

# Exercise your Faith by Applying the Word

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## Text:

**Matthew 8:5-13** <sup>5</sup> When Jesus had entered Capernaum, a centurion came to him, asking for help. <sup>6</sup> "Lord," he said, "my servant lies at home paralyzed and in terrible suffering." <sup>7</sup> Jesus said to him, "I will go and heal him." <sup>8</sup> 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. <sup>9</sup> 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." <sup>10</sup> When Jesus heard this, he was astonished and said to those following him, "I tell you the truth, I have not found anyone in Israel with such great faith. <sup>11</sup> 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. <sup>12</sup> But the subjects of the kingdom will be thrown outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." <sup>13</sup> Then Jesus said to the centurion, "Go! It will be done just as you believed it would." And his servant was healed at that very hour.

## 1 Introduction

One night a house caught fire and a young boy was forced to flee to the roof. The father stood on the ground below with outstretched arms, calling to his son, "Jump! I'll catch you." He knew the boy had to jump to save his life. All the boy could see, however, was flame, smoke, and blackness. As can be imagined, he was afraid to leave the roof. His father kept yelling: "Jump! I will catch you."

But the boy protested, "Daddy, I can't see you."

The father replied, "But I can see you and that's all that matters." The boy's faith must be based on believing what he does not see because his loving and faithful father sees and gives him his word. The boy's faith must be based on being sure of his hope of rescue by his loving and faithful father because his father has given his word.

## 2 Foundational definitions of faith

### 2.1 Faith is grounded in hope in the faithfulness and ability of God

We see from this story that faith springs from hope,<sup>1</sup> and this hope is founded on God's faithfulness and omnipotence. According to Hebrews 11:1 faith begins with hope, otherwise there can be no faith. You must earnestly hope for something to even enter the realm of faith. For faith to be great it has to be built on a rock solid hope – the rock of ages, the immovable rock of God.

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<sup>1</sup> **Colossians 1:5** the faith and love that spring from the hope that is stored up for you in heaven and that you have already heard about in the word of truth, the gospel

## **2.2 Faith is in the realm of intuition – what we don't see**

Someone once wrote, “As the New Testament uses the word, faith ... is a quality which lies rather in the realm of intuition than the intellect.” (Anonymous) The intuition speaks as to the possibility of what is not seen whereas the intellect dissects the present reality and certifies it as impossible. Intuition, then, is the essence of faith described in Hebrews 11:1 “Faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.” With your natural eyes you see the Red Sea ahead with the Egyptians in pursuit. You are completely surrounded by the enemy – at home, at work, at church, in your family, in your marriage. But with your intuition, the eye of your faith, you see the sea rolling back exposing dry land for you to cross over because you know that your God is the one who makes a way where there is no way.

## **2.3 Faith withstands contrary evidence**

Bertrand Russell, 20<sup>th</sup> century British philosopher and mathematician, once said, “Faith is a conviction, which cannot be shaken by contrary evidence.” It is a conviction formed by looking at the situation through God. God is your spectacles. What you see is not what others see because they are not wearing the same spectacles. Decades passed since God's promise to Abraham about being the father of nations and yet he was childless. His conviction about the promise withstood the contrary evidence and enabled him to continue believing God.

## **2.4 Faith requires obedience**

To exercise faith by applying God's Word requires obedience to God's Word in the first place. Abraham's exercise of faith in the near-sacrifice of Isaac was driven by his obedience to God's Word. Moses' exercise of faith resulting in great miracles was driven by his obedience to God's Word.

# **3 There is a pattern in Scripture of people exercising faith by applying the Word**

In scientific analysis, scientists look for patterns and then develop a generalization based on the pattern. If you are selling something and you raise the price, fewer people will buy from you. If you lower the price, more people will buy from you. After observing this pattern repeatedly economists have developed the Supply-Demand principle that says, the higher the price the lower the amount of buyers and vice versa. Using this type of analysis I have observed a significant repeated pattern in those who received major breakthroughs from Jesus' work on earth: To receive their breakthrough, they exercised their faith by applying the Word of God.

