

J.J.

AMAZING GOD
Matthew 8:5-13

Matthew 8: ⁵ When Jesus had entered Capernaum, a centurion came to him, asking for help. ⁶ "Lord," he said, "my servant lies at home paralyzed, suffering terribly."

⁷ Jesus said to him, "Shall I come and heal him?"

⁸ 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."

¹⁰ When Jesus heard this, he was amazed and said to those following him, "Truly I tell you, I have not found anyone in Israel with such great faith. ¹¹ I say to you that many will come from the east and the west, and will take their places at the feast with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. ¹² But the subjects of the kingdom will be thrown outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

¹³ Then Jesus said to the centurion, "Go! Let it be done just as you believed it would." And his servant was healed at that moment.

INTRODUCTION

A doctor goes out and buys the best car on the market, a brand new Ferrari GO. It is also the most expensive car in the world, and it costs him \$500,000.

He takes it out for a spin and stops at a red light.

An old man on a moped, looking about 100 years old, pulls up next to him.

The old man looks over at the sleek shiny car and asks, "What kind of car ya got there, sonny?"

The doctor replies, "A Ferrari GTO. It cost half a million dollars!"

"That's a lot of money," says the old man. "Why does it cost so much?"

"Because this car can do up to 250 miles an hour!" states the doctor proudly.

The moped driver asks, "Mind if I take a look inside?"

"No problem," replies the doctor.

So the old man pokes his head in the window and looks around.

Then, sitting back on his moped, the old man says, "That's a pretty nice car, all right, but I'll stick with my moped!"

Just then the light changes, so the doctor

decides to show the old man just what his car can do.

He floors it, and within 30 seconds, the speedometer reads 150 mph.

Suddenly, he notices a dot in his rear view mirror - what it could be...and suddenly.. WHHHOOOOOOSSSSHHH!

Something whips by him going much faster!

"What on earth could be going faster than myFerrari?" the doctor asks himself.

He floors the accelerator and takes the Ferrari up to 175 mph.

Then, up ahead of him, he sees that it's the old man on the moped!

Amazed that the moped could pass his Ferrari, he gives it more gas and passes the moped at 210 mph.

WHOOOOOOOSH HHHH!

He's feeling pretty good until he looks in his mirror and sees the old man gaining on him AGAIN!

Astounded by the speed of his old guy, he floors the gas pedal and takes the Ferrari all the way to 250 mph.

Not ten seconds later, he sees the moped bearing down on him again!

The Ferrari is flat out, and there's nothing he can do!

Suddenly, the moped plows into the back of his Ferrari, demolishing the rear end.

The doctor stops and jumps out and unbelievably, the old man is still alive.

He runs up to the mangled old man and says, "Oh my gosh! Is there anything I can do for you?"

The old man whispers, "Unhook my suspenders from your side mirror."

We are amazed by a lot of things BUT there's a story in the Bible where it shows where our Lord is amazed at.

By God's grace, in the past weeks, we studied : "Obeying God". Then we studied about "Pleasing God." Today, we'll bring it up a notch and it's "Amazing God". Yes, our Lord is amazing but we're not using this as an adjective but we're using it as a verb.

When it comes to pleasing God, we studied, that God is already pleased with us and the reason why we please Him is because He's already pleased with us. We summarized pleasing God in one word – sacrifice. It takes a giving up one's self in order to please God.

But when it comes to amazing God – **HERE'S THE KEY:**

*¹⁰ When Jesus heard this, he was amazed and said to those following him, "Truly I tell you, I have not found anyone in Israel with **such great faith**."*

The same story is seen in Luke

*Luke 7:9 When Jesus heard this, he was amazed at him, and turning to the crowd following him, he said, "I tell you, I have not found **such great faith** even in Israel."*

Now, there are only two characters in the New Testament where our Lord Jesus called that their faith is great. First, this centurion. The other one was the Syro-Phoenician woman in the same Gospel of Matthew where our Lord said...

