

A couple of weeks ago people were celebrating what has become known as the “Miracle on the Hudson.” This was where an airliner crash landed in the Hudson river after both engines failed after being struck by birds. The miracle was that all 155 people aboard survived, with only minor injuries to some. The captain and crew was praised ... the captains of the ferries and other boats that came to the rescue were praised, and rightly so.

Then we hear that U.S. Airways sent \$5000.00 to every passenger to cover lost belongings. And now people are starting to complain that it is not enough ... that it doesn't cover the emotional pain and suffering. Many are saying they will not fly again ... many are saying they will only fly for business, because their faith in flying has suffered. And of course, they want compensation for that.

Think about – it does take faith to fly — faith in the airplane manufacturer — that the dozens of people that worked on the plane built a good one... faith in the many maintenance people that keep the plane in safe working condition... faith in the security systems and people so that no hijackers or bombs get put on board... faith in pilots that their skills will get us to where we want to go... faith in the air-traffic controllers that they will keep other airplanes out of our flight path... really faith in a vast multitude of people and mechanical things — that all would work together so that we all arrive safely at our destination.

These are all things that we don't know about absolutely — we didn't see the plane being built... we don't see the maintenance workers work on the plane — and even we did, most of us wouldn't know if they were doing it correctly... We don't know the pilots — where they trained... how long they has been flying, etc. — so when we fly, we have to take all this by faith — we have to put our trust in their hands.

In our gospel lesson this morning we saw an example of faith... an example of trust — turn with me to Matthew, chapter 8. We read in verse 5 that Jesus had just entered Capernaum and a centurion came to him. This centurion was a Roman soldier — he was probably a heathen or a pagan. Being Roman he did not have the history behind him that the Jews had — and remember, they had much.

In fact, the Apostle Paul, in recounting what the Jews had — and the fact that they had rejected their Messiah said in Romans 9:3-5: *“For I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my countrymen according to the flesh, who are Israelites, to whom pertain the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the service of God, and the promises; of whom are the fathers and from whom, according to the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, the eternally blessed God. Amen.”* This is what the Jews had — they had it all — none of which the Centurion had.

And yet for all that he didn't have — he was a God-fearing man. This is made very clear in the parallel account in Luke 7:2-4, where we read: *“And a certain centurion's servant, who was dear to him, was sick and ready to die. So when he heard about Jesus, he sent elders of the Jews to Him, pleading with Him to come and heal his servant. And when they came to Jesus, they begged Him earnestly, saying that the one for whom He should do this was deserving, for he loves our nation, and has built us a synagogue.”*

So again, we see that this is a man who feared God. He did not know all about Him — we do not know if he ever read the Scriptures concerning Jesus — but he did love the Jews. It is entirely possible that the Jews who were with him had told him about the coming Messiah.

What we do know is that he recognized Jesus as something special... He recognized Jesus as someone who had authority. He recognized who he was — and it is because of this that he did not think himself worthy to have Jesus even come into his house.

And so we see — that when Jesus says that he will come and heal his servant he says this in 8:8-9 (READ).

We see a little difference in Luke 7:6-8, where we read: *“Then Jesus went with them. And when He was already not far from the house, the centurion sent friends to Him, saying to Him, ‘Lord, do not trouble Yourself, for I am not worthy that You should enter under my roof. Therefore I did not even think myself worthy to come to You. But say the word, and my servant will be healed. For I also am a man placed under authority, having soldiers under me. And I say to one, ‘Go,’ and he goes; and to another, ‘Come,’ and he comes; and to my servant, ‘Do this,’ and he does it.”* — the whole point of this was that he didn’t even need to have Jesus come to his house — all Jesus had to do was *say the word* and his servant would be healed.

And so we read 8:10: *“When Jesus heard it, He marveled, and said to those who followed, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, I have not found such great faith, not even in Israel!’”* Then in verse 8:13 we read: *“Then Jesus said to the centurion, ‘Go your way; and as you have believed, so let it be done for you.’ And his servant was healed that same hour.”* ... *“Go your way; and as you have believed, so let it be done for you.”* Because he believed... because he trusted in the word of Jesus... because he had faith in the word of Jesus — his servant was healed.

He trusted... he believed — he took Christ at his word... he didn’t doubt... he didn’t question — he simply believed. He didn’t need to see any fancy things... he didn’t need any “proof” — he didn’t need to see something hard — he simply believed — and all he needed was the word of Christ — and after the word, he went his way.

I am reminded of a story in the Old Testament from 2 Kings 5. It is about Naaman who was commander of the army of the king of Syria — a great and mighty warrior, but he was a leper. Through an Israelite servant girl, he hears about the prophet Elisha in Israel — and after a while he is introduced to him.

