

Extraordinary Faith

by Jim Cymbala

The sermon teaches that we can pray for others with faith, even if they don't have faith themselves, and that God can deposit faith in them, leading them to Christ.

Duration: 20:56

Scripture: Genesis 18:14, Isaiah 53:5, Isaiah 56:7, Matthew 15:21-28, Matthew 21:13, Mark 2:1-12, John 4:46-54, James 5:14-15

Topics: "Faith"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the concept of vicarious praying and extraordinary faith. He uses the story of four men who bring a paralyzed man to Jesus by digging a hole in the roof to illustrate this idea. The speaker emphasizes the importance of identifying with others and feeling their struggles in order to pray effectively. He also highlights the role of faith in salvation, noting that while someone else's faith can lead others to Jesus, personal faith is necessary for salvation. The sermon concludes with the example of a royal official who asks Jesus to heal his dying son and receives a miraculous answer to his prayer.

Transcript

Just file these away as I talk about some very, this is an unusual little something that maybe you have never thought about in this context. I want you to listen to the word of God, but I'd like to plant some things that Pastor Park wrote to me as an update on missions, praying for the persecuted church. Some recent prayer requests that have come in.

Authorities placed in China at least 20 Christians into, quote, a black jail, which is a more severe form of holding them than just criminal detention. Uganda, an ex-Muslim's wife was murdered because he refused to go back. A month earlier, his brother was murdered after taking part in a religious debate with Islamic scholars.

Nepal, two churches were bombed in eastern Nepal with a third bomb failing to detonate. The attackers left anti-Christian pamphlets at each site. Syria, traditional Assyrian Christians are being kidnapped and systematically executed by ISIS militants, including three men executed on Eid al-Adha, the Islamic feast of sacrifice.

Please pray for all these situations and protections for our persecuted brethren. That brings us to this subject of the fact that the Bible gives not just illustrations of praying for other people, but the Bible indicates that there's a power in a certain kind of extraordinary prayer, which could almost be called vicarious prayer. Vicarious means is done for someone else, something else.

Jesus' death on the cross was vicarious. What does that mean? He didn't die for himself. He died for the sins of the world.

His death had meaning way beyond the fact that he expired on the cross. Well, the Bible teaches that there's such a thing as vicarious or extraordinary prayer, which I would assure you none of us here have even scratched, not the surface, even the dust on the surface of this subject. Basically, there are 24 miracles in the Gospels that Jesus performed.

Seven of them, at least, indicate that there was no faith whatsoever on the part of the recipient of the miracle. There are 24 miracles that Jesus performed. At least seven seem to indicate clearly that the person who received the answer was totally passive and had no faith whatsoever.

The faith that God honored was somebody else's faith. The prayer God answered was somebody else's prayer. It was vicarious prayer.

It was extraordinary faith. You're aware of these situations. I'm just gonna outline a couple of them so God can plant this seed in our hearts to help us pray.

After the two days, he left for Galilee. Once more, he visited Cana in Galilee, John 4, 46, listen, where he had turned the water into wine. And there was a certain royal official whose son lay sick at Capernaum.

When this man heard that Jesus had arrived in Galilee from Judea, he went to him and begged him to come and heal his son. This is the official's son who was close to death. The royal official said, sir, come down quickly, in other words, before my son dies.

Go, Jesus replied. Your son will live. The man took Jesus at his word and departed.

And while he was still on the way, his servants met him with the news that his boy was living. When he inquired as to the time when his son got better, they said to him, yesterday at one in the afternoon, the fever left him. Then the father realized that this was the exact time where Jesus had said to him, your son will live, and that he had believed that word.

In Matthew 8, we read this. When Jesus had entered Capernaum, a centurion came to him, asking for help. Lord, he said, my servant lies at home, paralyzed, suffering terribly.

Jesus said to him, shall I come and heal him? 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. 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 servants, do this, and he does it. 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.

This man was a Roman centurion, a Gentile. I say to you, many will come from the east and the west and will take their places at the feast with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, but the

subjects of the kingdom will be thrown outside into the darkness where there'll be weeping and gnashing of teeth. 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. Then finally, a few days later, when Jesus again, this one goes into an area that is almost uncharted territory. A few days later, when Jesus again entered Capernaum, the people heard that he had come home.

They gathered in such large numbers that there was no room left, not even one, not even outside the door, and he preached the word to them. Some men came bringing to him a paralyzed man carried by four of them. Since they could not get into Jesus because of the crowd, they made an opening in the roof above Jesus by digging through it and then lowered the mat that the man was lying on.

When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralyzed man, son, your sins are forgiven. Not when he saw the man's faith, when he saw the four men's faith. And later on, after they criticized him for saying, who are you to forgive sins? He says, which is easier, to say your sins are forgiven or take up your mat and walk? And then he said, get up, take up your mat and walk.

And he got up and took his mat and then walked out in full view. The Bible seems to indicate clearly here that there's a kind of faith and a kind of praying, but the praying is filled with this special kind of faith that brings a blessing and an answer, not to the person who's praying or to the person who has the faith, but to another person who's totally passive. The official son, there's no indication that he had faith.

