

FAVORS FOR THE UNWORTHY

Luke 7:1-17

It's those who DON'T DESERVE IT that receive God's favor

They're the ones who trust Him – They receive the benefits

Jesus was acceptable to outcasts – The least likely come to Christ,
while the respected leaders ignore and reject Him.

THE DISTINCT RESPONSES TO JESUS' MINISTRY 4:14-9:50

Separation of followers 6:12-49 – In light of rejection

TWO ALTERNATIVES DEFINED AND THE ADHERENTS OF EACH 7:1-9:50

What are the choices?

1. **Choice:** Recognize and TRUST HIM (Follow Him)

Adherent: OUTCASTS

2. **Choice:** REJECT HIM Adherent: RELIGIOUS LEADERS

ACCEPTANCE BY THE OUTCASTS OF SOCIETY 7:1-8:3

The outcasts, the second-class citizens, accept Him and receive the
benefits of His ministry which the religious leaders rejected.

BENEFICIARIES OF CHRIST'S MINISTRY:

1. A Pagan (7:1-10)

2. A Widow (7:11-17)

3. Many sick, lepers, poor and tax collectors (7:18-35)

4. A sinful woman of bad reputation (7:36-50)

5. Formerly Demon-possessed women (8:1-3)

A PAGAN (GENTILE) 7:1-10

A Roman centurion's faith in Jesus' authority causes his servant to be
healed

There seems to be a deliberate play on the OT concept from Elijah and Elisha

Israel is passed over and pagans receive blessing when they trust God's
servant.

Remember Lk. 4?

Our Lord refers to 2 who were blessed when Israel wasn't:

1. Widow from Zarephath (a pagan!) whose son Elijah raised from the dead
1 Ki. 17:8-24

2. Syrian army captain (a pagan!), Naaman the Syrian, for whom Elisha
performed a miracle. 2 Ki. 5:1-14

What do these stories have in common with Luke 7?

The parallels seem too direct to be accidental!

Again pagans believe and receive blessing.

The Lord had told them that this was going to happen. Luke shows us how.

A "centurion" => commander of a "century" => 100 men

Unlike most Roman soldiers, this one was well-liked and respected by the Jewish people
because of his contribution for their synagogue.

Polybius describes the qualifications for a centurion: they must be not so much "seekers after
danger as men who can command, steady in action, and reliable; they ought not to be over-
anxious to rush into the fight; but when hard pressed they must be ready to hold their ground
and die at their posts." Men of fortitude and integrity were required. That's what we find in
NT centurions; most were looked on favorably by NT writers.

Roman custom said when a slave is old and useless, throw him out to die.

Here's an owner who loves his slave and cares about him.

The need: death is imminent.

A pagan Roman Centurion trusts in Jesus' authority

He receives a healed servant back

*He presents a contrast to the unbelief of "God's people" **7:9***

He isn't a proselyte—however, he did build their synagogue.

Elaborate remains of his work stand as a testimony to the extent of his investment.

While we know little about the man's religious orientation, it is clear that he was kind to God's people and supported their worship of Yahweh. He may have been a believer in Yahweh, though not yet willing to become a proselyte, perhaps due to the social consequences of such a decision.

THREE CHARACTERISTICS OF A TRUE BELIEVER:

1. RECOGNIZES HIS UNWORTHINESS **7:6-7**

NOT a Roman view of himself!

Can you imagine a Roman official telling a Jewish rabbi he isn't worthy to come to him or have him enter his house?

This view conforms to the Jewish view of his position as a Gentile.

No self-respecting Jew would go into his house—he's a *pagan*!

Jewish leaders ask Jesus for a favor based upon his worth.

*They say, "He is worthy" **7:4***

TYPICAL RELIGIOUS RESPONSE: "DO IT FOR HIM—HE DESERVES IT!"

He comes God's way—

He recognizes that He is NOT worthy. 7:6-7

He's overwhelmed by that sense of unworthiness

He isn't worthy to have Jesus in his house

He isn't even worthy to go out and meet Him in the street.

This isn't an inferiority complex. He IS guilty and unworthy.

No matter how unworthy we perceive ourselves, we're LESS worthy!

We deserve nothing.

We do not deserve to come to Him, nor for Him to come to us.

Yet He comes.

If we realize we aren't worthy of His love or salvation, we're at right starting point.

We're ready to receive His free gift.

He comes to us, not because we deserve it,

but because He loves us and wants to give us life!

