

The Foundation And Fruits Of True Faith.

Text: Matt 8:1-13

1) It's foundation

Suggested Hymns:

2) It's fruit

Tan: 217, 321, 392, 294, 368

Ade: 217, 352, 321, 392, 368

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is Matthew 8:1-13, ¹ *When He had come down from the mountain, great multitudes followed Him.* ² *And behold, a leper came and worshiped Him, saying, "Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean."* ³ *Then Jesus put out His hand and touched him, saying, "I am willing; be cleansed." Immediately his leprosy was cleansed.* ⁴ *And Jesus said to him, "See that you tell no one; but go your way, show yourself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded, as a testimony to them."*

⁵ *Now when Jesus had entered Capernaum, a centurion came to Him, pleading with Him,* ⁶ *saying, "Lord, my servant is lying at home paralyzed, dreadfully tormented."* ⁷ *And Jesus said to him, "I will come and heal him."*

⁸ *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."* ⁹ *"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."*

¹⁰ *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!"* ¹¹ *"And I say to you that many will come from east and west, and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven."*

¹² *"But the sons of the kingdom will be cast out into outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."* ¹³ *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. (NKJV)*

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

The great central theme of our Gospel is faith, faith illustrated both by the leper and by the centurion. The climax is reached when Jesus exclaims, ***“Assuredly, I say to you, I have not found such great faith, not even in Israel!”***

The unbelieving people of this world have no true notion of faith. Ask them, and what will they say? Some of them will tell you that faith is only a mask which Christians wear on their face. They put on a pious outward appearance, pray, go to church, and all this they do for some selfish purpose. This class of unbelievers looks upon all Christians as hypocrites.

Others, again, among the unbelieving people of this world will tell you, faith is an illusion formed in the mind. They consider Christians as people who believe things which are contrary to the simplest principles of common sense. This second class of unbelievers looks upon the Christians, as if they were people with an unbalanced mind.

The a third class of unbelievers, who, if you ask them their opinion on faith, will smile and say, *“Why do you make such a great deal about faith? What good does faith do? Let a person believe ever so much and ever so sincerely, what does that benefit him or others? Faith, rightly looked at, is nothing but an altogether useless act in the mind; and you Christians expect to get to heaven by faith. What foolishness!*

These are all the opinions of the children of this world. They do not have the least idea of what faith is. They speak about faith as a blind person would speak about colours. And is it no wonder? Does not the Word of God say, ***the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned?***¹

If such people would only taste faith for themselves and experience for themselves what faith is, they would know what they are speaking about. Then they would no longer speak as they now speak.

However, Christians, too, are in need of constant instruction on the nature of faith. Our Gospel points out the foundation on which true faith is built, and also tells of the fruit of such faith. May the Lord bless our meditation.

1. The Foundation Of True Faith

Firstly, on what did the leper in our Gospel rest his faith? We are told, ¹ *When He had come down from the mountain, great multitudes followed Him.* ² *And behold, a leper came and worshiped Him, saying, "Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean."* Here we must observe that the leper is not praying for a spiritual gift, but for a temporal blessing.

He is not asking for forgiveness of sin and the grace of God, but for the removal of his leprosy. Jesus had just delivered His great sermon on the mount. The leper had probably stood from afar and heard the sermon, because the law did not permit him to approach others on account of this loathsome contagious disease.

But when Jesus came down from the mount, the poor man was bold enough to walk right up to the Lord, to fall down before Him, burying his face in the dust, and to utter the request: *"Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean."*

Note how he submits to the Lord's will, teaching us by his example that, if we ask for a temporal gift, we should leave it to the Lord to deal with us according to His good pleasure. No doubt the leper knew that a person is sometimes afflicted with some temporal evil for the sake of his own welfare. Therefore he did not venture to ask for the cleansing of his leprosy without adding the condition, *"Lord, if You are willing.* In other words the leper is saying, *"You know better than I do, O Lord, whether or not it will be profitable for me to be made rid of this loathsome disease, but as for your ability to help me, I do not doubt that for one moment". "Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean."*

On what, then, did the leper rest his faith? On Christ, His good and gracious will and His almighty word. He desired to hear the word of Christ telling him that he should be clean, and he was confident that instantly his leprosy would disappear, if Jesus only spoke the word.

