

Faith Demonstrated
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Matthew 8:5-13

Opening question: What is a “chain of command” in the military? Why is it important in organizations or even in the home?

This morning, Jesus encounters a military man who understood the “chain of command” and authority. He was able to “connect the dots” between a human authority structure and the heavenly authority given to Jesus by God the Father.

He displayed INCREDIBLE faith in Jesus’ authority and power that is a model to you and me today. So let’s dig into this passage and see what it says; what it means; and how it should change us this week.

Matthew 8:5–6 (ESV)

The Faith of a Centurion

⁵When he had entered Capernaum, a centurion came forward to him, appealing to him, ⁶“Lord, my servant is lying paralyzed at home, suffering terribly.”

- After His Sermon on the Mount Jesus shifted from preaching to proof.
- In chapters eight and nine Jesus performed a series of miracles that displayed His power in very practical ways: He healed many; He calmed a storm; He raised a girl from the dead.
- On the mountain He had “taught with authority.” When He came down from the mountain He “demonstrated that authority.”
- This text not only displays Jesus’ “wonder-working power,” it confirms that His power is limitless because His authority from the Father is limitless.
- Verse five: After the Sermon Jesus headed to Capernaum, His base of operations. If the sermon occurred where most scholars believe, this was about a one-hour walk to the town He called home at this time.
- Luke’s account implies this is the same day of the sermon.

- Before He got to Capernaum Jesus healed a leper. Then as He walked into town a Centurion approaches him with a request for help.
- **Who were Centurions?**
- It's interesting that any centurions mentioned in the New Testament were "good guys." This one cared about his servant and believed Jesus could heal him.
- In Mark 15:39 a centurion who witnessed the crucifixion identified Jesus as the Son of God.
- In Acts 10 the conversion of the centurion Cornelius marked the beginning of the church's outreach to the Gentile world.
- In Acts 27:3 the centurion Julius treated the Apostle Paul with courtesy.
- These passages illustrate the generally favorable impression made by the centurions who appear in the NT. They were usually career soldiers, and they formed the real backbone of the Roman military force.¹
- Luke's account indicates that the centurion sent some Jewish elders to make his plea to Jesus. Matthew says simply that the centurion came with a request. This isn't an inconsistency in scripture; it's two witnesses describing the same story in different levels of detail. The point: this Gentile, Roman officer was willing to ask Jesus to heal his servant.
- Let's talk about THIS centurion.
- The Life Application Bible poses a great question. **What were some possible obstacles that might have kept this centurion from approaching Jesus? Do any of those keep us from Christ?**²
- **Why was the fact that this officer approached Jesus for help shocking from a "racial" perspective?**
- **What is the man's demeanor in approaching Jesus? What does the word "appealing" in verse five tell you? Roman officers weren't accustomed to "begging" Jews for things!**
- **What does the centurion's concern for his servant say about him?**
- **What does the simple fact that he asked Jesus for healing indicate about the centurion?**
- **How did this gentile Roman officer's demeanor toward Jesus compare to how the Jewish religious leaders confronted Him?**

- So, we have a gentile Roman officer with COMPASSION for his servant; coming to Jesus in HUMILITY and with FAITH. How much faith? Let's see that. In verse seven Jesus responds:

⁷ And he said to him, "I will come and heal him." ⁸ But the centurion replied, "Lord, I am not worthy to have you come under my roof, but only say the word, and my servant will be healed. ⁹ For I too am a man 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." ¹⁰ When Jesus heard this, he marveled and said to those who followed him, "Truly, I tell you, with no one in Israel have I found such faith.

- **Why would Jesus' response have been shocking to both the Jews and the centurion?**
- **Verse nine: How did the centurion react to this idea (v. 8)? Why?**
- This centurion understood the Jewish laws about contact with Gentiles. Coming into a Gentile home would defile a Jew. This would have been a big inconvenience to Jesus. Apparently, the centurion also didn't feel worthy of Jesus coming to his home.
- Let's pause for a great truth: No matter who you are; where you are; what you've done; or how messed up you are Jesus will meet you there to solve your problem! No one is too bad, too dirty, or too distant for Jesus's touch.
- Verse nine really sets this story apart from others. **How did this man's understanding of military order and chain of command give him incredible insight to the extent of Jesus' power? How did it give him insight into the SOURCE of that power?**
- You and I aren't surprised about the scope and source of Jesus' power. We understand where His authority comes from because we've read verses like:

Matthew 28:18 (ESV)

18 And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

Mark 1:22 (ESV)

22 And they were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as one who had authority, and not as the scribes.

Mark 1:27 (ESV)

27 And they were all amazed, so that they questioned among themselves, saying, "What is this? A new teaching with authority! He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him."

- What's amazing about this centurion's understanding of Jesus' power and authority is that he didn't get it from reading the New Testament because he didn't HAVE a New Testament; he was LIVING the New Testament!
- This pagan had an unbelievable understanding of who Jesus was; the power Jesus had; and that it came from a higher authority.
- To make it even more incredible, he believed Jesus could heal his servant from a distance! That should blow our minds! It's blew Jesus' mind too!
- Verse ten says Jesus "marveled" at the faith of this centurion.
- Marveled means Jesus was amazed. By the way, side note, Jesus was God and God is never amazed at anything. **So, how could Jesus have been amazed?** [Hint: The "God-man."]
- If you search for the word "marvel" in the New Testament you'll find lots of people marveled at Jesus, but Jesus only marveled TWICE in scripture.
- He marveled at this man's faith and he marveled at the unbelief of the Jews in his hometown. Look at Mark 6:1-6.
- Only two things made Jesus "marvel:" the great belief of a pagan and the great unbelief of the Jews. Jesus pointed this out to His disciples.

¹¹ I tell you, many will come from east and west and recline at table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, ¹² while the sons of the kingdom will be thrown into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

- **Any idea what Jesus meant by "recline at the table with Abraham, Issac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven?" What do you think he meant by "many will come from the east and west?"**

- **Verse 12: Who are the “sons of the kingdom” who will not only miss the feast...but will miss the kingdom? What were they relying on?**
- The incredible faith of this gentile centurion compared to the unbelief of most Jews demonstrated two truths:
 - o Jesus came to bring salvation to BOTH the Jew and to the Gentile.
 - o Being born into the Jewish race doesn't automatically get you into the kingdom of heaven.
- Another truth for us today: Being religious or coming from a religious family doesn't get us into Heaven. Who do we know today that needs to understand that?
- After Jesus “marveled,” He took action.

¹³ And to the centurion Jesus said, “Go; let it be done for you as you have believed.” And the servant was healed at that very moment.

So, What's The Takeaway?

- This week, YOU tell ME! Let's close with some questions:
- **How does this passage encourage YOU in your life today?**
- **What does it remind you about Jesus' power in your circumstances?**
- **How can we use the centurion as a model for us in bringing our requests to Jesus?**
- **What are some ways we might put this passage into practice this week?**
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¹ Brand, C., Draper, C., England, A., Bond, S., Clendenen, E. R., & Butler, T. C. (Eds.). (2003). Centurion. In *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (pp. 275–276). Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers.

² Life Application Study Bible NKJV by Tyndale. Note on pg. 1662.