

## The Centurion

Luke 7:1-10 (New American Standard Bible)

*When He had completed all His discourse in the hearing of the people, He went to Capernaum.*

<sup>2</sup>And a centurion's slave, who was **highly regarded** by him, was sick and about to die. <sup>3</sup>When he heard about Jesus, he sent some Jewish elders asking Him to come and **save** the life of his slave. <sup>4</sup>When they came to Jesus, they **earnestly implored** Him, saying, "He is **worthy** for You to grant this to him; <sup>5</sup>for he loves our nation and it was he who built us our synagogue." <sup>6</sup>Now Jesus started on His way with them; and when He was not far from the house, the centurion sent friends, saying to Him, "Lord, do not trouble Yourself further, for I am **not worthy** for You to come under my roof; <sup>7</sup>for this reason I did not even consider myself worthy to come to You, but just say the word, and my servant will be healed. <sup>8</sup>For I also am a man placed 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." <sup>9</sup>Now when Jesus heard this, He marveled at him, and turned and said to the crowd that was following Him, "I say to you, not even in Israel have I found such great **faith**." <sup>10</sup>When those who had been sent returned to the house, they found the slave in good health.

## Introduction

I am back on my sermon schedule *Walk with Jesus*. Today we follow Jesus in a city called Capernaum. This was the city where Jesus' ministry was headquartered. Capernaum: about 20 miles northeast of Nazareth. *It must've been a considerable city during Jesus' time because it was a customs station. There was a synagogue also, which was built by a Roman centurion (Luke 7), this could indicate that there was a station of Roman soldiers nearby.* (www. Bible-history.com).

In this city, one day, Jesus was greeted by a group of Jewish elders. They all begged Jesus to come and heal one of the Roman centurion's slaves who was about to die. FYI. Centurion was a Roman army officer in charge of 100 infantry men.

## Content

Today's text shows three excellent qualities in the centurion that culminated in the healing of his slave. Such qualities and practice thereof helped the centurion to receive what he desired from Jesus: the healing of his favored slave.

I am talking about *kindness, humility, and faith*. The centurion was a man of kindness, humility, and faith whom we can imitate in our journey to Heaven.

First, he cared for others with love and kindness that transcended class and race.

Next, he was a man of humility that he knew his place in his relationship with Jesus. He knew who he was and who Jesus was, therefore, showed utmost reverence to Jesus the Lord of all.

Finally, he was a man of faith who understood Jesus' authority and power. He applied his faith in his request on behalf of his slave and he got it answered. His faith impressed Jesus. Let's check them out.

**A man of kindness:** Being a professional soldier, the centurion could have turned out to be unkind and brutal. In Jesus' time, soldiers were known even to their own people as the violent bunch. E.g. Some soldiers came to John the Baptist and asked him what they should do in terms of repentance: *And he said to them, "Do not take money from anyone by force, or accuse anyone falsely, and be content with your wages"* (Luke 3:14).

This centurion was different. He was firm, yet kind both inside his household and outside in the community. Both to his slaves, to soldiers under him and to the people under his occupation. For instance, when his slave was dying of illness, he invited Jesus to his house to save the life of his slave (v. 3).

His kindness did not stop there. Well known to the surrounding Jewish community, his love for people was greatly appreciated by the townsfolk. For instance, he built a synagogue for them. In the end, his excellent relationship with the community paid off big time in his prayer request for his slave.

**A man of humility:** When the centurion sent for Jesus on behalf of his slave, he sent out the Jewish elders in his place. They entreated Jesus on behalf of the man. The Jews pleaded on behalf of the foreigner! They said, *this centurion is worth helping, Jesus, because he loves our nation and has built us our synagogue* (v. 5).

Think about the reason why the centurion didn't go to Jesus directly. It was not arrogance. Rather, he didn't think he was worthy to meet Jesus face to face (v. 7). I suspect he was conscious of his non-Jewishness. Knowing that Gentiles and Jews had no dealings with each other, he restrained himself from meeting Jesus in person. He was sensitive and sensible enough to respect the Jewish custom, so he stayed behind. E.g. Peter's reluctance on entering Cornelius's house in Acts 10.