He's lying close to death. It's the official going to Jesus and believing that what Jesus said was true. And at that moment, his faith was answered by a healing to a third party.

When the centurion asked about his servant and Jesus said, I'll go, he said, no, you can't go. I'm not worthy to have you under my roof, so on and so forth, but you don't have to come and you don't have to lay hands on anybody. Just say it, just say it.

I understand about orders. I know that you have authority in this realm, just say it. Because I have people, I say, go, they go, come, they come, do it, they do it.

And Jesus was taken back and said, according to your faith, that's what you're gonna have. And that moment, who was healed? Not the centurion, his servant. There's no faith in the servant.

Servant's lying there in a room somewhere. In one of these cases in the gospel, somebody is healed 25 miles away from where Jesus is and the person believes Jesus. 25 miles away, someone else gets a miracle having nothing to do with them.

And now we come to this last case and then we can see how this applies to us. Four men who must love this guy, who knows how long they loved him, how stout he was, what kind of mat that they had, and they're all out. They're not thinking of themselves, they have faith.

We hear about this Jesus, he's gonna do something for our friend who's wasted, crippled, or whatever his disease was. So what happens? Usually this happens when you have faith and you believe in God and you wanna pray. There's obstacles.

Everything in life is overcoming obstacles. Nothing is a free ride. When you serve Jesus, there's gonna be obstacles.

When you wanna believe God for something, there's gonna be an obstacle. When you wanna see God bring a revival, there's gonna be an obstacle. When you wanna see God rescue your wayward daughter or son, there's gonna be 101 obstacles.

But their faith, this supernatural, this vicarious faith, they're not having faith for themselves. They don't want a thing. They don't ask Jesus for one thing for themselves.

In fact, they don't even ask Jesus for anything that we know. There was no language transferred here. They try to get in, they can't because of the crowd.

They climb up on the roof. Now tell me what kind of job that was to do with a mat, four grown men carrying another who can't move. They carry that weight out.

Then they go digging on the roof, make a hole in the roof. What faith? They didn't even ask the owner if they could do it. And made a hole in the guy's roof.

Whatever. Because that's how you get when you have this kind of vicarious faith. When you have this kind of miraculous faith, nothing's gonna stop you.

So they dig something in the roof and they make a hole and they drop the guy down. And the Bible says they didn't say a word. But when Jesus saw their faith, he said two things eventually to the guy.

First, he said verbally, son, your sins are forgiven. Well, what does that do to our theology? What does that mean in its full import? He says to a fifth person, because he sees four men's faith, sons, your sins are forgiven you. Then later on, take up your bed and get out of here.

Why? Because of the guy's faith? There's no hint he has faith. He's just being carried by four guys that are full of faith. And there's many other cases in this.

And by the way, just on that thing, I have no final word here to tell you about this, but it does seem that hardly anybody that you can read about is saved unless someone else has faith that gets them to Jesus. You gotta have your own faith to get saved, obviously. You can't get saved by somebody else's faith.

But notice the interplay of the faith. Some preacher has faith to preach the gospel. Somebody hears and gets saved.

Some parent prays for their child, then they get saved. Somebody was praying. Somebody's doing something in faith to get another person to have faith.

But let's stay on point. So vicarious faith. I never saw it until this week that that is taught plainly in the scripture in this verse, John 5, verses 14 and 15.

If there's any sick among you, let him call for the elders of the church. Why? Because obviously his faith is not getting him healed. Let him call for the elders of the church and the prayer offered in faith after they anoint him with oil, back James teaches us, and the prayer of faith shall raise up the sick.

And whose faith is that? It seems every indication is the people praying for the guy who's sick. What does that open up to us tonight? That sister or brother that you have that's lost. How much power can you have in their life for them to come to Christ through praying? That wayward child, that messed up situation, it's not even for you.

I'm talking about someone you love that you care about. Let me just say two things about this as I've studied it. It seems as if that this vicarious praying and this supernatural kind of praying, extraordinary praying, only happens when you totally identify with that person and you feel what they're going through.

See these four guys, it wasn't just like, yeah, no, they showed how much they cared by dragging them there. You could tell that the official son was, that was his only son, the Bible tells us. He's praying for his only son who's close to death.

How would you pray? And then the centurion, he seemed to be a good man. He really cared about his servant. But just think, you can be here in Brooklyn and pray, and there's a kind of prayer and a kind of faith that breaks through obstacles, that overcomes distracted mind, that overcomes discouraging words, and can actually go to Trinidad and something can happen in Port of Spain because somebody prayed here in Brooklyn.

If you believe that, say amen. If that's not true, then what is this teaching us? That there's such a thing as having vicarious faith? Because let's admit it, some people that we care about, they don't have the faith of a slug. Am I correct or not? They're not looking for God.

And that's why we give up sometimes. We give up because it seems hopeless because they're so messed up. But notice it has nothing to do with how messed up they are.

It has to do with is it possible to have faith for another person and see God answer and visit? Come on, let's put our hands together and say amen to that. This scripture seems to indicate, according to your faith, so be it unto you, as if the person was asking, as if the centurion was asking for something for himself. Jesus says, according to your faith, so be it unto you.

