

Amazing Faith

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[0:00] We are going to dive right into it today. Take your copy of the scriptures with me and go to Luke chapter 7. Yes, I know the video said Romans and this is week 12 of our series in Romans.

But we're going to go to Luke today. So Luke chapter 7. Verses 1 down through verse 10. What's happening here? Well, there is a Roman centurion.

Anybody know what a centurion is? Come on, you smart people. This is your chance to show off right now. What is a Roman centurion? Anybody? Soldier. We got that much, right? But not just any soldier, right?

He commanded men. He was high up. He was very important. So Luke chapter 7, Luke's Gospel, verse 1.

When Jesus had finished saying these words, well, if you want to see what words he was saying, you've got to go back and read chapter 6. In the hearing of the people, he went into Capernaum. So we know where he was and who did he meet there?

[1:16] There was a centurion who had a slave. Listen, this was the way of the world back then. This is not unusual. Of course, we have outlawed slavery in America and much of the world today.

But of course, this was common practice for the time. So he had a slave who was particularly precious to him. This slave was ill at the point of death.

The centurion heard about Jesus, sent some Jewish elders to him and asked him to come and rescue his slave. They approached Jesus and begged him eagerly. He deserves a favor like this from you, they said.

He loves our people. And he built himself. He built he himself built us our synagogue. So the Jewish people are coming to not just any Jewish people, the elders, probably some Pharisees in this group, came to Jesus and were making the case, pleading the case for this centurion to come and help his slave.

What happened? Jesus went with them. Verse six, when he was not far off from the house, the centurion sent friends to him with a further message. Master, he said, don't trouble yourself.

[2:31] I don't deserve to have you come under my roof. That's why. I didn't think myself worthy to come to you in person.

But just say the word and my slave will be healed. That is what faith looks like.

You don't even have to show up in person, Jesus. I've got a problem that I can't solve. I'm a Roman centurion.

I can solve most problems that come my way. Nothing really terrifies me. I've got. I've got. Strong, fearsome Roman legionnaires under my command.

But I can't solve this problem. An enemy has come up against me. In the form of sickness. The life of my dear servant slave.

[3:33] Clearly, he felt strongly about this slave. Clearly, he had become meaningful to him more than just an employee or more than just someone, a worker.

He was someone he cared about deeply. He said, Jesus, I can't solve this problem. But you, you don't even have to show up. You can just say the word.

And you have that kind of power. I recognize that. I've heard about you. I've heard about how you are. I've heard about who you say you're from. And I believe. I have faith.

And so you don't even have to say the word. Well, what happened? He continued on. Verse eight. You see, I'm used to living under authority.

Of course, he wasn't the top of the Roman army. He had those over him. But he said, then I also have soldiers reporting to me. And I will say to them, go. And this one will go.

[4:34] And I'll say to another one, come. And he'll come. And I'll say it to my slave. And he'll do it. I have authority over these people. Verse nine. Jesus gives his reaction.

When Jesus heard this, he was astonished. Let me tell you, he said, turning to the crowd that was following him. I haven't found faith of this kind, even in Israel.

And the people who had been sent to him went back to the house. And there they found the slave in good health. The faith had brought results. So what do we see here?

A Roman centurion. He's a Gentile. He's an outsider. He's not a Jew. And that's the point Jesus makes in just a little bit. He said, I haven't even found this kind of faith among the people who are supposed to have faith in God.

The people who are supposed to be looking for the Messiah. Well, here I am. I am the Messiah. And I have not encountered this kind of faith in the Jewish people.

[5:39] Only in this Gentile outsider. He was a powerful man, but he was helpless when his servant was sick and dying. But he did the right thing.

He reached out to the right source of rescue. He sent for Jesus. And then he said, I'm not even worthy for you to come under my roof.

He didn't say, Jesus, listen to me. I'm important. You really should do this for me. I'm part of the Roman occupying force.

I'm kind of a big deal around here, Jesus. Okay. So I'm going to cover my bases. And in case you are who you say you are, then I want you here and wave your magic wand over him or whatever and say your incantation and maybe it'll work and help my guy out.

