

Th122 Foundation Doctrines

Lesson Th122 - 8 Faith Pleases God

Raising children is an adventure. Sometimes we, as parents, are pleased and sometimes we are displeased. At times our children make us laugh with joy; other times we cry with frustration. One thing every child does is to ask their parents for things. We sometimes overlook the marvelous truth behind this. In order for a child to ask something of us, he must believe that we are able to meet his request. The request is actually an act of faith. The author of the Book of Hebrews wrote, "Without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him" (Heb 11:6).

The disciple Matthew wrote this story about Jesus meeting a man of great faith. Jesus and his disciples were traveling through the region of Galilee and entered the city of Capernaum. The fishing village was on the northwest coast of the Sea of Galilee and would become the base of operations for Jesus' ministry in Galilee.

When Jesus entered the city a Roman centurion approached him and asked for help. Now Roman centurions were men of substantial authority. They were officers in the Roman army and commanded 100 to 200 men. Each centurion derived his authority from the officers above him and ultimately, from Caesar himself. The centurion was the officer that carried out the commands of Rome. Many centurions became men of great wealth and influence. And so it was with the centurion that came out to meet Jesus upon his arrival in Capernaum. "Lord," the centurion said, "my servant lies at home paralyzed, suffering terribly."

This statement caught Jesus' attention. This military leader was coming to Jesus, not for his own need, but for that of a servant. It was not uncommon for masters to treat their servants cruelly. But some masters developed close friendships with their servants. Perhaps Jesus sensed that in the centurion's voice. "Shall I come and heal him?" Jesus asked.

"Lord, I do not deserve to have you come under my roof," the centurion humbly said. He treated Jesus with great honor and respect. "But just say the word, and my servant will be healed. For I myself am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. I tell this one, 'Go,' and he goes; and that one 'Come,' and he comes. I say to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it."

When Jesus heard this he was amazed. This Roman soldier truly understood how authority worked and he was demonstrating his faith in Jesus' authority. Just as he had only to give the command for his men to obey, he believed that Jesus had only to give the command and his servant would be healed.

Jesus turned to all of those around him and said, "Truly I tell you, I have not found anyone in Israel with such great faith. I say to you that many will come from the east and the west, and will take their places at the feast with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. But the subjects of the kingdom will be thrown outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

Then Jesus turned to the centurion and said, "Go! Let it be done just as you believed it would." And his servant was healed at that very moment (Matt 8:5-13).

From this incident in Jesus' life we learn a lot about faith and how important faith is to God. We see how the centurion's faith was rewarded. We also see how faith is linked to having a right relationship with God. Jesus taught that it would be through faith that people from around the world would become part of the kingdom of God. Those who thought they were Christians, but who did not have faith, would never enter into God's Kingdom. Indeed, as it is written in the Bible, "Without faith it is impossible to please God."

This story is **important** because it teaches that praying is demonstrating faith that God, our Father, will hear and answer us.

The **main truth** of this lesson is that God is pleased by the faith of anyone who comes to him, believing that he exists. He rewards those who seek him by giving them eternal life with him.

To **review** this lesson, answer the following questions:

1. What was a Roman centurion? [Pause]
 - A. If you said that a Roman centurion was an officer in the Roman army who commanded at least 100 soldiers, you are right.
2. What did the centurion want Jesus to do? [Pause]
 - A. If you said that the centurion wanted Jesus to heal his beloved servant, then you are correct.
3. What did Jesus say about the centurion's faith? [Pause]
 - A. If you answered, "Jesus said that he had not seen such great faith in all of Israel," then you answered correctly.

Your **assignment** for this lesson is to watch this lesson at least three times. Memorize this simple verse from the Bible, "Without faith it is impossible to please God," Hebrews chapter 11, verse 6. Now find someone and discuss with them the importance of having faith in God when we pray.