

Connect With Faith

Matthew 8:5-13

Today and next week I am bringing you a couple messages related to our Vacation Bible School theme of: HEAR IT! BELIEVE IT! CONNECT IT!

The main scripture for the week is Romans 10:17, "So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." or as the children will learn it, "So faith comes from what is heard and what is heard comes from the message about Christ."

Today I want to look at Monday's Bible story and what it teaches about connecting with faith and authority.

STORY: When Christian Herter was governor of Massachusetts, he was running hard for a second term in office. One day after a busy morning chasing votes and (no lunch) he arrived at a church barbeque. It was late afternoon and he was famished. As he moved down the serving line, he held out his plate to the woman serving chicken. She put a piece on his plate and turned to the next person in line.

"Excuse me," Governor Herter said, "do you mind if I have another piece of chicken."

"Sorry," the woman told him. "I'm supposed to give one piece of chicken to each person."

"But I'm starved" the governor said.

"Sorry," the woman said again. "Only one to a customer."

Governor Herter was an unassuming man, but he decided that this time he would throw his weight around a little.

"Do you know who I am?" he said. "I am the governor of this state."

"Do you know who I am?" the woman said. "I'm the lady in charge of the chicken. Move along mister!"

That lady understood something about authority! Today in our story we are going to meet another man who understood something about authority and about faith.

The context for this story is Matthew's gospel. Jesus comes in fulfillment of prophecy. He is baptized to start his ministry. He gives the sermon on the mount, the guidelines of his ministry. Then he really gets busy, performing one miracle after another. They start here in chapter 8. We see Him heal a leper, a centurion's servant, a mother-in-law, the demon possessed. We see Him calm a storm and forgive sin all in ch. 8.

I want to focus today on the story of the centurion. What do we learn about authority and faith from the centurion?

Verse 10 says that Jesus the Son of God marveled at the faith of this Gentile, saying, "**Assuredly, I say to you, I have not found such great faith, not even in Israel!**" This centurion who did not have the advantage of knowing the Old Testament to show him the path to God, this centurion understood what the Jews did not understand and that was you can say have faith, you can think about having faith but until you submitted to its' authority in your life you can never live

by it. Just what was different about the centurion's faith than what most of the Jews were doing?

A. The pleading of the centurion (vv. 5-7).

1. Probably on that same day, Jesus "**entered Capernaum**" which at the time was a prosperous village on the edge of the Sea of Galilee, the home of Peter and Andrew.
2. As He was coming in to this city, "**a centurion**" approached him. A "**centurion**" was an officer in the Roman army, a commander over 100 men. There is no doubt that this man was a Gentile who served in the occupation army stationed in Israel. Although most Roman soldiers would have been hated, despised, and feared by the common Jew, it seems this man was different.
3. In a parallel passage in Luke 7:1-10, it seems that the man came to Jesus through Jewish intermediaries, some of the Jewish elders. They said that the centurion was deserving, "for he loves our nation, and has built us a synagogue." However Matthew shows us that he came "**pleading**" (v.1) or begging Jesus for help.
4. He said, "**Lord my servant is lying at home paralyzed, dreadfully tormented.**" The word for "**servant**" here literally means a child or a young man. Maybe this boy was the child of one of his household slaves.
5. Romans were often very cruel to their slaves and had little regard for them except for their value and ability to work. This centurion seems to be very different. Though he was a seasoned soldier, probably a combat veteran, his love for this child-slave is evident.
6. Note that he didn't have to ask Jesus to come to the child. He just stated the problem. Jesus quickly responded, "**I will come and heal him.**"

B. The faith of the centurion (vv. 8-9).

1. Perhaps it was because he didn't want to trouble Jesus, or allow the Lord to become ceremonially unclean by entering the home of a Gentile, but he said, "**Lord, I am not worthy that You should come under my roof.**"

The centurion says, "Lord, I don't deserve to have you come under my roof. But just say the word, and my servant will be healed! I know from being in the military that when the army commander speaks, things happen. Therefore, I am convinced that when the commander of the UNIVERSE speaks, things happen! I have faith that you have power over sickness and suffering! I have faith that you have the power to make bad situations better! I have faith that you can do WAY more than all we ask or imagine! So just say the word, and my servant will be healed!"

