

WHAT IS “GREAT FAITH?”

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What comes to our minds when we think of someone’s having “great faith?” Do we suppose it to mean that he can ask God for whatever he wants, and get it? Do we take it to mean practically *daring* God by demanding outlandish things from Him? Do we think a person who does foolhardy things, assuming that God will protect him, provide for him, and get him out of any trouble he gets into, has “great faith?” Have we fallen for the “name it and claim it” theory?

The examples God has given us of “great faith” give a totally different picture from any of these notions. There were two people of whom Christ said that they had “great faith.” One of them was the centurion whose servant Christ healed (Luke 7:9). The other was the Syrophenician woman whose daughter Christ delivered from a demon (Matthew 15:28; Mark 7:26). What did those two people have in common, other than being Gentiles (curiously)? Both of them were very conscious of their unworthiness of Christ, and of the enormity of His grace. *That’s* what “great faith” is.

Are we surprised? Then consider how Christ responded when His disciples said to Him, “Increase our faith” (Luke 17:5). He first told them that even a very small faith could do things they’d never imagined— which would show them that their faith was *even smaller* than they thought. Then the parable He told them in verses 7-10, still in response to their request that He increase their faith, strongly confirmed that explanation of great faith. His conclusion was, “you also, when you have done all the things that are commanded you, say, “We are unworthy servants. We have done our duty.” *That* was how their faith would be increased so as to become great.
