

## **"Is My Faith Showing?"**

[based on Luke 7:1-17]

They say that age brings wisdom. I like to think that we all are able to live this life and gain **some** wisdom. All of us certainly hope so.

I was a different man 50 years ago. There have been a number of mentors in my life when I was young, who must have seen '**something**' in me, that they would take the time and the energy to teach me.

Yet, there were times when I got '**too big for my boots,**' and disappointed them. I had been taught, by these people, to be fair and just. Yet I disappointed them and I regret it **so** much, even now, over a half century later. I feel guilty for the way I treated them and took them for granted.

It took me **prayer time,** and '**inward searching**' with the help of the Holy Spirit, to understand and realize the importance of other people's feelings, not just my own. It haunts me to this day as I try to forgive myself for my past insensitivity.

In a former life, as the manager of a branch of a national company, I was driven by the world's teaching, and not by a faith in God's plan...

We learn in different ways. Some of us learn by reading, others by hearing and still others by hands-on experience.

There have been countless books written on the topic of **faith.** These have been helpful for many.

For the followers of Jesus, though, something more is needed. We have that "more" in today's text, which contains great examples of what comprises an incomparable faith.

It's common knowledge that faith is more than agreement in certain religious doctrines. Faith is not a noun, but rather it is a verb...in other words, we do not "have" faith, instead we "live" faith...

In the story of the Centurion, and the healing of his servant, we see the demonstration of a faith focused on others.

The Centurion was not approaching Jesus on his own behalf, but rather for the Centurion's "**highly valued**" slave...

Most of the time people approach Jesus to heal themselves, with some notable exceptions. In the second chapter of Mark, the author records that Jesus heals a paralytic. The man had been carried to Jesus by four of his friends...

In the seventh chapter of Mark, the author writes about a foreign woman who boldly approached Jesus on behalf of her daughter...

It's not wrong for us to bring our needs before the Lord. God invites us to do this. We are also encouraged to pray for the needs of others.

One of the ways that we can bear one another's burdens is through prayer. At certain churches, members are sent a monthly Prayer Calendar so that they can pray for each other, and by doing so, encourage each other in their lives of faith and service. Some churches even have Prayer Connections Teams to pray for critical needs.

There are times when, in the middle of our struggles or sickness, we are unable to pray for ourselves, and we need the prayers of others.

The Centurion displays a notable sense of humility when he approaches Jesus. It is obvious that he doesn't feel comfortable within himself, to ask the Lord to heal his servant. So, the Centurion requests that Jewish officials speak to Jesus and make the request. When Jesus comes near the Centurion's home, he tells Jesus that he doesn't feel he is worthy of having Him enter inside. (*It would have meant that Jesus would have been defiled according to Jewish law.*) Instead, the Centurion encourages Jesus to just say the words...

**We** often attempt to approach Jesus from a position of strength. We remind Jesus why we are worthy of God answering our prayers. If we feel that our position is a little weak, we may resort to bargaining with God, saying that we will do something if God answers our prayers.

Yet, when we read the story of the Centurion's servant, we understand that Jesus did not respond to the Centurion's request because the soldier was worthy. We also assume that Jesus did not come to the Centurion's house under duress because of the military coercion at his disposal. No, we realize that Jesus responded to the Centurion because He saw a person in need—the slave. The Centurion's unique military perspective allowed him to see Jesus in a different light than the Jews.

At this time in Jesus' ministry, the people who came to him, thought of him as a man with a special gift. Jesus had the gift of healing and the ability to cast out demons. The people did not see Jesus as a possible Messiah. Even the disciples didn't realize that Jesus was the Saviour, until near the end of his ministry.

The Centurion was well aware of the reputation of this healer. Jesus obviously was a man of great authority. He acted like a general in the Roman army. Generals did not need to be present in order for their orders to be carried out. The Centurion understood that Jesus did not need to enter his house and touch his servant, in order for the servant to be healed. Jesus merely needed to say the word.

Great faith sees who God is through the pallet of struggle, sickness, tribulation and grief. We see God's steadfast love. We know that God is a God of great power. We rest in the blessed assurance that God is present with us and will see us through. Such faith gives us the peace that passes understanding and the strength we need to endure.

We will never be perfect in our faith, but we do know some of the key elements. Empowered by the Holy Spirit, we can incorporate these into our lives. We then can live, love and serve, as people of faith.

Clearly it is impossible for us to right our past wrongs, yet learn from them, we must. And in that process, we need to give ourselves permission to forget our past mistakes and yes, to forgive ourselves as well.

When we discover all these things, '**things which will change our lives,**' we can go forth accordingly, showing that we are different than those who choose the world's ways.

We can have a committed faith in our God, and live our lives to become more like Jesus, emulating His life of service, knowing that even though we can never be perfect, we are loved by an awesome God who loves all who **seek** Him.

I would like to leave you with the lyrics of a fabulous song by Stephen Curtis Chapman called "His Strength is Perfect"...

I can do all things, through Christ who gives me strength,  
But sometimes I wonder what He can do through me...  
No great success to show, no glory of my own,  
Yet in my weakness He is there to let me know...  
His strength is perfect when our strength is gone.

We can only know the power that He holds,  
When we truly see how deep our weakness goes.  
His strength in us begins, where ours comes to an end.  
He hears our humble cry and proves again..

His strength is perfect when our strength is gone.  
He'll carry us when we can't carry on.  
Raised in His power, the weak become strong.  
His strength is perfect, His strength is perfect.

Have faith my friends, for with faith comes aid, and forgiveness, and unending Love.

Amen