

GRACE ANSWERS GREAT FAITH!
MATTHEW CH8:5-13

GENTILE! V5-7

A Roman Legion consisted of 6000 fighting men with an overall Commander who was under the direct authority of the Emperor Caesar. In order to run the Legion efficiently, the Commander would appointed 60 other Commanders, known as “Centurions”, who commanded a 100 men each! As far as I can find “Centurion's” are mentioned on 7 occasions in the New Testament, and every time they are mentioned, it is with honour!

Matthew Ch8:5-13	This Centurion (appeals on behalf of another)
Matthew Ch27:54	At the cross (surely this is the Son of God)
Acts Ch10:22	Cornelius (becomes a Christian)
Acts Ch22:26	The riot (rescues Paul)
Acts Ch23:17	The plot (rescues Paul)
Acts Ch24:23	Ordered by Felix (looks after Paul)
Acts Ch27	Paul's final journey (Cares for Paul)

Like the leper using the word “Lord” v2 translated “kyrie” in the Greek, it was the title that people commonly used when they would approach a person for *divine aid*. The centurion does the same thing in v5 when approaching Jesus asking for his help!

Like the leper (who was presumably a Jew banished from the community because he is deemed unclean), who shows confidence, reverence and humility in his approach to Jesus, *the centurions approach is even more astonishing in its humility and faith!* Why? Centurions do not normally treat representatives of conquered peoples with utmost respect! Yet here is this Roman centurion treating Jesus, one of the conquered Jews, as if he were a rank so exalted that his humble home was not suitable for him! Why? Because he gets who Jesus is and the authority that He has!

Furthermore, and just as astonishing in keeping with the theme of compassion (going back to the leper, who is touched by Jesus), the centurion's request is for his slave, who is paralysed and in terrible suffering (v6). Why is this so astonishing? A servant during the Roman occupation would be insignificant, less valuable than furniture!

This centurion is extraordinary because he loved his servant, who is paralysed and in terrible suffering, so much that he reverently, humbly and with confidence in Jesus comes to Him for help!!

GEOGRAPHY! V8-9

The centurion applies his own grasp of his own position and authority! The centurion sees himself as simultaneously under authority and as one exercising authority. When he gave a command the soldiers under his authority would respond because the centurion commands represented the words of the Emperor! The centurion

recognised that the powerful deeds of Jesus were not some kind of magic, but on His authority, which was nothing other than the authority of God Himself.

GREAT! V10-13

Jesus' Word singles out both the centurion for his exemplary faith and warns Israel for their lack of faith! The centurion's understanding of who Jesus is, makes him realise that Jesus has authority to heal his servant without needing to touch him or be anywhere near him! This faith astonishes Jesus! A Gentile healed and gentile inclusion! Incredible! But also a warning! Israel is warned of exclusion and Hell!

What is Hell? Hell is a place of eternal conscious punishment for the wicked (Matthew Ch25:30, Ch25:41, Ch25:46, Mark Ch9:43, Ch9:48, Luke Ch16:22-24, Ch16:28, + Rev Ch14:9-11)! People will be aware, they will be conscious of their punishment and pain!

Think of your Christian friends in Church, how do you think you will feel when you watch them stand before Christ at the final judgement? How will they feel about you? How does this contemplation of future judgement affect the way you think of your fellowship with them?

The actual healing is not in proportion to the centurion's faith, but it is in response to his faith. The faith that the centurion puts in Jesus, brings healing to another who did not encounter Jesus!

APPLICATION

JESUS makes real change possible and permanent! As we hear the words of JESUS and put them into practice, we build our lives on Him, as the rock of our lives, so as the storms of life hit us, with various degrees of hardness, because the foundations are built on JESUS our lives will not give way like sand! When JESUS is given His rightful place in the centre of all aspects of our lives, the foundations are right!

Miracles will attest the authenticity of the Gospel Message. Jesus did not want the crowd clamouring for the miracles, His primary mission is to bring forgiveness of sins and to reconcile sinful man to a Holy God!

The passport to God's presence is faith in His Son! Those who do not turn to Jesus in faith, will receive *just* punishment in Hell (Gehenna)! Grace answers unpretentious (modest, down-to-earth) need! The authority of Jesus is a great comfort to the eyes of faith and a great terror to the unrepentant. Why is the teaching about "Hell" so unpopular? It seems cruel and unjust to modern minds! Jesus, in His time on earth, talked more about "Hell" in Scripture than any other subject!

Let us contemplate!