**THE CENTURION AND HIS SERVANT**

***So Great Faith***

***Luke 7:1-10***

Sunday School Lesson 7

*The Miracles of Jesus*

02/24/2019

**Introduction:** Following the miracle of the paralyzed man, Jesus called Matthew to be the twelfth apostle. The Pharisees also began ramping up their attacks on Christ. They questioned why He would eat with sinners at Matthew’s house. They called out His apostles for picking and eating corn on the Sabbath day, and they also were greatly displeased when He healed the man with the withered hand on the Sabbath. In spite of the opposition, the Lord continued to heal and teach many. After preaching the sermon on the mount, Jesus entered again into Capernaum. While He was there, He was approach by some Jewish elders. They had come to Him on behalf of a Roman centurion who had a servant sick to the point of death. This centurion was friendly to the Jewish nation, and he had even helped them in building a synagogue. When they presented the worthiness of the centurion to Jesus, He agreed to go with them back to the centurion’s home. Along the way, the centurion sent out his friends and requested that Jesus not come to his home. Instead, he asked that Jesus just speak the word of healing, as the man did not view himself worthy of Jesus’ presence. Jesus marveled at the man’s faith, and He told the crowd that followed Him that He had not seen so great faith among the Jews. He granted the centurion’s request, and He healed the servant without stepping foot in the man’s home. While the centurion’s faith is the primary focus, one cannot consider his faith without also considering his humility. In this lesson, we will look at how humility and faith fit in so closely together.