That wasn't the attitude. That would have been more understandable. That would have been more likely. But that wasn't his attitude. He had a complete attitude of humility.

[6:39] He was humble. He said, Jesus, I don't even deserve to have you show up in my home. Would you just take the small effort of just speaking the word?

And I know that will work. Jesus was amazed by that. He said, I haven't found this kind of faith among all the people of Israel.

He wasn't amazed by his wealth. He wasn't amazed by his position. He wasn't amazed by his authority. He wasn't amazed or blown away by his morality. Jesus was amazed by his faith.

To understand why Jesus was amazed by this, we need to go back and we need to understand what faith has always meant to God.

So now let's go to Romans. Romans chapter 3. Romans chapter 3. Romans chapter 3. Skip down to verse 21 if you would.

[7:42] Paul's letter to Romans chapter 3. Paul's letter to Romans chapter 3 and verse 21. Keep the centurion's faith in the back of your mind. This faith that amazed Jesus.

Keep it in the back of your mind as we pick it up in Romans chapter 3 and verse 21. But now God has shown us a way to be made right with him without keeping the requirements of the law.

We've been talking about this for several weeks now. As was promised in the writings of Moses and the prophets long ago. We are made right with God. Not through the law. Not through any morality. Not through any position. Not through any power. We're made with the law. We're made right with God by what? Placing our faith in Jesus Christ.

And this is true for everyone who believes. The Jewish faithful believers. And the Roman centurions.

[8:46] Everyone who would come to God by faith in Jesus Christ. This is true for them too. No matter who we are. Verse 23. For everyone has sinned.

We all fall short of God's glorious standard. You and I can never measure up. I'm sorry.

I'm not trying to be the bearer of bad news this morning. I'm not trying to make you feel bad about yourself. But listen. The reality is if you don't feel bad about yourself. Sometimes you're lying to yourself.

Because we are a mess. We all cannot measure up. Every single one of us will always fall short. That's why we need Jesus.

That's why we need help. Have you ever heard somebody say or hear a news story or see somebody kind of melt down in public or maybe a kid or something. You say, boy, they need Jesus. Truth is, we all do.

[9:46] We can look in the mirror and say, that guy needs Jesus. That girl needs Jesus. Yes, we do. Because we all fall short. We don't measure up. Now go back to verse 24.

Yet God in his grace freely makes us right in his sight. And he did this through Christ Jesus when he freed us from the penalty for our sins.

So Paul gives us a problem here. Okay. He says everyone has the same problem. We've all done what? Sinned. Y'all are with me, man. I love it.

We've all done what? We've sinned. We've all fallen short. Nobody can earn their way to God.

Listen, if you've been around this church for a while, that's not a shock to you.

If you've been around any church that preaches the gospel as we find it in the scriptures, that's not a shock to you. But maybe that's a surprise to you this morning. Maybe you haven't been paying attention or maybe you've been convinced that you're good enough on your own.

[10:48] Well, the Holy Scriptures are here to inform you that none of us are. We've all fallen short. Perfection has never been the answer.

It's always been faith. So that is how God has made a way. God has made a way not through our performance, not through any achievement, not through any religious credentials, not how good your church resume looks.

Well, I was a Sunday school teacher and I was on this committee and blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. Nobody cares. All right. We care. Listen, we care. We need you to work in the children's ministry. Okay.

We care. We care about that. That's not what amazes Jesus. What amazes Jesus is faith. And that's not what saves you and restores your relationship with God.

It's always been faith. Y'all, I shudder to think the amount of people who are going to stand before God someday and they're going to point back to their religious achievements and say, look at all this.

[11:49] I did. Look at how faithful I was in church. Look how much tithe I gave. You telling me I don't have right standing with you. He'll say that the thing you were missing was faith in my son.

You had all the faith in yourself. You didn't have it in my son. That's how God has made a way through Jesus sacrifice through God's grace through our faith.

