

Feats of Great Faith

By David Phillips

When men think of Bible examples of great faith, stories such as Noah and the flood, Abraham sacrificing his son, and David and Goliath will often come to mind. Indeed, these are all wonderful stories that are truly able to strengthen our faith in the power of God.

Yet, there are other accounts in the scriptures that receive less recognition as *feats of great faith*, but are just as profitable for strengthening our faith: stories such as the Paralytic who was lowered through a roof to be healed by Jesus. Certainly these stories are not on as grand of a scale as those of Noah, Abraham, and David, but they are excellent for causing us to see the more detailed principles of faith that can often be overlooked by Christians. Therefore, we will consider these examples in order to learn from the nuggets of wisdom that they offer.

The Paralytic: Mark 2:1-5

It is true that some people seem to appreciate the value of our Lord and Savior more than others. Throughout His ministry Jesus encountered people who resisted Him with great effort. He would teach and heal people, yet the Pharisees and chief priests still desired to take His life (John 7:32). He would offer wisdom and instruction from above, yet men would “walk with Him no more” who were not willing to accept His teaching (John 6:61-66). Yet we find that those who had true faith in Jesus were willing to do anything in order to get close to Him. The paralytic was one such man. So we find that in spite of the great crowd that was pressing around the house in which Jesus was standing, this lowly man would not be deterred from seeing Him. The man and his friends would not allow the crowd to hinder them. They could not reach Jesus by the front door so they took the man up to the roof in order to lower him down to where Jesus was. “*Then they came to Him, bringing a paralytic who was carried by four men. And when they could not come near Him because of the crowd, they uncovered the roof where He was. So when they had broken through, they let down the bed on which the paralytic was lying*” (vs. 3-4).

What is it that we can learn from this lowly paralytic? Notice what it was about this man that Jesus caught Jesus’ eye. “*When He saw their faith, He said to the paralytic, ‘Son, your sins are forgiven you’*” (vs. 5). It was his faith! It was the faith of this man and his friends that motivated them to do anything necessary in order to reach Jesus. There are many people today who will follow Jesus as long as it is convenient. They will follow Jesus as long as they do not have to give anything up, or as long as it does not cost them anything. They will seek Him as long as they are not required to make any changes; as long as they can continue to “be themselves.” In some cases people approach Jesus with the idea that they are actually doing Him a favor by believe in Him and if He so much as asks one thing of them that they do not like (i.e. dress nice for services, attend all the services, put away a sin, live in submission, etc.), then they will “walk with Him no more.” We see in this paralytic that true faith will cause a person to come to Jesus no matter what the obstacle and no matter what the challenge. This man’s faith was a great feat because he was willing to go to any length in order to be healed by Jesus. Therefore Jesus has said, “*And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My name’s sake, shall receive a hundredfold, and inherit eternal life. But many who are first will be last, and the last first*” (Matthew 19:29-30).

The Centurion: Luke 7:1-10

There are many people today who approach their service to God as if they are doing it “out of the goodness of their heart.” Some of the wealthier and more prominent in society require special treatment from members and leaders of a congregation in order to assemble with them (James 2:2-4). Even many who consider themselves to be average will only attend the services of the church so long as they are made to feel special. This centurion, on the other hand was a man of authority who had servants under him and was a commander in the

army. *“For I also am a man placed under authority, having soldiers under me. And I say to one, ‘Go,’ and he goes; and to another, ‘Come,’ and he comes; and to my servant, ‘Do this,’ and he does it”* (vs. 8). Yet, in spite of his position, we find this man to be in complete contrast to many people of lesser situation today, for he approached Jesus with great humility, acknowledging that he was not worthy for Jesus to even enter into his house. *“Lord, do not trouble Yourself, for I am not worthy that You should enter under my roof. Therefore I did not even think myself worthy to come to You”* (vs. 6-7). When Jesus heard these words by the mouth of this man’s servants it was then that He said, *“I say to you, I have not found such great faith, not even in Israel!”* (vs. 9).