Matthew 15:28 28 Then Jesus said to her, “Woman, you have great faith! Your request is granted.” And her daughter was healed at that moment.

Now, the only difference here is this.

It was only with this centurion where we see that our Lord was “amazed”.

Etymology : thaumazo – marvel; admired

Imagine that, yes we please God with our sacrifices but the ultimate is when God is amazed.

So then by God’s grace, let’s look deeper. Why would God be amazed the great faith of the centurion but never mentioned anything with the Syro-Phoenician woman?

Note : Not to take away from the Syro-Phoenician woman, remember, she also received that commendation that her faith is great.

I looked at the two words here.

CENTURION

¹⁰ When Jesus heard this, he was amazed and said to those following him, “Truly I tell you, I have not found anyone in Israel with such great faith.”

SYRO-PHOENICIAN WOMAN

Matthew 15:28 28 Then Jesus said to her, “Woman, you have great faith”

ETYMOLOGY ON THE SYRO-PHOENICIAN WOMAN FAITH

Great – megas – huge large, strong,

ETYMOLOGY ON THE CENTURION’S FAITH

Such Great or So Great - tosoutos – so great – from o (last letter of the Greek alphabet, omega) and autos – this means, overwhelming, or the ultimate

But based on context, here’s the difference between “megas” faith (megas faith is already good).

Note : There is no faith, then there’s little faith and then there is “megas” faith.

Remember, the disappointment of our Lord Jesus Christ with his disciples. Look at

Matthew 8 : 26 He replied, “You of little faith, why are you so afraid?”

NOW HERE’S THE DIFFERENCE :

Syro-phoenician woman – great faith compared to Centurion’s such great faith.

The centurion’s faith is “THE ULTIMATE” kind of faith...it’s the omegas, autos...in short, it’s one of a kind.

Illustration :

There's a little building, there are great buildings but there is a one-of-a-kind building or the ultimate building.

Or there's a regular singer, there are great singers but there's this one-of-a-kind singer that just blows you away or in this case...amazes you.

IN SHORT, I'VE NEVER SEEN ANYTHING LIKE THIS KIND OF FAITH.

Remember what our Lord said.

¹⁰ When Jesus heard this, he was amazed and said to those following him, "Truly I tell you, I have not found anyone in Israel with such great faith."

THAT'S THE KIND OF FAITH THAT AMAZED OUR LORD!

The Elements of SUCH Great Faith

I. TRUST IN GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY

(I will take more time on this because this is the starting point of an omega faith)

⁵ When Jesus had entered Capernaum, a centurion came to him, asking for help. ⁶ "Lord," he said, "my servant lies at home paralyzed, suffering terribly."

Notice that the centurion acknowledged Jesus as Lord.

Etymology : Lord "kyrios" master;

Note : When you call Jesus "Lord", it says a lot. If you call someone Lord, it means you look at yourself as the servant. So if you call Jesus "Lord", you are saying to Him, I am your servant, I'll do whatever you want me to do today.

What's so amazing about this is that the man is *a centurion*

Centurion — in charge of 80-100 TOUGH men (though the root word comes from the word "centum" (Latin) which means one hundred, in those days, Centurion means tribe or company).

So what if the man is a centurion?

Historical context : Remember that the Jews were under the Romans, the Jews were under their power and Jesus is a Jew. **BUT this centurion, by calling Jesus "Lord" has put Himself under Jesus.**

Note : We also have to remember that Jesus was already making waves during that time and the centurion have already heard Jesus' claim about Himself as Lord. If you look at the previous chapter...

Matthew 7: 21 Not everyone who says to me "Lord, Lord, shall enter the kingdom of heaven."

You see this? Most certainly, the centurion has already heard Jesus' claim about Himself and he acknowledges it.

Note : This is the door to which faith enters – acknowledging who Jesus is.

Romans 10:9 that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved;

The door of faith starts with acknowledging that Jesus is Lord.