How many of you need a word from God today? Maybe it's a healing word for someone you love. You can say, "Lord, my dad has a bad back. Some days, it hurts so bad that he doesn't even want to get out of bed. But I have faith that you can do things that even doctors can't do! I have faith that you have the power to bring him out of this situation! So just say the word, and bring healing to my dad's life!"

Or maybe you need a word of guidance for yourself. You say "Lord, I've been looking for a job. So far, my phone's not ringing. I haven't heard from anyone.

But you said in Psalm 25:14 that the Lord confides in those who fear Him. You said in Psalm 32:8 that "I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go." And I believe it! I have faith that these precious promises are going to come true in MY life! I have faith that something's going to happen! I have faith that there are better days ahead! So just say the word, and show me the way! Say the word, and make things happen!"

You say, "What if Jesus doesn't say the word that I want Him to say? What if He says "no?" What if He says "wait?" What if things turn out differently than what I would have asked for?"

That's a good question. My answer is this: Faith isn't believing that God is going to do whatever you want WHENEVER you want. Faith is believing that God is going to do whatever is BEST! I can remember times when I was at the bedside of a dear saint. And I said, "Lord, nothing is too difficult for you. Please heal this dear man! Add 15 years to his life, so that he may bring glory to you. In Jesus' name, Amen." And God answered the prayer! The sickness was removed! And God received the glory!

But I can also remember times when I prayed, and God said, "No. It's time for this person leave this life in the body. I want her to experience the ULTIMATE healing!" And now I understand. Faith is believing that God is going to do whatever is BEST, no matter what that might be.

There are two things I want you to notice about the faith of the centurion. Number one: **It's a humble faith**. Sometimes we say, "Lord, I'm a good person. I've been a part of the church ever since I was a baby. I DESERVE this healing! I DESERVE a blessing!"

But the centurion was humble. He said, "Lord, I DON'T deserve it! I know I'm a sinner! I know that I fall short of the glory of God!"

"But I also believe in this little thing called grace! I believe that you are a God of love! I believe that you are gracious and kind even when we DON'T deserve it!"

James 4:6 says that "the Lord opposes the proud, but He gives grace to the humble."

The centurion had a humble faith. The second thing I want you to notice is that **he had a confident faith**. He said, "I believe that you are so powerful, that you can even do long distance miracles! You can touch people's lives even when their miles away!"

2. Notice that both times the centurion addressed Jesus, in vv. 6 & 8, he called him "**Lord**." That was not mere courtesy. The title "**Lord**" refers to one who is a ruler or a master. This man recognized Jesus as Lord.

3. Knowing and understanding something of the unlimited authority of Jesus, he said, "**Speak a word, and my servant will be healed**." He recognized that the power of Jesus was not limited by time and space. He knew Jesus could heal and he believed Jesus could heal anywhere at any time.

4. The basis for his belief is in v.9, He said, "**I also am a man under authority, having soldiers under me. And I say to this one 'Go,' and he goes and to another 'Come,' and he comes and to my servant 'Do this,' and he does it.**"

- a. As a man "**under authority**" he could cause his soldiers and his slaves do whatever he wanted simply by giving them orders.
- b. He reasoned that Jesus was "**Lord**" and had far greater authority than he. If he with limited authority could speak an order and his will would be done, how much more could Jesus do with one word!

How do you see the authority of Jesus when it comes to answering your prayers?
What does scripture tell us about His authority?

And so it was, when Jesus had ended these sayings, that the people were astonished at His teaching, for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes. (Mat 7:28-29 NKJV)

"But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins"; then He said to the paralytic, "Arise, take up your bed, and go to your house." (Mat 9:6 NKJV)

And when He had called His twelve disciples to Him, He gave them power over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease. (Mat 10:1 NKJV)

And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Amen. (Mat 28:18-20 NKJV)

This centurion believed on Jesus' authority.

Did you know that most of what you think you know, you believe on authority? How many of you believe George Washington was the first President of the United States? Why do you believe that? --Because you trust the authority of the historians and teachers who told you.

