

Authority in Two Worlds

I. Jesus Sought by the Centurion

Matthew 8:5-13:

And when Jesus was entered into Capernaum, there came unto him a centurion, beseeching him,

And saying, Lord, my servant lieth at home sick of the palsy, grievously tormented.

And Jesus said unto him, I will come and heal him.

The centurion answered and said, Lord, I am not worthy that thou should come under my roof: but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed.

For I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me: and I say to this man, Go, and he goes; to another, Come, and he comes; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it.

When Jesus heard it, he marveled, and said to them that followed, Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel.

And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven.

But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

And Jesus said unto the centurion, Go thy way; and as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee. And his servant was healed in the selfsame hour.

Luke 7:1-10:

Now when he had ended all his sayings in the audience of the people, he entered into Capernaum.

And a certain centurion's servant, who was dear unto him, was sick, and ready to die.

And when he heard of Jesus, he sent unto him the elders of the Jews, beseeching him that he would come and heal his servant.

And when they came to Jesus, they besought him instantly, saying, That he was worthy for whom he should do this:

For he loves our nation, and he has built us a synagogue.

Then Jesus went with them. And when he was not far from the house, the centurion sent friends to him, saying unto him, Lord, trouble not thyself: for I am not worthy that thou shouldest enter under my roof:

Wherefore neither thought I myself worthy to come unto thee: but say in a word, and my servant shall be healed.

For I am also a man set under authority, having under me soldiers, and I say unto one, Go, and he goes; to another, Come, and he comes; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it.

When Jesus heard these things, he marveled at him, and turned about and said unto the people that followed, I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel.

And they that were sent, returning to the house, found the servant whole that had been sick.

II. A Contradiction in Scripture?

Bible scholars often use these passages to substantiate their belief that the Bible contradicts itself. Both of these passages are speaking of the same event. Matthew's gospel records the centurion came to Jesus. Luke says the elders of the Jews came to Jesus. On the surface, these verses do look contradictory, but the Bible never contradicts itself.

One important point about these passages is that the emphasis is not on faith; the emphasis is on authority. This story reveals the fact that the centurion had an understanding of simple authority. In verse 8 of Luke 7, the centurion says, "*For I am **also** a man set under authority...*" The word "*also*" is a key word. This man had already recognized the authority in Jesus. He understood the authority in which Jesus operated. Again, in verse 8 the centurion, expressing this understanding, says, "*For I am also a man set under authority, having under me soldiers, and I say unto one, Go, and he goes; to another, Come, and he comes; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it.*"

The centurion had sent out representatives in his name. He first sent the elders of the Jews, who began to explain the situation to Jesus. Then, as Jesus approached the centurion's house to pray for his servant, the centurion sent others in his name to tell Jesus that it was not necessary for Him to come; that if Jesus would just speak, he knew the servant would be healed.

Think about a salesperson. When they sell a product, they often say, "I made a sale". In a sense, this statement is true, but in reality, the company sold the product to the buyer. The salesperson was sent as a representative of the company. And beyond that, the company actually represents its owners. Therefore, the salesperson is not speaking for himself, he is speaking for the company he represents.

In the same way, the Jewish elders speaking to Jesus was the same as if the centurion was standing before Jesus making his request. However, the scriptures will reveal that the elders share more with Jesus than they were instructed to do so by the centurion.

III. The Centurion

The story recounted in Matthew and Luke is not about a servant who is healed; it is about a man who beseeched Jesus in behalf of his servant. This story is actually about an intercessor. The centurion spoke in behalf of his servant and sent intercessors in his name who spoke in the centurion's behalf. Nothing was mentioned about the servant who was healed having faith. The centurion had faith and stood in the gap for the servant. One thing we can surmise; the servant wanted to be healed. We cannot stand in the gap for someone who does not want to receive. A person may desire something for their life but may not have the faith to receive it; they may lack knowledge of the scriptures. That is when we can stand in the gap for their need to be met. The servant wanted healing and was near death. Because the man did not know how to receive healing, the centurion sent for Jesus.

The centurion lived outside Capernaum. He lived nearly a day's journey away from the city. He probably did business and worshiped in Capernaum. Imagine the disciples as they listened to these men describing the entire situation to Jesus asking Him "Will you come and heal him?" Jesus responded, "I will come." In fact, the Greek actually says, "I Myself will come." The disciples knew they would have to go with Jesus. They also knew it would be nearly a day's journey out of their way to reach the man and a day's journey back.

