



Kingdom Call – Faith

Richard Dawkins, the famous outspoken atheist, once said that, “Faith is the great cop-out, the great excuse to evade the need to think and evaluate evidence. Faith is belief in spite of, even perhaps because of, the lack of evidence.” What should Christians make of his concept of faith? Doubtless many Christians have used “faith” as a cop-out when faced with tough questions of the faith. However, is that how the Bible describe what faith is? What does Jesus tell us about what faith is?

In our passage today, we look at the faith of a centurion towards Jesus to heal his servant. Is the faith of the centurion a “great cop-out” as described by Dawkins? What is the difference? Let’s look at the passage and learn from it.

Launch

- 1) How do you think Christians can increase their faith? What does it even mean to have “more” faith?

The Faith of the Centurion

Read Matthew 8:5-13

- 2) Where was Jesus and who came to see him? Is he a Jew or Gentile? (v5)
 - a. What did he want from Jesus? (v6-7)
- 3) What must it have taken the centurion, a Gentile, to seek help from Jesus, a Jew? How do you think it would have been perceived by others?
- 4) What point is the centurion making when he’s talking about himself being under authority and having authority over others? (v9)
 - a. Based on the centurion’s response, who does the centurion think Jesus is? (v8-9)
 - b. Who/what does the centurion think Jesus has authority over? (v8) Based on your understanding of the Old Testament, who else has the authority to do that?
- 5) How does Jesus respond to the centurion’s words? (v10)



- a. Based on Jesus' response and your answers in Question 4a and 4b, what do you think "faith" is in this case?
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- 6) Who will be in the kingdom of heaven, feasting with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob? (v11)
 - a. How would this have sounded to the Israelites of the day?
 - 7) Why do you think the current subjects of the kingdom will be thrown outside? (v12, cf. v10)
 - 8) What was the result of the centurion's faith? (v13)
 - a. What do you think Jesus' actions would have done for the faith of the centurion? (v13)
 - 9) In what way is the faith of the centurion different from the "faith" described by Dawkins?
 - 10) How much faith do you have in Jesus and the salvation that he has accomplished for you? Do you doubt sometimes? (Be honest in your sharing within your small group)
 - a. How can you "increase" your faith in Jesus?

Another word that we can use in place of "faith" is the word "trust". The word "faith" has been used in a variety of different ways by Christians over the years, some of which are far from how the Bible actually uses it. By using the word "trust" in place of "faith", it helps us to see Scripture afresh, and to think about our own "trust" in Jesus Christ. Unlike what Dawkins says, faith/trust is not the great cop-out or excuse to evade the need to think and evaluate evidence. In fact, it's quite the opposite in the Bible.

The centurion knew who Jesus is, and what he has done. It is because of that knowledge that the centurion took action and sought out Jesus to heal his servant. He knew Jesus had authority over sickness and death (presumably a witness has told him about his miracles), and "trusted" Jesus to heal his servant.

Faith/trust then is a commitment or decision to rely on someone else based on your knowledge and relationship with that person. The more you know that person, the more you will trust that person. How do spouses increase their trust for each other? By living life together and going through life together, because by doing that, they will know each other's characters, commitment and love for one another. That increases their trust of each other. It is the same with our relationship with Christ. How can we increase our faith/trust in God? By knowing him more through the Scriptures, and walking with him throughout our lives and talking to him (praying).