

Little or Great Faith Pt. 5

The Faith of the Roman Centurion

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Mt 8:5-13 And when Jesus entered Capernaum, a centurion came to Him, imploring Him, 6 and saying, "Lord, my servant is lying paralyzed at home, fearfully tormented." 7 Jesus said to him, "I will come and heal him." 8 But the centurion said, "Lord, I am not worthy for You to come under my roof, but just say the word, and my servant will be healed. 9 "For I also am a man under authority, with soldiers under me; and I say to this one, 'Go!' and he goes, and to another, 'Come!' and he comes, and to my slave, 'Do this!' and he does it." 10 Now when Jesus heard this, He marveled and said to those who were following, "Truly I say to you, I have not found such great faith with anyone in Israel. 11 "I say to you that many will come from east and west, and recline at the table with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven; 12 but the sons of the kingdom will be cast out into the outer darkness; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." 13 And Jesus said to the centurion, "Go; it shall be done for you as you have believed." And the servant was healed that very moment. (Lk 7:1-10)

8:5 **Capernaum** = Peter and Andrew owned a home in this city. It became Jesus' Galilean headquarters after being rejected in His hometown [Nazareth, Mt 4:13].

Centurion = A Roman military officer who commanded about 80 men. These officers served their entire careers as soldiers and were highly experienced and esteemed. They, along with lepers were the most ostracized people in Jewish society.

The response of Jesus to the rejects of society demonstrates Jesus' love for all mankind, as seen with His dealings with the men of Gadara (Mt 8:28, 34) and the Syrophenician woman (Mt 15:21-28).

imploring (appealing) **Him** = The Greek word [parakaleō] carries the sense of strongly urging or begging.

Matthew's choice of words would have conveyed a shocking scene: A high-ranking Roman military official (part of the imperial forces currently occupying Palestine) begs for help from one of the subjugated people, even calling him "Lord" (v 8).

8:6 **my servant** = (or) boy (and so throughout this section where appropriate).

lying paralyzed = (or thrown down) - a picture of a disease violently gripping him.

Fearfully (terribly, bitterly) **tormented** (to punish by physical torture or torment)

In Lk 7:1-10 the servant is bedridden, in great pain and about to die.

The account in Luke records that this man had great love for the Jewish people.

The account in Matthew shows that he had great love for his servant boy.

8:7 **I will come and heal him** = This is an emphatic use of "I" which is explained in v. 8 by the unheard of action of Jesus being willing to enter a Gentile home which was a major cultural/religious taboo.

8:8 **I am not worthy** = (or sufficient, I am inadequate for you to visit).

The centurion humbles himself before Jesus, who would have been perceived as a lowly Jewish rabbi. He also might be indicating an awareness that Jews could not acceptably enter the homes of Gentiles (Ac 10:28; 11:3).

just say the word, and my servant will be healed = A statement of faith.

The centurion expresses belief not only in Jesus' authority over sickness and disease, but also over time and space (anticipating His ability to heal from a distance).

This man, being a military person, understood authority and did not demand a ritual, or magical formula, or even Jesus' physical presence for the healing.

8:9 **a man under authority** = The centurion served within a chain of command; his own authority was derived from those above him. He seems to recognize a similar situation with Jesus, whose authority comes from God (Mt 11:27; 28:18).

servant = slave (this is not the same word as v. 6 which can mean servant or boy).

This word means slave primarily but can also mean servant. The context suggests slave.

8:10 **marveled** = astonished; [it can also mean admired]. Matthew frequently refers to the astonishment of Jesus' audience (8:27; 9:33; 15:31; 22:22), but this is the only place in this Gospel where Jesus Himself is astonished.

Jesus uses the opportunity to teach His followers about faith.

Truly I say to you = Jesus employs this statement throughout His ministry to emphasize the words that follow.

great faith with anyone in Israel = The faith of this Roman military man was greater than any Jesus had encountered among the Jewish people.

8:11 **many will come** (or, be present) **from east and west, and recline at the table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob** = This was an allusion to the inclusion of Gentiles into the family of God.

The phraseology was taken from the concept of the Messianic banquet at the end of time (Mt 22:1-14; Lk 14:15; 22:16; Rev 19:9).

The Old Testament predicts a gathering of Israel from all over the earth (Isa 43:5-6; Psa 107:3), as well as the Gentiles (Isa 2; 60:3-4; Mic 4:1-2; Zec 8:20-23).

8:12 **but the sons of the kingdom will be cast out** = Many Jews knew nothing of a personal relationship with God but only of a racial, legalistic, and ritualistic religion handed down to them (Isa 29:13). They were prideful and self-righteous based on their race and performance of the Mosaic Covenant (Mt 3:9).

Jesus affirms that many who were not historically part of the people of God will be included, and many who thought they were part of the people of God will be excluded. This is still a valid warning!

into the outer darkness; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth = These metaphors [Mt 13:42, 50; 22:13; 24:51; 25:30] describe the horrors of separation from God in hell [Gehenna]. What men and women do with Jesus Christ now will determine their ultimate destiny; Jesus Himself is the One who shows us the grim alternative facing those who refuse to trust Him.

Principles of great faith:

Ask in humility, be humble.

Mt 8:8 But the centurion said, "Lord, I am not worthy for You to come under my roof, ..."

Jas 4:6 But He gives a greater grace. Therefore it says, "GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE." (1Pt 5:5; Ps 138:6; Mt 23:12)

Pray (ask) with confidence.

Mt 8:5 And when Jesus entered Capernaum, a centurion came to Him, imploring Him,

Heb 4:16 Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need. (Heb 10:19; Eph 3:12; 1Jn 2:28; 3:21)

Believe what He say's (Know His Word).

Mt 8:8 "... just say the word, and my servant will be healed."

2Cor 4:13 But having the same spirit of faith, according to what is written, "I BELIEVED, THEREFORE I SPOKE," we also believe, therefore we also speak,

Rom 10:9-10 that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; 10 for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation.

Be under authority, submission

Mt 8:9 "For I also am a man under authority, with soldiers under me; and I say to this one ..."

Heb 13:17 Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account (1Cor16:16; 1Pt 2:13; 5:5)

Have others who are in faith stand with you.

In Luke the centurion did not come to Jesus personally but sent representatives: Jewish elders (Lk 7:3-5); and his friends (Lk 7:6).

1Thes 5:25 Brethren, pray for us.

Other Gentiles that were people of faith

Rehab the harlot of Jericho hides the spies (Jos 2:8-13); she is in the genealogy of Jesus (Mt1:5)

Ruth, a Moabite, was devoted to Naomi.

Ruth 1:16-17 But Ruth said, "Do not urge me to leave you or turn back from following you; for where you go, I will go, and where you lodge, I will lodge. Your people shall be my people, and your God, my God. 17 "Where you die, I will die, and there I will be buried. Thus may the LORD do to me, and worse, if anything but death parts you and me."

Job was from the land of Uz (Job 1:1).

Job 13:15 "Though He slay me, I will hope in Him. (Job 1:21-22; 2:9-10)

Cyrus, King of Persia, was called the Lord's anointed (Isa 44:28-45);

He gave permission for Israel's restoration (2Chr 36:22-23; Ezra 1:1-3; 6:3)

Tamar - was in the genealogy of Jesus (Mt1:3); the Canaanite daughter-in-law of Judah, she bears Judah two sons, Perez and Zerah (Gen 38).

The **Magi**, from the east, visited Jesus at His birth (Mt 2:1-12).

References Used:

Faith life Study Bible
The Life of Christ; by M S Mills
The First Christian Primer: Matthew; (by R J Utley)
Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament: