

The unfolding of your words gives light.

To Seek and to Save

An Exposition of the Gospel of Luke

^{7:1}When He had completed all His discourse in the hearing of the people, He went to Capernaum^a.

²And a centurion's slave, who was highly regarded by him, was sick and about to die^b. ³When he heard about Jesus, he sent some Jewish elders asking Him to come and save the life of his slave^c. ⁴When they came to Jesus, they earnestly implored Him, saying, "He is worthy for You to grant this to him^d"; ⁵for he loves our nation and it was he who built us our synagogue^e." ⁶Now Jesus *started* on His way with them; and when He was not far from the house, the centurion sent friends^f, saying to Him, "Lord, do not trouble Yourself further, for I am not worthy for You to come under my roof^g"; ⁷for this reason I did not even consider myself worthy to come to You, but *just* say the word, and my servant will be healed^h. ⁸For 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 itⁱ." ⁹Now when Jesus

^a 7:1 **When He had completed all His discourse in the hearing of the people, He went to Capernaum.** Capernaum was now Jesus' base of operations. These geographical markers help us put the earthly ministry of Jesus on the map. The Sermon on the Mount may have been delivered only a mile or so from Capernaum, where this next encounter took place.

^b 7:2 **a centurion's slave, who was highly regarded by him, was sick and about to die.** This centurion loved his slave and knew where to go for help. Luke the physician wants us to understand how grave the situation was so we are sure not to miss the miraculous.

^c 7:3 **When he heard about Jesus, he sent some Jewish elders asking Him to come and save the life of his slave.** The man had surely heard in the Capernaum synagogue of the great prophets in Israel's history. Jesus fit the character and the ability, so he asked in faith that Jesus was all he had heard.

^d 7:4 **When they came to Jesus, they earnestly implored Him, saying, "He is worthy for You to grant this to him."** Some have criticized the Jews for suggesting that this man deserved God's favor. There is a great lesson in humility here, but it is not in this verse. These men simply expressed to Jesus the reason they loved this Gentile centurion.

^e 7:5 **he loves our nation and it was he who built us our synagogue.** The centurion may have been some sort of Jewish proselyte to have provided for the Hebrews in Capernaum a building set aside for the specific purpose of studying the Scripture. They even used the strongest word for love (*agapao*) to describe the man's commitment to Israel.

^f 7:6 **Jesus started on His way with them; and when He was not far from the house, the centurion sent friends.** Jesus consented, but there was more than a physical healing in this story for our instruction. Somehow the centurion knew Jesus was coming to his house. He did not want that.

^g 7:6 **Lord, do not trouble Yourself further, for I am not worthy for You to come under my roof.** In this verse and he next the centurion contradicts the people who came to Jesus. The message was, "Save my servant," not "I am worthy of a visit from You." Here the man uses words that mean "I am not *enough* for you to come under my roof."

^h 7:7 **I did not even consider myself worthy to come to You, but just say the word, and my servant will be healed.** Here he uses the same word the Jews used, but in the negative. He says he does not *deserve* to approach Jesus.

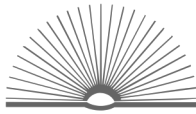
ⁱ 7:8 **I also am a man placed under authority, with soldiers under me; and I say to this one, 'Go!' and he goes, and to another, 'Come!' and he comes, and to my slave, 'Do this!' and he does it."** The centurion was a people-mover and he understands that Jesus is a universe-mover. There is evidence of his ability to command others here. He sent this servant with a

The Gospel of Luke
Steven Svendsen, Sr.

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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^a.”¹⁰ When those who had been sent returned to the house, they found the slave in good health^{b, c}

message. He even had some of the Jewish elders (verse 3) approach Jesus to ask for his slave’s healing in the first place. Now he effectively says, “I give commands to people and things happen. You order molecules and things happen.”

^a 7:9 **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.”** The Gentile got it when many Jews missed it. This is an illustration of Jesus’ teaching that attachment to the visible church does not necessarily reveal the heart. The gospel of Christ is for the world. It is a false view of the deity and humanity of Christ to assume that He was never pleasantly surprised while on earth. Here is an example. The word “marveled” is the same word Luke used to describe the wonder of the people in Bethlehem when they heard the account of angels announcing the coming of Messiah. It was used of Mary and Joseph’s attitude when Simeon and Anna publicly blessed baby Jesus in the temple.

^b 7:10 **When those who had been sent returned to the house, they found the slave in good health.** What self-proclaimed miracle worker ever did a healing when physically absent from the sick person?

^c 7:1-10 Notice that the centurion loved his slave and that no mention is made of the slave having faith. Take heart as you pray for other people. Notice the marks of “great faith”:

1. You have an honest assessment of your own unworthiness before God. The centurion did not live in despair and give up. Quite the opposite. He simply knew that his help would not come on the basis of his own merit. So then the opposing unbelief would produce a delusion that somehow you can earn God’s favor.
2. You have a revelation-based assessment of God’s character. Somehow the centurion, doubtless having hung around the synagogue he funded, The opposite would be imagining God as you think He should be or as information outside the Scripture tells you He should be. This kind of unbelief ends in defection when God does not perform up to your expectations.
3. You apply both assessments to your present situation. Unbelief may profess correct theology, but it’s lack of substance shows up when you think your sin and the perfect character of God have nothing to do with your present trial.

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