During that time, when you call somebody “Lord”, you are saying to Him, I am your servant, do whatever you want and I will accept, say whatever you want and I will follow.

Now the question is, “Is this your kind of faith?”

Hebrews 11:6 And 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 seek Him.

Notice : It does not say that faith must believe there is a God. It must believe that He is God. And when we acknowledge He is God, then we must be ready to obey His commands.

Note : If you only believe there is a God, that is not faith.

James 2:19 You say you have faith, for you believe that there is one God. Good for you! Even the demons believe this, and they tremble in terror.

Quote : The proof of your faith is in your obedience.

Hebrews 11: 8 By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed by going out to a place which he was to receive for an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing where he was going.

Remember, if we say we have faith in the Lord, then we must be ready to do what He wants us to do or trust on what he what He is doing.

Illustration : Someone once wrote and asked Emily Post, the etiquette expert of another generation, "What is the correct procedure when one is invited to the White House but has a previous engagement?"

Replied Post, "An invitation to dine at the White House is a command, and it automatically cancels any other engagement."

⁶ “Lord,” he said, “my servant lies at home paralyzed, suffering terribly.”

⁷ Jesus said to him, “Shall I come and heal him?”

You have to take note that this centurion cares deeply about his slave because he has compassion on him.

We must remember again that during that time slaves were treated as commodities.

***Quote :** "There can be no friendship and no justice toward inanimate things. Indeed, not even toward a horse or an ox or a slave. For master and slave have nothing in common. A slave is a living tool, just as a tool is an inanimate slave." – Aristotle

"The only difference between a slave and a beast and a cart is that the slave talks." – Varro, Roman writer

So you see, for the centurion to go out of his way and seek Jesus about his slave shows what's inside his heart given the cultural scenario he is in.

Now notice, that he presented the situation to Jesus and did not ask anything.

"my servant lies at home paralyzed, suffering terribly."

It doesn't mean the centurion doesn't want it to happen or he did not believe that Jesus can do it. (Why would he go out of his way in the first place for his slave, if he does not believe in the power of Jesus)

What he was doing is that he presented the situation to Jesus knowing that Jesus can heal his slave but has given our Lord the leeway on how to respond to his request.

HE IS TRUSTING HERE IN GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY

In short, since the centurion, called him Jesus "Lord", he is also accepting that our Lord has the final decision on everything.

Biblical Illustration : Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego in Daniel 3 refused to bow down to the idol that Nebuchadnezzar created and refusal means they will be thrown to the fire. So when they were being forced between the heat of the king's anger and the heat of the furnace, this is what they replied,

Daniel 3: "O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to give you an answer concerning this matter.¹⁷ If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the furnace of blazing fire; and He will deliver us out of your hand, O king. ¹⁸ But even if He does not, let it be known to you, O king, that we are not going to serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up."

Quote : Faith for my deliverance is not faith in God. Faith means, whether I am visibly delivered or not, I will stick to my belief that God is love. There are some things only learned in a fiery furnace. – Oswald Chambers (Run Today's Race)

Remember : Faith is believing that God answers our prayers but He has a million ways on how He will answer. He is Sovereign.

Isaiah 55:8 "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the LORD.

Remember Job? Zak and I had a wonderful discussion one time while we were having coffee about Job. From a human standpoint, his suffering was great – lost all his wealth, health and children. He wanted to talk to God to find out why he was suffering. When God showed Himself to Job in chapter 40, God did not explain why he was suffering.

God only said to Job in chapters 40 and 41. "Who is able to do this? Who is able to think of this? Who is able to create this?"

In short, **God is saying to Job that He can do whatever He wants because He is God.**

That's why Job said in chapter 42

Job 42: Then Job replied to the Lord:

*2 "I know that you can do all things;
no purpose of yours can be thwarted.*

*3 You asked, 'Who is this that obscures my plans without knowledge?'
Surely I spoke of things I did not understand,
things too wonderful for me to know.*

In short, Job will not be able to understand WHY THE SUFFERING HAPPENED TO HIM but He trust in God's total control of the situation...

