

**Subject: *A Veteran's Great Faith in Christ***

**Scripture: *Matthew 8:5-13***

The story takes place in Capernaum, a city located on the north end of the Sea of Galilee. It was the hometown of five of Jesus' disciples: Peter and Andrew, James and John, and Matthew. This story is about an officer of the Roman army who had great faith in Christ. This man was a good soldier and had the rank of centurion, an officer over 100 men. Every time we read of a centurion in the Bible it is in a positive light, and it seems likely that each of them became a believer in Christ.

We remember the centurion who watched Jesus die on the cross and said, "Truly this was the Son of God" (Mt. 27:54). There was another centurion named Cornelius, who was described in Acts 10:2 as a devout man that feared God with all his family, gave to the needy, and was a man of prayer. This centurion in Matthew 8 was also a good man. According to the parallel record in Luke 7:5, this man loved and respected the Jews so much that he built them a synagogue at Capernaum. This Roman officer would normally have been hated by the Jews, but instead he was highly respected. We don't know the centurion's name, but we do know he was a kind-hearted and generous man, and we know he was a veteran, but today he is still remembered as a man of great faith in Christ.

### **1. The centurion's great need (vs. 5-6)**

The centurion had a servant who was paralyzed and suffering greatly. He came to Jesus out of great concern and desperation. He came "beseeching" (urging, begging) Christ on behalf of his servant. He knew that Jesus could heal him. Spurgeon said, "It is good for masters to be concerned for their servants, especially when they are sick. It is even better when they go to Jesus about their servants."

### **2. The centurion's great faith in Christ (vs. 7-10)**

The centurion obviously knew a lot about Jesus. This officer addressed Jesus as "Lord." He didn't tell Christ what He ought to do, but he simply made Him aware of the need. He was a very humble man who felt unworthy for Jesus to come into his house. In the parallel account in Luke 7:1-10, we find that the centurion at first sent others to Christ and then eventually spoke to him face to face. The centurion understood that having Christ a Jew enter the house of a Gentile would make him ceremonially unclean, so he asked Christ to just speak the word and his servant would be healed. Jesus could heal him from a distance. That was no problem for Him.

Jesus was amazed when He heard the centurion's faith and said that his faith was greater than any faith He had found with anyone in Israel. Some Jews believed in Christ, but none had shown the sincerity, humility, and depth of faith of this Gentile soldier. This is one of two times when Christ marveled (was astonished); the other was when the Jews in Nazareth would not believe: "He marveled because of their unbelief" (Mk. 6:6). Two things caused Jesus to marvel: great faith and no faith.

### **3. The centurion's great example (vs. 11-12)**

Jesus used the centurion's faith as an example or object lesson to teach an important lesson. Some people who are least likely to be saved will be in Heaven and some people most likely to be saved will be in Hell. Many Gentiles will be saved and enter heaven (vs. 11). They will sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in heaven. But the children of the

kingdom (people of Jewish birth and religious heritage) will not be saved and will be in Hell (vs. 12). This was directly opposite of what the Jewish rabbis believed and taught. The Jews thought they would be in heaven because of their physical connection to Abraham and the fathers. They thought that Gentiles would be in Hell because they were outcasts who didn't know God's will, and were unfit for God's kingdom. The centurion was a great example of saving faith. The one factor that determines if a person is saved and will be in heaven is true faith in Christ.

#### **4. The centurion's great assurance (vs. 13)**

Christ assured the centurion that his servant would be healed, and He healed him instantly. Christ honored and rewarded his faith. He honors faith because faith honors Him.

*Hebrews 11:6 But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.*

*1 John 5:13 These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.*

#### **5. The centurion's great lessons (vs. 9-10)**

What lessons should we learn from the centurion's great faith? There are two lessons to learn and live by:

##### **a. A lesson about authority and submission**

The centurion understood well the principle of authority and how the chain of command works. He stated what every military person learns in basic training. There is a chain of command and it must be followed. He was under the authority of officers above him and he was in authority over the men below him. You don't have to be in the military to understand and appreciate that principle. Every day of our lives we understand how that works: on our jobs, in government, police, and so on. We ought to realize that Christ has supreme authority and we all live in submission to Him. Sadly, some people have never learned that lesson. They want Christ to be their Savior, but not their Lord. They want to have His blessings, but they're not interested in His commands.

##### **b. A lesson about trust and obedience**

Because Jesus has supreme authority we should trust Him for all things and obey Him in all things. The Christian life revolves around two words: trust and obey. We trust Him to do what only He can do, and we obey whatever He tells us to do. Just before Christ ascended back to the Father in heaven He left these orders, called the Great Commission.

*Matthew 28:18-20* <sup>18</sup> And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. <sup>19</sup> Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit: <sup>20</sup> Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.