So number one, as we talk about amazing faith this morning. Did you all see the pretty picture of the centurion here? Did I skip over that?

Sorry about that. There you go. I didn't come up with that, but I found it. Here we go. Amazing faith, faith that amazes Jesus. There are a couple of truths that we need to lock into this morning.

Number one. Here we go. Wow. Here we go. Jesus gives what we could never earn. Sometimes I get to talking and I forget to keep the slides up with me and I'm sorry for that.

[12:50] But here we go. Jesus gives what we could never earn. So let's think back to the centurion. This man had no Jewish resume. He wasn't impressive by Jewish standards.

He was impressive by Roman standards. But the Jewish people weren't impressed by how long he had been in service to Rome. They weren't impressed by how many men he commanded.

They were thankful for how he had helped them along the way. They're thankful for how he had helped them get their synagogue built, etc. But he had no covenant markers.

He had no religious background to point to. He simply trusted Jesus. Paul writes about this in Ephesians chapter 2 verses 8 and 9.

Look up here. God saved you by his grace when you believed. And you can't take credit for this. It is a gift from God. Salvation is not a reward for the good things that we have done.

[13:48] So none of us can boast about it. I don't know how many of you might have grown up or been be familiar with a works based religion.

A works based religion is common in a lot of well known churches today all around the world that say you if you do this and you do this and you do this, then God will forgive your sins.

The truth is there are only two kinds of religions in the world. You say, now wait a minute. There's a lot more than two. Because I saw the sign out there and it said Baptist. And over there we got Methodist.

And we got Church of God. We got Church of Christ. Listen. There are only two kinds of religions in the world. There is a do religion. And there is a done religion.

The do religion says you have to do something to have peace with God. That something can change depending on the religion.

[14:52] Islam might look very different from Catholicism. But they're both going to say you have to do something. Over here in this category, we've got the done religion.

You know what that says? It's been done for you. Jesus did it for you. You couldn't do what Jesus did. So he did it for you.

What locks you in to a relationship with God for all of eternity is that word faith.

If you believe in the done religion. And you say that's how I'm going to see Jesus. I'm going to open up the scriptures. I'm going to read through.

I'm going to especially focus on Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. And see what Jesus himself taught. Who he was. And then I'm going to make my decision and say I'm going to have faith in that. [15:51] Because you'll have people on the do religion side who say, oh, yeah, man, it's about Jesus. But then you listen to what they teach and they say, no, it's actually about what I do.

But over here, Jesus says, no, that's never been the way with God. The Old Testament Jews were not saved, not restored with in right relationship with God by their obedience to the law of God. God gave them the law, but they were not saved by their obedience to it. They were saved by faith in the God who gave it. And we're still saved by that.

So Ephesians, Paul makes it so clear. You can't take credit for God's gift because it's a gift. He just gave it to you freely.

You didn't earn it. You didn't deserve it. By any by any reason or logic, you shouldn't have it. You and I should never have received this gift from God.

[16:58] That's why we call it sometimes scandalous or reckless love. It doesn't make sense from human perspective or thinking. But God says, no, I just wanted to give it to you even though you don't deserve it, even though you deserve the opposite, even though you deserve punishment for your sins, punishment for all your law breaking.

Instead, I'm going to offer you something beautiful. I'm going to offer you my son. God saved you by his grace when you believed by faith.