Believing things 'on authority' only means believing them because you have been told them by someone you think trustworthy. Ninety-nine percent of the things you believe are believed on authority. Many people who believe all kinds of historical and scientific things "on authority" for some reason have trouble believing things about God "on authority." If a person balked at authority in other things, as some people do in religion, he would have to be content to know almost nothing all his life.

This centurion understood something about authority. The centurion's word was law to his soldiers. He illustrated his faith in the power of Christ to heal by the power he had as a centurion over his soldiers. His faith in the word that Jesus spoke was certain. Because he knew all about the power of authority--he recognized Jesus' power and authority over disease.

Scripture tells us in Psalms 119:89, "Forever, O Lord, your Word is settled in heaven." Another version says, "Your word, O LORD, is eternal; it stands firm in the heavens," (NIV).

The centurion had no problem in believing that Jesus could heal someone at a distance because the power of Christ knows no limits. Jeremiah 23:23 says,

"Am I a God near at hand," says the LORD, "And not a God afar off? (Jer 23:23 NKJV). This shows both the immanence and the transcendence of God. When we pray for people at a distance, know that God hears that prayer just as if you were right with the person.

C. The pleasure of Jesus (vv. 10-13).

1. As omniscient God in a human body, Jesus knew all men's hearts, but in His humanity, he "**marveled**." He said to the Jews around Him, "**I have not found such great faith, not even in Israel**." Many Jews believed in His power, but not like this Gentile centurion.

2. Jesus went on to teach that the centurion would not be alone in His faith. He said "**many will come from east and west**" referring to the Gentile nations. They will "**sit down with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven**." He also said that many of the "**sons of the kingdom**," the Jews would be "**cast into outer darkness**" where there is "**weeping and gnashing of teeth**."

3. Salvation is not about being a son of Abraham, but about believing in Jesus Christ. Rom.4:3 says, "**Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness**."

4. Jesus looked to the centurion with a smile on His face and a gleam in his eye and said, "**Go your way; and as you have believed so let it be done for you**." Matthew adds that the servant was "**healed that same hour**."

D. Our part: the authority of Jesus and faith in Him.

1. We know that God is omnipresent. He is universally present everywhere. He is *ubiquitous* which means that He is equally present

2. Because of this unlimited power, we can pray for someone on the other side of the world and God hears and responds. We can pray for something now and God may respond later.

Concl: We call ourselves Christians this morning, but where is our faith?

What is the need in our life? Are we willing to admit it and ask for help?

Are we willing to believe that God can work in our lives?

Are we praying for God to do anything in us and through us?

Do we expect to meet God and hear from him this morning?

What do we want to see God to do in our lives?

How many of you remember Colonel Sanders? He's the guy who started KFC: Kentucky Fried Chicken. He was very generous with his money. He gave 10% of his profits to the church.

But deep in his heart, he sensed something was missing. Somehow, he knew that if he died today, he wouldn't be with the Lord in heaven.

One day, a pastor invited him to attend a revival service later that day. The sermon was based on Romans 10:9, which says "If you confess with your mouth 'Jesus is Lord,' and if you believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved."

And then at age 79, Colonel Sanders got up from his seat. He came forward. He kneeled at an old fashioned altar. And he gave his life to Christ. He said "When I walked out of church that night, I knew that my sins were forgiven. I knew that I was a different person. I knew that for the first time in my life, I was a child of God."

Maybe you're here today, and you're thinking, "Pastor, I've always believed in God. But something's missing. If I died today, I don't know where I would go."

I want you to know that the same Jesus who could say the word and bring healing to a centurion's servant can say the word and bring healing into your soul. He died on the cross for your sins. And He rose again on the third day to be the Lord of the universe. And all you have to do is receive Him into your life by turning to Jesus in repentance and faith. I want you to say, "Lord Jesus, I believe in you. Be my Savior, be my king, be my Lord. Just say the word, and my soul will be healed." And then you will discover for yourself that Faith in the power of Jesus will be rewarded.

If you're already a believer, you can ask Jesus to heal a hurting area in your life. Maybe it's a broken relationship. Maybe it's a broken heart. No matter what it is, Jesus can help. Let us go to Him in prayer.