

HEALING THE CENTURION'S SERVANT Matthew 8:5-13

The Man Whose True Faith Impressed Jesus

Introduction:

1. In our series on Miracles of Jesus we find a man who's faith impresses Jesus
2. Although this Roman Soldier makes only a brief appearance in the gospels
3. He's had a lasting impact over the centuries of what true faith looks like

I. THE CENTURION

A. THE RANK OF THE CENTURION

1. **The Roman Army was unparalleled by any other in the ancient world... and Conquered More of the Ancient World Than Any Other...**
 - a) A large part of their success was the command, discipline and courage of Centurions
 - b) It has been said that Centurions were the backbone of the Roman army.
 - (1) A Roman Legion was 6,000 soldiers;
 - (2) the legion was divided into 60 centuries, each containing 100 men,
 - (3) and in command of each century there was a Centurion.
 - c) They were responsible for the discipline of the regiment, And the morale of the Roman army depended on them—in peace time and in war.
2. **The Greek historian Polybius describes what a centurion should be:**
 - a) 'They must not be so much venturesome 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.'

(Barclay)
3. **One Student of Scripture Points Out: That Every Roman Centurion Mentioned in the NT is mentioned w/ honor.**
 - a) The Centurion at the Cross, said without shame, Truly this was the Son of God
 - b) Cornelius, the first Gentile convert in the church, was a Centurion
 - c) It was a Centurion who recognized Paul was Roman citizen, rescuing him from a riot
 - d) It was a Centurion who was informed of a plot to kill Paul and he protected him
 - e) And it was a Centurion who accompanied Paul to Rome, treating him with respect and accepted Paul's leadership when their ship was wrecked in a storm.
 - f) And We See This Centurion Shows Honor and Respect to Jesus... (Barclay)

Trench observed: "Probably, in the general wreck of the moral institutions of the heathen world, the Roman Army was one of the few in which some of the old virtues survived."

(Richard Trench, cited by James Burton Coffman)

B. THE CHARACTER OF THE CENTURION

1. **HE WAS A GENTILE—A ROMAN SOLDIER OF RANK—NOT A JEW...**
 - a) In Other Words—He's a Commanding Officer in an Army Oppressing Jewish Nation!
 - b) Which Makes His Faith—and Jesus Response, Even More Remarkable

2. HE WAS GENEROUS...

- a) Luke Shares the Testimony of the Jews who went to Jesus on his behalf (**Lk 7:2-5**)
- b) Some may think this odd for a Roman Centurion, but there is usually a fear or prejudice against an occupying force...
- c) US Soldiers in Iraq were viewed with suspicion, but they helped Iraqi Civilians rebuild schools and hospitals or with Relief in Haiti after a hurricane

3. HE WAS KIND...

- a) In the Roman Empire, a Slave was a tool, a commodity, not a human being
- b) Slaves had no legal rights, but owners had the right of life or death over a slave
- c) This Centurion was Different—He Cared About His Servant

C. THE FAITH OF THE CENTURION

1. His Faith was—a HUMBLE FAITH

- a) The centurion did not say, “My servant is not worthy to have you come,” but he said, “I am NOT worthy.”
- b) He Certainly Did Not Make a Show of His Rank in the Roman Army
- c) And He Wasn’t Approaching Jesus For Himself—But For Someone He Cared About

2. His Faith was—a TRUSTING FAITH

- a) He Knew Jesus Could Just Say the Word and it would be done
- b) **Unbelief** says, “I'll believe it when I see it.”
True faith says, “I believe it whether I see it or not.”

3. His Faith was—an EXPECTANT FAITH

- a) He Didn’t Need to See Jesus Perform a Miracle—
- b) Being a Military Man He Understood Authority...
- c) HeAppealed to Jesus Authority over Nature, over Disease, over Creation

- **ILLUSTRATION:** I Heard about a Preacher who was in his chair reading when his young 5 yr old Daughter approached him and asked if he would build her a doll house...
- He said “Yes” and promised he would, then went back to reading his book.
- But after a while he glanced out the window and saw his daughter with her arms filled with dishes, toys and dolls. She made trip after trip until there was a big pile of her play things in middle of the back yard.
- He asked his wife why she had done that... and She said, “Oh don’t you remember that you promised to build her a doll house, and she believes you. She’s just getting ready for it.”
- He was Shocked! So He Hurried to the Lumber Yard for Supplies and Built her a Doll House!
- He asked, WHY DID I RESPOND AND BUILD THE DOLL HOUSE? Because I Wanted to
- NO! I Did It Because I Gave Her My Word and She Believed My Word and Acted On It!
- When I Saw Her Faith, Nothing was going to Keep Me From Carrying Out My Word!

II. THE SAVIOR

A. THE RESPONSE OF CHRIST (v.10)

1. When Jesus heard the faith of the Centurion “He Marveled...”

“He marveled, and said to those who followed, “Assuredly, I say to you, I have not found such great faith, not even in Israel!”

2. This is a Remarkable Statement—Why Would Jesus Say This?

- a) I Think it’s Because this Centurion Recognized the Divine Authority of Jesus...
- b) Not Just as a Rabbi or a Priest or a Miracle Worker—BUT AS A KING!
- c) Not Just a King Over Israel But a King Greater than Caesar!
- d) Jesus is King of kings, and Lord of lords, over Heaven and Earth!

