

Jesus "... is preferred before me, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to loose" (John 1:27). These are truly humble words, especially from someone so great.

A final lesson we can learn, and possibly the most important, is that great faith entails complete trust in Jesus. Complete trust means that we continue to obey Him, regardless of the obstacles that may surround us. The disciples were frequently guilty of looking at this world. Peter was able to walk on the water until he took his eyes off Jesus and started looking at the water. He lost his complete trust in Jesus. Jesus assures us that God can and will take care of us. Do we really believe it? If we don't, our faith is weak (Matthew 6:30).

We must also trust Jesus in the face of discouragement. All of us often face times of discouragement. Great faith will see you through seemingly insurmountable obstacles. The woman with an issue of blood found a way through a huge multitude to get to a place where she could touch the hem of Jesus' garments. I wonder how many other people might have given up, because the crowd was so huge.

The Gentile woman persevered, even when it might have seemed as if Jesus was going to ignore her simply because she was not a Jew.

She could have easily been offended at Jesus, but if so, she would never have received a great blessing. I'm sure you have heard or seen, as I have, several instances when people have quit attending worship services because someone offended them. Usually, it seems to others to be a relatively minor offense, nevertheless, it becomes major to them. By cutting themselves off from their relationship with the body of Christ, they also cut themselves off from many great blessings, primarily, an eternal home in heaven. The ones with great faith would not quit God and His Family, and neither should we. No amount of discouraging words or actions from others should ever deter us from our goal of being faithful to Christ.

How strong is your faith? You can also be one with great faith. May you grow stronger, in spite of every obstacle (2 Thessalonians 1:3).

WORLD EVANGELISM TRACTS

Phone: 662-283-1192;

Choate@WorldEvangelism.org;

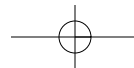
www.WorldEvangelism.org

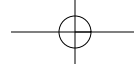
Request a free Bible Correspondence Course

Presented by the Church of Christ

Great Faith

Jerry Bates





Who Has the Greatest Faith?

Jerry Bates

Among those you know, whose faith is the strongest and greatest? Most people would probably immediately say that surely it would be the preacher, elders, or deacons. Many people especially want the preacher to pray for them, as if his prayer is somehow more powerful or more effective than the prayer of someone else. Hopefully, the faith of the men mentioned is strong; however, there is no assurance that their faith is any stronger than the faith of others. In fact, as we look at the Bible, we find that, oftentimes, the ones with the strongest faith are the ones we least expect.

For example, three times Jesus told a group that their faith was "little" or weak. On two of the occasions, those with little faith were the twelve disciples (Matthew 8:23-27; 16:5-12). The other example was Peter when he was walking on the water (Matthew 14:22-36). This would surprise many people, because these are the very ones who should have had great faith. After all, they accompanied Jesus and learned from Him daily, seeing many great miracles. Yet, their faith did not grow accordingly.

On the other hand, three times Jesus particularly praised some people for their faith. One

example is in Luke 7:1-10 when a Roman centurion came to Jesus asking that He heal his son. This man confessed that he was not worthy to even approach Jesus, much less for Him to enter his home. Jesus said the He had not found so great a faith, even in Israel (Luke 7:9).

Another example is recorded in Mark 5:25-34. In this case a poor, sick, Jewish woman firmly believed that Jesus could heal her of a disease so severe that no doctors could cure or even help. She believed so strongly in the power of Jesus that she thought she would be healed simply by touching His clothes as He walked by. Jesus commented that her faith made her whole (Mark 5:34). While it is true that Jesus did not specifically say that she had *great* faith, I think we would all agree that it is implied in that statement.

The third example is found in Matthew 15:21-28. This concerns the daughter of a Canaanite woman who was possessed with demons. She came to Jesus, and at first He seemingly ignored and ridiculed her. However, she persevered and received the blessing that she desired from Him. At the last, Jesus said, "O woman, great is your faith!"

Notice that these examples of "great" faith are comprised of a Canaanite woman, a Roman

centurion, and a poor, sick, Jewish woman. Surely, these would not be the obvious choices for having great faith.

What can we learn by comparing these two groups? One lesson is that *mere association does not guarantee a strong faith*. The ones with weak faith were the disciples, those who were closer to Jesus than anyone. I must never assume that my faith is strong simply because I have been a Christian a long time. The person with the greatest faith in a congregation possibly might be the comparatively new Christian or the one I least expect.

A second lesson is that *great faith involves great humility*. The centurion did not feel worthy to even approach Jesus. The Samaritan woman was willing to confess that she was a dog in the eyes of Jesus. The sick woman only wanted to touch Jesus' clothes. In contrast, the disciples often squabbled over who would be the greatest in the kingdom of God.

All great servants of God were humble people. Consider, for example, John the Baptist. Jesus said concerning him, "Assuredly I say to you, Among those born of woman there has not risen one greater than John the Baptist" (Matthew 11:11). Those are high and noble words of praise. Yet, later, John preached that

