

Luke 7 • Faith, Hope & Love

Introduction

One of the things we need to do is to pay attention to is the Bible's definition of words. For instance, the world uses the words "faith", "hope", and "love" most often in ways that bear little resemblance to their biblical definition. We see this not only in sermons Christ preached, but in the way that He interacted with people and in the miracles He performed. Understanding how Christ defines these terms helps us understand their true meaning as used in the writings of the epistles by the apostles to come. In this lesson, it's crucial to pay particular attention as to how each of these things actually overlap each other and contribute to a deeper meaning both individually and collectively.

¹When He had completed all His discourse in the hearing of the people, He went to Capernaum. ²And a centurion's slave, who was highly regarded by him, was sick and about to die. ³When he heard about Jesus, he sent some Jewish elders asking Him to come and save the life of his slave. ⁴When they came to Jesus, they earnestly implored Him, saying, "He is worthy for You to grant this to him; ⁵for he loves our nation and it was he who built us our synagogue."

⁶Now Jesus started on His way with them; and when He was not far from the house, the centurion sent friends, saying to Him, "Lord, do not trouble Yourself further, for I am not worthy for You to come under my roof; ⁷for this reason I did not even consider myself worthy to come to You, but just say the word, and my servant will be healed. ⁸For I also am a man placed under authority, with soldiers under me; and I say to this one, 'Go!' and he goes, and to another, 'Come!' and he comes, and to my slave, 'Do this!' and he does it."

⁹Now when Jesus heard this, He marveled at him, and turned and said to the crowd that was following Him, "I say to you, not even in Israel have I found such great faith."

¹⁰When those who had been sent returned to the house, they found the slave in good health.

[Read v. 1-10]

Q: Jesus had just visited Nazareth (chapter 4) a short while ago. What is the immediate contrast between events in Nazareth and here in Capernaum?

A: In Nazareth, Jesus "wondered at their unbelief" (Mark 6:6); in Capernaum He was amazed at "such great faith".

Q: What is particularly ironic when it comes to the specific people involved?

A: In Nazareth, it was the Jews who rejected Him and became angry when He rebuked their unbelief with examples of how whenever God's people reject Him, He goes to Gentiles (the examples of the widow in Sidon and Naaman). Here in Nazareth, it's a Gentile whose quality of faith amazes Jesus.

Q: Based on the Centurion's own words, how does he define "faith"?

A: Trust in the one who has authority. He doesn't see Christ as someone who can work magic or has knowledge pertinent to the Centurion's situation; Christ is the higher authority over everything to which everything is subject.

Point: Biblical "faith" is not some kind of hoping or wishing that something will come true, but placing one's trust in God's authority to work all things out for good according to His will.

Q: How might the Centurion's past actions indicate something about his faith?

A: It wasn't just theoretical or kept to himself; it showed forth publicly in such things as building the local synagogue. He wasn't just a "hearer" of the Word, but a "doer".

Q: What might the Centurion's method of contacting Jesus indicate about his faith?

A: Direct contact wasn't required; prayer was enough.

Application: How does the example of the Centurion's faith compare with your own? In what ways are they similar or different?

¹¹Soon afterwards He went to a city called Nain; and His disciples were going along with Him, accompanied by a large crowd. ¹²Now as He approached the gate of the city, a dead man was being carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow; and a sizeable crowd from the city was with her. ¹³When the Lord saw her, He felt compassion for her, and said to her, “Do not weep.” ¹⁴And He came up and touched the coffin; and the bearers came to a halt. And He said, “Young man, I say to you, arise!” ¹⁵The dead man sat up and began to speak. And Jesus gave him back to his mother.

¹⁶Fear gripped them all, and they began glorifying God, saying, “A great prophet has arisen among us!” and, “God has visited His people!”

[Read v.11-16]

Q: The loss of a child at any age is always tragic and emotional, but how would this loss be even more burdensome for this particular woman in this culture?

A: Many things were tied directly to family in Old Testament Israel, especially the fact that the land and all family possessions were passed down through the firstborn, and that children took care of their parents in their old age. As a widow losing her only son, she's in the position of irrecoverably losing everything. It's a hopeless situation wherein she didn't just lose a child, but her entire family's standing, inheritance, and future welfare.

Point: *This is why Christ's first pangs of compassion were not for the dead boy, but for his mother who was facing a hopeless situation in that the death compounded many issues for her to come.*

Q: What is actually being revealed in the people's reaction, “A great prophet has arisen among us!” and “God has visited His people”?

