

Example of Great Faith: the Centurion

There are a few instances where Jesus praises someone's great faith. The Centurion and his ill slave, recorded in two accounts (Matt 8:5-13; Luke 7:2-9). What makes the Centurion's faith so remarkable?

And a centurion's slave, who was highly regarded by him, was sick and about to die. Now when he heard about Jesus, he sent some Jewish elders asking Him to come and save the life of his slave. And when they came to Jesus, they were earnestly pleading with Him, saying, "He is worthy for You to grant this to him; for he loves our nation and it was he who built us our synagogue."

Now Jesus was going on His way with them; and when He was not far from the house, the centurion sent friends, saying to Him, "Lord, do not trouble Yourself further, for I am not good enough for You to come under my roof. For this reason I did not even consider myself worthy to come to You, but just say the word, and my servant will be healed. For 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."

Now when Jesus heard this, He marveled at him. And He turned to the crowd that was following Him and said, "I say to you, not even in Israel have I found such great faith." (Luke 7:2-9, LSB)

1. Was the Centurion ethnically a Jew or Gentile? What evidence do you see that indicated that he was a Believer?

2. What does the Centurion think of Jesus? What does the Centurion think of himself?

3. What do you observe of the Centurion's view of authority and obedience?

4. What do you observe of the Centurion's trust in Jesus?

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Teacher Notes

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1. Was the Centurion ethnically a Jew or Gentile? What evidence do you see that indicated that he was a Believer?

Ask the student: how did Jewish elders describe the Centurion to Jesus?

By saying, "he loves our nation and it was he who built us our synagogue," Jewish elders indicate that the Centurion was a Gentile.

Ask the student: what evidence do you see that suggests that the Centurion was a Believer? Is the Centurion a Believer under the Old Testament or New Testament?

The Centurion appears to be an Old Testament Believer, because he loves the Jews and built their synagogue.

2. What does the Centurion think of Jesus? What does the Centurion think of himself?

Ask the student: why did the Centurion stop Jesus from coming to his house?

"I am not good enough for You to come under my roof." The Centurion did not consider Jesus as a peer or someone beneath him. Jesus was someone exceedingly great in authority.

Despite his status of Centurion, a leader of about 80 soldiers, he saw himself as unworthy to be in Jesus' presence.

3. What do you observe of the Centurion's view of authority and obedience?

Ask the student: what do you learn about the Centurion's view of authority and obedience?

For 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."

Ask the student: does the Centurion see himself in some way a slave himself?

"For I am also a man placed under authority" reflects the command structure of the Roman legion and infers that that he sees himself, in a sense, as a slave.

4. What do you observe of the Centurion's trust in Jesus?

Ask the student: as an Old Testament Believer and aware of Jesus' miracles of healing, who did the Centurion believe Jesus was?

When Jesus "marveled" at the Centurion, the Centurion apparently recognized Jesus as the Messiah. Because the Centurion felt unworthy to be in the presence of Jesus, he recognized that Jesus was the Son of God.

Ask the student: how much trust did the Centurion have in Jesus?

Because the Centurion knew who Jesus was, he knew that His word was authoritative and trustworthy. The Centurion had no doubt in Jesus' word and, as the powerful Son of God, could simply say "be healed."

Living in a Roman society, the Centurion understood that God should be accorded all the honor and respect as the King, and extended as well to His Son. The Centurion understood that serving is a privilege and in obedience to those of higher authority.

Ask the student: do you understand why Jesus lauds the faith of the Centurion? Take the time to review and discuss.