Elisha simply tells him to go and wash in the Jordan river 7 times. Naaman was furious — and as we read in 2 Kings 5:11: *“But Naaman became furious, and went away and said, ‘Indeed, I said to myself, ‘He will surely come out to me, and stand and call on the name of the LORD his God, and wave his hand over the place, and heal the leprosy.’ Are not the Abanah and the Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? Could I not wash in them and be clean?’”* So he turned and went away in a rage.”

At this point his servants came to him and said 2 Kings 5:13: *“My father, if the prophet had told you to do something great, would you not have done it? How much more then, when he says to you, ‘Wash, and be clean’?”* And so Naaman did it and became clean.

All he needed to do was believe... all he needed to do was have faith — and then to follow through with what he believed... he needed to obey. Believe and Obey — that can be described as the sum of our Christian lives — believe and obey... trust and obey — sounds like a song to me. Believe and act on what we say that we believe. Believe and then follow through on what we say that we believe.

Naaman just needed to simply believe and obey... the Centurion believed and obeyed — he believed the word of Christ... he believed and simply went on his way. He didn’t say what he said and then say... “wait a second, on second thought, you’d better come along” or “can you give me some real proof that you are who you say you are

and that you can do what you say that you can do.” No — he acted on what he believed... he trusted and then in simply faith — obeyed — he simply went to his home.

The evidence of our beliefs about airplanes and all the people and mechanical systems involved is that we actually get on the airplane. The evidence of what we believe is when we go in, sit down and buckle up. If we said that we believed all those things — and then refused to get on the plane — then we really don't believe what we've said we believe.

An example that I have used before, goes like this. If I come running in to this room and say that there is a bomb in this room and you all say yes, we believe you — and you just sit there — then you really don't believe me. Belief... faith — ALWAYS results in action... it always results in doing something.

So often we need “proof” before we act. Let somebody else go up in the airplane first. Show me who else you have healed. People reject the idea of God because he cannot be scientifically proven... people reject the idea of a Supreme being as a “fairy tale”... a crutch for weak people.

This is human nature — we can say sinful human nature. Jesus says as much. In John 4, we read about those who came to Jesus concerning a certain nobleman's son — John 4:46-48: “*So Jesus came again to Cana of Galilee where He had made the water wine. And there was a certain nobleman whose son was sick at Capernaum. When he heard that Jesus had come out of Judea into Galilee, he went to Him and implored Him to come down and heal his son, for he was at the point of death. Then Jesus said to him, “Unless you people see signs and wonders, you will by no means believe.”*”

But even in this case — we see that the nobleman believed the word of Jesus — John 4:49-50: “*The nobleman said to Him, “Sir, come down before my child dies! Jesus said to him, “Go your way; your son lives. “So the man believed the word that Jesus spoke to him, and he went his way.”* He believed and went his way — he didn't say come to my house — that's the only way... he didn't say: “that's it — you're not going to come.” No — we read: “*So the man believed the word that Jesus spoke to him, and he went his way.*” He obeyed the word of Jesus... he believed the word that Jesus spoke to him.

This is the way of faith... the way of belief... the way of trust. It is simply taking God at his Word. When Jesus says “*I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me*” — we need to believe him. We can't sit and analyze it and say is that what it really means... or is that all there is — no — it is a simple statement — where one can respond in either the affirmative or the negative.

In the book of Acts we read about Paul and Silas being in jail. God sent an earthquake and all the doors were opened and all the chains were loosened. The jailer — thinking that all had escaped prepared to kill himself. Paul called out and said don't do it — we are all here. So the jailer said: “*Sirs, what must I do to be saved?*” *So they said, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household.”* Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ — it is that simple.

But, then, as we go about in our Christian lives we then must act on what we believe... we first trust — and then we obey... we obey what God has revealed in his word... we try to follow those things which God wants us to follow. Again, as so often happens, we are brought back to the great commandment — “*You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.*”... “*You shall love your neighbor as yourself.*” — which as we have said is the summary of the 10 commandments and indeed, all of the

commandments that God has given us.

As I have also said before, loving the Lord with all of our heart, soul and mind — means fulfilling the first four of the 10 commandments. It means worshiping God on a regular basis... it means not have any other gods before him — whether it be money, or people, or things. Loving our neighbor means following those commandments — thou shall not kill, steal, commit adultery, etc. Loving God and our neighbor means following all that God says in His word — even when we don't want to.

Will we do this perfectly — NO, of course not — but that is where the issue of faith and trust come in. Because not only do we need to trust God and the Lord Jesus Christ for our salvation — we need to trust him every day of our lives.

We have to have the faith the Centurion had — a faith that caused him to take the actions that he did — and all Jesus needed to do was “say the word.” We need to take God at his word — and we need to follow through on what we say that we believe. God is faithful — He will fulfill what he has promised... He will keep his word. But we must keep ours — we have trusted... we have believed... we have put our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior — then let us obey.