

## The Simplicity Of Faith

Before we begin our study of these precious truths given here in chapter 7 of the Book of Luke, I'd like for us to pause and remind ourselves of some of the basic tenets of our Christian faith and doctrine that Jesus is showing to us, both with His life and also through the many things that He accomplishes as He travels about preaching and teaching and healing the people.

One of those basic tenets of doctrine that is an essential element of our faith is that God truly is "Sovereign" and that He providentially superintends all the many things that take place on this earth, reaching His Hand into and guiding the paths of mankind toward the purposes He intends, and all to His glory and to His praise.

And while yes, this understanding about God, about who He is and what He does within our often troubled lives, is hard to grasp and sometimes hard to accept, it is nonetheless absolutely true. God's hand is firmly moving within and guiding all that takes place at every moment throughout every day. And that has been so from the beginning of creation and it will be so until God calls creation to a close. God is "Sovereign" and He is "Providential".

And one other truth that we need always to be reminded of is that the Lord Jesus is the One within the Trinity of God who exercises that divine power. Yes, all three members of the Trinity, God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit are all continually exercising Sovereignty and Providence, but from the mysterious truths that we read here within these scriptures, Jesus is said to be the One within the Trinity who carries it all forward.

Listen to these words in Colossians chapter 1 that tell us so, that Jesus

<sup>15</sup> . . . is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. <sup>16</sup> For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. <sup>17</sup> And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. (Colossians 1:15-17)

Please note those words carefully . . . He, the Lord Jesus, created all things for Himself and for His purposes. And in him all things hold together. Simply put, His powerful hand holds all things together every moment of every day and He continually guides it all towards the purposes He intends.

And then also in Hebrews chapter 1, God tells us this same truth again, that He, the Lord Jesus,

<sup>3</sup> . . . is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. (Hebrews 1:3)

Again, it is by the guiding Providential power of the Lord Jesus that all things in existence is upheld, held together. And that includes not only the sun, the moon, and the stars, it also means that He keeps the very air we breathe in its right proportions.

And folks, please also know that even though as Jesus lived here on this earth, fully human like you and me, walking alongside men teaching them and healing them from their diseases, all the while, though intentionally withholding some of His divine power, beneath the surface of His humanity, Jesus truly was still, ever and always the omnipotent, all-knowing, all-powerful God of all creation.

And I especially want us to keep all this in mind as we read about all of those intimate moments that He spent with His disciples and with the common and ordinary people of His day.

Turn with me in your bibles and read along in today's passage from Luke chapter 7, here beginning in verse 1.

<sup>1</sup>Now when He concluded all His sayings in the hearing of the people, He entered Capernaum. <sup>2</sup>And a certain centurion's servant, who was dear to the centurion, was sick and ready to die. <sup>3</sup>So when he heard about Jesus, he sent elders of the Jews to Him, pleading with Him to come and heal his servant. <sup>4</sup>And when they came to Jesus, they begged Him earnestly, saying that the one for whom He should do this was deserving, <sup>5</sup> "for he loves our nation, and has built us a synagogue."

<sup>6</sup>Then Jesus went with them. And when He was already not far from the house, the centurion sent friends to Him, saying to Him, "Lord, do not trouble Yourself, for I am not worthy that You should enter under my roof. <sup>7</sup> Therefore I did not even think myself worthy to come to You. But say the word, and my servant will be healed. <sup>8</sup> For I also am a man placed under authority, having soldiers under me. And I say to one, 'Go,' and he goes;

and to another, 'Come,' and he comes; and to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does *it*."

<sup>9</sup>When Jesus heard these things, He marveled at him, and turned around and said to the crowd that followed Him, "I say to you, I have not found such great faith, not even in Israel!" <sup>10</sup>And those who were sent, returning to the house, found the servant well who had been sick. (Luke 7:1-10)

As we consider this encounter that Jesus was involved in here in this circumstance, may I say to us again that while yes, it is often difficult for us recognize and to accept that God truly is providential, that He has a plan that He is working out for each and every person, in every place. And that He really does reach His hand into our circumstances and is carrying that plan forward every moment of every day. And folks, that is what is taking place here within these words.

