

Owning a Faith That Matters

Session 2

January 28, 2024

Yielded Faith

The Point: Faith acknowledges the authority of Jesus.

Session Passage: Luke 7:1-10

Luke 7:1-5

Connection to The Point: No matter the situation, we can look to Jesus for help.

Saying all this; All his sayings (v. 1). This expression refers to Jesus's discourse recorded in Luke 6:20-49. Often referred to in Luke as the "Sermon on the Plain" (see the reference to "a level place in the plain," 6:17), it parallels the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5-7.

Capernaum (v. 1). This place, with a name meaning "village of Nahum," was situated on the northwest shore of Lake Gennesaret or the Sea of Galilee. This thriving Jewish village served as the base of operations for Jesus as He began His ministry. Fishing and farming were important industries in the area. A customs station and a military installation under the command of a centurion existed in Capernaum. Some of Jesus's disciples, including Peter, Andrew, and Matthew, lived in the village. In spite of Jesus's teachings and miracles in Capernaum, however, most of its inhabitants refused to accept Him as the Messiah. Thus they fell under His condemnation for their refusal to repent (Matt. 11:20-24).

Servant (v. 2). The Greek word basically means "slave." This term originally designated the lowest rung on the scale of servitude. It became the most common and general word for *servant*. It depicts an individual totally responsible to and dependent on another. In the first century at least one out of five persons was a slave.

Highly valued, Valued highly, Dear (v. 2). The Greek adjective means the centurion regarded this servant as prized, esteemed, or honorable. The servant possibly held a position with great responsibility. Nevertheless, he was still a servant with no legal rights. In spite of the fact the servant could be easily replaced, the centurion cared for him and did not want to lose him.

Sick, and about ready to die (v. 2). Matthew described the centurion's servant as "paralyzed sick of the palsy" and "in terrible agony suffering terribly grievously tormented" (Matt. 8:6). Interestingly, the Greek word translated *sick* can also mean "evil." While this centurion's servant clearly had some type of physical ailment, illness in the ancient world was often associated with the suffering individual's sin. While some illnesses are directly related to an individual's wrongdoing, the assumption that suffering is always the direct result of the sufferer's sin is wrong. Jesus countered that viewpoint in John 9:1-3. Scripture teaches that illness with its attendant suffering is inevitable in a fallen world (Gen. 3:14-19). Furthermore, the Bible also affirms that sometimes God uses suffering to teach, discipline, and mature His children (1 Pet. 4:12-13).

Centurion (v. 3). This officer in the Roman army commanded one hundred soldiers at full strength. These men typically were career soldiers and formed the backbone of the Roman military. This centurion may not have been serving in a direct Roman military capacity. He may have been in the service of Herod Antipas, who used Gentile soldiers. Centurions who appear in the New Testament present a favorable image. A centurion who witnessed Jesus's death identified Him as the Son of God (Mark 15:39). The conversion of the centurion Cornelius marked the initiation of the early church's outreach to the Gentile world (Acts 10). The centurion Julius treated Paul kindly as the apostle sailed as a prisoner to Rome (27:1-3).

Elders (v. 3). Although *elder* can refer to age, in this context it designates these men's role as Jewish officials. Among the Jews, men called *elders* functioned as leaders in local synagogues and as members of the Sanhedrin, the highest Jewish council or court. The elders mentioned in Luke 7:3 were leaders of the local Jewish community. The term later came to designate spiritual leaders in the early church.

Requesting, Asking, Beseeching (v. 3). The form of this term in Greek is singular emphasizing that the centurion was the one making the request. Gentile commanders and Jewish leaders came in contact on a regular basis in conducting daily business. Such contact resulted in their doing favors for one another at critical times. Thus the centurion asked the Jewish elders to approach Jesus to request healing for the centurion's servant. Luke thus made clear that the centurion himself was doing the asking through the Jewish elders. The Gospel of Matthew clearly shows the centurion made the request (Matt. 8:5-6).

Save the life, Heal (v. 3). The Greek term behind this phrase can convey various shades of meaning depending on context. It can mean "to rescue" or "to save from danger" as when Paul and other shipwrecked passengers "safely" reached shore (Acts 27:44). In that same context the centurion, who wanted to "save" Paul's life, thwarted the soldiers' plan to kill the prisoners on board the ship (27:42-43). In other contexts, including Luke 7:3, the verb means "to heal" (Matt. 14:36).