A centurion is a Roman. The word “*centurion*” indicates having authority over 100 soldiers. This particular centurion may have gained even more authority than indicated by his title because he apparently was quite wealthy. He had many servants under his authority. In Rome, a servant was a slave. Rome was one of the greatest slave nations in the world. The servant who was dying was actually a slave in the centurion’s home. He received no money for his service in the centurion’s home.

IV. The Account of the Centurion by the Jewish Elders

A. The Centurion Loves the Nation of Israel

The centurion mentioned in these accounts from Matthew and Luke was unique. The first thing the elders mentioned to Jesus was that the centurion had a love for the nation of Israel. For a Roman citizen, this was not normal. Romans typically did not like Israel. They considered being sent to Israel one of the worst tours of duty a Roman soldier could receive. Israel was part of the Roman Empire, but Rome only dominated them because of the intense hatred the Jews had toward Romans. For a Roman to love the nation of Israel was very unusual.

B. The Centurion Built a Jewish Synagogue

This particular centurion used his own money to finance the building of a synagogue. The elders told Jesus, “The very synagogue in which we worship was built by this man! He used his own money and built it for us.” We learn from this that not only did the centurion love the nation of Israel, he had become a proselyte to Judaism. He not only loved the people of Israel, he loved the Word of God. We do not know whether the man is saved, but it is a strong possibility since his faith is mentioned.

C. The Centurion’s Servant was “Dear” to Him

Luke 7:2 says the centurion’s servant was “dear” to him. This was extremely unusual. We have a Roman who actually had a love for his slave. In the Roman Empire, there were so many slaves that often they would just kill them after a time. Some Roman writings explain the mentality of the Romans. They believed that slaves were human tools. Just as when a tool wears out, it is replaced, the Romans believed that they should dispense of slaves just as they would any other used tool. Slaves greatly outnumbered the

Romans. In fact, that is how the Roman Empire fell. Slaves did everything. The Romans basically enjoyed themselves and made the slaves do all of their work until one day there was an insurrection and a great slave uprising. Again, Romans did not know slaves on a personal level, did not have any affection for them, and simply used them. This particular centurion crossed a line that most Romans of his day would never cross. He knew this slave personally and fellowshiped with him. When the servant became sick, the centurion had compassion on him.

When the centurion heard about Jesus, he so badly wanted his servant healed that he sent a group to find Jesus because the centurion knew Jesus was special. The centurion probably went to the synagogue and when the rabbis would read from the Old Testament he would hear about the creation of the universe, the parting of the Red Sea, the crossing of the Jordan River, the walls of Jericho falling, David slaying Goliath. Although the centurion heard all these stories, he probably had not seen any miracles in his day.

The centurion has been hearing about lepers being healed, the dead being raised, deaf ears being opened and blind eyes seeing all through the hands of a man named Jesus. Suddenly, faith rises in his heart and the centurion believed his servant could be healed. That is why he sent the Jewish elders to find Jesus to ask Him to come.

D. The Centurion is Deemed Worthy by His Servants

Notice again, what the elders have told Jesus about the centurion. They said, “He loves our nation. He built us a synagogue and paid for it himself. He has fond affection for his servant. He has heard of you, Jesus. This man (the centurion) is *worthy* that you should come heal his servant.” The elders are emphasizing that the centurion is such a great man he is worthy that Jesus should come and heal the servant. However, none of us are worthy to receive anything from Jesus.

Jesus replied, “I will come” and again, the Greek actually says, “I Myself will come.” Jesus is saying, “I don’t care what this man has done. I am not coming for him, I am coming for Me. I am coming because there is a need present.”

We could read these passages and think, “This centurion was such a wonderful man! He spent so much money, he loved his slaves, he loved the nation of Israel. It had to be because of the centurion

being such a great man that Jesus was willing to go out of His way to heal the centurion's servant." We could almost be intimidated by this story because our lives do not measure up to the centurion's. But it is good to know Jesus went because there was a need; He went to meet the need at hand.

During Jesus' earthly ministry, there were many things Jesus knew by the Spirit, but there were also many things He did not know. Some people have the idea that Jesus operated in the gifts of the Spirit twenty-four hours a day. They think Jesus had word of knowledge, word of wisdom, prophecy, the healing gifts, miracles operating non-stop in His life, but that was not the case.

