

A Roman Soldier's Faith Matthew 8:5-13; Luke 7:1-10

by David Servant

The sermon explores the profound faith of a Roman centurion and its implications for both earthly and eternal blessings.

Scripture: Matthew 7:13, Matthew 8:5, Matthew 8:10, Matthew 8:12, Luke 7:1, Revelation 20:11

Topics: "Faith And Humility", "Kingdom Inclusivity"

Description

David Servant preaches about the remarkable faith of the Roman centurion, a non-Jewish man who displayed humility, love for the Jewish people, and a deep reverence for Jesus. Despite being a Roman soldier, the centurion's faith in Jesus' authority over sickness surpassed that of many Jewish individuals. Jesus commended the centurion's faith and used this encounter to teach about the inclusivity of the kingdom of heaven, where faith, not nationality, determines one's place. The centurion's faith not only brought healing to his servant but also serves as a powerful example of genuine belief in Jesus, which transcends cultural barriers and expectations.

Transcript

Because Jesus ministered in Israel, a nation predominantly inhabited by Jewish people, most of the people He helped were Jewish. However, during Jesus' time, Israel was controlled by the Roman Empire, so there were also Roman governmental leaders and soldiers living there. This Roman soldier of whom we just read was called a centurion, which meant he was an army officer in charge of one hundred other soldiers.

According to Luke's account, the centurion was a good man who loved the Jewish people, and he even helped them build a synagogue. These facts, along with what we've read about his words and actions as he related to Jesus, indicate to us that he was a godly man. He even considered himself unworthy to personally meet Jesus, sending some respected Jewish leaders to take his request for his servant to be healed.

Upon learning of the centurion's desire, Jesus, without hesitation, began heading toward his house. However, when the centurion heard the news that Jesus was coming, he realized that the Jewish leaders he'd sent had partially misunderstood his request. He wasn't expecting Jesus to actually come to his house, but if He would just speak a word where He was, that would bring healing to his servant. He

considered himself unworthy to have Jesus in his home, again revealing his high regard for Jesus. Perhaps he even realized that Jesus was God in the form of a human being. So he quickly sent another messenger, hoping to convey to Jesus before He arrived that it was not necessary for Him to come. Just as he had authority over other soldiers who obeyed his commands, he believed Jesus had authority over all sickness, and that He didn't have to be physically present to heal his servant.

Jesus was amazed by the Roman centurion's faith, a faith that was stronger than what He had yet encountered among Jewish people. He then seized the opportunity to tell everyone present that the kingdom of heaven is wide open to non-Jewish people who have faith. In fact, He said that many people who aren't Jewish will feast in heaven with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, while many Jewish people who don't believe in Him will be cast into hell, where there will be "weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matthew 8:12). That was shocking news for the Jews, who prided themselves as being God's special people. They despised anyone who was not Jewish, calling them "dogs." Praise God that anyone who believes in Jesus can be saved! If you believe in Jesus, you'll get to eat one day with this centurion in heaven, along with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob!

For the centurion, his faith in Jesus not only paid off for eternity, but also during his earthly life, as his dying servant was healed "that same hour" (Matthew 7:13).

Q. You probably noticed that Matthew and Luke's versions of the same story were slightly different. Matthew said that the centurion personally made his request of Jesus, whereas Luke said that the centurion sent some Jewish leaders on his behalf. Some people claim that this contradiction proves that this story is just a myth, making the Bible unreliable. Does it?

A. No. There are numerous details in this story that are identical, and only one apparent contradiction. Matthew must have either not known the detail of the Jewish leaders' involvement, or he simply chose not to include it, purposely condensing the story a little bit. When two people report the same incident, it's not unusual for one to omit details the other might include.

Q. Jesus talked about people eating in heaven, so there must be people who will have mouths and stomachs there. He also talked about people weeping and gnashing their teeth in hell, indicating that there will be people there with eyes and mouths. How can this be true if, when people die, they leave their bodies behind, and only their spirits go to heaven or hell?

A. The answer is that everyone, saved and unsaved, will one day receive new bodies. Those bodies will be somewhat different from what we have now, because they will never die, but will also be similar to our present bodies in some ways. Christians will receive their new bodies when Jesus comes back. The unsaved people now in hell will not receive resurrected bodies until after Jesus reigns for one thousand years on the earth. Then they will stand before the final judgment and be cast bodily into the lake of fire (see Revelation 20:5-6, 11-15).

Application: Although some Christians don't want to face up to this fact, it is entirely scriptural: Those who trust Jesus receive blessings in this life that aren't received by those who don't believe. Jesus said the centurion had greater faith than any Jewish person He'd met. How do you think He would evaluate your faith?

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