

A MOTHER'S FAITH, A CENTURION'S FAITH, AND A FATHER'S FAITH

"But without faith it is impossible to please Him...." (Heb. 11:6)

WHAT is faith? Noah Webster defines faith as "a firm, cordial belief in the veracity of God, in all the declarations of his word; or a full and affectionate confidence in the certainty of those things which God has declared, and because he has declared them." The Bible says that "faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Heb. 11:1). Simply put it, faith is being assured of what we hope for and being confident of what we do not see. Faith is very important to God. The Bible says that "without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is [that He exists] and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him" (Heb. 11:6). God does not like unbelief and often will not work where there is unbelief. We read in the gospel of Matthew how Jesus did not do many mighty works in Nazareth, His hometown because of their unbelief (Matt. 13:58). Jesus told His disciples that they could not cast out the demon because of their unbelief (Matt. 17:20). We read in the gospel of Mark how Christ rebuked the disciples who did not believe those who have seen His resurrection (Mark 16:14). There are three noteworthy examples of faith in the Bible. They are:

A Mother's Faith

"Then Jesus went out from there and departed to the region of Tyre and Sidon. And behold, a woman of Canaan came from that region and cried out to Him, saying, "Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David! My daughter is severely demon-possessed." But He answered her not a word. And His disciples came and urged Him, saying, "Send her away, for she cries out after us." But He answered and said, "I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." Then she came and worshiped Him, saying, "Lord, help me!" But He answered and said, "It is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the little dogs." And she said, "Yes, Lord, yet even the little dogs eat the crumbs which fall from their masters' table." Then Jesus answered and said to her, "O woman, great is your faith! Let it be to you as you desire." And her daughter was healed from that very hour." (Matt. 15:21-28)

The Syro-Phoenician woman is worthy of emulation. She was a gentile by birth. She was the outcast of society. The Jews regarded gentiles as mere dogs. Yet this woman had great faith and overcame all obstacles. She had a need and knew only the Lord could fulfill it. She believed and had great faith that the Lord Jesus could help her. She knew that she was not worthy and like Jacob would cry: "I am not worthy of the least of Your mercies" (Gen. 32:10). Yet she came to the Lord Jesus in faith and we can imagine her saying: "Lord, don't You have a crumb for me?" She was persistent. She kept asking, she kept seeking, and she kept knocking (Mark 7:26). She was not discouraged at the Lord's silence but persevered until she was heard.

A Centurion's Faith

"Now when Jesus had entered Capernaum, a centurion came to Him, pleading with Him, saying, "Lord, my servant is lying at home paralyzed, dreadfully tormented." And Jesus said to him, "I will come and heal him." The centurion answered and said, "Lord, I am not worthy that You should come under my roof. But only speak a word, and my servant will be healed. For I also am a man under authority, having soldiers under me. And I say to this one, 'Go,' and he goes; and to another, 'Come,' and he comes; and to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it." When Jesus heard it, He marveled, and said to those who followed, "Assuredly, I say to you, I have not found such great faith, not even in Israel! Then Jesus said to the centurion, "Go your way; and as you have believed, so let it be done for you." And his servant was healed that same hour." (Matt. 8:5-10, 13)

The centurion's faith is worthy of emulation. He did not need to see to believe (John 20:29). He believed that Christ is able to heal his servant. He told the Lord: "Lord, I am not worthy that You should come under my roof. But only speak a word, and my servant will be healed" (Matt. 8:8). For that saying Jesus "marveled, and said to those who followed, 'Assuredly, I say to you, I have not found such great faith, not even in Israel!'" (Matt. 8:10).

A Father's Faith

"Therefore it is of faith that it might be according to grace, so that the promise might be sure to all the seed, not only to those who are of the law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all (as it is written, "I have made you a father of many nations") in the presence of Him whom he believed—God, who gives life to the dead and calls those things which do not exist as though they did; who, contrary to hope, in hope believed, so that he became the father of many nations, according to what was spoken, "So shall your descendants be." And not being weak in faith, he did not consider his own body, already dead (since he was about a hundred years old), and the deadness of Sarah's womb. He did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God, and being fully convinced that what He had promised He was also able to perform. And therefore "it was accounted to him for righteousness." (Rom. 4:16-22)

"By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, of whom it was said, "In Isaac your seed shall be called," concluding that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead, from which he also received him in a figurative sense." (Heb. 11:17-19)

Abraham's faith is worthy of emulation. God promised Abraham saying: "Surely blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply you" (Heb. 6:14). The Bible says that "Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness" (Rom. 4:3). God promised Abraham that He would bless him and multiply him and make him a

great nation. Humanly speaking that was impossible for Abraham was old and childless and his wife had passed the age of childbearing. But God told Abraham: "Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your exceedingly great reward" (Gen. 15:1) and He brought Abraham outside and said to him: "Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them." And He said to him, "So shall your descendants be" (Gen. 15:5). The Bible says that Abraham "who, contrary to hope, in hope believed; so that he became the father of many nations, according to what was spoken, 'So shall your descendants be.' And not being weak in faith, he did not consider his own body, already dead (since he was about a hundred years old), and the deadness of Sarah's womb. He did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God, and being fully convinced that what He had promised He was also able to perform" (Rom. 4:18-21). The Bible says in Hebrews 6:15 that "after he patiently endured, he obtained the promise" (Heb. 6:15). Abraham's faith was tested when God told him to offer up Isaac "his only begotten son" (Heb. 11:17). But Abraham believed "that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead" (Heb. 11:19).

Faith is NOT seeing, YET believing. Faith believes in the unseen God. Faith believes God can do the impossible. Faith lays hold of God's promises. Jesus told the two blind men, "Do you believe that I am able to do this?" (Matt. 9:28). We need to have faith when we pray. Jesus said "whatever things you ask in prayer, believing you shall receive" (Matt. 21:22). When we pray we are exercising faith in the unseen God and faith that God will answer our prayers. Prayer is faith that God will give us what we ask for, though we may not see it before our eyes.

Father, help us to have more faith in You. Increase our faith to lay hold of Your promises. In Jesus name. Amen.

Peter Sarkis

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