Our passage narrates the encounter of the Centurion with Jesus in which the Centurion asks Jesus to just give him the Word for him to apply. Jesus gave him the Word and he applied it to get his breakthrough. Jesus described the Centurion's faith as “great.” That is, his faith is great as opposed to small faith, or no faith. This type of faith that is exercised by applying the Word is observable in several episodes where people have received major breakthroughs:

- The Royal Official acted on the plain meaning of the Word and received healing for his child.
- The ten lepers acted on the plain meaning of the Word and received their healing.
- The cripple at the pool of Siloam acted on the plain meaning of the Word and received his healing.

- The cripple at the gate of Beautiful acted on the plain meaning of the Word and received his healing.

In order to receive your breakthrough, you must exercise your faith by applying the Word. Operate your faith by applying the Word. Exercise your faith by acting upon the Word.

*What does it take to exercise your faith in this manner?*

## **4 What it takes to exercise great faith**

The boy stuck on the roof of the burning house had to get his father's word to jump. Then he had to believe in the plain and ordinary meaning of his father's word and then apply the word to jump to safety for his breakthrough. In the same way in order to exercise great faith in getting your breakthrough, you must get and apply the Word from God who controls all situations and who is faithful to his Word.

### **4.1 You must know the Word to apply to your situation**

You cannot exercise great faith without having a Word from God. What is the promise of God regarding your situation? What does the Word of God say about you? When the Centurion approached Jesus, he asked him to give him the Word. He said to Jesus, "Just say the word, and my servant will be healed." (Matthew 8:8) All the Centurion wanted was the Word from Jesus. He must have repeatedly said, "Just say the Word."

The Centurion had a unique understanding of the importance of receiving a command from a superior. That is why he said, "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." (Matthew 8:9) In this case he wanted a command from the commander-in-chief of the universe – Jesus, God incarnate.

The Centurion had to ask Jesus for a Word, but you have been given the Word in scripture. All you have to do is appropriate the Word in scripture to your situation. God has spoken many things concerning your life and I want you to begin to apply the Word to your situation to get your breakthrough.

- God's Word to you in Romans 10:11 says, "Anyone who trusts in him will never be put to shame."
- God's Word to you in Jeremiah 29:11 says, "For I know the plans I have for you, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."
- God's Word to you in Philippians 1:6 says, "He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus."
- God's Word to you in Romans 8:28 says, "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose."

So, when you are sick, get the Word from the Bible.

When you are hurting, get the Word from the Bible.

When you lose your job, get the Word from the Bible.

When you lose your house, get the Word from the Bible.

When you have marital problems, get the Word from the Bible.

When you have financial problems, get the Word from the Bible.

## **4.2 You must trust the power of the promise maker to fulfill the promise**

To exercise great faith, you must be convinced of the ability of the promise maker to fulfill the promise. The centurion understood that the God incarnate, Jesus, created the world and controlled everything in the world. In fact, God had done exactly what the Centurion said he was used to: God spoke the world into existence.

When God said, "Let there be light," light had to respond and light appeared.

When God said, "Let there be an expanse between the waters to separate water from water." The expanse had to respond and the expanse appeared.

When God said, "Let the water under the sky be gathered to one place, and let dry ground appear." The water had to respond and gathered itself into one place.

This is what is called command-fulfillment control – a command is given, which is the Word spoken, followed by a fulfillment of the command. This is exactly what the Centurion told Jesus; he, as a Centurion, has command-fulfillment control over his soldiers and so he believed that Jesus, the creator God, also has command-fulfillment over creation! You need to understand that our God is the El Shaddai – the God Almighty and because God is omnipotent, God can do all things; nothing can prevent the accomplishment of his purpose. Is anything too hard for the Lord? Nothing is impossible with God.

Don't worry, declare that God is in control of your situation. God is in control in the morning and in the evening. God is in control in the summer and in the winter. God is in control at home and at work. God is in control on the highways and on the biways.