The centurion had such great faith that amazed our Lord because He trusted on who Jesus is...**HE IS LORD!**

And as Lord, He can do anything and He can decide on what He wants to do but at the end of the day, we need to also see the our Lord Jesus is good and loving and kind and holy....IT MEANS ALL HIS PURPOSES ARE GOOD EVEN IF WE, JUST LIKE JOB DON'T UNDERSTAND IT.

IMPORTANT QUOTE: This is the foundation of faith that amazes God. It's putting our trust in what He can do but more than that IT'S TRUSTING ON WHAT HE WANTS TO DO. JESUS IS LORD.

Thank God For The Fleas:

In her book The Hiding Place, Corrie Ten Boom tells of a time she discovered that God was working even in the most horrific circumstances.

Corrie and her sister Betsie had been imprisoned by the Nazis for hiding Jews behind the wall of their Holland home, and Nazi prison conditions pretty well unbearable.

Corrie writes:

"Barracks 8 was in the quarantine compound. Next to us—perhaps as a deliberate warning to newcomers—were located the punishment barracks. From there, all day long and often into the night, came the sounds of hell itself. They were not the sounds of anger, or of any human emotion, but of a cruelty altogether detached: blows landing in regular rhythm, screams keeping pace. We would stand in our ten-deep ranks with our hands trembling at our sides, longing to jam them against our ears, to make the sounds stop.

"It grew harder and harder. Even within these four walls there was too much misery, too much seemingly pointless suffering. Every day something else failed to make sense, something else grew too heavy."

Yet, in the midst of the suffering, the women prisoners around Corrie and Betsie found comfort in the little Bible studies they held in the barracks. Corrie writes they gathered around the Bible “like waifs clustered around a blazing fire...The blacker the night around us grew, the brighter and truer and more beautiful burned the Word of God.” When they were moved to Barracks 28, Corrie was horrified by the fact that their reeking, straw-bed platforms swarmed with fleas. How could they live in such a place?

It was Betsie who discovered God’s answer:

““Rejoice always, pray constantly, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus.” That’s it, Corrie! That’s His answer. *“Give thanks in all circumstances!”* That’s what we can do. We can start right now to thank God for every single thing about this new barracks!’

“I stared at her; then around me at the dark, foul-aired room...”

They thanked God for the fact they were together. They thanked God they had a Bible. They even thanked God for the horrible crowds of prisoners, that more people would be able to hear God’s Word. And then, Betsie thanked God for the fleas.

“The fleas! This was too much. ‘Betsie, there’s no way even God can make me grateful for a flea.’

““Give thanks in all circumstances,”” she quoted. ‘It doesn’t say, “in pleasant circumstances.” Fleas are part of this place where God has put us.’

“And so we stood between tiers of bunks and gave thanks for fleas. But this time I was sure Betsie was wrong.”

It turned out that Betsie was not wrong; the fleas were a nuisance, but a blessing after all. The women were able to have Bible studies in the barracks with a great deal of freedom, never bothered by supervisors coming in and harassing them. They finally discovered that it was the fleas that kept those supervisors out.

Through those fleas, God protected the women from abuse and harassment. Dozens of desperate women were free to hear the comforting, hope-giving Word of God. Through those fleas, God protected the women from much worse things and made sure they had their deepest, truest needs met.

We all have “fleas” in our lives. We all have those things that we can see no use for, things that are obviously horrible, unpleasant, painful things that we want gone. No life is free of “fleas”, but if Corrie and Betsie can be our examples, God can use even these nasty insects for our protection and blessing.

That’s the reason why one of my favourite quotes that I always shared with you.

Quote : ‘God is too good to be unkind and He is too wise to be mistaken. And when we cannot trace His hand, we must trust His heart.’ - Charles Spurgeon

Next week : we’ll talk about the other two elements next week by God’s grace.

S.G.D.