Because you were born into membership at First Baptist Church. church by the way that doesn't even happen you got to be baptized at some point then you're part of the membership at first Baptist Church not because you grew up in the right family not because you had the right parents or didn't because how fair would that be if it was saved by if you were saved by your family what about those without a family what about those who were born into broken home life the ground is level the ground is equal so God only requires only requires belief the centurion was not saved because he was impressive he was in say he was saved his servant was healed because of the impressiveness of Jesus love God's grace sparked by his faith and that's number two faith has always been God's way look back at Romans 4 now we were in Romans 3 let's skip ahead to Romans 4 and look at verse 1 what shall we say then have we found Abraham to be our ancestor in a human fleshly sense after all if Abraham was reckoned in the right on the basis of works well he has grounds to boast but not in God's presence what's it saying it's saying Abraham was humanly speaking the founder of the Jewish nation so what did he discover that made him right with God if his good deeds had made him acceptable to God he would have had something to boast about but that was not God's way listen church it's never been God's way for the scriptures tell us Abraham believed God and God counted him as righteous because of his impressive obedience to God Abraham believed God and God counted him as righteous because he was very good looking I don't know if he was or not I just wanted to throw that out there for the young people who you know care about how they look um Abraham believed God and God counted him as righteous because of his what his faith when people work their wages are not a gift there's something they've earned but people are not made right with their work by trusting God but I'm sorry but people are not made right with their work they're made right by trusting God who forgives the ungodly so that's down through verse 5 and Paul takes us to Abraham what's this about why is he working Abraham the great

Jewish patriarch father of the Jewish nation why is he working him in because someone might say Paul this faith thing you're talking about is new that's not how the old way operated look we have our histories we've have the old testament we can read back through and we can see the law that God gave and required obedience to and this is how you were in right standing with God how closely you followed the law Paul says nope you got it wrong go back and read it again this is how God has always worked Abraham's story is that first God made a promise and then second Abraham trusted the promise you look at it with with Sarah um Genesis chapter 15 and verse 6. what does it say we'll get there in a minute Genesis 15 and verse 6 Abraham believed the Lord and the Lord counted him as righteous because of his faith well Paul just quoted that in Romans 4. by

the way you don't realize how many times Paul how many times Paul quotes the old testament y'all I've actually heard preachers get up and they get their sermons get piped all over the nation and they'll get up and they'll say well we don't really need the old testament the old testament's kind of a mess you know you can't really trust the old testament okay um Jesus quoted it

[21:59] Paul quoted it but I'm supposed to listen to you when you say it doesn't matter I don't think so Abraham believed the Lord and the Lord counted him as righteous because of his faith faith so Paul's telling these Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians who are in the church in Rome who are kind of fighting over the old ways and whether or not we still need all those laws and everybody who follows Jesus should have to also abide by these laws that were passed down from Jewish tradition and they're fighting over this no we don't think that's necessary and the the old Jewish Christians are saying yes it's absolutely necessary it came from God and they're kind of fighting over this and Paul says guys you're missing the point of it the point of it was not obedience to the law the point of it was faith in God to do things that seemed weird at the time and he goes on and talks about circumcision but we don't need to dive into that this morning okay that's just it's a procedure that happens to baby boys right after they get born okay just was it like 10 days later something like that eight there you go eight days later yeah circumcised the eighth day I should I should have had that in my head uh it's been a little while since mine were well we don't need to dive into that any more than that but look but back then that was a weird thing to ask somebody and y'all do you realize that Abraham was

I think he was 99. I think he was 99 when he got circumcised any uh anybody in here above the age of three that would want to voluntarily yeah I didn't get circumcised when I was a baby you can do it now tell me when I'll be there without local anesthetic without any painkillers we're diving into it and I said we wouldn't I'm sorry about that look this was a weird thing that God asked God's laws like what what are you doing well centuries later we see that's actually a really healthy procedure and it's better to do it and all and God knew what he was talking about but back then it's like man you're asking a lot of us so these Roman Christians the Gentiles being asked to do that as adult males what no you're telling me to follow Jesus I gotta go get circumcised are you crazy Paul says look it wasn't even about the circumcision it was about believing God enough to say okay we'll do this even though it's not normal even though nobody else is doing it the medical professionals at the time weren't requiring it but God said you should do this so we're gonna say okay yes we'll do it it was about faith then and it's still about faith now and then in Hebrews here we go it was by faith that Abraham obeyed when God called him to leave home and to go to another land that God would give him as an inheritance Abraham move out pack up where are we going I'm not going to tell you yet but it's going to be great I'm going to give it to you okay how many of you would sign up for that God just showed it up and said okay it's time to go okay where are we going you'll find out okay how should I pack just come on let's go he went without knowing where he was going just by faith and it was by faith that he lived as a foreigner in the promised land anybody ever lived in another country I have yep where's Ben's he not here this morning yeah there he is right there right there Ben's has lived in all kinds of countries wait Austin has lived in a foreign country yeah he raised his hand Bo said I was born in Utah that felt like a foreign country it kind of was in some ways anyway uh but yeah we lived in Costa Rica Panama