3. True Faith, Real Faith, is a Rare and Precious Thing...

- a) Even Today, People Are Quick to Blame God but Slow to Praise Him
- b) Jesus: “When the Son of man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?” (Lk 18:8)
- c) But When Jesus Sees True Faith in this man’s heart—He Commands him for It

B. THE TEACHING OF CHRIST (v.11-12)

1. Jesus uses this Gentile’s Faith as a Lesson for Israel

2. Among the leaders of the Jews there was a False Sense of Security...

- a) In their Lineage as descendants of Abraham
- b) In their Education and Traditions
- c) In their Positions and in the Praise of Men they Craved so much

3. In Other words, They Thought They Were the Gatekeepers of the Kingdom

- a) But They Had Allowed the Enemy to Blind Them with their own Pride

4. And their Lost Condition was an absolute Tragedy...

- a) A Tragedy that would’ve been compounded—Had Jesus Not Warned them of it
- b) Jesus Wept over Jerusalem—It was His Love that caused Him to Warn them
- c) just as the prophets had worked them generation after generation.

C. THE MIRACLE OF CHRIST (v.13)

1. This Centurion Honored Jesus’ Authority—

- a) and Jesus Honored Him by healing His servant
- b) His Servant Was Healed that Same Hour!

2. How Interesting that it was this man’s faith—not the servants faith...

- a) It was the Centurion’s faith that Jesus Answered...
- b) The Centurion’s Faith that Allowed His servant to Be Healed!

3. Does God Answer the Prayer of Faith?

- a) Even if the Request is for someone who may not have faith?
- b) God Answers the Prayer of Faith according to His will...
- c) He Has Given His Word on it! (Mt 21:22)

“And whatever things you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive.” (Mt 21:22)

III. THE LESSONS

A. TRUE FAITH OVERCOMES THE WORLD

Notice the barriers of the world his faith overcame...

1. **A Cultural Barrier: He was a gentile, considered a pagan by jews.**
 - a) He knew there was a middle wall of partition between Jew and Gentile
 - b) He Sent Jewish friends ahead, nor thought he was worthy for Jesus to enter house
 - c) But His Humble Faith broke down those barriers
2. **An Ideological Barrier: He was an Officer of an Occupying Army**
 - a) He was hated and Despised by Jewish nationalists
 - b) But Faith Overcomes the Prejudices and Hatred of Man against Man...
 - c) neighbor against neighbor, race against race, nation against nation,
 - d) Rich against poor, common verses elites....
3. **A Physical Barrier: His servant was terribly ill, but several miles away**
 - a) But He Knew Jesus Power Could Transcend Space or Time
 - b) Jesus is not bound by Physical Limitations
4. **A Spiritual Barrier:**
 - a) He Knew He could not ask Jesus based on his own worthiness
 - b) Just as we know we don't deserve heaven based on our own greatness
 - c) The very definition of Grace is GIFT: It's NOT Deserved or Earned—it is given!
5. **Faith Overcomes the World (1 John 5:4–5)**

B. TRUE FAITH IS IMPRESSIVE TO GOD

1. **Two Times We Find Jesus was Amazed by Faith...**
 - a) FIRST: In Jesus Hometown of Nazareth He was rejected,
even though they saw Him preform miracles...
(1) "And He marveled because of their unbelief." (Mk 6:6)
 - b) SECOND: Here Jesus is Amazed at this Centurions Faith...
(1) "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!" (Mt 8:10)
2. **True and Sincere Faith is Impressive to God...**
Like the little girl's faith in her dad to build a doll house made a big impression on him!

C. TRUTH FAITH HONORS JESUS' AUTHORITY

1. **This Centurion Recognized Jesus Authority!**
 - a) Not Just as a Rabbi or Priest—But As a KING!
 - b) Not Just a King Over Israel But a King Greater than Caesar!
 - c) As King of kings, and Lord of lords, over Heaven and Earth!
2. **Jesus Said, I Have Not Seen This King Of Faith Even in Israel!**
And It's Even Hard to Find This Kind of Faith Among so called Bible Scholars, Teachers and Preachers!

- a) After Jesus was crucified and rose from the dead,
Notice what He told the disciples (**Matthew 28:18–20**)
- b) “All Authority is given unto me in heaven and on earth...
- c) Got therefore and make disciples... Baptizing them ...
- d) But Her Come the Bible Scholars and Theologians...
- e) You Don’t Need to be Baptized! Baptism is a work and you can’t be saved by works!

3. Wait a Minute—Who Has ALL AUTHORITY IN HEAVEN AND EARTH?

- a) And How Much Authority is left over for me? or anyone?

D. TRUTH FAITH IS HONORED BY GOD

1. Jesus said Many Will Come From the East and West...

- a) and sit down with Abraham, Issac and Jacob, In the Kingdom of Heaven!
- b) Heaven is Pictured as a Great Wedding Banquet
- c) With All of the Redeemed of All Time at the Table of the Lord

2. But Many sons of the Kingdom Will Be Cast Out...

- a) Why would some be cast out? What Makes the Difference?

3. How One Responds to the Authority of Jesus Makes the Difference

- a) The Centurion Recognized and Honored the Authority of Jesus the King!

Augustine said of the centurion, “Counting himself unworthy that Christ should enter his doors, he was counted worthy that Christ should enter his heart.”

CONCLUSION:

- 1. Will You Honor the King?**
- 2. Will You Recognize His Authority Over All Heaven and Earth?**
- 3. Hebrews 11:6**

But without faith
it is impossible to please Him,
for he who comes to God must believe that He is,
and that He is a rewarder
of those who diligently seek Him.