

Where Does Faith Come From?

“The centurion replied, ‘Lord, I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. But just say the word, and my servant will be healed. ⁹ 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.’” Matthew 7:8-9

Most of us are rather familiar with the movie, “The Wizard of Oz”. After all, it is a classic story of Dorothy, a young girl from Kansas, who finds herself transported to the land of Oz, a colorful and magic land filled with all sorts of amazing characters. As she travels along the way to meet the wizard to find her way back home, she has quite a few adventures, and learns a great deal about friendship, courage, wisdom, caring, and trust. Yet, at the end of the movie, she learns that she already had everything that she needed stored up inside of her. This, in fact, is the very lesson that the movie seeks to teach. Interestingly enough, this is the very lesson that the world is constantly teaching us. As humans, we are told that we can do anything we want. We have the power to affect our lives and all we have to do is look deep enough inside ourselves and we will find everything we will ever need. All we have to do is trust ourselves.

However, our Savior teaches us a different lesson about faith. The lesson is that faith is not self-centered, but God centered. After Jesus finished preaching the “Sermon on the Mount” he returned to Capernaum and, on his way, met a centurion. This was a rather important man, meaning that he was the commander of a hundred men at Capernaum, which would have made him ranking officer in town, and the person who was essentially in charge of Capernaum under the Roman leadership of the day. But not only does his position tell us something about his authority and importance, but it also tells us about his character, as the Romans didn’t just pick anyone to be a centurion. They picked the best men. This centurion was a man who was respected, who was courageous, who was a leader and who was resourceful.

Yet, this man was different. His faith was not self-centered, but God centered. Though he was a Roman Centurion and a Gentile, he had come to faith in the God of Israel. And he recognizes that he is not worthy of Jesus’ presence, and understands the Jesus’ words are powerful, “just say the word, and my servant will be healed”. God’s Word, by the power of the Spirit, produces faith. That’s why faith is called a gift (Ephesians 2:8-9). But once God has planted the seed of faith, we are responsible to make it grow and bear fruit, with the resources he has given us, including his written Word, the presence and guidance of the Holy Spirit, the fellowship of the saints, among others.

The truth is, there is nothing that we can offer to God with which to bargain, because everything we have is what God has loaned to us already. Thus, everything that the Lord does for us is an act of his grace. The answers he grants to our prayers, be they “yes” or “no”, are answers of his grace. We need to rely on his promises and let Him guide our lives. In Jesus’ powerful name! Amen.