Austin was born in Panama when you're living in a foreign country when you go and visit Carson just went to Mexico when you go and visit you know yeah you get treated like a tourist usually uh when you live there it changes a little bit people kind of start to look at you like oh you're not just here and then going home like why are you here why are you staying in our in our country they kind of want to know you get looked at differently because you're a foreigner by the way that's a good thing for us to remember when we find people from other countries in our culture it's good for us to remember that they're feeling like a foreigner so the best we can do to not treat them as a foreigner but treat them as family god will bless that and he might even give you a chance to share Jesus with that person so it was by faith that Abraham lived as a foreigner in the promised land going anywhere he wanted living in tents no stable home life just like Isaac and Jacob who would inherit the same promise why did he do this why did he pack up his family as a wealthy man why did he live as a wanderer as a nomad because he was confidently looking forward to a city with eternal foundations a city designed and built by god he didn't even know what to call it we call it the new jerusalem we call it heaven we get to read about it in revelation 21 i looked and i saw holy city the new jerusalem coming down from heaven it was by faith that even sarah was able to have a child

though she was barren and was too old to have a child faith has always been the way don't get so caught up in all the legal requirements that you find in the old testament that you miss the heart behind it all which was faith in god i will have enough faith in god to do these things god would ask his people to do weird stuff pack up and move go act like you're going to sacrifice your child i'm not really going to make you do this but he didn't know that he just said i'm just going to follow god by faith faith has always been god's way so paul's teaching this what kind of faith did abraham have he had real faith it wasn't perfect sometimes his faith would fail sometimes he'd get scared you get to read about it in genesis but he trusted even when he couldn't see faith without seeing believing in what you can't see that's faith you can have faith whether or not to sit on the pew because you can see it you can feel it you can check it out maybe it's a little rickety but you feel like it'll hold you up right what about sitting down on an invisible seat that you can't see and you can't even feel but you just sit down by faith that's faith in god and that's what he requires and the longer you spend with god the more visible fruit you get to see the more visible evidence in your life of god working you get to see so we have faith for now and we have faith for the future all the way up to looking forward to the city with eternal foundations a city designed and built by god if god's got our future secure with the holy city and the kingdom of god he's got our right now secure as well he had our five minutes ago or five years ago or 50 years ago secure and he still got today in the palm of his hand abraham trusted when he couldn't see he believed when the circumstances looked impossible he relied on god's promise now let's think back to the centurion the roman centurion abraham trusted god's promise the centurion trusted jesus's authority you could say his power but both understood the same thing here's what it was god can do what we cannot do god can do what we cannot do by faith abraham believed god and because of his faith god called him righteous why does god call you righteous this morning is it because of your accomplishments is it because of you think you're a pretty nice guy or a nice girl is it because you've been in church for a while what are you counting on for god to call you righteous because the only thing that impresses him is faith look back at romans and we'll close romans chapter 4 in verse 23 the words god counted him as righteous were written out not for abraham's sake alone but for us too do you see that romans 4 23 the words god counted him as righteous were written not for abraham's sake alone y'all this is so cool this is an ancient writing this is an ancient promise an ancient declaration that god made about the patriarch of israel that paul is saying hey by the way it's for us too and we can look at that today with our copy of the new testament and we can say it's for us too why because we have faith in the same god we have faith in the same jesus we have faith in the same one who was impressed by the centurion's faith who was impressed by abraham's faith he can be impressed by my faith too not by my works by my faith in him god will count us as righteous if we believe in him the one who raised jesus our lord from the dead he was handed over to die because of our sins and he was raised to life to make us right with god so the question is not have i done enough the question is do i trust jesus jesus was amazed by one thing from the centurion his faith not perfection not status not achievement but his faith the faith that jesus celebrates is not the faith of people who have it all together it's a faith of people who know they need him hudson taylor was a great missionary to china and he wrote this he said do you you do not need a great faith but you need faith in a great god can we say that together everybody look at the screen you do not need a great faith but faith in a great god how many of you believe you have faith in a great god this morning guess what jesus is impressed by that jesus is impressed by you he's impressed by your faith in a great god faith is not this faith is not proving yourself to god faith is not performing for god you don't have to prove yourself to god he says all the proving yourself all the trying to impress me all the righteousness that you can work together he says i look at it and i see it as filthy rags you can't perform enough for me you can't prove yourself enough to me so if faith is not that what is it faith is humble trust believing that god is who he says he is and he will do what he says he will do that's what faith is

