

A Centurion's Faith

Dr. Douglas W. Cho

[Luke 7:1-10] Now when He concluded all His sayings in the hearing of the people, He entered Capernaum. 2 And a certain centurion's servant, who was dear to him, was sick and ready to die. 3 So when he heard about Jesus, he sent elders of the Jews to Him, pleading with Him to come and heal his servant. 4 And when they came to Jesus, they begged Him earnestly, saying that the one for whom He should do this was deserving, 5 "for he loves our nation, and has built us a synagogue." 6 Then Jesus went with them. And when He was already not far from the house, the centurion sent friends to Him, saying to Him, "Lord, do not trouble Yourself, for I am not worthy that You should enter under my roof. 7 Therefore I did not even think myself worthy to come to You. But say the word, and my servant will be healed. 8 For I also am a man placed under authority, having 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." 9 When Jesus heard these things, He marveled at him, and turned around and said to the crowd that followed Him, "I say to you, I have not found such great faith, not even in Israel!" 10 And those who were sent, returning to the house, found the servant well [a]who had been sick.

In the New Testament, we read of three Roman centurions – the centurion of Capernaum we read above, the centurion who oversaw the crucifixion of Lord Jesus outside of Jerusalem, and Cornelius the centurion in Caesarea who was converted through the apostle Peter. A centurion was a Roman military rank and refers to a professional officer who commanded 60-100 soldiers in his unit. This centurion commanded his unit which was responsible for the security of the northwestern area of the Sea of Galilee. In this capacity, this man had a large responsibility and authority because he represented the power of the Roman Empire in this region.

We note the following characteristics about this centurion:

First, this centurion 'loved' the Jewish nation, meaning he came to a deep appreciation of the history and religion of the Jewish people. His words and actions spoke clearly of his appreciation and affection toward the Jewish people and their religion, as evidenced by his financing of the construction of the Jewish synagogue in Capernaum.

Secondly, this centurion had a favorable relationship with the local Jewish people and the elders of the Jews went to Jesus on his behalf for seeking help.

Thirdly, this centurion had love and concern that caused him to actively seek the help of the Lord Jesus for his healing. He had a heart of compassion and love for the people around him.

What was most surprising to the Lord Jesus about this centurion was that he recognized Jesus as the Son of God and the Savior of humanity. Because he identified Jesus as One who was so high above his level that he was unworthy of having His presence in his own house nor was he worthy even to come to the presence of Jesus. This centurion believed that, as he was unworthy to have the honor of the presence of the Roman emperor, so was he unable to bear having the sovereign Son of God come into his humble dwelling nor was he able to come near to His awesome holy presence.

John the Baptist also had a similar recognition of Lord Jesus as One who is so high above his level that he was not even worthy to tie His sandal strap, that he felt he was so low compared to Lord Jesus that he dared not even to come near to His feet to tie His sandal strap. This he said although John was related to Jesus through their mothers and was senior to Jesus by about six months.

[Mark 1:6-8] Now John was clothed with camel's hair and with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. 7 And he preached, saying, "There comes One after me who is mightier than I, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to stoop down and loose. 8 I indeed baptized you with water, but He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

The fisherman Peter, when he witnessed an exhibition of the sovereign power of the Son of God, felt how insignificant and unfit he was to be in the presence of the sovereign Savior that he felt prostrate before Him and confessed his unworthiness.

[Luke 5:5-8] But Simon answered and said to Him, "Master, we have toiled all night and caught nothing; nevertheless at Your word I will let down the net." 6 And when they had done this, they caught a great number of fish, and their net was breaking. 7 So they signaled to their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both the boats so that they began to sink. 8 When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!"

When Lord Jesus began His earthly ministry, He faced numerous misunderstandings, suspicion, hatred, and unbelief. Such ill-treatment came mostly from the religious groups of priests and scholars, in other words, the educated and the privileged class. Throughout the Old Testament, the people of Israel, despite their chosen people status, treated the Almighty God as a pestering overseer whose meddling in their affairs needed to be kept at a minimum. They rather favored the lifeless idols of their neighbors who said nothing, could see nothing and did not scold them when they were indulged in sinful, corrupt cultures. God sent numerous prophets and seers to instruct, warn, and guide them to godly standards. However, the Jewish people killed almost all of them because they did not like what the prophets were telling them.

Now, when the time came God sent His own Son into their midst in a human form so that they could see and hear directly from Him instead of through the prophets. Yet, they did not recognize Him as the Son of God and accused Him of blaspheming. On this day in Capernaum, a gentile military officer, who had come to know the Hebrew religion and apparently about the coming Savior, recognized Lord Jesus as that long-awaited Savior and confessed his unworthiness to face the awesome sovereignty of the Son of God. Lord Jesus marveled at this confession of great, simple faith, saying, *"I have not yet found such great faith, not in Israel!"* This was a day of a pleasant surprise to the Savior. He was pleased to meet a gentile military man of a great faith, which was not found among His own people.

We can learn the following lessons from the account of this Roman centurion at Capernaum:

First, who is Jesus to you? Is He a great teacher who brought moral teachings to humanity? Is He a person of worship at your church? Or do you recognize and worship Him as your Savior and King? Do you worship Him as fitting to His great stature and being in true fear and respect, both in church services and in your home life?

Second, when you make a request to Lord Jesus, do you exhibit the simple faith as this centurion did, "Just say the word and it will be done because You are the Almighty God of heaven and earth"? Lord Jesus had the pleasure of responding to the centurion's request of faith because He was pleased with his great faith. So, let us ask in faith and not with doubts.

[James 1:6-7] But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. 7 For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord.

"Lord God, we thank You that You are all-knowing and all-powerful and that there is nothing that You cannot do. We are so very privileged to be Your children. We are so very blessed to be within Your love and care. Help us learn how to properly ask in faith and in humility. In Jesus' holy name, Amen."

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Douglas Cho Ministry, PO Box 501, Cross Junction, VA 22625
Or Paypal to dwcho4771@gmail.com
South Korea: Shinhan Bank 110-008-655930 [조덕윤]