A: It has been several hundreds of years since a true prophet had been sent by God to Israel. In the intervening centuries a lot of poor imitations had come and gone to the point that people of this time talked about the “good old days” when true prophets of God were sent to Israel rather than all the fakes and pretenders of late. This is a very strong acknowledgment of Christ's authority.

Q: Nowhere does it even hint that someone's faith was involved or that a request was made for Jesus to do what He did. What did Christ spiritually restore by physically restoring the son to his mother?

A: He restored hope.

Point: *Biblical hope is one's personal trust and faith in Christ to accomplish all things in spite of the appearance of present circumstances.*

Application: *Some would have thought that there couldn't possibly be room for hope once the boy actually died, that hope was only possible while he was yet breathing. How might our hope be tested even beyond the limits WE think proper?*

¹⁷This report concerning Him went out all over Judea and in all the surrounding district. ¹⁸The disciples of John reported to him about all these things.

¹⁹Summoning two of his disciples, John sent them to the Lord, saying, “Are You the Expected One, or do we look for someone else?” ²⁰When the men came to Him, they said, “John the Baptist has sent us to You, to ask, ‘Are You the Expected One, or do we look for someone else?’ ”

²¹At that very time He cured many people of diseases and afflictions and evil spirits; and He gave sight to many who were blind. ²²And He answered and said to them, “Go and report to John what you have seen and heard: the BLIND RECEIVE

[Read v.17-35]

Q: Why is John the Baptist another example of someone who might be struggling with having their hope shaken?

A: It's apparent that Jesus' ministry was not conforming to John's personal expectations of how the Messiah would do it. John's personal dedication was so intense that it landed him in prison and he seemed to need to know that his efforts were not undertaken in vain.

Q: What is the true nature of Jesus' response to John? What is He basically affirming for John?

A: Even though it might not have been what John expected, Jesus shows that His actions conform to the very Word of God concerning the Messiah. It's another way of stating that those who trust in God's Word are able to affirm that Jesus is the Messiah fulfilling that Word.

SIGHT, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, the POOR HAVE THE GOSPEL PREACHED TO THEM. ²³Blessed is he who does not take offense at Me.”

²⁴When the messengers of John had left, He began to speak to the crowds about John, “What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind? ²⁵But what did you go out to see? A man dressed in soft clothing? Those who are splendidly clothed and live in luxury are found in royal palaces! ²⁶But what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I say to you, and one who is more than a prophet. ²⁷This is the one about whom it is written,

‘BEHOLD, I SEND MY MESSENGER
AHEAD OF YOU,
WHO WILL PREPARE YOUR WAY
BEFORE YOU.’

²⁸“I say to you, among those born of women there is no one greater than John; yet he who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he.”

²⁹When all the people and the tax collectors heard this, they acknowledged God’s justice, having been baptized with the baptism of John. ³⁰But the Pharisees and the lawyers rejected God’s purpose for themselves, not having been baptized by John.

³¹“To what then shall I compare the men of this generation, and what are they like? ³²They are like children who sit in the market place and call to one another, and they say, ‘We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we sang a dirge, and you did not weep.’ ³³For John the Baptist has come eating no bread and drinking no wine, and you say, ‘He has a demon!’ ³⁴The Son of Man has come eating and drinking, and you say, ‘Behold, a gluttonous man and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!’ ³⁵Yet wisdom is vindicated by all her children.”

Q: What could John have possibly thought was going wrong? Based on his message announcing the impending arrival of the Messiah, what might John have expected?

A: One of John’s major points was that the Messiah’s ministry would be one of judgment. (Luke 3:7-9, 16-17), but the reports back to Him could be characterized as Jesus engaging in a ministry of mercy. Jesus reminds John of additional Scriptural requirements for the Messiah from the same prophet (Isaiah) through whom God predicted John’s ministry.

Q: Why did some people “take offense” (v.23) at Jesus?

A: Their hope was misplaced, having become focused on the kind of Messiah they **WANTED**, not necessarily the kind promised by God through His Word. By this time they wanted the Conquering King to bring down Rome and raise up Israel, something He won’t do until His Second Coming. Their hope was not established in God’s Word, but their own desires superimposed upon it.

Q: How is Jesus’ dissertation to the people concerning John an affirmation of the points being made here?

A: Just as many were offended by Christ’s works because they misinterpreted Scripture to hope for what **THEY** wanted instead of what God wanted, so they also missed the point of what John was sent to do according to God’s Word as well. They didn’t want to see Scripture fulfilled according to God’s way, but their own.

