

SAVING FAITH

In Luke 7, Jesus is asked to heal a dying servant. His master, the centurion in Capernaum, pleads with Christ to merely speak the divine word from afar. Jesus marvels at his faith and heals him. "By this miraculous cure, without touch of hand or look of eye to see the sufferer, our Lord restores to health a dying man by a single word," observes JC Ryle. "No prophet or apostle wrought miracles in this manner. We see here the finger of God."

MAN OF FAITH - The centurion understood authority, and knew that Jesus could speak a word and get results. Like the centurion Cornelius at Caesarea in Acts 10, he was "*a devout man who feared God with all his household, and gave alms generously to the people and prayed continually to God.*" The Gentile centurion was a "*worshiper of God*" like Lydia in Acts 16.

Most Romans believed in a pantheon of gods, and appropriated the religions of the regions they conquered. They tolerated the Jewish idea of "one God" which to them was atheism. Perhaps for reasons of his position he had not actually become a Jew. But outward constraints did not contain his true faith in God and his trust that Jesus Christ could heal his servant.

FAITH CHOOSES - The centurion had no cultural history of thousands of years of God at work through the Hebrew nation. Hebrews 11 informs our faith, from creation, Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses and more. But he was learning about God's redemptive history. Now he would take interest in Jesus as the Christ, since his life was transformed by a miracle.

Hebrews 11:1 says "*faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.*" Because of the evidence, faith chooses to put its trust in what God does and says. Faith believes God's promises, without demanding to see them first. Faith is trusting what is trustworthy.

AMAZING FAITH - The centurion said, just say the word and my servant will be healed. Jesus marveled at this faith. The only other time He was said to be amazed at something is in Luke 4 (and Mark 6) when He marveled at the unbelief of the people at the beginning of His ministry.

"What could be more terrible than to amaze the Son of God with lack of faith?" asks RK Hughes. "What could be more wonderful than to amaze Him with one's faith? This centurion had amazing faith." From the beginning of His promises, God said Gentiles would come to faith in Him.

FAITH REPENTS - In the parallel in Matthew 8:11, Jesus adds, "*many will come from east and west and recline at table with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, while the sons of the kingdom will be thrown into outer darkness.*" The Jews who should believe, refuse to repent. The people rejected Jesus as the Christ, wanting only His miracles, not His lordship.

"The multitudes were amazed at Jesus because they saw wonderful power and heard profound wisdom," observes RC Sproul, "but not one was able to penetrate the authority of Christ as did this centurion. He understood what escaped the religious leaders: the obvious manifestation of God incarnate, which took place in the midst of people blind to it, but recognized by a Gentile."

YOUR FAITH? - Do you have faith like the centurion? Trusting what you can't see? "Is pride keeping Christ away from your home?" asks Sproul. "Is pride a barrier to recognizing the divine authority vested in Him? Are you trying to manipulate God as if He is obligated to keep your commands? Or do you recognize Christ's authority over you, humbling yourself before Him, confessing on your knees Jesus Christ as king of kings and lord of lords? May it be your faith!

Every person lives by faith, every moment of every day. But not everyone has saving faith in Christ Jesus as Lord and Savior. Saving faith is your whole being believing and trusting in all that Jesus is. Saving faith is believing with mind and heart and will, intellectually and experientially and volitionally, trusting that only Jesus saves. Because salvation is by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, according to Scripture alone, to the glory of God alone.

LIVING FAITH - Do you have living faith? Daily trusting the Lord and living for Him? Not to gain salvation but because you have been saved, trusting and obeying His Word by His power within.

"Salvation is of the Lord from beginning to end," explains Sproul. "Yes, I must believe. Yes, I must respond. Yes, I must receive Christ. But for me to say yes to any of these things, my heart must first be changed by the sovereign effectual power of God the Holy Spirit." Soli Deo Gloria! ☐