In spite of what the Jewish elders had shared with Jesus, He still did not know much about the centurion because the Holy Spirit had not revealed anything to Him. But as Jesus approached the centurion's house, the centurion had sent his friends who shared exactly what the centurion asked them to share. The centurion instructed them, "Tell Jesus to speak from where he is; I am not worthy that He should enter under my roof. But I understand authority and know if He speaks, my servant will be healed."

V. Jesus Commends the Centurion

Notice the difference between what the Jewish elders were saying and what the centurion said. The elders, speaking of the centurion said, "He is worthy! He is worthy!" In contrast, the centurion said of himself, "I am not worthy." His attitude was, "Jesus I am not worthy of anything you would do for me. I so appreciate you coming to heal my servant, but if You will stop where You are and speak the word from there, I know my servant will be healed." When Jesus heard this He said, "This is a man of great faith."

Suddenly, the focus changes from what the centurion has done, as reported by the elders, to the centurion's faith. The focus is no longer, "This man loves our nation and built us a synagogue." Any sinner can put money into a building. Any sinner could work to build a name for himself. But it is not the amount of money you spend, or how many good deeds you have done, or how much you love your neighbor that gets you to heaven. It is your heart attitude.

Notice, the people who came to tell Jesus not to come to the centurion's house never mentioned the synagogue he had built or that he loved the nations of Israel. They did not even mention the centurion's faith. What they share with Jesus simply reveals that the centurion understood authority.

The point of this story is the connection there is between understanding authority and the operation of faith.

VI. Authority Defined

The Greek word for “*authority*” is the word “*exousia*”. It is different from the word “*power*”, which is the Greek word “*dunamis*”. The word “*power*” is what God creates and it comes from heaven. Exousia or authority, is the delegation of power through us. It comes through a representative. For example, behind every police officer is the power of the local government. Behind the power of the local government is the state government. Behind the power of the state government is the federal government. Power must be delegated through authority.

Not all police officers have the same stature, the same strength, or the same demeanor that might cause others to fear them. But when a person stands before an officer wearing a uniform and badge, size and weight are insignificant. What is important is not the power in you, but the power of those you represent. When the centurion sent the Jewish elders and then the others to meet Jesus in his stead, when they spoke, it was as if the centurion were present and speaking. They were backed by the authority of the centurion, who was backed by the Roman government, which was backed by Caesar himself.

The centurion had a clear understanding of authority and recognized that although Jesus walked in an authority of a different origin than his own, it was still authority. The centurion walked in human authority but Jesus walked in spiritual authority. Over and over again Jesus said, “I didn’t come to do My works. I came to do the works of Him that sent Me. I didn’t come to speak My own words, I came to speak the words of Him that sent Me. The miracles that I do, it’s not Me, it’s Him that sent Me. I have come in My Father’s name.”

The centurion said, “I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me.” Authority never sits on top; there is always a higher authority, with the exception of God. In essence, the centurion was saying, “Jesus, I recognize that when You speak, there is an authority behind you. The Word of God, the angels, and all of the power of God are behind You. I sent out representatives to You and God has sent You as His representative. I have to be obedient to those who are in authority over me, and those in authority under me, must be obedient to me. I understand there is Someone above

You Who has given You authority and when You speak, sickness must obey; it must become Your servant and go in the name of Jesus.”

VII. The Connection Between Authority and Faith

After hearing the centurion’s words, Jesus said, “Wow! This is great faith!” Notice, until this point in the story, faith has not been mentioned. So often we study faith, examine faith, look at every example of faith we can find in the Word of God, and Jesus says, “If you understand and operate in authority, that is great faith.” Actually, that is simply what faith is. Faith recognizes Who is above us, what is below us, and that we stand between the two. Our power comes from God and we have authority over every sickness, disease, and every work of Satan. Because the centurion understood authority, Jesus commended him for having “great faith”.

VIII. Authority Given to Believers

Luke 10:

vs. 17 *And the seventy returned again with joy, saying, Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through your name.*

This was the first experience Jesus’ followers had in using the authority He had given them. They were very excited. Jesus responded in the next verse.

vs. 18 *And he said unto them, I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven.*

Jesus was saying, “Understand this, you are dealing with a fallen being. Satan has fallen. The only way he can come against you is through deception. He will try to make you believe he is more powerful than he really is. But I was there when he fell. I saw it with My own eyes. I was in heaven when he fell. I saw him cast as lightning from heaven and fall to the earth.”

vs. 19 *Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions; and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you.*

The first time the word “power” is mentioned in this verse it is really the word “*exousia*” and should be translated “authority”. The second time the word “power” is used it is the word “*dunamis*” and means “power”.