Pleaded, Besought (v. 4). This significant Greek verb literally means "to call to one's side." Its various shades of meaning include "begging or beseeching," "encouraging," "comforting," and "instructing." A related noun is often transliterated or written in English as Paraclete. Jesus used the term to designate the Comforter (KJV) or Counselor (CSB) He promised to send following His ascension (John 14:16), the Holy Spirit, who permanently dwells within us as believers. He not only intercedes for us but also encourages, comforts, and instructs us.

Worthy, Deserves (v. 4). The Greek word means "having weight or value." Why would Jewish leaders earnestly beg Jesus to come to the aid of a Gentile? These Jewish elders recognized this centurion as different from the way Jews typically regarded Gentiles. He cared for the Jews and had used his own resources to build them a synagogue (v. 5).

Synagogue (v. 5). This structure served political, social, religious, and educational purposes for the Jews. The synagogue became the primary Jewish religious institution following the destruction of the Jerusalem temple in AD 70. However, it was probably functioning by the sixth or fifth centuries BC. The Jews assembled in the local synagogues for prayer, worship, instruction in God's Word, and sometimes community judicial proceedings. Jesus's visit to the Nazareth synagogue sheds light on a first-century synagogue service (Luke 4:16-21).

Luke 7:6-8

Connection to The Point: Faith recognizes the authority of Jesus.

Jesus (v. 6). This name, occurring throughout Luke 7:1-10, derives from the Hebrew word for *Joshua*, meaning "Yahweh saves." An angel of the Lord directed Joseph to name the son born to Mary "Jesus, because he will Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins" (Matt. 1:21).

Lord (v. 6). This title, signifying a person as having power or authority, is the one normally used in the New Testament to refer to Jesus as Lord. It is sometimes translated "Master." The term carries a wide range of reference. It is sometimes applied to God, angels, and human beings, as well as to Jesus. When people in the Gospels used the designation of Jesus, they sometimes meant nothing more than "sir." At other times, the title expressed a full confession of faith (John 20:28).

"I am not worthy, I do not deserve" (v. 6). The Greek term rendered *worthy deserve* differs from the one translated "worthy deserve" in verse 4. The word in verse 6 means "sufficient in ability" or "fit in character." The centurion

expressed his sense of unfitness for Jesus even to enter his house. The terminology also appears in Matthew 3:11 where John the Baptist expressed his unworthiness to remove Jesus's sandals, a task assigned to the lowliest of servants, who also were required to wash guests' dusty feet. Perhaps this Gentile centurion thought that Jesus as a Jew would regard Himself as defiled if He entered a Gentile home. This passage provides an example of the social and religious gulf that existed between Jews and Gentiles in the first century. The early church struggled to overcome this gap (see Acts 10).

Roof (v. 6). This word derives from a verb meaning "to cover" and literally means "a covering." Here it conveys the sense of "house." Roof structures might be formed from tree poles or palm tree trunks. The builders placed smaller branches, reeds, or palm fronds over these poles to provide a base for a packed clay layer. In some cases stone was pulverized and spread over the clay to make the roof more water resistant. Outside stairs might lead up to the roof, making it an accessible area in which to enjoy cool evening breezes.

"Say them a word" (v. 7). The centurion recognized Jesus did not even need to be present with his servant in order to heal him. Jesus only needed to pronounce the healing word for the servant to be cured. With his statement, the centurion expressed absolute faith in Jesus. Genuine faith recognizes that the Lord can heal without rituals, special ointments, monetary gifts, or even touch.

Healed (v. 7). In most New Testament references in which this verb occurs, it designates physical healing. Luke, the physician, used the term more than any other writer. It occurs fifteen times in the books of Luke and Acts. In some contexts, however, it seems to convey the deeper spiritual meaning of forgiveness of sin or salvation (Matt. 13:15; 1 Pet. 2:24).

Under authority (v. 8). The word rendered *authority* also means "power," "privilege," or "right." The centurion's words can be interpreted in one of two ways. They could mean that just as the centurion could exercise certain powers because he had received delegated authority from someone above him, so Jesus, under divine authority, had greater power and could give orders to heal his servant in God's name. On the other hand, the centurion's words could mean that even though the centurion was under authority, he could still give orders, so Jesus possessed even greater power since He was not under authority. However, we interpret the centurion's words, Luke wanted us to understand the centurion was emphasizing Jesus's authority, not downplaying it.

Soldiers (v. 8). When the tribes were threatened in early Israelite history, all adult males were called to fight. David was the first leader to put together a national army of professional soldiers. Kings frequently gathered a personal group of soldiers to guard them. In the New Testament period Roman soldiers were common. John the Baptist admonished soldiers not to extort money from civilians (Luke 3:14). In contrast, the account of the Roman centurion (leader of one hundred soldiers) in Luke 7 and the centurion Cornelius in Acts 10 present soldiers in a positive light. Paul used the analogy of the fully armed soldier to teach believers about Christian warfare (Eph. 6:10-18).

