A close-up photograph of an olive branch with several small, green olives. The branch is in the foreground, and the background is a soft, out-of-focus sunset with warm orange and yellow light. The sun is partially obscured by the leaves, creating a lens flare effect.

Faith, Compassion and Love - Part 1

Luke 7

Eva L. Clarke



Welcome!



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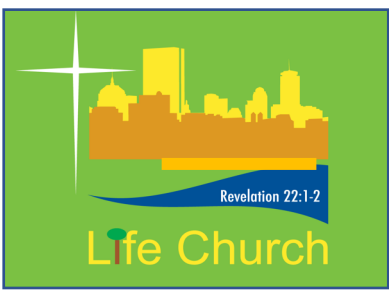
The Key Passage: Luke Chapter 7:1-10 (NIV)



7 When Jesus had finished saying all this to the people who were listening, he entered Capernaum. **2** There a centurion's servant, whom his master valued highly, was sick and about to die. **3** The centurion heard of Jesus and sent some elders of the Jews to him, asking him to come and heal his servant. **4** When they came to Jesus, they pleaded earnestly with him, "This man deserves to have you do this, **5** because he loves our nation and has built our synagogue." **6** So Jesus went with them.

He was not far from the house when the centurion sent friends to say to him: "Lord, don't trouble yourself, for I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. **7** That is why I did not even consider myself worthy to come to you. But say the word, and my servant will be healed. **8** For I myself am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. I tell this one, 'Go,' and he goes; and that one, 'Come,' and he comes. I say to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it."

9 When Jesus heard this, he was amazed at him, and turning to the crowd following him, he said, "I tell you, I have not found such great faith even in Israel." **10** Then the men who had been sent returned to the house and found the servant well.



The Centurion Commended

- Centurions were Roman soldiers, that commanded groups of soldiers under them known as centuries. These centuries numbered from as few as 30 to up to roughly 100 soldiers.
- Centurions were promoted to their position by going thru the ranks and proving themselves.
- They themselves were under the command of more senior centurions.
- The typical attitude of Roman soldiers towards the Jews would be hostile or condescending at best but this centurion was a friend of the Jews, and apparently financed the construction of their local synagogue.



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The Centurion Commended (continued)

- As someone under authority, the centurion had delegated authority. Based on the authority of the one above him, he was given authority to command those under him. Some of you may be familiar with delegated authority. Authority you wouldn't have on your own but is transferred to you. People who would normally say "You're not the boss of me" yield because you've been given authority that you otherwise don't have.





The Centurion Commended (continued)

And the authority the centurion is talking about is like delegated authority on steroids. It's an absolute authority that we don't generally observe in civilian life.

We're talking about authority that's unquestioned. Authority that's unchallenged. Authority that is immediately and completely obeyed.

A close proximity is the structure of authority displayed in the military.



The Centurion Commended (continued)

Some of you may remember the movie “A Few Good Men”. In it, Tom Cruise plays a lawyer defending two marines charged with killing a fellow marine named Santiago by giving him a “code red”. The “code red” was a severe beating imposed on Santiago for being a whistleblower. In their defense, the marines claimed that they didn’t intend to kill Santiago but were just following the orders to give the “code red” that had filtered down to them; orders that originated with the base commander played by Jack Nicholson. This exchange between the lawyer and commander characters portrayed by Cruise and Nicholson illustrates the nature of absolute authority.



What Authority Can Look Like





The Centurion Commended (continued)



If you have this kind of authority, what you say goes. There's no second guessing. There's no hesitation. There's just obedience. Pure and simple. All you need to do is say the word.

The thing that the centurion understood that amazed Jesus was that he identified with Jesus as someone under authority. Not in authority, under authority. What that meant was that he understood that Jesus was operating under and possessed the delegated authority of almighty God. All Jesus had to do was speak the word and it would be done.

When Jesus heard this, he was amazed and told the crowd he hadn't found such great faith even in Israel.



Rabbis (Teachers)

To understand why Jesus was amazed at the faith of the centurion and how that compared to the faith he found in Israel, we need to look further at what it meant for Jesus to be a teacher or rabbi with authority.