our final thoughts this morning are these stop trying to prove yourself to god try stop trying to trust your performance come to jesus just like the centurion called out to jesus for help he came humble he came trusting he came believing that he has the authority and the power and the good will to save so amazing faith doesn't come from amazing people amazing faith comes from trusting an amazing god would you bow your heads with me amazing faith comes from trusting an amazing god you don't have to be amazing this morning but you serve a god who is jesus is amazing enough for both of us jesus is amazing enough for all of us his grace is amazing amazing faith comes from trusting an amazing god god i pray that you would remind us of just how amazing your grace is in

response to our faith we don't have to have faith that blows everybody away Jesus even told his disciples that they just have a tiny amount of faith the size of a grain of a mustard seed they'll be able to do anything that God asks of them the faith is in how amazing you are the faith is in how good you are how willing you are how right you are God strengthen the faith of first Baptist Henrietta this morning let it trickle down to our families let it trickle down to our neighbors our circle of friends and influence let this whole county this region be impacted by the faith that the people in this room have in an amazing God will give you the credit for it we'll have nothing to boast about but we know you will be moved you'll be impressed and you'll work because of our faith just like the centurion just like Abraham there's someone in the room this morning who says I need to put my faith in Jesus for the first time today I'm not going to trust anything else I'm going to trust in Jesus alone while the heads are bowed would you slip your hand up I'd love for you to testify that right now so I'd like to put my Jesus my faith in Jesus for the first time today thank you I'm going to open up this altar area we've got some steps down here you could come kneel if you'd like to remain in your seat and just be in prayer if you'd like to stand and sing we're going to sing the chorus of Amazing Grace in just a moment if you'd like to kneel at your spot if you need to go talk to somebody if you'd like to come down front and talk to somebody about putting your membership in this church this would be a great time to do that whatever God's working on your heart to do by faith say yes to him in faith today Jesus we love you teach us how to have faith increase our faith in you it's in your name we pray Amen would you sing with me Amazing Grace how sweet like me
[38:16] I once was lost, but now am found.

And I was blind, but now I see. Let's sing one more verse while people are praying. 'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear.

And grace my fears relieved. See how precious did that grace my fears.

The eye I first believed. Now think about someday when we've been there 10,000 years with our Lord.

When we've been there 10,000 years with our Lord. That's why we have faith.

[39:36] Bright shining as the sun. We've no less days to sing God's praise.

Than when we first begun. God, we love you.

We thank you for giving us the faith that we can have in you. And I just ask that you would increase it. Whatever the obstacles, the barriers are to faith in our hearts or in our minds.

And by your spirit, you would get us past those, God. And just remind us through your grace of how good you are. How loving you are. How reliable you are. How good you are.

God, pull us close into your arms. Send us out as beacons of faith, as ministers of faith in this world. Bring us back together again Wednesday night, next Sunday.

[40:52] Through all the different things we have going on as a community and as a church. Help faith to be what binds us together in you. It's in Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Haven't gotten to meet you yet.

Look forward to meeting you in the back in just a moment. You are dismissed. Thank you.