It was not in vain that he entrusted himself to the Lord, not in vain that he rested his faith on Christ's will and word, for we are told, ³ *Then Jesus put out His hand and touched him, saying, "I am willing; be cleansed."* *Immediately his leprosy was cleansed.* ⁴ *And Jesus said to him, "See that you tell no one; but*

go your way, show yourself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded, as a testimony to them.”

Secondly, on what did the centurion in our Gospel rest his faith? The centurion also asked for a temporal gift. We read, ⁵ *Now when Jesus had entered Capernaum, a centurion came to Him, pleading with Him, ⁶ saying, “Lord, my servant is lying at home paralyzed, dreadfully tormented.”*

And when Jesus answered and said *“I will come and heal him.”* What was the centurion’s reply? *“Lord, I am not worthy that You should come under my roof. But only speak a word, and my servant will be healed.* The centurion does not desire a sign, he does not desire to see Jesus lay His hand on the sick man. He does not even deem it necessary for Christ to come into the house. All he desires is to hear Christ’s Word.

Christ’s Word is the foundation on which his faith rests. Christ’s Word and nothing else. Such is his confidence in Christ’s Word that he says, ⁹ *“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.”*

The centurion is saying, *“I am a man under authority. I have superiors whom I must obey. Yet my word is obeyed by those who are subject to me. But You are more than mortal man, You are the Son of God; subject to no authority, all the powers in heaven are subject to you. How much more, then, must Your Word accomplish what it says! You speak and it is done. All that is necessary is Your word, and my servant’s disease must disappear.”*

To show that this is true faith, faith as it should be, namely the faith which rests on no other foundation than Christ’s Word, our text says, ¹⁰ *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!”* ¹¹ *“And I say to you that many will come from east and west, and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven.*

¹² *“But the sons of the kingdom will be cast out into outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”* ¹³ *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. Clearly, the faith which brings deliverance is the faith that rests on the foundation of Christ's Word.

Is your faith resting on this foundation? Today thousands of Christians claim to be true believers, but there is no sound and solid basis to their faith. They are not positively sure and certain about the things which they believe. They base their faith on their own repentance, on their conversion, on their emotions, on their feelings, on their virtues, and the like.

There are those who say, I believe that I am a child of God, for I repented of my sins, I felt truly sorry for having sinned against God, and so I confidently believe that in Christ my sins are forgiven.

Others say, I believe that in Christ I am saved, for my own heart tells me so. I felt the wrath of God upon me, and then I went down upon my knees and implored God to have mercy on me, and behold, my fears departed, my soul was made alive, a voice seemed to call out to me, "*Your sins are forgiven, and now I believe that I have made my calling and election sure.*"

Still others say, I felt my misery and my wretchedness, I did not know if I should flee for fear of God's anger and wrath. But then I began to pray and to wrestle with God, and I continued night and day until the Spirit of God came into my soul, and I felt that I was truly converted. Then I could shout and say, Now I have found grace, Jesus is mine, heaven is mine, I am saved!

Others, again, triumphantly call attention to the wonderful change which has happened and expect to get to heaven because they had mended their former sinful lives. Formerly, say these, we took part in the vain pleasures of this world and indulged in certain sins, but now we lead an altogether different life, we read the Bible, we pray, we go to church; why, then, should we not get to heaven?

Finally, there are such as claim to be in favour with God because in a dream or in a vision they had seen Jesus, or the holy angels, or had otherwise met with some extraordinary experience, assuring them of the grace of God, the forgiveness of their sins, and the salvation of their souls.

All these foundations of faith which people make for themselves are like the quicksand which gives way under the feet. Woe unto those who rest their faith on their own repentance, for our repentance is always imperfect and never deserving of God's grace! Woe unto those who rely upon their own feelings, for

they are relying on their own sinful heart, and God says, ²⁶ *He who trusts in his own heart is a fool.*²

Woe to those who base their faith on certain emotions and on the inward testimony of God's Holy Spirit, for that testimony may not always be there! Woe to those who believe that they are God's children because they are walking in newness of life, for even the best of lives is damnable, if not covered with the robe of Christ's righteousness.

The only foundation upon which Christians must rest their faith is Christ's WORD. Whoever simply relies on that which God has spoken in His divine Word, the Bible; whoever believes that his sins are forgiven, and that he shall be received into heaven for no other reason than because God declared in His Word that all people, even the greatest of sinners, are reconciled with God for the sake of the painful suffering and bitter death of His beloved Son Jesus Christ, and that through His name whoever believes in Him shall receive remission of sins; he has based his faith on the true and everlasting foundation on which alone it can securely rest.