In reading the commentary of Matthew Henry on this passage, I was reminded that it is part of God's plan to place His special ministering servants in some of the most unlikely of positions and places so that they can minister to us.

We know that he does that with His angels. In Hebrews chapter 1, it is said of angels,

<sup>14</sup>Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation? (Hebrews 1:14)

God has appointed certain of His angels to be close at our side, to minister to our needs and to protect us as we go about our day.

And God also uses people in much the same way. He very strategically places special men and women within our daily lives to minister to us and to provide for us and to protect us, right people in the right place at the right time.

That certainly seems to be the case here with this centurion commander.

It is said of him here that he "loved" the nation of Israel, so much so that He built them a synagogue. Historians of that age tell us that the cost of building that synagogue was probably borne personally by the centurion.

He was the right man in the right place at the right time to bless the people of Capernaum. And he did. And in the process, he earned the affection and respect of the town elders.

These circumstances remind me of a similar time in the life of Israel, the many years they spent in captivity to Babylon. At that time, the prophet Jeremiah told the Israelite people to live peaceably under the control of their captors and by doing that, they would be treated well.

And God intervened so that Jeremiah's counsel would take place. As the Israelite captives did submit to their captors, they were often treated very well. Most notable were Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego. In reading the account of their lives, you can easily see that the Chief of the Eunuchs who was put in charge of training the young captives was one of those well-placed people who would care for and protect God's people.

And then, as the years of their captivity went by, except for those very special times when God allowed their faith to be tested, those men were very well treated by their captors. And God blessed the whole nation of captive Israelites by reaching His guiding Hand into the matters of the Babylonian government and assuring that those Hebrew men were elevated into important leadership positions within the government, well-placed servants of God, to bless His people.

But folks, it is often that our indomitable American spirit does not allow for such submission. It is our nature to always be fighting for freedom from our captors. And at times, that might be the right thing to do.

But as Jeremiah warned his people, such resistance is not always God's will. Sometimes, it is God's will that we live within the circumstances provided.

Here in this passage, the people of Capernaum seemed, at least for this period of time, to have accepted their circumstances with the Romans. And God was blessing them for it, especially in His provision of a kind and generous local ruler.

Some of the more skeptical historians tell us that such generous treatment by the Roman captors was done for political purposes, to gain favor and help keep peace in the towns. And that may have been true in many cases. But here with

this particular centurion commander, the testimony being given about him tells a better story, especially the part about his servant.

We are told here that the servant was "dear to the centurion". His servant may have come to him by way of a long family relationship dating all the way back to his childhood. We don't know. But most likely the servant was a local Jew, perhaps even a Joseph type of person.

Recall how Joseph, the son of Jacob, had been sold into slavery in Egypt by his brothers, but God worked his time of slavery together for good for Joseph, and consequently, for the whole nation of Israel. God inserted His guiding Hand into that circumstance and placed Joseph as a servant in exactly the right place at the right time to greatly bless everyone concerned, Joseph eventually rising to the position of a ruler, second only to Pharaoh.

And we can also see the evidence of God's guiding Hand within this circumstance involving this servant of the centurion. While these scriptures do not say it, it seems good to believe that this servant might also have been a well-placed messenger of God to win the heart of the centurion so that the centurion would in turn treat the other Israelite people well.

God surely is in the business of blessing His loved ones and this all just seems to be well-positioned pieces of a puzzle that were put together to assure good treatment for God's people. That's the way God does things.

And we are also told here that a strong measure of faith was present within the heart of the centurion.

Again, perhaps it had to do with his servant. If the servant was a strong believer, he might have influenced the centurion to also believe.

Best of all, these words speak of Jesus Himself testifying to the centurion's strong faith. Folks, of all of the witnesses to my faith, I want most of all for Jesus to be the one who will testify on my behalf. He is the one I most want to please with my faith.