Q: So according to v.29-30, what was the essential difference between those who obtained biblical hope and those who did not?

A: In order to participate in John’s baptism, one had to engage in sincere repentance of sin from the heart. The lack of repentance hardened hearts so as to be blind to the renewed hope experienced by those who repented, who had a greater assurance of the future than those who couldn’t move beyond the present conditions.

Point: This is summarized in the final verses where Christ portrays the unrepentant as immature children who aren’t interested in the truth but will argue any opposing viewpoint in order to get their way.

Q: How did Jesus affirm for John that John’s ministry had not failed?

A: Jesus established that it was actually the people and their leaders who had failed by first rejecting God’s Word, and then in their rejection of John himself.

Q: How would you compare and contrast the hope exhibited in the situation with the widow and her son with that of John and the people?

A: The first has more to do with personal trust and faith that one’s hope in God is greater than any personal circumstances; the second has more to do with our personal trust and faith in the hope of God’s Word to accomplish our work in the Kingdom according to **HIS** will and ways regardless of our personal expectations or misgivings.

Application: How do faith and trust figure into our hope? What role does God’s Word play? What if things in our personal life are not working out like we’d hoped? What if things in our spiritual life aren’t going the way that we thought they would?

³⁶Now one of the Pharisees was requesting Him to dine with him, and He entered the Pharisee's house and reclined at the table. ³⁷And there was a woman in the city who was a sinner; and when she learned that He was reclining at the table in the Pharisee's house, she brought an alabaster vial of perfume, ³⁸and standing behind Him at His feet, weeping, she began to wet His feet with her tears, and kept wiping them with the hair of her head, and kissing His feet and anointing them with the perfume.

³⁹Now when the Pharisee who had invited Him saw this, he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet He would know who and what sort of person this woman is who is touching Him, that she is a sinner."

⁴⁰And Jesus answered him, "Simon, I have something to say to you."

And he replied, "Say it, Teacher."

⁴¹"A moneylender had two debtors: one owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. ⁴²When they were unable to repay, he graciously forgave them both. So which of them will love him more?"

⁴³Simon answered and said, "I suppose the one whom he forgave more."

And He said to him, "You have judged correctly." ⁴⁴Turning toward the woman, He said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave Me no water for My feet, but she has wet My feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. ⁴⁵You gave Me no kiss; but she, since the time I came in, has not ceased to kiss My feet. ⁴⁶You did not anoint My head with oil, but she anointed My feet with perfume. ⁴⁷For this reason I say to you, her sins, which are many, have been forgiven, for she loved much; but he who is forgiven little, loves little."

⁴⁸Then He said to her, "Your sins have been forgiven."

⁴⁹Those who were reclining at the table with Him began to say to themselves, "Who is this man who even forgives sins?"

⁵⁰And He said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace."

[Read v.36-50]

Q: How would you characterize the difference between the woman and the Pharisee when it comes to their faith?

A: Her faith was in Christ her Savior; his faith was shaken to the point of doubting that Jesus was even a regular prophet.

Q: How would you characterize the difference between the woman and the Pharisee when it comes to their hope?

A: Her hope was that in spite of the circumstances of her sin that she could be forgiven and reconciled to God through Christ; his hope was in his own works and interpretation of the Law.

Q: What appears to be the crucial difference between them? How does it relate to Jesus' statement in v.29-20?

A: One was convicted by their sin and sought to repent; the other did not recognize their sin and therefore was blind to their need for repentance.

Q: But how does Christ Himself contrast the end result of the application of these two people's faith and hope?

A: It's directly equated to the condition and quality of their love.

Q: The issue of Christ's authority was revealed in each of the above examples regarding faith and hope. How is it again contrasted between the woman and the Pharisee?

A: She didn't just acknowledge, but trusted in Christ's authority; the Pharisee and those present rejected it outright.

Application: *What role does biblical faith and hope play in the quality of our love? How might our love be lacking due to weaknesses in our faith and/or hope? Why is it false to think that deficiencies in one's faith or hope can be overcome with an extra emphasis on love? Why is the salvation process a key to each of the qualities of faith, hope, and love?*

Overall Application

- *What is the relationship of Christ's authority to each of the qualities of faith, hope, and love?*
- *How might issues with His authority actually be the root cause of problems with one's faith, hope, and/or love?*
- *How does this in turn bring us back to the issue of repentance?*