

STORY

The Centurion's Servant - Matthew 8:5-13; Luke 7:1-10

TEACHER PRAYER

Dear Lord, You promise to hear those who call upon You in truth. In our times many have attacked Your Word as unreliable and not to be completely trusted. Yet, as we see Your hand working throughout history for the benefit of all nations, we know that Your Word is true and backed by Your ultimate power and authority. Strengthen the faith of those who hear this lesson that they may, as the Centurion did, trust with humble faith the power and reliability of Your Word. For the message of salvation in Jesus is in Your Word and needs to be trusted by all. You have promised that Your Word will never be destroyed, but also warned that it can depart from those who despise it. I pray that Your Word may truly be respected and believed by me and those with whom I share it that You may continue to bless us through that Word and our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen

VOCABULARY

Centurion - a Roman commander of about 100 men, this one commanded the garrison at Capernaum

Gnashing - grinding of teeth, normally in frustration or anger

Gentile - any person who is not of Jewish ancestry

Israel - a small country east of the Mediterranean Sea, the region in which Jesus conducted His ministry

OUTER AIM

Jesus heals a Centurion's servant

INNER AIM

God gives faith to trust in Him.

BACKGROUND

(Rupprecht Bible History References Vol.2, pp. 179-186)

We walk by faith not by sight. If you can see something or have proof of its existence, you do not need faith. Faith comes into play in those spiritual areas which are not subject to scientific proof.

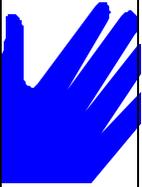
(Hebrews 11:1) "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." In this episode we have an example of genuine "faith."

Luke 7:1

- ▶ This event took place after Jesus had preached the "Sermon on the Mount."
- ▶ Again we find Him in Capernaum where He had been well received.
- ▶ Capernaum - (village of Nahum) was on the western shore of the Sea of Galilee. (Matthew 4:13) It was in the "land of Gennesaret," [(Matthew 14:34) comp. John 6:17,21,24] It was of sufficient size to be always called a "city," (Matthew 9:1; Mark 1:33) and had its own synagogue, in which our Lord frequently taught, (Mark 1:21; Luke 4:33,38; John 6:59) The only interest attaching to Capernaum is as the residence of our Lord and his apostles, the scene of so many miracles and "gracious words." It was when he returned thither that he is said to have been "in the house." (Mark 2:1) - Smith's Bible Dictionary

v. 2

- ▶ The local Centurion or Roman commander had a servant whom he loved dearly..



▶ The servant was sick (Matt: paralyzed and dreadfully tormented) and about to die.

v. 3

▶ The Centurion was Roman, a Gentile, a non-Jew, asking a favor of an important Jew, Jesus.

▶ So he sent some of the Jewish Elders to ask that Jesus go out of His way to heal his servant.

vs. 4-5

▶ The Jewish messengers respected the Roman commander, for he had treated the Jews well and even built a synagogue for them.

▶ They pleaded that Jesus would also respect the centurion for those reasons and honor his request.

v. 6

▶ Jesus for His own reasons consented to heal the servant (Matt 8:7) and went with the messengers towards the Centurion's house.

▶ But before arriving, the Centurion sent friends again to Jesus.

▶ The Centurion felt unworthy (knowing he was ceremonially unclean) of having Jesus come to his house and didn't want Jesus to expose Himself to the discomfort of becoming "contaminated" by contact with Gentiles.

v. 7

▶ So unworthy did the Centurion feel that he didn't feel respectable enough to come himself to Jesus.

▶ But he believed in Jesus' power to simply say the word, and his servant would be healed.

v. 8

▶ He understood authority, for he was a soldier accustomed to the "chain of command" system.

▶ When he was given or gave a command, that order was carried out without question.

▶ The Centurion trusted that Jesus held absolute authority over sickness in the same way. He knew that Jesus could heal the sickness by giving an order if Jesus would but wish to do so.

v. 9

▶ Even Jesus marveled that a Gentile would display such a faith in Jesus and His authority.

▶ So He pointed it out to the crowd around Him, emphasizing that He hadn't found such a faith among the Israelites.