## **4.3 You must trust the faithfulness of the giver of the Word**

To exercise great faith, you must trust in the faithfulness of the person who gave the Word. The Centurion trusted the faithfulness of Jesus and that is why he even approached him in the first place. And then, he trusted the truthfulness and efficacy of Jesus' Word and that is why he asked him to just speak the Word. If I give you my word and you do not trust me you will not rely upon my word in executing your plans. Trust is based on my faithfulness and truthfulness to fulfill the promise I have made you. The Word of God in scripture is given by God himself. And Numbers 23:19 says, "God is not a man, that he should lie, nor a son of man, that he should change his mind. Does he speak and then not act? Does he promise and not fulfill?" So, beyond any shadow of doubt our God is faithful and truthful. What he has said concerning your situation must come to pass. So you must exercise your faith by applying the Word to your situation. You must operate your faith by acting upon the Word.

Jesus' earthly mother knew the faithfulness and truthfulness of Jesus. When the wine ran out at the wedding in Cana, Mary reported the problem to Jesus. And then Mary told the servants, "do whatever he tells you." Mary may have suspected that what his son will tell the servants to do to solve the problem may appear nonsensical and so she emphasized, "do whatever he tells you."

Sometimes when we bring our problems to God and he tells us what we should do, we don't do it. Someone came to see me about a problem that I diagnosed to be spiritual. I told him to repent of his syncretistic pagan idolatry, immerse himself in the Bible, fast and pray, and attend church prayers and services regularly. He did none of this. He expected me to give him some special oil, cream, handkerchief or something for his problem. He did not do what the Lord used me to tell him to do because he did not trust in the faithfulness of God's Word.

When you bring your problem to the Lord you must "do whatever he tells you." So, follow the Word of God and do whatever Jesus tells you. Just do whatever Jesus tells you.

#### **4.4 You must apply the Word**

Jesus gave the Centurion the Word, when he said, “Go! It will be done just as you believed it would.” The Centurion took that simple Word and acted upon it. He accepted the plain and ordinary meaning of the Word because he knew the source of the Word. He knew the command had been given from the faithful and truthful God, the one who has control over all situations. And so, he was convinced his situation will change in response to the command. So, he did whatever Jesus told him; he went and his servant was healed. This is great faith. This is faith founded on hope in the rock of ages. This is faith that ignores contrary evidence. This is faith operating on obedience to the Word.

Whatever your situation is today, God is telling you “Go! It will be done just as you believed it would.”

### **5 Ezekiel exercised faith by applying the Word of God**

Ezekiel experienced this command-fulfillment control principle that the Centurion told Jesus about when the Spirit of God took him into the valley filled with dry human bones. When God asked him “can these bones live?” Ezekiel told God something like, “if you say they will live, they will.” In other words, Ezekiel was asking God to give the Word concerning the situation. So God gave his Word, saying, “I will make breath enter you, and you will come to life. I will attach tendons to you and make flesh come upon you and cover you with skin; I will put breath in you, and you will come to life. Then you will know that I am the LORD.” (Ezekiel 37:5-6)

Ezekiel took the Word and since he understood that the author of the Word is the creator God who is in control of all situations, he applied the Word to the situation. And as he applied the Word, the dry bones changed into living human bodies.

I don’t know your particular situation. But whatever it is, know that your God is “the God who gives life to the dead and calls things that are not as though they were.” (Romans 4:17) “He commands even the winds and the water, and they obey him.” (Luke 8:25) “For it is his mouth that has given the order, and his Spirit will gather them together.” (Isaiah 34:16) “He sent forth his word and healed them.” (Psalm 107:20) “He sends his word and melts them.” (Psalm 147:18)

So just apply the Word to exercise your faith, act upon the Word to receive your breakthrough.

### **6 Conclusion**

In order to exercise great faith, you must know the Word to apply to your situation, you must be convinced of the ability of the promise maker to fulfill the promise, and you must trust the giver of the Word.

I submit to you that God has given you his Word in the Bible concerning any situation you are in and would ever enter. I further submit to you that God, as the creator of the universe, has complete command-fulfillment control over the elements in your situation. He can make things go away, make things appear, and make things change in your situation. And because he is a covenant-keeping God, he will fulfill his Word that he has spoken to you. So to get your breakthrough begin to exercise your faith by applying the Word. Exercise your faith by acting upon the Word.

“I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength, which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come.” (Ephesians 1:18-21)