For, while everything else, repentance, conversion, feeling, virtue, is unreliable, the Word of God is truthful and can never fail. Nothing can prevail against faith resting on such a foundation. Even if such a believer experiences nothing but God's anger and wrath and feel no joy whatever, even if he suffers tribulations, and afflictions, and persecutions, even if Satan directs against him his darts in the face of death, the Word of God will bear him through.

2. The Fruit Of True Faith

Let us briefly consider the fruit which faith that is based on Christ's Word produces.

The fruit of faith is love, as exemplified in the centurion's care for his slave. The centurion, literally, a captain over one hundred soldiers, was not a Jew, but a Roman. As a rule, these Roman officials, and Roman men and women in general, cared very little for the welfare of their slaves.

But behold, what a sympathising master true faith had made of this centurion. He looks after his servant with no less care than he would devote to his own child. He is grieved to see him tormented and in pain. He does all in his power to alleviate his pains and to have him restored to health. In his anxiety he

goes to the Lord for his slave. That, surely, was not merely a trait of his noble character, but the fruit of his faith.

Let us look at Luke's account and we shall hear still more about the fruit of his faith. Luke informs us that the centurion, deeming himself unworthy, did not go to meet the Lord in person, but at first sent the elders of the Jews to ask Jesus in his behalf. And what did the elders say about the centurion?

We read in Luke 7:4-5, ***‘And when they came to Jesus, they begged Him earnestly, saying that the one for whom He should do this was deserving, ⁵ ‘for he loves our nation, and has built us a synagogue.’*** The fruit of his faith was, then, that he also loved God's chosen people, though they were despised and held in contempt by the Romans, and to show them his appreciation of their religion, he built them a synagogue, a house of worship, where, doubtless, he himself was a regular worshipper.

Love toward God and the neighbour is another fruit which invariably grows on the tree of that faith which is based upon the Word of God.

Unbelievers and Charismatics frequently speak despicably of that faith which rests upon the Word of God alone. They claim that such a faith is merely a dreary thought of the heart. But they do not know what they are speaking about. For if anything will change people's hearts, and make him a new creature, and move and urge him to love God and his neighbour, to feed the hungry and thirsty, clothe the naked, give shelter to the homeless, and to do works of charity without ceasing, it is that faith which is based upon the Word of God alone.

Such faith is God's work in man, and how can that which God has made alive be a dead and powerless thing? Could the sun be without light or fire without warmth or true faith without deeds of love? Certainly not!

But one thing must be borne in mind here. While the unbelievers and many Charismatics make a great show and display of what they call charity, arranging events and advertising their donations, so that people should admire their generosity, the children of God, who base their faith on the Word of God alone, prefer not to let the left hand know what the right is doing.

In sincere humility they do not boast of their sympathy for others and of the great good which they do. Quietly they bring forth the fruits of their faith, incessantly and without murmuring, building the kingdom of God, supporting the

holy ministry, helping those that are in need, and, in general, doing good to all people, especially to those who are of the household of faith.

Another fruit of faith is evident both in the leper and in the centurion. It is true humility before God and men. The leper yields up his own will and wisdom to Christ and His will, wisdom and goodness, saying, *“Lord, if You are willing.*

Likewise the centurion humbles himself, though a Roman officer, before the Man of Nazareth and Son of God. He deems himself unworthy of receiving Jesus in his house and extending to Him his hospitality. He does not claim at Jesus’ hands any measure according to his own thoughts or desires, but leaves the manner of the fulfilment of his request entirely to the Lord. This was not a fruit of his sinful nature, but of faith engendered in him by the Word of God.

He, who would otherwise have been a haughty Roman officer, was thus made a meek and humble petitioner before the meek and humble Nazarene. Today faith also makes people meek and humble who would by nature be haughty and puffed up with pride. Faith, a firm reliance on God’s grace in Christ Jesus, disposes the believer to mercy, to sympathy with the afflicted, though they be lowly, as was the centurion’s slave.

May the Lord grant us all that faith which is based on the Word of God alone, and we shall not only be sure of our faith, but also bring forth the blessed fruit of faith and never grow weary in well-doing.

Let us conclude by saying, *How firm a foundation, ye saints of the Lord, Is laid for your faith in His excellent Word.*³

May God grant us this faith, built on the Word of God alone, for the sake of Jesus Christ, His beloved Son, our only Mediator and Redeemer. Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

¹ 1 Corinthians 2:14

² Proverbs 28:26

³ Hymn 392