

ESF, Lord's day service message
9/21/2014

Great Faith
Luke 7:1-10

When Jesus had finished saying all this to the people who were listening, he entered Capernaum. ² There a centurion's servant, whom his master valued highly, was sick and about to die. ³ The centurion heard of Jesus and sent some elders of the Jews to him, asking him to come and heal his servant. ⁴ When they came to Jesus, they pleaded earnestly with him, "This man deserves to have you do this, ⁵ because he loves our nation and has built our synagogue." ⁶ So Jesus went with them.

He was not far from the house when the centurion sent friends to say to him: "Lord, don't trouble yourself, for I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. ⁷ That is why I did not even consider myself worthy to come to you. But say the word, and my servant will be healed. ⁸ For I myself am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. I tell this one, 'Go,' and he goes; and that one, 'Come,' and he comes. I say to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it."

⁹ When Jesus heard this, he was amazed at him, and turning to the crowd following him, he said, "I tell you, I have not found such great faith even in Israel." ¹⁰ Then the men who had been sent returned to the house and found the servant well.

Faith is the channel to connect us to God. Faith pleases God. Our faith moves God's heart. When God's heart is moved, He will pour His blessings upon us. God reveals great things through great faith. So if we want to see great things in our lives, we need great faith. How can we have great faith? Today, through a Roman soldier's faith in this text, we will learn how to obtain great faith.

Great faith is available to all people

Here the centurion was a Roman soldier who had a high military rank. But in terms of a religious background, he was just an ordinary person. He was not one of the disciples of Jesus. He did not belong to any prominent Jewish religious group in those days. He was not even a Jew. He was a Gentile whom the Jews despised. However, he was able to possess great faith.

If such a person could have great faith, we all can have great faith. You can have great faith too. In fact no one is born with great faith. When we see the records of people who live by great faith, many of them were born and lived as unbelievers before they came to have great faith. The father of faith, Abraham had lived without faith in God until he was 75 years old. He had been serving man-made idols.

There was also a woman who had great faith but had a very humble origin. Her name was Rahab. She was a prostitute in the city of Jericho at the time of Joshua in the Old Testament. She was not only living in a land where nobody knew God, but also living a very lowly life. But when she heard the news of what God had done through the people of Israel, she came to believe what she heard. When all the people in her home land refused to believe what they heard about God, she believed and had great faith. By her great faith, she was saved and saved all her family when her city was totally destroyed by God. And her name was written in the book of Joshua (Joshua 2:1-24) and also in the record of Jesus' genealogy in the book of Matthew as the mother of man of faith Boaz (Matthew 1:5).

So the Bible proves, through those examples, that regardless of man's condition or background, a person can have great faith. Even if you are poor, even if you are old, even if you are not much educated, even if you don't have a believing family background, even if you have a very shameful past, you can have great faith. So even if there is nothing distinctive about you do not exclude yourself from becoming a person of

great faith. You also can be a person of great faith like the centurion here.

Loving people

The great faith of the centurion came from his love for others. He cared so much for his servant that when the servant got sick, he tried to do everything he could to heal the servant. And he found that there was nothing he could do. At that time, he came to earnestly seek Jesus' help. His love for people led him to great faith.

The centurion's love transcended the gap between different social status-between a master and a servant. His love transcended the gap between different races -between Romans and the Jews. His love was testified by the Jews. When some Jews came to Jesus, they testified to his inter racial love by these words: This man deserves to have you do this *because he loves our nation* and has built our synagogue (verse 5).

When you love people, and they get sick or have problems, you desire to help them by any means possible. And when there is no way you can help the person, you cannot but turn your eyes unto God who alone can bring help to the needy person. So your love for others leads you to seek God. If you want to have great faith, turn your heart from loving things to loving people, from loving yourself to loving others. Loving people brings you great faith in God.