From stories such as David and Goliath we learn how that when we put our faith in God He can do great things in our lives. But what is it that the centurion’s feat of great faith is able to teach us? That a man who has true faith is one who approaches God with great humility and trust. Notice that out of all the people that Jesus healed, out of all the people that followed Him from town to town and through the wilderness, in spite of all those who had seen His mighty works no one had shown as great a faith as this humble centurion. When we have true faith then we, like the centurion, will acknowledge the greatness of Christ and our unworthiness to enter into His presence. We will acknowledge that it was purely by His grace that He was willing to come down to earth, to live as a man, and to suffer on the cross in order to save our lives. True faith will cause us to acknowledge that we owe Christ everything and therefore must submit to His will in all things. This is the faith that will cause us to approach our God with meekness and to trust in His mercy as well as His power to forgive our sins.

One symptom of a weak faith that is very common today is that of men who believe they must work for income to the point of forsaking the commandments of God. Many have become so consumed with the thought of taking care of their own needs that they forget that God is the One with the power to take care of our needs and that in order for Him provide for us we must be willing to serve Him first! This centurion knew that Jesus did not have to come to his home to heal his servant. He knew that Jesus’ power was great enough. We too must have this faith when it comes to God’s ability to work in our lives. Only when we put this kind of trust in God will we be able to bear the commandment of Jesus which says, *“Therefore do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble”* (Matthew 6:31-34). Only when we have faith as this centurion will we be able to put our lives completely in God’s hands.

The Sinful Woman: Luke 7:38-50

Finally, let us consider the sinful woman. The paralytic taught us that true faith is willing to do anything to come to Jesus. The centurion taught us that true faith is willing to approach God with great humility and trust. What is it that we learn from this sinful woman? That those with great faith are willing to humble themselves at the feet of their Lord, to adorn Him with their tears, and to offer their lives in service to Him. Consider all that Jesus went through, all that He has done, and all that He continues to do. He alone is worthy. Many people believe that unless they have been made to feel good in worship then their worship was useless. Many people approach God as if He needs to serve them and fulfill their every whim. But this sinful woman shows us that before we can be made to feel good, we must be willing to lower ourselves and to acknowledge our absolute dependence upon God. Therefore Jesus said, *“Blessed are the poor in spirit,” “Blessed are those who mourn,”* and *“Blessed are the meek”* (Matthew 5:3-5). This woman shows us how true faith will cause a person to fulfill the command given by James which says, *“Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord...”* (James 4:7-10). He is worthy, are you willing?

Application

Sadly, in a physical world with carnal values many people have mixed up true faith with pictures of grandeur and glory. To the world, a good church is pictured as a building that can be seen for miles or an organization with an annual income that would diminish that of many corporations in the world. Yet these feats of great faith teach us that true glory is seen in submission to God, not in the wealth and popularity of the world. True faith causes men to humble themselves before God, as the centurion and the sinful woman did.

When many Christians think of having great faith they conjure up pictures of preaching before thousands, being beaten for righteousness sake, and giving everything they have in order to do the Lord's work. Where these types of sacrifices may be good, they are not the extent of what truth faithfulness is about. For our faith in God must cause us to not only make great sacrifices to serve God, but to also rely on God for our very being, and to trust in Him with all of our hearts. This is true faith! What about you? How far are you willing to go in order to reach Jesus in your life? How much are you willing to rely upon God for your well being? All men are required to work hard (Colossians 3:23). But only those with true faith will trust in God enough to not allow their secular work to interfere with their obedience to the will of God.

All men need to be healed of a common sickness – sin. Do you have faith to come to Jesus to be healed by Him? Do you have faith to come to Jesus in tears over your sins? Do you have faith to adorn the Lord in humility, to serve Him, even to wash His feet with your tears? Do you have faith to reach out to Jesus for life and for wellness, both physical and spiritual? Do you have the faith to grope for Jesus as though He were your only hope in the world? These are the feats of great faith that the people in the gospels were known for. For in each of the above examples Jesus said to the person, *“Your faith has made you well,”* or *“Your sins are forgiven you.”*

Conclusion

Jesus is calling all men to come to Him. He offers eternal salvation to all who are willing to show the same faithfulness as that seen throughout this lesson. If you are willing to humble yourselves before the Lord and to obey His will you can have the gift of salvation today. For it is written, *“Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned”* (Mark 16:15-16). If you believe, will you come?