▶ The centurion had showed his faith 1) in his love for his servant 2) in his humble feeling of unworthiness before Jesus and 3) his confidence in Jesus' power to heal with a simple command.

Matthew 8:11-12

▶ Jesus adds this warning: Many Gentiles from the ends of the earth will believe in Jesus and so enter heaven with the Forefathers of the Jews.

▶ But the Jews who reject their promised Messiah will be cast out of heaven into outer darkness, that is, Hell, where they will be tormented for their sins and unbelief.

Matthew 8:13 (Luke 7:10)

▶ Jesus' reply to the Centurion quantifies the miracle of healing by the faith shown. And indeed the servant was healed at Jesus' command, without His presence or a special sign.

STUDENT PRAYER

Jesus Christ, My Savior, thank You for bringing Your word also to us and to people of every nation. Help us to trust Your Word with humble and courageous hearts that we may lay hold of all Your precious promises. For we know that You have the power and the Love to do all that You have promised. So, when we call upon You, we know that You will answer. With Jesus as our

Savior we know that we will be saved. And when we pray, we know that Your answer will be what is best for all whom our prayer touches. We come to You, Jesus, in whom we trust, Amen.

PRESENTATION

Briefly review previous story as time allows. Make links to the new story when possible.

Tell the story: Teachers, be encouraged to tell the story in your own words while remaining faithful to the scriptural account. When scripture records the story in more than one place, you may want to harmonize the accounts (including extra details found in each account.) Let the students know where they can find the additional details in the Bible.

Discuss the story: While reviewing the major events of the story, discuss the possible applications to the students' lives. Ask questions that make them think about the story and show that they understand the story.

1. Why did the soldier come to Jesus? (*His servant was very sick.*)
2. What did the soldier believe Jesus could do? (*Heal the servant.*)
3. The soldier was humble and had a strong faith. What did he believe Jesus could do? (*Heal the servant without coming into his house.*)
4. How are you like the soldier? (*We believe Jesus will help and save us.*)

APPLICATIONS

1. The centurion trusted Jesus' Word, that it would accomplish whatever Jesus wanted it to. That same powerful word of God created the world, keeps the stars in their courses, sends the seasons, and assures us of salvation in Jesus. We should trust it as confidently and humbly as the Centurion did. We should not need any more proof God's Word is truth and profitable for life and salvation. To deny part of the Word of God threatens all of it and ultimately destroys our assurance of salvation in Jesus Christ.
2. An additional point to be made in connection with Jesus' powerful Word is that He can and did heal a deadly earthly disease by simply saying the word. What a comfort that can be to young and old alike when they or a family member or friend are afflicted with any disease of any severity. Our Lord can care for our well-being in any way He may choose.
3. How thankful we can be that Jesus wants all people to be saved, not just one particular race or nation. We are a part of those who have "come from the east and the west" to sit at His table. God's Word is able to create faith in the hearts of people from all nations. That is why God sends us with His Word to all nations.

PASSAGES

These passages can be assigned as memory work or simply discussed in class as to how they fit the lesson.

Lower

Hebrews 11:1 - Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

Middle any of the above and...

Psalms 130:3-5 - If You, LORD, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand? But there is forgiveness with You, That You may be feared. I wait for the LORD, my soul waits, And in His word I do hope.

Psalms 50:15 - Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify Me."

Upper any of the above and...

Psalm 46 all.

Psalm 107:19-20 - Then they cried out to the LORD in their trouble, And He saved them out of their distresses. He sent His word and healed them, And delivered them from their destructions.

Isaiah 55:10-11 - "For as the rain comes down, and the snow from heaven, And do not return there, But water the earth, And make it bring forth and bud, That it may give seed to the sower And bread to the eater, So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; It shall not return to Me void, But it shall accomplish what I please, And it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it."

HYMN CHOICES

"Lord, as Thou Wilt, Deal Thou With Me" (TLH 406)

"When in the Hour of Utmost Need" (TLH 522: 1-2, or all)

"My God, My Father, Make Me Strong" (TLH 424)