Jesus gave the disciples the same authority that He walked in and because of that authority, everywhere they went, people recognized they had been with Jesus. When we go out, people should recognize the authority in which we walk. That should be our main testimony. We do not do the work, Jesus does. Behind Jesus is all of heaven, including God the Father. We have simply been sent as His representatives. When I speak, Jesus speaks. When Jesus speaks, God speaks. No matter how far down the chain of authority we are, sickness is still beneath us. Demons are still beneath us.

John 12:

vs. 44 *Jesus cried and said, He that believeth on me, believeth not on me, but on him that sent me.*

vs. 45 *And he that seeth me seeth him that sent me.*

If anyone deserved glory it was Jesus, but whenever He would receive praise, He would quickly give it back to the Father.

vs. 49 *For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which hath sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak.*

vs. 50 *And I know that his commandment is life everlasting: whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto me, so I speak.*

John 13

vs. 20 *Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that receiveth whomsoever I send receiveth me; and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me.*

It is so good to know that we are never alone. When we go, we do not go in our own name or our own authority. We go in the name of Jesus, and when we stand in that name, we also come in the power of God the Father.

IX. Receiving the Representative is Receiving the Authority

When Jesus received the men the centurion had sent, He not only received the Jewish elders, He received the centurion. When Jesus was nearing the house of the centurion and was met by the men who told Him He did not need to go to the centurion's house, He received these men as if He had received the centurion. When Jesus saw the elders of the Jews He saw the centurion. When He saw the servants, He saw the centurion. And behind the centurion, He saw all the power of Rome.

When we come in the name of Jesus, Satan does not just see us, he sees Jesus, all of heaven, and the power of God behind you. People often become intimidated thinking, “What if I lay hands on someone and they don’t recover? What if I pray for someone and nothing happens? If only the pastor could pray for them. If only a counselor or elder of the church could pray for them, I would feel so much better.” What many do not realize is when Satan or his demons see you, they do not see you, they see Jesus! Jesus said, “Wherever you go, I go. Whenever you speak, I speak. Whatever you do in My name, I am there with you and I do the work.”

John 14:

- vs. 10 *Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? The words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works.*
- vs. 11 *Believe me that I am in the Father, the Father is in me: or else believe me for the very works’ sake.*
- vs. 12 *Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works shall he do; because I go unto my Father.*
- vs. 20 *At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, you are in me, and I am in you.*

Until verse 20 Jesus has said, “I am in the Father and He is in Me.” But now Jesus says, “In the day that you reach out and start to do the work I have called you to, you will realize it is not just God in Me and Me in God. It is us in you!”

X. Walking in Authority

One of the most exciting truths for a believer to realize is the power of God that dwells within him and seeing the works of Jesus wrought through his life. Reading about our authority in the Word is one thing, but understanding that authority and stepping out in it is entirely different thing. Realizing, “It is not me laying hands on a sick person. It’s Jesus in me, God the Father in Him, reaching out to touch that person. I’m standing under the authority of Jesus, Who is under the authority of God, but I am sandwiched in between and I have authority over sickness, disease, Satan and all of his demons.” That is faith speaking.

It is important to study faith but one of the greatest elements that has been missing in teachings on faith is the simplicity of the authority in which we stand under Jesus Christ, Who enables and empowers us.

John 17:

vs. 18 *As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world.*

Just as Jesus was sent by God to fulfill His purpose on earth, He sent forth His disciples to fulfill theirs. He commissioned His followers in Matthew, chapter twenty-eight.

Matthew 28:

vs. 18 *And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.*

vs. 19 *Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.*

In Mark 16 Jesus said to his disciples that they would cast out demons and lay hands on the sick and see them recover. We must begin to realize that when we use the name of Jesus and stand in His name, we no longer stand in our own power and authority, we stand in the power and authority of the Lord Jesus Christ. We must begin to rise up in boldness. When we begin to stretch out our hands to lay hands on the sick, when we begin to do the works of Jesus and greater works, then we will know beyond a shadow of a doubt that Jesus is in God, God is in Jesus, they are in us, and they stand in authority behind every word we speak in Jesus' name.