But it's not for him. It's for the thing that's on his heart. You'll get what's on your heart because of your faith in me.

But how about that third person? Doesn't indicate where that person was. They got a blessing through another person. Oh, I know that's true.

That is true. That is true. You can pray in point A and wait on God and get faith, and God can just be shaking things up in another part of the city or the country or the world.

Otherwise, why even pray for these suffering Christians? Just say a prayer. But can we really enter in and see God do things that we won't even know until we get to heaven? Have you followed me on this? How many have heard the verses and understand what I'm saying? Just lift your hand, okay? I'm not making these verses up, and I left out a whole bunch of others. The Syrophenician woman who said, Lord, I got a child who's tormented and all that, but she's not a Jew, and Jesus says to her, look, I wasn't sent to you.

I was sent to the lost sheep of Israel. No, no, but please, you know, please, I'm not gonna let you go. I'm not gonna let you go so easy.

No, no, look, it's not right to give the children's food to the puppies. Jesus used a kind of rough expression which would have discouraged a lot of people, not her. She turned it in a second.

She said, yeah, but some puppies under the table, they get some crumbs. Did she not say that in the Scripture? Some puppies, and Jesus said, whoa, whoa. No, with faith like that, you got it.

Your child will be made well. Who got the child well? Whose faith? The child's faith? None. Child that had no faith.

So this is an area here that the Holy Spirit has to teach us, and maybe you're here and say, I don't even believe that. According to your faith, so be it unto you that I believe that. I believe some of us are even here today because somebody prayed for us.

We wouldn't even be here today. I believe, listen, I believe that angels can be sent on missions to go and help people because, not because they prayed, but because somebody else was praying. Oh, the history of the Christian church is full of those examples of mothers and dads getting up in the middle of the night and saying, I can't sleep.

Something tells me my son's in trouble, and then later they find out that God averted a disaster. So it's nice and early because I wanna pray. But listen, I don't wanna do this by the rote, by the numbers, I don't wanna do that.

I'd rather just pray for one or two people that God brings to our hearts. So I just want you to look at me for a second. Who is it? A brother, a sister? Who do you really care about? Or what's really pressing on your heart? I don't care how many times you prayed before, and I don't care how bad they are.

I don't care if they're in prison. I don't care who they are, what they're doing. This word teaches us that God can deposit a faith in us that's so supernatural that it moves mountains that are not even where we are.

We're praying from mountains 1,000 miles away, and God says, I'm gonna do that because you prayed and you believed. Oh, no wonder the devil has blocked churches from praying. If this is true, what would the devil wanna block first in the church, preaching? He doesn't like preaching.

And if you do preach, he wouldn't want the Bible preached. And that's happening enough. People are just telling stories.

And he wouldn't want singing and praise and worship. But what's the number one thing he wouldn't want? No wonder Jesus said, don't you know my Father's house will be called a what? House of prayer. So who is it? No, I wanna focus on this one, the one you haven't, the one you've given up a little bit on.

And listen, I know about those things. I've battled, and I've given up on some people, and then God reminds me. Is anything too hard for God? What are you gonna go by how bad it seems? Oh, they're getting worse? I can turn it in a second.

Will you believe? If a centurion who wasn't even a child of Israel could have faith that would amaze Jesus, that's impossible for you and me? And we're children of God? How many believe with a loud amen that God can do anything? How many believe he can do anything? Let's close our eyes. So the only thing I'm gonna say now is we're gonna flat out pray. We're gonna get to Jesus.

Gotta get to Jesus. Tell him all my problems. Only he can solve them.

Mend the broken pieces. I gotta get to Jesus. Isn't there somebody here like, aren't any of us gonna be strong enough to be like those four men that say, I wanna bring someone to Jesus with such faith that Jesus sees me drop them down in front of him in prayer, and he'll speak that word, and a miracle will

happen, and they'll know, they'll know somebody believed God from me.

I gave you the word of God today. Didn't make up one of these stories. Anybody here got somebody that you feel like, Pastor? That was from me.

Someone I really care about. Some situation that is on my heart big time. I got faith that if Jesus could heal the ruler's son, because of the ruler's faith, not the son's faith, I wanna bring my situation.

Just get out of your seat and come up here with that. Just stand here in front of me. If some of you wanna just stay and pray right where you are, you can do that too.

But those that are really urgent about the whole thing, I got, listen, this thing gotta change, Pastor. It's gotta change. Jesus, you gotta change it.

Jesus, you gotta change it. I'm lugging this guy all the way to you. Lugging this person to you, Lord.

I don't care how bad they are. I don't care how many times you prayed. If you can't get out of your aisle because there's so many people, just stand up where you are or sit down.

God doesn't care if you're sitting or standing or kneeling or anything. It's your faith. Everybody talk to Jesus now.

Everyone talk to Jesus. Just like this centurion, talk to him. Come on, out loud, quiet, in your heart, everywhere.

Everybody talk to Jesus now about someone, about something, not yourself.

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