And note in these words the depth and the strength of the centurion's faith. In a soldier-like manner, his faith was not only strong, it was simplistic and matter-of-fact. Listen again to the centurion's words. Verse 6,

“Lord do not trouble Yourself, for I am not worthy that You should enter under my roof. <sup>7</sup>Therefore I did not even think myself worthy to come to You. But say the word, and my servant will be healed. <sup>8</sup>For I also am a man placed under authority, having soldiers under me. And I say to one, ‘Go,’ and he goes; and to another, ‘Come,’ and he comes; and to my servant, ‘Do this,’ and he does *it*.” (Luke 7:7-8)

This centurion's faith was simple and matter-of-fact! And note also, the great humility within his heart. He believed himself to be “unworthy” to even be near to Jesus.

Humility can be feigned. And we often do that, especially when we want to gain someone's favor.

But from Jesus' response to the man, we know that the centurion's humility was real. Remember the words that are so often spoken in these gospels that, “Jesus knew the thoughts of the people.” And it was no different with this centurion. Again, Jesus is ever and always the Omnipotent God, and He was able to know the centurion's thoughts and He knew the truth behind the man's words. And He knew that the man's humility was real. And He was greatly honored by it.

Let me pause for a moment and ask you a question. Are you always humble as you approach Jesus for His favor? Our humility, our esteeming Jesus as the Most High God, the Lord of Lords, the King of Kings, and especially as our one and only Savior and Lord, greatly honors Him.

And as we read in the Book of Revelation, when this earth and all of time and existence is called to a close, we and everyone and everything that ever is and ever will be will humbly bow at the feet of Jesus. And we will all cry out in a loud and passionate voice “glory, honor and praise be to You”.

And in Philippians 2, we read,

<sup>9</sup>Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, <sup>10</sup>that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, <sup>11</sup>and *that* every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Philippians 2:9-11)

Jesus truly is King of Kings and Lord of Lords and our Most High God. And the humility with which we acknowledge Him as being our Lord will mean everything to us, both as we walk through the days of this life, and especially when we stand before Him in that great and terrible day of judgment.

How awful it is to think of the many times we have treated Jesus as if He has no honor and no lordship over us. How many times have we treated him as if He really didn't matter at all!

Folks, that must never be because there surely will come a day of accounting. In our disrespect and our dishonoring of Him, we are running the risk of being judged with the judgment that Jesus speaks about in the Book of Matthew chapter 7. Listen!

<sup>21</sup>Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. <sup>22</sup>Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? <sup>23</sup>And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity. (Matthew 7:21-23)

Humility is the first order of honor and respect due the Lord Jesus. If we do not have humility towards Him, we have no part in Him.

And again, the other thing that Jesus marveled about in this centurion was his deep and abiding faith. Remember the words of Hebrews 11:6 where we read, <sup>6</sup> . . . without faith *it is impossible to please Him*, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and *that* He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him. (Hebrews 11:6)

Simple faith is the first and most important requirement of you and me as we enter into and live within a relationship with Christ. And the more simple and the stronger our faith, the more we are able to trust in Him and to receive the blessings that are in Him. And it is our faith that gives us access to those blessings.

And how magnificent those blessings can be! Imagine with me for a moment. In Christ, we are truly Children of the King. And as His children, all of the magnificent splendor that is due a son of God is ours to be had and to be enjoyed. We have only to receive it. But to do that, we must have faith. It is

faith and faith alone that allows the grace of God to flow, and the stronger the faith, the stronger the flow of grace.

But we must also be warned by these words, the flow of God's grace can also be restricted by our lack of faith, sometimes to only a trickle. And that should never be allowed to happen.

You and I must accept our own part of the responsibility in this matter of receiving God's grace. Jesus clearly and often spoke the words, "Be it according to your faith". Those are words of truth. The amount of grace, mercy and blessing that we receive seems often to be directly proportional to our faith.

And if you and I will only and simply believe, God's grace will freely flow upon us. What a wonderful thought.

This centurion was a man of simple faith. And because of his simple faith, God's blessing of healing was able to freely flow upon his servant and heal him.

And those same blessings of healing can flow upon those that you love and care for. All that is required is faith, simple faith. Do you have that kind of faith? God wants you to!

Listen to these words in Hebrews 11:6 again as we close!

<sup>6</sup> . . . without faith *it is* impossible to please *Him*, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and *that* He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him. (Hebrews 11:6)

May we pray.