Spurgeon: "By some means Satan almost always manages it this way, that when we get a little hope it is generally a self-grounded hope, a vain idea that we are getting better in ourselves—a mischievous conceit; proud flesh, which hinders the cure, and which the surgeon must cut out; it is no sign of healing, it prevents healing. On the other hand, if we obtain a deep sense of sin, the evil one manages to put his hoof in there, and to insinuate that Jesus is not able to save us such as we are."

"Your sense of unworthiness, if it be properly used, should drive you to Christ.

You are unworthy, but Jesus died for the unworthy.

Gospel pharmacy is for the sick,

Gospel bread is for the hungry,

Gospel fountains are open to the unclean,

Gospel water is given to the thirsty

Your unworthiness should act as a wing to bring you to Christ, the sinners' Savior."

2. RECOGNIZES CHRIST'S ABILITY (GOD'S PROVISION) **7:8**

If he, subject to numerous authorities, with limited authority, gives an order, people carry it out.

There's no right to question.

He speaks, and his men do what he says. PERIOD!

No objections are permitted!

How much more authority would Jesus have?

He can send the order; a person of his rank doesn't have to go Himself.

All Jesus has to do is speak, and it's done. That's still true!

Let the eternal "Caesar" of heaven speak, and it's done.

The gates of hell can't stop Him!

If God be for you, who can be against you?!

That's enough. He's big enough to do whatever He wants!

If He says you're healed, the battle is over. It's done!

If He forgives, He doesn't have to answer to anyone.

3. **TRUSTS CHRIST** to solve the problem **7:8-9**

He thought: If he can get so much done with *his* limited authority, how much more can Jesus do? That's real faith in Jesus!

Not even in Israel – *not among "God's people"* – does He find evidence of such faith.

Christ responds to His faith. **7:10**

A **WIDOW** **7:11-17** – Second incident – second-class citizen receives blessing

The power evident when Jesus raises the only son of a widow, is accepted by the crowd as a demonstration that God is at work among His people

Is there any sign-significance to the fact that this miracle was performed at Nain (near Shunem)? (Cp. 2 Ki. 4:8-37 – another widow's son – a Shunammite.) Luke 4

The mother is the victim:

The sorrow of being left a widow, without life's partner is deep.

Nevertheless, that sorrow is comforted because of the joy of her son.

Now she loses him. She has no one left.

The widow has lost her only son => she is all alone with no source of livelihood.

Two impossible commands:

Jesus' command would have seemed strange – He starts by telling her to *stop crying!*

That's a heartless thing to say.

It's obvious he cares.

The passage indicates that what motivated Him was concern for her.

His heart went out to her.

He turns to her and says, **"Stop crying!"**

What's the basis for obedience to the command?

Trust that he is going to do something about her sad situation.

The next command was about as strange.

He turns to a dead man and says, "Get up!"

A strange series of commands!

But the man does it!!!

Jesus speaks to the dead man as if he were alive.

The dead man can do nothing. He's dead!

When Jesus calls him, He gives life to the dead man.

Notice that no one had come to Him to ask anything from Him.

He takes the initiative.

The healing does not depend on anyone's faith.

God shows mercy because His heart goes out to the woman in her desperation.

Jesus risks ritual defilement by touching the coffin (stretcher board)

He gives the command to the dead man.

The healing is immediate and total.

He sits up and begins to talk.

The resurrection of the widow's only son provides adequate evidence to the crowd that God's at work among them. **7:16-17**

The crowd is amazed. They recognize that only God can raise the dead.

Therefore, they glorify God for what He has done.

They are convinced that God is at work among His people.

Again the basic message is clear:

***Divine blessing is for those who
recognize Jesus as God's Son and trust Him!***

TWO CRITICAL QUESTIONS TO ASK OURSELVES:

1. What difference will thinking we're worthy make in our approach to God?

2. What's the most dramatic "near death" experience you've encountered?

These folk were as near death as they would ever be!

One almost died, literally.

The other had died.

Christ has the power to meet the most serious situation they would ever face—DEATH!

He has the power to meet ours also.

Why did Jesus come by there that day?

He has an appointment! –with a grieving mother and a dead man.

If God cares that much about a physically dead person,

how much more does He care about a spiritually dead person?

I don't know why you have come here this morning.

But in God's plan, He has an appointment to meet you here today!

No one else can help us.

No one else can give us life. – But Jesus can!

He is calling us today, just as he did that dead man 2000 years ago.