I'll mention again an excellent online resource called Walking the Text with Brad Gray and the Teaching Series called Rabbis and Disciples that is very informative.

A key insight is that in Jesus' day there were two kinds of Rabbis:

- Regular Rabbis
- Rabbis with Authority.



Rabbis (Teachers) (continued)

Regular Rabbis could only teach what was already accepted and understood. They were the Scribes.

Rabbis with Authority on the other hand, were authorized to:

- Enact legal judgements
- Offer new interpretations
- Have disciples following them

To become Rabbis with Authority, Rabbis had this authority conveyed to them through an ordination ceremony.

Therefore everybody knew how they got their authority.



Challenge to Jesus' Authority



Because the chief priests and elders didn't grasp where Jesus' authority came from, they challenge it; they questioned it.

Matthew 21:23-27 (New International Version)

²³ Jesus entered the temple courts, and, while he was teaching, the chief priests and the elders of the people came to him. "By what authority are you doing these things?" they asked. "And who gave you this authority?"

²⁴ Jesus replied, "I will also ask you one question. If you answer me, I will tell you by what authority I am doing these things.

²⁵ John's baptism—where did it come from? Was it from heaven, or of human origin?" They discussed it among themselves and said, "If we say, 'From heaven,' he will ask, 'Then why didn't you believe him?' ²⁶ But if we say, 'Of human origin'—we are afraid of the people, for they all hold that John was a prophet." ²⁷ So they answered Jesus, "We don't know."

Then he said, "Neither will I tell you by what authority I am doing these things.



The Source of Jesus' Authority

The answer and the reality is that Jesus' authority came straight from God the Father.

Jesus' ordination ceremony was his baptism. He was ordained with authority when God the Father affirmed Him!

Mark 1:9-11 ⁹ At that time Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. ¹⁰ Just as Jesus was coming up out of the water, he saw heaven being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. ¹¹ And a voice came from heaven: "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased."





The Source of Jesus' Authority (continued)

The thing that the centurion understood that amazed Jesus was that he identified with Jesus as someone under authority. What that meant was that he understood that Jesus was operating under and possessed the delegated authority of almighty God. All he had to do was speak the word and it would be done.

This is why Jesus said of the Centurion "I have not found such great faith even in Israel".



Lessons For Us

- Be bold in asking God.
- Be proactive in making requests of God for our needs and the needs of others.

1 John 5:14-15 New International Version

¹⁴ This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. ¹⁵ And if we know that he hears us—whatever we ask—we know that we have what we asked of him.



Lessons For Us (continued)

Remember God is free to answer our requests according to his will.

Therefore, God's answers include Yes, No or Wait. But we should ask, knowing that God is powerful and able, as well as loving and compassionate.

Knowing that God is good, even if God's answer to us is No, we can trust, noting the truth stated in

Isaiah 55:8-9 (NIV):

- ⁸ "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways", declares the LORD.
- ⁹ "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts."



Lessons For Us (continued)

The Kingdom of God has arrived and when Jesus returns, all will be set right. Healing and deliverance now are indicators of a day to come when according to God's word in Revelation 21:4 (NIV): He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death' or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.

Our Faith is in Jesus, knowing that we can cooperate with him to accomplish his will. Rather than trying to muster up faith for a specific outcome, our Faith is in Jesus to accomplish his will in our lives.



Lessons For Us (continued)

The centurion had a servant he highly valued.

He leveraged his relationship with the Jewish elders and sent them to Jesus to ask for healing for his servant.

The elders vouched for the centurion – deeming him worthy of this favor because of his love for the Jewish people and action in building the synagogue.

The centurion takes a position of humility, sending a message thru friends to Jesus saying I don't deserve to have you come to my house and I'm not worthy to approach you in person.

It makes his boldness in asking for healing for his servant all the more remarkable.

Lessons for us: We don't have to feel that we deserve what we're requesting. We can be:

HUMBLE AND BOLD

VS.

PROUD AND TIMID