

Faith
Mark 5:35-43

In this passage we see an extraordinary example of one of the greatest basic truths of the Christian faith. Faith is the foundation of everything else religiously. Without faith, we cannot please God (Hebrews 11:6). In this passage, Jesus is approached by the ruler of a synagogue and requested to return home with him in order to heal his daughter who is near death (Mark 5:21-24). While on the way to comply with the ruler's request, Jesus is delayed by the actions of a woman who has been seriously ill for twelve years (Mark 5:25-34). Once the procession is ready to renew their journey to the ruler's home, a messenger comes and tells the man that his daughter is dead. What lost hopes! What blasted dreams!

The ruler of the synagogue, Jairus, had originally come to Jesus in faith. He had undoubtedly heard of the miracles of Jesus, and now that Jesus had journeyed to his neighborhood he knew that his ill daughter had a chance for life. This is what prompted him to come to Jesus with his request. The request was simple, "Come and lay Your hands on her, that she may be healed, and she will live." This was a request of faith. His faith motivated Jairus to ask Jesus to come to his house, and it was his faith that prompted Jesus to agree. Now, his daughter is dead! But, in the midst of this terrible news, Jesus asks Jairus to manifest more faith. Jesus says, "Do not be afraid, only believe." We need to ask ourselves what we would have done in this man's situation. Could we have complied with the request of Jesus? Jairus knew that if he could just get Jesus to his house all would be well. Because of the interference of the woman who touched Jesus' garment, he did not accomplish his task. Now, Jesus asks him to reach down further into his heart and believe, even though his daughter is dead.

We know from the remaining verses that Jairus did go with Jesus and that Jesus raised his daughter from the dead. The faith of Jairus is exceptional. It is a grand example of one of the greatest of the basic truths of the Christian faith. Jesus came to impart life (John 10:10), not just physical life, although He did impart physical life to Jairus' daughter and Lazarus. Jesus came to impart spiritual life, the more abundant life! Salvation is the term used frequently in the New Testament to describe the process of acquiring the new life in Jesus. Salvation implies the rescue of one from impending danger. There are other terms used in the Bible to describe the acquisition of the new life in Christ.

Redemption is the act of being redeemed or liberated at a price. Zacharias, the father of John, the Baptist proclaimed that God had visited and redeemed His people (Luke 1:68). Peter tells us that we have not been redeemed with corruptible things, like silver and gold, but with the very blood of Jesus, a lamb without blemish and without spot (1 Peter 1:18-19).

Adoption is another word that describes our new condition in Christ through faith. Paul describes the benefits of this adoption in Romans 8:15-17. In this passage he shows that through our adoption we became children and heirs. Heirs together with Christ! But, the one phrase that everyone understands is the phrase "born again". Jesus tells us that we must be born again in John chapter 3. Being born again involves certain things; the primary act is faith since faith is the foundation of all other acts. Without faith it would do us no good to be baptized. A baptism without faith results in a sinner getting wet and nothing else.

Faith is essential to spiritual life. Paul tells us that the just shall live by faith (Romans 1:17). In this verse, Paul reaches back to the Old Testament and quotes the prophet Habakkuk who said the very same thing (Hab. 2:4). Faith has been the key in all of God's dealing with mankind. In an opposite way, lack of faith is a hindrance. Jesus asked, "How can you believe, who receive honor from one another, and do not seek the honor that comes from the only God?" (John 5:44). We also find that Jesus was not able to do many works in Nazareth because of the unbelief of the citizens there (Matthew 13:58).

Faith is first a capacity within mankind, then a possession. Paul tells us that God has given to each a measure of faith (Romans 12:3). People have an ability to believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and then they actually possess that belief when they are saved. Faith gives confidence, trust, and reliance. As Jesus said, if we possessed faith even as small as a mustard seed, we could toss mountains into the sea (Luke 17:6).

Faith is absolutely necessary for salvation. Jesus said, "for if you do believe that I am He, you will die in your sins" (John 8:24). He also said, "that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:15). The Holy Spirit was sent with a mission: to convict the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment. Jesus said, "of sin, because they do not believe in Me" (John 16:7-9).

We have tremendous assurances because of faith. We need not fear death, because Jesus is the resurrection and the life (John 11:25-26). We have the promise of Jesus that faith will result in rivers of living water flowing out of our hearts (John 7:38). Faith is the answer. It is the means by which we approach Christ and by which Christ approaches us. Jesus will always ask, "Do you believe in the name of the Son of God?" (John 9:35).

Faith results from hearing the word of God (Romans 10:17). The testimony of the gospels is sufficient to produce faith in Jesus. Not merely an assent that He exists, but a genuine belief that trusts!

Faith was very important to Jesus. In Matthew 8:1-3, we find that a leper came to Jesus asking to be healed. The leper exhibited faith, "If you are willing, you can make me clean". In Matthew 15:21-28 we find Jesus conversing with a Gentile woman. The woman requested Jesus to cast the demons out of her daughter. Jesus rebuffed her by pointing out that He was sent to the nation of Israel. She then implored Jesus to help her. Once again, Jesus puts her on the spot by saying that it is not right to take the children's bread and give it to the dogs. While this reply would have dissuaded many people from seeking His help any further, the woman replies, "Yes, Lord, yet even the little dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their master's tables". When Jesus heard this He exclaimed, "O, woman great is your faith!"

One of the greatest testimonies to faith is what Jesus said in response to the Roman centurion in Matthew 8:8-10. This man believed that Jesus could heal his servant even without coming to his house. Jesus said, "Assuredly, I say to you, I have not found such great faith, not even in Israel!" This makes the question of Jesus in Luke 18:8 even more poignant, "when the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the Earth?"

Contrast the faith of the Centurion with the lack of faith at times by the disciples (John 20:27), and even with Peter (Matthew 14:30-31). We can be made whole through faith, not just physically (Matthew 9:22) but spiritually as well! As Jesus said, "All things are possible to him who believes" (Mark 9:23). When the 21st Century Church realizes the essentiality of faith, great things will be done.