That is an important truth Jesus wanted to teach His disciples. When Jesus came to Peter after He was risen from the dead, Jesus asked Peter: "Do you love me?" Then Jesus said to Peter: "Take care of my sheep" "Feed my sheep" Through the words, Jesus emphasized that loving His flock is the best way to love Him. Jesus inscribed in Peter's heart that taking care of people with love is the most important part of any ministry.

When God wants to give you great faith, He brings you people first. He gives you opportunity to love them and to take care of them. And when you love them and take care of them, He brings you great faith too. That is why it is a blessing to be a part of a church where we meet people whom we have to constantly take care of with love.

Here in our church where many different races are gathering together, we have a good opportunity to have great faith. Loving each other among people of different races are not easy. But when we gather together constantly and take care of each other in Christ, we exercise God's love which is "agape" love. Agape love transcends our nature, our feeling, and our favoritism. And while we are sharing agape love with each other, God gives us the gift of great faith. So if you want to have great faith, try to be active in taking care of others. Try to show your genuine interest in other people regardless of their racial, social, or economic status. Try to love others before they love you. And you also can have great faith through love.

Humility

The centurion's great faith came out with his humility. At that time the Romans ruled the Jews. He was a Roman military leader. He could have looked down on the Jews whose social status was inferior to him. He could have acted as if he was better than the Jews in every way. But he humbled himself before the Jews and respected them as God's chosen people. He tried to obtain faith from observing them. He tried to get help from their faith. And he had great faith.

The centurion did not think that he could do everything by himself. Especially in seeking spiritual things, he recognized that he needed other people's help. So when he needed the help of Jesus, he asked others to help him to gain Jesus' favor. When we see Paul, he always respected other people in his ministry. He never worked alone. He always worked

with other believers. He always let others help him and worked as a team with them.

There is no one who can have strong faith at all times and in all situations. Even if your faith is strong now, you cannot maintain the strong faith always. There are times when you need encouragement and some help from other believers who can support you through their faith and with their gifts. Always recognize that you can't have great faith alone. Don't hesitate to ask help from other believers.

The authority of the word of the Lord

Finally, the centurion's great faith came out of recognizing the authority of God's word. When Jesus was coming near his house to help him as he had prayed, he sent some people and said to Jesus through them: "*Lord, don't trouble yourselfBut say the word, and my servant will be healed.*"

The centurion publically recognized the authority of Jesus' word. He believed that through the word, Jesus could reveal supernatural power. Jesus called such faith of the centurion great faith.

A Roman centurion was in charge of 100 soldiers. As a centurion he had authority over 100 men. He learned the power of the authoritative word through his own life. He said, "*For I myself am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. I tell this one, 'Go,' and he goes; and that one, 'Come,' and he comes. I say to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it*"

The authority of the centurion was given by the Roman emperor. But the authority of Jesus was given by God. So, the centurion recognized Jesus as the Lord of lords, the King of kings who had ultimate authority. He believed that if Jesus spoke a word, everything would obey, even sickness would obey.

Jesus has authority to rule over everything by His words.

When the disciples were afraid of the storm which suddenly overtook their boat in the middle of a sea, Jesus rebuked the wind and raging water. And the storm subsided. All was calm (Luke 8:24).

In Mark 1:25-26, there was a man who was possessed by evil spirit. When Jesus commanded the evil spirit “*Be quiet! Come out of him!*” the evil spirit shook the man violently and came out of him.

In Luke 5:13, when Jesus commanded a man with leprosy, “*Be clean!*” immediately the leprosy left him.

In Luke 8:32, the demons begged Jesus to let them go into the pigs. Then Jesus told them to do so and they instantly went into the pigs.

In Matthew 21: 18-19, Jesus commanded a fig tree which produced no fruit “*May you never bear fruit again!*” and immediately the tree withered.

Do you want to have great faith? Recognize the authority of the words of the Lord: “Lord, your words have authority to rule over everything in the universe. With your words you can calm all storms in my life. By your words you can breakthrough all my obstacles. Just speak your word to my sickness and I will be healed.”