After the elders entreated with Him, Jesus was on the way to the house of the centurion. This time, Jesus was encountered with another group of people: the centurion's

friends (v. 6). Conveying the centurion's message, they pleaded with Jesus not to bother to come. Why? Because the centurion was not worthy enough to receive Jesus under his roof (v. 6). *I am not worthy to come to You (v. 7). I am not worthy for You to come under my roof (v. 6).* Twice he said that to Jesus. Have you ever felt the same way? Your abode is too humble to have someone very important under your roof?

I can tell from the centurion's attitude toward Jesus that he was a humble man. Out of humility, he treated Jesus with the highest regard. He kept thinking of how unworthy he was to meet Him in person and to receive Him under his roof. He was a humble man.

Being a head of 100 Roman soldiers in the occupied land, he could have been easily arrogant. *The occupying force. Toward the occupied.* However, he was different. He served the community with thoughtfulness. He used his power and authority to fill the needs of the community instead of exploiting them. Yet, before Jesus and His spiritual authority, he knew his place. He respected Jesus (a Jewish Messiah) and showed his utmost reverence. *Lord, I am not worthy to have You under my roof.*

Reality check: Let us think about our own attitude toward Jesus. We often call Him our friend. Sometimes so casually! *What a friend we have in Jesus*, we sing, too. But seriously, how do we treat Jesus?

Yes, we all confess that He is our Savior and Lord. But do our thoughts, words, and actions reflect the same? Like the Roman centurion? *Lord, I am not worthy to have You under my roof.* To be honest with myself, I often forget my place and treat Jesus as my equal. Worse, at times, I treat Him as someone at my beck and call. *Forgive me, Lord. I repent. I am not worthy.* It's time that we repented our arrogance and casual attitude toward our Lord and be more like the centurion.

**A man of faith:** Finally, the centurion was a man of faith. His faith really impressed Jesus. His understanding of Jesus' authority was unheard of even in Israel. He even applied his understanding of Jesus to his prayer request: *Just say the word, Lord, and my servant will be healed (v. 7).* Jesus has not met such a man of faith even in Israel (v. 9)!

As a military man, the centurion perfectly understood authority and order. In the military hierarchy, there is order. A subordinate must obey his superior's commands. E.g. I remember my military days in Korea. At the boot camp, the very first thing they drilled into my mind was to obey the orders from my superiors, whether I liked them or not, whether I agreed or not, or even whether I understood or not. The only choice I had was to obey the orders from above. And, if I disobeyed the order, I surely would be in trouble. I would be disciplined, possibly jailed, and even would be punished by instant execution in a wartime.

The centurion understood the order in the spiritual world in the same way. In the spiritual world, every knee bows down to Jesus, commander in chief. Even the devil and all other spirits are to obey Him, too.

Fully aware of such authority and power of Jesus in the spiritual world, the centurion applied his faith in his prayer request. *If Jesus is the Lord of lords, he reasoned, His order would be carried out with no delay or no questions asked.* As his order in the Roman army was obeyed immediately by his subordinates, he believed, Jesus' healing order would take in effect right away.

Briefly, it's worth mentioning the power of spoken words here. Jesus' word had the power to heal the centurion's servant. So does ours. Our tongue has power to change things in our daily life. Both positively and negatively. Words we speak can build up or tear down each other. Proverbs 12:18 says, *"Rash words are like sword thrusts, but the tongue of the wise brings healing."* Speak the positive words often such as "I love you," and "I am proud of you." "Excellent job," or "I am glad that you are in my life."

Stop saying negative words, too. E.g. We still carry in our hearts some cutting remarks from our parents/teachers/peers. Ephesians 5:3-4. *"But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people, Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk, or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving."*

## **Conclusion**

In the story of the centurion, I see a prayer chain going on. A servant was sick. His master started the prayer chain. Jewish elders joined in. Jesus answered and healed the servant. The centurion touched the hearts of the elders who in turn pleaded with Jesus on behalf of a Gentile man! Their earnest plea moved Jesus' heart. Combined with the humility and reverence of the centurion, his request was heard by Jesus.

Let us all be like the centurion. Let us live out our life with love and kindness. Let us show utmost humility and reverence to Jesus. Let us believe and exercise His authority and power in our prayer requests. Let us say to Jesus, *Just say the word, Lord, and my request will be answered.* Amen.