

## Sermon Series: Spurred on to Holiness (and Power) by Immersing Ourselves into the Life of Christ Through the Eyes of the Apostles – A Harmony of All Four Gospels

Sermon Title: ““A Pagan's Faith Heals a Loved Slave” from Matthew 8:5-13.

June 16, 2019

Today's Scripture: See insert

Series Theme verse: Acts 4:13 Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated, common men, they were astonished. And they recognized that they had been with Jesus. (ESV)

Introduction: Carter Conlon's experience in Jos Nigeria with the powers of darkness

Main point: God's power to heal, cleanse, forgive, multiply, through Jesus is available to any believing person, regardless of their supposed distance from the Throne of Grace.

Context:

Exegesis

- Disease was untreatable in Jesus' day. The Scriptures indicate from Matthew 12 that Jesus healed everybody in the crowds and everywhere he went he attracted thousands. We could say that Jesus eradicated disease in Israel while he was alive.
- A centurion was normally despised by the Jews because he was 1) a Gentile 2) the commander who commanded the troops to enforce the tax laws, who frequently overlooked his soldiers raping female victims, 3) who was the local rep for a hated Rome and 4) because all centurions were locals this one was likely a Samaritan, someone despised even more than a normal Gentile.
- All three centurions in Scripture appeared to be or become God-fearers. This one in Capernaum, the one at the cross, and Cornelius. This one because he loved the Jews and their faith and he built their synagogue, the ruins and foundations of which are still to be seen in the site today.
- This gentile/ Samaritan centurion was humble to the point of not contaminating Jesus. First he didn't feel worthy approaching him on his own, secondly, he didn't want to cause Jesus to be contaminated by coming into his house.
- This gentile centurion had already decided Jesus was God in human flesh. He called him Lord, and based on the kind of expectations he had on Jesus' power, it was obvious he had concluded that Jesus was who he said he was.
- The centurion showed his status of slave to Jesus by not even asking for a favor. He simply transferred information to Jesus and knew that Jesus would act on it.
- He showed his humility and status by admitting that he wasn't worthy to have Jesus

enter his home. That would be an honor far above his status. WOW! Many people today think they are doing God a favor by “choosing Christ” which in itself is a fallacy because Jesus says he chose us in John 15:16.

- Jesus marveled at his faith because as an outsider he should have had less faith than the insider Jews who grew up hearing of the miracles of God done by Moses, Elijah and the prophets. Yet the Sunday School Jews failed to believe Jesus could heal from a distance while this pagan believed he could.
  - Jesus predicted a massive influx of gentiles into the kingdom when he said: *And I say to you, that many shall come from the east and the west, and dine with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the Kingdom of Heaven; but the sons of the Kingdom shall be cast into outer darkness, where there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.*”
  - Jesus also spoke of the horrible realities of hell in this verse. I wonder why we downplay it so much in our conversations with non-believers. It is REAL.
1. If the Church today acts anything like Jesus acted, it should be attracting multitudes to her. *great multitudes followed him,*
    - *John 13:34–35 A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.*” (ESV)
    - *Acts 2:42–47 And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. And all who believed were together and had all things in common. And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.* (ESV)
  2. The church should have been the first to consider all races equal and no race worthy of chattel status based on this verse (and many others). *Now a certain slave boy,*
    - The Greeks and Romans did not consider their slaves to be anything more than cattle. They called them living tools. They could kill them without consequence. This centurion loved his slave like he loved his own son – evidenced by the lengths he went to for getting him the help he needed.
    - Jesus’ compassion for the slave is our example. Every human being is valuable and the church should have condemned the brutality of antebellum slavery.
  3. There is a spiritual danger of knowing too much religion and missing the heart of the gospel message (often called spiritual inoculation). *“Verily, I say to you, not even in Israel have I found such extraordinary faith! And I say to you, that many shall come from the*

*east and the west, and dine with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the Kingdom of Heaven; but the sons of the Kingdom shall be cast into outer darkness, where there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.”*

4. True faith is shown by understanding that God though Christ is our authority. *For I, too, am a man invested with authority, and have soldiers under myself and I say to one, ‘Go,’ and he goes, and to another ‘Come’, and he comes, and to my slave boy, ‘Do this,’ and he does it”.*
  - This centurion is a man’s man. He was promoted on the battlefield most likely and had his soldier’s respect based on his combat proficiency, i.e. he had killed a few men in battle already.
    - Here is what Vegetius says about them: *The centurion in the infantry is chosen for his size, strength and dexterity in throwing his missile weapons and for his skill in the use of his sword and shield; in short for his expertness in all the exercises. He is to be vigilant, temperate, active and readier to execute the orders he receives than to talk; Strict in exercising and keeping up proper discipline among his soldiers, in obliging them to appear clean and well-dressed and to have their arms constantly rubbed and bright.*
    - He was also on the front lines leading his soldiers into battle and therefore there was a high mortality rate. The Emperors personally approved of all centurions at the rate of about 90 per year.<sup>1</sup>
  - Yet, here he is ready to surrender everything to Jesus because he recognized that Jesus was God and had immense power at his disposal much like he could have as a commander calling for legions to assist with an uprising.
5. There is no reason why we shouldn’t be asking God for BIG miracles and seeing Him answer BIG prayers for His BIG GLORY.
  - Carter’s father’s salvation. Start by praying for your loved ones salvation. It took Carter and father 25 years before the answer came. Never give up.

## Application

1. Those who grew up in the church from childhood to adulthood are those who should consider themselves sons of the Kingdom. Every Jew believed he was reserved a seat in heaven simply by being born a Jew. Many church-goers today believe the same thing. Because they were baptized, attended church with their parents, had godly parents that somehow all of that qualified them to a spot in heaven and certainly no spot in hell. Listen to Jesus’ warning. Unless you have the same kind of faith as this centurion, you have no

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<sup>1</sup> <https://historum.com/threads/how-to-become-a-roman-centurion.39373/>

assurance whatsoever of salvation – a faith of total surrender and belief that Jesus is God himself and that his death on the cross paid in full for your sins and mine.

2. Does God answer every faith request for healing or for a miracle? No. Paul didn't get his request answered because there was a higher purpose and a bigger lesson. But very few requests get answered without faith.
3. Our mission is to make disciples. It is not to reach other Christians from other churches. Next week, I will ask you to start praying for the needs of our neighbors individually. We are a church full of gentiles (the only Jew we had was Steve Swartz) and as gentiles who were once despised by the Jews of Jesus' day, let's not consider ourselves better than anybody, and start loving the ones most neglected, meaning our neighbors.