you are a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, this is the strength of faith that you are capable of manifesting!

I. “Faith” Generally Defined and Described – It is a belief or trust in someone or something

- A. A Dictionary definition: 1. unquestioning belief. 2. unquestioning belief in God, religion, etc. 3. a religion or a system of religious beliefs: as, the Catholic *faith*. 4. anything believed. 5. complete trust, confidence, or reliance: as children usually have *faith* in their parents. 6. loyalty; allegiance to some person or thing.
 1. Do you see the broadness of this definition? Do you see how it makes “faith” to encompass anything you want or you choose to believe in?
 2. This is Not the “faith” to which the Lord Jesus referred in Matt.8:10.
 - It is Not the broad faith of the world, But the narrow faith of the Bible
 - It is Not just mental assent to some facts about the one, true and living God of the Bible, But facts about that God that are lovingly embraced by the heart, and regularly manifested in the way you live.
- B. D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones in his commentary on the N.T. book of Romans states that “faith” is like a drinking straw. It is not the drinking straw that nourishes life nor brings death, it is the substance that flows through (is received through) the drinking straw. “faith” is a channel, a means of receiving something.
- C. The value of a person’s faith is directly related to the object of their faith.

1. If the Object of your faith is non-existent, insufficient or worthless, then your “unquestioning belief” in that object, will prove to be foolishness, disappointing and embarrassing to you – the ex. of the prophets of Baal recorded in I Kings 18.
 - from morning to evening they cried out, “*O. Baal, hear!*”(18:26), leaped about the altar, cut themselves
 - 18:29b “*...But there was no voice, no one answered, no one paid attention.*”
2. BUT if the Object of your faith is the All-sufficient God of the Bible, then your “unquestioning belief” in the God of the Bible, will prove to be wisdom, exceedingly fulfilling to you and glorifying to God – the ex. of Elijah recorded in I Kings 18.
 - an Elijah, in the evening prayed one time to the LORD
 - 18:38 “*Then the fire of the LORD fell and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and it licked up the water that was in the trench.*”

II. “Biblical Faith” – It is a particular belief or trust exclusively in the God of the Bible

- A. Defined and Described – It is a channel, a means of receiving.
 1. Eph.2:8, 9, “*For by grace you have been saved **through faith**, and that not of yourselves; it (faith) is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.*”
 - Notice that Biblical Faith is the channel, the God-given means “*through*” which the God’s eternal salvation (saving grace) is received.
 - Notice also that Biblical Faith is not naturally in the natural-born descendants of Adam – “*...and that not of yourselves...*” Nor can Biblical Faith be earned, merited by fallen mankind – “*...not of works lest anyone should boast.*” It is “*the gift of God*”. (Phil.2:13)
 - Notice furthermore that it is the God of the Bible that possesses and is able to impart this needed gift of Biblical Faith as well as His gift of eternal salvation. The Object of Biblical Faith is the God of the Bible, particularly the Lord Jesus Christ.
 2. Shorter Catechism: Faith **in Jesus Christ** IS a saving grace, whereby we (believers) **receive** and **rest upon Him alone** for salvation, as He is offered to us in the gospel.
 - Biblical Faith is “IN Jesus Christ”; He is the object of saving faith – cf. Gal.3:26; Eph.1:15; 3:12

- Biblical Faith is a “saving grace”; it is a gift from God, who has and is able to impart such a gift.
 - Biblical Faith is the gift that God imparts to believers enabling them to “receive and rest upon Him (Jesus Christ) alone for salvation”.
3. Shorter Catechism: Justification by faith is **an act of God free grace** whereby He pardons us (believers) of all our sins and accepts us as righteous in His sight, only for the righteousness of Christ imputed to us and **received by faith alone**.
- B. The Strength of Biblical Faith is determined by the manifested trust and confidence a person has in the person of God and in God’s word.