Luke 7:9-10

Connection to The Point: Jesus affirms our faith when we acknowledge/recognize His authority.

Amazed, Marveled (v. 9). Jesus responded to the centurion's faith in the same way crowds typically responded to His miracles—in amazement. (See Matt. 15:31 where the same Greek verb appears.) The verb also can be translated "marveled" or "wondered at." Luke used the verb repeatedly in his Gospel to designate people's response to Jesus at significant times in Jesus's life and ministry. In Luke 2:18 it identifies the listeners' amazement at the shepherds' announcement of Jesus's birth. In 2:33 the verb depicts Mary's and Joseph's response to Simeon's words upon seeing the child Jesus in the temple. In 8:25 the term expresses the disciples' reaction to Jesus's quieting the winds and waves on the Sea of Galilee. Even the religious leaders were amazed at Jesus's answers when they attempted to trap him (20:19-26). Finally, in 24:41 the verb expresses His followers' amazement at seeing the resurrected Lord.

Crowd following him, People that followed him (v. 9). The Greek word translated *crowd people* refers to a throng or a casual collection of people. The same term appears in Luke 5:1 where Luke recorded the crowd as pressing in on Jesus to hear His words. Wherever Jesus went, crowds followed Him for various reasons. Some wanted healing. Some desired physical sustenance (bread). Some like the religious leaders wanted to trap Him. Others, however, desired to learn from Him (see Luke 5:1). Masses of people felt drawn to Jesus because they sensed His compassion for them. The term rendered *following/followed* can mean simply “to accompany.” It can also signify joining with a person in the sense of becoming a disciple. While multitudes willingly accompanied Jesus, few willingly chose to pay the cost of discipleship (see Luke 9:57-62).

Faith (v. 9). This common New Testament word conveys the idea of trust or the firm conviction that someone or some claim is true. An individual’s faith or personal trustful response to God’s revelation of Himself in Christ results in salvation (Eph. 2:8-9). Faith recognizes and acknowledges Jesus’s authority. Because He is God’s Son, we don’t have to wonder if He is able to act on our behalf. Luke presented the centurion as representative of believing Gentiles who stood in stark contrast to unbelieving Jews. This centurion’s affirmation of faith provides support for the later acceptance of Gentiles into the church. Jesus prized this quality in the centurion—the ability to believe God would do what He promised. Such faith far exceeded the stance of the Jewish leaders who knew Jesus could heal but who refused to follow Him. The book of Hebrews reminds readers including us: “Now without faith it is impossible to please God, since the one who draws near to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him” (Heb. 11:6).

Israel (v. 9). This designation first applied to an individual, then to a community of his descendants, and finally to a land area. The appellation was initially a personal name God gave the patriarch Jacob. As Jacob wrestled with God, God changed his name to Israel, meaning “God strives,” “God rules,” “God heals,” or “he strives against God” (Gen. 32:24-32). Jacob’s multiplied descendants became known as the Israelites. That designation identifies Jacob’s descendants in Egypt following their relocation there after Joseph became second in authority to Pharaoh (Ex. 1:7). The promised land, initially referred to as Canaan (Gen. 17:8), later became known as Israel. The name first applied to the whole territory conquered by the Israelites. After the division of the kingdom at the end of Solomon’s reign, the term identified the land belonging specifically to the northern ten tribes. The area belonging to the southern tribes was called Judah. By New Testament times the land was under Roman control with its three main areas designated Galilee, Samaria, and Judea.

House (v. 10). This general term, also in Luke 7:6, can refer to various kinds of dwelling places, including a personal residence, a palace, a tent, the human body, abodes of various animals, and the house of God. It also can denote a family or household, including the family of God (the church). Furthermore, it can indicate a person’s race or descendants, as in the phrase “the house of David” (Luke 1:27). In Luke 7:10 the word designates the centurion’s residence or dwelling. The fact this Roman centurion had built a synagogue for the Jews signifies he possessed wealth, and his house no doubt had features not found in the dwellings of average citizens.

Good health; Well; Whole (v. 10). This phrase/word translates a Greek word meaning “whole.” It is a form of a verb that means “to be sound” or “to be well.” Most of the occurrences of the term appear in Paul’s letters to 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus, where it generally refers to sound teaching or sound doctrine.