

AUTHENTIC FAITH

Faith, believing, trusting, are all synonyms. Faith always has an object, which must be worthy of trust. Faith is choosing to believe in something or someone because of the evidence for it. In Luke 7 Jesus encounters a powerful faith from a surprising source. Will you learn from him?

MAN OF KINDNESS - Luke writes, "*After He had finished all His sayings in the hearing of the people, He entered Capernaum. Now a centurion had a servant who was sick and at the point of death, who was highly valued by him. When the centurion heard about Jesus, he sent to Him elders of the Jews, asking Him to come and heal his servant.*" Wait, a 'kind' centurion?

This powerful and influential man rose to his rank commanding 80-100 men, after 15-20 years as a Roman soldier. Having seen lots of battle-hardened action, he was experienced in leadership. His soldiers were likely involved in patrols, peacekeeping, as couriers, enforcing tax collection, building roads, etc. They lived in a major city on the main trade route to Damascus.

Centurions received twice the pay as regular soldiers. Twenty percent of the Roman population were slaves, of various classes. Luke points out that the slave was highly valued. For the Jewish elders to intercede for the centurion shows his standing in the community. "Kindness is a grace that all can understand, and it always brings its own reward," observes JC Ryle.

CONTRAST IN HUMILITY - When the elders came to Jesus, they pleaded with Him earnestly, saying, "*He is worthy to have you do this for him, for he loves our nation, and he is the one who built us our synagogue.*" When Jesus was not far from the house the centurion sent friends, saying to Him, "*Lord, do not trouble Yourself, for I am not worthy to have You under my roof.*"

The centurion was kind toward his servant, toward the Jews, toward their synagogue and nation, and respectful of Jesus. By the way, archaeologists have discovered stones likely belonging to the structure he built. He understood the Jewish religion, showing humility in asking for Jesus' help through the elders. He knew a Jew entering his house would become unclean, because he was a Gentile. And he did not use his authority as a Roman centurion to order Jesus around.

"No Spirit-filled Christian should ever look self-righteously upon an unbeliever," notes RK Hughes, "Yet most non-Christians and even many believers are strangers to themselves, seeing all the errors of others but living in unwholesome unconsciousness of their own sin." RC Sproul adds, "There is no hope for justification until one is ready to humble himself."

STUDY IN AUTHORITY - The kind and humble centurion says to Jesus, "*Therefore I did not presume to come to You, but say the word and let my servant be healed. For I too am a man set under authority, with soldiers under me, and I say to one go, and he goes and to another come, and he comes, and to my servant, do this and he does it.*" As a man accustomed to authority, he recognizes the authority of Jesus and His ability to heal by word or by touch.

The synagogue in Capernaum is where Jesus had cast out a demon with a word in Luke 4:35, and in 4:39 healed Peter's mother and then many people by laying on His hands. The centurion must also have heard of the healing of the paralytic in Luke 5:13, and many other examples. And he knows that when a commander speaks, his word is carried out.

"He declares his confidence that Jesus is an almighty master and king, and that diseases, like obedient servants, will at once depart at His orders," observes JC Ryle. The centurion recognizes the consummate lordship of Christ, and not to make a show at his unworthy house, simply asks Jesus to say the word to heal his servant. "Though a foreign stranger to God's covenant, he understood authority, and that Jesus had authority and ability over life and death," says Sproul.

EXAMPLE OF FAITH - When Jesus heard these things from the centurion, He marveled at him, and turning to the crowd that followed Him said, "*I tell you, not even in Israel have I found such faith.*" And when those who had been sent returned to the house, they found the servant well.

Jesus merely speaks the word from afar, and by His divine power the servant who was at the point of death is healed. And what of your faith? You've heard these words of Scripture. You've heard what Christ has done for others. Salvation is found in no one else. Will you believe in Him? Put all your trust in Jesus Christ alone as your Lord and Savior. Do so today! ☐