III. The “great faith” of Matt.8:5-13

- A. The things leading up to what is recorded Matt.8:5-13, the centurion’s coming to and pleading with the Lord Jesus
1. **he heard about the Lord Jesus**, both His ability and His willingness to heal the afflicted - especially, the fact that the Lord Jesus healed all that came to Him seeking healing. *“So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”* (Rom.10:17) We see this in Matt.4:23, 24; 8:16, 17
 2. **he believed in the Lord Jesus’** ability and willingness to heal the afflicted – his belief is manifested in what this centurion did > he came to and pleaded with Jesus
 3. **he may have heard about and believed** that the Lord Jesus was a prophet sent from God (like Nicodemus in Jn.3:2) or that the Lord Jesus was God-incarnate (Messiah) - Matt.3:1-3, 11-12; Jn.1:22, 23; Jn.1:29, 34b
- B. This centurion’s compassion, his manifested concern for those under his authority – the motivation behind what he did and said > he went to Jesus Christ and pleaded for the help ONLY CHRIST was able to give.
- This centurion did not discard this servant because he was sick and not as serviceable to him as he once was or could be.
 - This centurion had personally observed his servant’s paralysis and dreadful torment, and was moved by compassion for him. This is how the Bible instructs masters to treat their slaves, especially believing masters - Eph.6:9
- C. Jesus’ response:
- His willingness to come/go, expressed, 8:7a, *“And Jesus said to him, “I will come...”*

- Even though this centurion was one of the oppressors of Israel, a Roman officer, and a Gentile (R.C. Sproul), the Lord Jesus was ready and willing to go and help.
 - This “willingness issue” of Christ to receive and minister to those who came to Him, regardless of their deplorable state, had been addressed and clearly answered forever in Matt.8:1-4.
- His promise to come/go AND DO, 8:7b, *“...I will come and heal him.”*– Jesus promised to exercise His ability to cure the incurable; this is mercy and grace
- D. This centurion’s acknowledgment of his own unworthiness expressed, 8:8a, *“...Lord I am unworthy that You should come under my roof...”*
- He acknowledged his own unworthiness as a sinner. It was not a matter of merit that had been earned by him or was owed to him. He came humbly, seeking and pleading for a gift; he was seeking mercy and grace from the Lord Jesus.
 - Perhaps he was mindful of the possible negative impact Jesus’ coming into his Gentile home might have upon Jesus and Jesus’ ministry to others, particularly the Jews, who hated the Romans and despised the Gentiles.
- E. This centurion’s understanding of how authority works – 8:9, This is how it is supposed to work. This is how authority DOES perfectly WORK, when you are talking about the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God > ex. creation: Gen.1:1-3; Col.1:15, 16
- F. Jesus marveled at this centurion’s, this Gentile’s manifestation of “great faith”! Why? Because it was so rare, so unexpected from a Gentile. “marveled” only used twice in the N.T. to describe a response of Christ Jesus – R. C. Sproul
- G. “great faith” does not have to see signs and wonders done personally and particularly to them, for them or for those they love (like the charismatic experiences that so many want and seek). Great Faith KNOWS God and trusts in God alone for salvation.

IV. Summary – R. C. Sproul comments on Matt.8:5-13

- A. The lesson to be learned of this centurion: “You don’t have to come. Just say the word and my servant will be healed. I know the power of Your word. I know that the universe is here because you spoke it into being. You said, ‘Let there be light’ and there was light. I believe that all authority in heaven and on earth is given to You.”
- B. Regarding Experience versus Scripture, R. C. Sproul writes:
1. “Whether this experience or that experience is of the Holy Spirit, I never know for sure. But I know this – the Bible is God’s Word...I can always rely on God’s Word...We will enjoy God’s

immediate presence for eternity, but for now, we are to live by His Word.”

2. “I realized I needed the Word of God, for that is where I find my stability, my confidence, my ability to persevere, and my hope.”
 3. “The Word of God has the power to change our lives! We can depend on it and live by it!”
- C. Great Biblical Faith believes in (relies upon) and lives according to the word of God!

V. Applications

- A. What kind of “faith” do you have? What is the object of your faith?
- B. Is it “Biblical faith”? Is it great and strong “Biblical faith”?
- C. Though your Biblical faith, as a believer in Christ, may be weak at this moment, **the good news** is that **it can grow** to be great and strong faith. **Here is how:** by **drawing near to God** (Jas.4:8); *by learning to listen to and follow the indwelling of the Holy Spirit*, who guides God’s people into all truth (Jn.16:13); **by increasing your knowledge of God and His written word**, 2 Tim.2:15; **by asking for wisdom**, Jas.1:5