

THY FAITH HAS MADE THEE WHOLE

Matthew 9:22 But Jesus turned him about, and when he saw her, he said, Daughter, be of good comfort; thy faith hath made thee whole. And the woman was made whole from that hour.

One of the greatest Christian virtues we should possess and covet is faith. Let us begin with a biblical definition of faith. “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” (Hebrews 11:1). The New Living Translation states, “Faith is the confidence that what we hope for will actually happen; it gives us assurance about things we cannot see”. In other words, faith is not only having hope in the promises of God but having the confidence that they actually will happen. It is similar to the feeling one experiences when the result from some health concern returns and the doctor says with a smile, “Good news! There is nothing to worry about!” Now faith is when the doctor and the test result is purely based on the Word of God. Noah believing that God would save him through the ark, Abraham believing that he will have a child, Moses believing that God will deliver Israel from 430 years of slavery, Elijah believing that God would send fire from heaven to consume the sacrifice, the apostles believing that they would find the consolation of Israel, the Messiah – all these are examples of faith. Let us rejoice at the fact that we, also, who are expecting the return of the Lord Jesus, are among the great elders who received a good report through their faith. Faith is not only found in the pages of the Bible; faith is always living and walking among us. There are many Abrahams, Esthers, Daniels, Peters, James, Johns and Pauls among us today. For God is not the God of the dead but the living.

Blessed are we when our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is strong! Then we can be “of good comfort”, as the Lord assured the woman who suffered from a blood issue for twelve years. Indeed, if our faith is strong, we can be of good comfort. In other words, it doesn’t matter what the nature of our problems may be as long as we have faith in Jesus. On the other hand, one has cause for worry if everything is fine but faith is lacking. “And had suffered many things of many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was nothing bettered, but rather grew worse” (Mark 5:26). For 12 years the woman placed her faith in physicians. That faith was not only disappointed but punished – she grew worse. There is a lesson for us here. Let us as Christians be careful where we invest and place our hope; matters may become worse. Faith in the name and power of Jesus Christ makes whole whereas faith in other names

and powers diminishes the quality of our lives. Let us now turn to the story of blind Bartimaeus.

Mark 10:52 And Jesus said unto him, Go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole. And immediately he received his sight, and followed Jesus in the way.

What do you do when the God who made you did not open your eyes at birth? This is too difficult for those of us who take our eyesight for granted to contemplate. Such individuals may be tempted to criticize and attack God, if they believe that he is the Creator. With the above in mind, the faith of blind Bartimaeus is truly admirable. He was a beggar but never lost faith in receiving his eyesight and changing his circumstances one day. Not least, he recognized and seized the opportunity when the day and hour came. Faith recognizes the time and will not be silenced. Contrary to those who had sight and walked wherever the Lord walked, blind Bartimaeus had no other option than to weaponize his faith so much so that the Lord could not take one step more – faith brings the feet of Jesus to a complete stop. I pray we have faith that brings the feet of the Lord to a complete halt; then we can ask him whatever we want. Blind Bartimaeus' faith hath made him whole. Notice that the Lord gave both him and the woman with the blood issue the credit for the healing – thy faith has made thee whole. It was as if they were to congratulate themselves for the blessing. Thank yourselves for your great faith, was basically what the Lord was saying. The Lord humbly put his mighty work of healing secondary to their faith, so to speak. The Lord's power was dependent on such faith in order for it to be released. In fact, this is precisely what we hear in regard to the faith of the Roman centurion.

Matthew 8:13 And Jesus said unto the centurion, Go thy way; and as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee. And his servant was healed in the selfsame hour.

The woman with the blood issue and blind Bartimaeus exercised faith for their own welfare. In the case of the Roman centurion, we have someone who exercised faith on behalf of his servant. Some speculate that his servant most probably was Jewish. This is worthy of much admiration. Here was a man of high standing in an occupation not associated with mercy and compassion. Yet he personally went to the Lord and requested healing for a lowly servant. Clearly, great faith exercised on behalf of the poor and lowly brings praise from the mouth of the Lord himself. "He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the LORD; and that which he hath given will he pay him again" (Proverbs 19:17). The Roman centurion teaches us to love the poor and lowly and exercise great faith on behalf of all people. I pray our most fervent prayers will be for those who are strangers to the church and the name of the Lord

Jesus Christ. The Roman Centurion could have easily hired many more new servants, but he did not because he loved and valued his servant like a family member. Let us consider one more example of this second kind of faith, faith on behalf of others, before we conclude.

Matthew 15:27 And she said, Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table.

Matthew 15:28 Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour.

A spoiled child leaves not only crumbs on the floor but big chunks of food. They do this because they do not know the value of the food. The poor and desperate, however, gather around the table of the spoiled rich kids and are happy to enjoy the remains on the floor. Just consider how dogs, cats and rats have survived for thousands of years. I have never seen anyone willingly place food out for rats and yet they multiply. In fact, we place poison and traps of every size and shape out there to exterminate rats, and yet they thrive, and their numbers continue to expand. If rats ever had a national anthem, it would be Gloria Gaynor's "I will survive". May the Lord teach us to be rats when it comes to knowing how to steal the crumbs of the children! This is the insight of the Syrian woman in her response to the Lord. In essence she was saying that the children of Israel do not fully know the value of the food the Lord gave them richly to enjoy. She was happy to place herself among the dogs, cats and rats who survive on the crumbs because these crumbs have the power to sustain dogs.

In this sermon, we are reminded of the indispensable role that faith plays in our Christian journey. As we explore the biblical definition of faith in Hebrews 11:1, we understand it as more than a mere hope in God's promises; it is a deep-rooted confidence in their actualization. Reflecting on the stories of individuals like the woman with the blood issue, blind Bartimaeus, and the Roman centurion, we realize that healing is attributed to their strong faith. The narrative emphasizes that faith actively contributes to transformation. Moreover, we are encouraged not only to nurture faith for personal well-being but also to extend it to others, highlighting the importance of compassion and concern for those less fortunate. The title of the sermon is "Thy faith has made thee whole". Why don't we also practice "Thy faith has made others whole!"