1. THE CENTURION HAD GREAT FAITH BECAUSE HE DID NOT COMPARE THE JEWS PLIGHT AGAINST HIS OWN POSITION AND AUTHORITY OVER THEM. (LUKE 7:3,5,7-8)
2. **Notice that he loved the nation of Israel even though they were under Roman captivity (Luke 7:5, 8).** When the Jewish elders spoke to Jesus, they told all about the affection the centurion had for the nation of Israel. It is pretty amazing to think that a centurion would have loved Israel. The Roman empire was a massive empire, the most powerful in the world at that time. This man was one of the leaders within that empire. While he did not have a grand position like some others may have, he did have one hundred soldiers that answered directly to him. In verse 8, he talked about his authority and how he had people available to him at his beckoning call. It would have been easy for the centurion to look down upon the Jews, like many of the other Romans had done. Not only that, but he was willing to put his faith in the God of Israel. He probably saw the silliness of the Roman pagan worship, and he was not willing to view the Caesar as a “god.” Instead, he trusted in the Lord and even helped in building a synagogue for the Jewish people. When he heard about Jesus, it was not hard for him to believe in a Jewish Messiah.
3. **Notice that he viewed the Jewish elders as more worthy than himself to approach Jesus (Luke 7:3,7).** Now that he had received news about Jesus, he had to decide how to contact Him. He may not have known exactly where to find Him. The Bible tells us that the centurion did not view himself as worthy to come directly unto Jesus. Consequently, this also means that he viewed the Jewish elders as more worthy than himself, since he asked for them to go and find Jesus. The elders would have been those in his local city that served as Jewish council for the area. Clearly, he had a good relationship with them, based on what we saw in the first point regarding his affection for Israel. The fact that he viewed them as worthy shows us that he did not just love and respect Israel, but he also viewed Israel in a higher regard than his own nation. For the current day believer, we can understand this mentality, as we are able to recognize that Israel is still God’s chosen nation.
4. THE CENTURION HAD GREAT FAITH BECAUSE HE DID NOT MEASURE HIS WORTHINESS BY LISTENING TO THE OPINION OF OTHERS. (LUKE 7:4,6-7)
5. **Notice how others viewed the worthiness of the centurion (Luke 7:4).** The Jewish elders viewed the centurion as someone worthy to get the attention of Jesus. This was why they were willing to go to Jesus on behalf of the centurion. The man did not ask for them to go and talk about how great he was. He was just hoping that the elders could find Jesus and that Jesus would show compassion on him. Jesus did not offer healing to those who were worthy recipients of it. If that were the barometer, no one would have been healed during His earthly ministry. Regardless, the elders had set in their mind that there were some who were worthy of a miracle and others who were not.
6. **Notice that the centurion did not agree with their opinion even when it looked true (Luke 7:6-7).** It is obvious that the Jewish elders were not supposed to ask Jesus to come with them to begin with. This was why he had sent them instead of going himself. It does not make sense that the centurion would have asked for them to bring Jesus to his house if he did not view himself as worthy of being in the Lord’s presence. I imagine that the centurion may have been a little frustrated when he saw them bringing Jesus and a big crowd to his home. The elders had good intentions. They were friends with the man, and they highly respected him. They probably asked for Jesus to come with them to prove to their friend that he was a worthy recipient of the healing. When he saw Jesus, it would have been easy for the centurion to buy into the hype of his worthiness. After all, it seemed that their opinion of his worth was true. Yet, he did not budge. His opinion of his self-worth was unaffected by their actions.
7. THE CENTURION HAD GREAT FAITH BECAUSE HE DID NOT TAKE THE LORD’S WILLINGNESS FOR GRANTED. (LUKE 7:6)
8. **Notice that the Lord was willing to go with the elders, although they had a poor understanding of His healing ministry (Luke 7:6).** As mentioned previously, Jesus does not weigh a person’s worth when giving out healing. In a sense, the elders were right in their view of the centurion, but not for the same reasons that they may have thought. Jesus looked towards a person’s faith in giving out healing. In that regard, the centurion was definitely a worthy recipient of a miracle. The elders did not mention the man’s faith, though. They were more concerned about the outward things that he had done to show his support for the nation of Israel. Jesus did not even bother to correct the men. This is likely because Jesus knew the heart of the man that was desiring a miracle.
9. **Notice that the centurion could have just let Jesus come to his home and heal his servant (Luke 7:6).** While it was not what the centurion wanted, Jesus was willing to come to his home and heal the servant. He was almost there. Now that the centurion knew that Jesus was willing, was it really that important to send his friends out to stop Him? Why not just let Jesus come into his home and provide the healing? The centurion did not take Jesus’ willingness for granted. As mentioned, he still viewed himself as unworthy. He was not going to let his own convenience override what he believed. He quickly sent his friends out there because he did not want to trouble Jesus any further. He knew that every minute that Jesus spent walking toward his house was another minute that Jesus could have been doing some other important task.
10. THE CENTURION HAD GREAT FAITH BECAUSE HE CARED FOR THOSE WHOM OTHERS WOULD NOT HAVE CARED FOR. (LUKE 7:1-3)
11. **Notice that the centurion viewed the servant as one who was dear unto him (Luke 7:2).** What might get lost in this story is the fact that all of this took place to heal the man’s servant. It was not his wife. It was not one of his children. It was just a servant in the house. While that sounds inhumane, that was the common attitude of the day. The average person did not value the life of a servant outside of the monetary investment that was made to hire one. The centurion did not seek healing because he wanted to spare the expense of hiring a new servant. The Bible tells us that the servant was dear unto him. This is a reflection of the man’s general attitude toward himself. Based on what we know from the story, it should not surprise us that the man cared for his servant. He did not view his life as any lesser than any other member of his house.
12. **Notice that the centurion risked potential backlash in order to find healing for his servant (Luke 7:1-10).** How would the centurion’s men view his decision? Would they question why the man would humble himself to the Jews? What would happen if word of this man’s story reached the ear of someone in the Roman government? Would they question the man’s loyalty to the Roman nation? Did his friends in the home agree with going through all of this hassle just for a servant? There were certainly risks involved for the centurion in reaching out to Jesus. Did the thought ever cross his mind on whether the servant was worth the risk? Not likely. Also, it is worth considering that the man also risked rejection from Jesus for the sake of his servant. Nothing mattered to him but finding healing for his servant.

**Conclusion:** God’s plan may not result in every person doing something of great fame within the Christian walk. How many stories are there in the Bible of people that we rarely consider or even know their names? In this story, the Bible does not even give the name of the centurion. Some believe that he was the same centurion found in Acts, whose name was Cornelius, but we have no way of knowing that for certain. This is intentional. The Bible could have put this man’s name in the story if the Lord desired for it to be there. The point is that anyone can be a person of so great faith. The centurion was not concerned about getting his name out there. In fact, that went counter to his faith. I wonder how many Christians are more concerned about their status than having so great faith? The Bible tells us that faith is what pleases the Lord. Are we willing to humble ourselves to increase our faith? As we decrease, He increases!