

A Faith Jesus Marveled At

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[0 : 00] Luke chapter 7. We'll be reading the first ten verses in just a moment.! Luke chapter 7.

Now, don't get confused. I'm going to read a different verse, so I've not mistakenly given you a different passage. I quoted this verse in my prayer this morning.

Let me read it. Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession.

That's an Old Testament verse. It's from Psalm 2. It's a verse that speaks of Christ, and that he would have the nations as his heritage and the ends of the earth his possession.

It's a tall order. From where we are in the book of Luke, almost all of God's work to this point in history, even all of the Old Testament, all of that work has been in and for the benefit of Israel.

[1 : 33] Aside from Jesus' infancy in Egypt and a brief stint in the coasts of Tyre and Sidon, Jesus lived, ministered, died, rose, and ascended just from the land of Israel, never leaving, except for those two brief instances, the land of Israel.

How will it ever be that the nations will be his heritage, and the ends of the earth his possession?

Today we're going to look at what is labeled in most Bibles, Jesus heals the centurion's servant. We're going to look at this and see how Jesus' authority extends to the ends of the earth, and see how, even at this point, the greatest faith that Jesus had seen to that point came from a man who was not a Jew, which is interesting.

Let's look at Luke chapter 7. I'm going to read the first 10 verses. Let me, before I read, Jesus has just finished what's called the Sermon on the Plain.

He spent the night in prayer. From his disciples, he chose 12 apostles. The disciples, all of the disciples, not just the 12, were gathered around Jesus. He preached the sermon.

[3 : 18] He finishes the sermon. He comes at that point to what's in chapter 7. After he had finished all his sayings in the hearing of the people, he entered Capernaum.

Now, a centurion had a servant who was sick and at the point of death, who was highly valued by him. When the centurion heard about Jesus, he sent to him elders of the Jews, asking him to come and heal his servant.

And when they came to Jesus, they pleaded with him, earnestly saying, He's worthy to have you do this for him, for he loves our nation, and he is the one who built us our synagogue.

And Jesus went with them. When he was not far from the house, the centurion sent friends, saying to him, Lord, do not trouble yourself, for I am not worthy to have you come under my roof.

Therefore, I did not presume to come to you. But say the word, and let my servant be healed. For I too am a man under authority, with soldiers under me, and I say to one, Go, and he goes, and to another, Come, and he comes, and to my servant, Do this, and he does it.

[4 : 43] When Jesus heard these things, he marveled at him. And turning to the crowd that followed him, said, I tell you, not even in Israel have I found such faith.

And when those who had been sent returned to the house, they found the servant well. Let's pray together. Father, even just reading this speaks of the wonder of who Jesus is.

Lord, I pray that you would give us eyes to see that today. Who is this Jesus? What is he doing? Who is he for?

I pray that you would make plain your goodness, and what you've provided, and what we should do. We pray in Jesus' name.

Amen. So I mentioned the situation. This is right after the sermon on the plane. And it seems as though it was a plane that was not far from Capernaum.

[5 : 52] It's the end of that day. Whatever point he gets done preaching, he turns and goes to Capernaum. And we don't know exactly where he goes, whether he goes to where he had been staying, or just gets into town.

We just don't know. There are no details other than he entered Capernaum. And the situation was that at that time, as he gets into Capernaum, Luke just gives us a little bit of backstory about a situation that has taken place already, a situation that prompts a request.

And so there is in that area, probably in Capernaum, a centurion. A centurion, century, hundred, it's a man who rules over a hundred soldiers.

I understand that today, I'm not absolutely correct, positive I'm correct in this. I understand that this would be a captain in this day and age, but be that as it may, a centurion was a leader of a hundred men.

He served Rome in the Roman army, and he was almost certainly a Gentile. And that's an important fact, as you're trying to understand what's going on here.

[7 : 15] So here's the centurion who has a servant, it says. And the servant was sick, near to death. Now, you can get more details if you look at the book of Matthew.

I believe it's chapter 8 that speaks about this situation. I'm going to caution you, do that later. There are things that are not here that are in Matthew.

And there are things here that are not in Matthew. And I keep trying to emphasize this. Luke wrote this. It wasn't that he was forgetful.

It wasn't that he hadn't heard all his facts. Luke is writing this, not trying to shape the word of God into something that it's not. Not trying to shape the situation that Jesus is in into something it's not.

He is taking the very situation that Jesus is in and relating these facts to Gentiles. Remember, Luke was written to Theophilus, who was a Gentile, and this would end up going to the Gentiles.

[8 : 25] And so, he's recording facts that will be most significant to the Gentiles. He's not twisting the truth. He's making it so that Gentiles will have the greatest understanding.

They don't really need to hear a lot about the law. They don't need to hear about a lot of the things that Matthew deals with because Matthew is writing to Jews. And they need to hear how this related to them.

And Luke writes this to Gentiles and shows how it relates to him. So, you can find more details, but like I say, do that later. This servant was near to death.

We could go into it a lot. We could learn more in Matthew. But all we need to know is this man was sick, near to death. And the other important thing was that this man was very dear to the centurion.

Now, that's kind of an odd phrase. A centurion in those days would probably be thought of as a person who was hard-hearted and didn't care about anybody. Servants were people you could buy and make them serve you and they were disposable.

[9 : 33] But this man had a servant who was dear to him. Whether he had served him a long time, served him exceptionally well, those things might enter into it, but I don't think that that is what is being portrayed here.

There, even at this point, begins to be clues about something being different about the centurion. And I think this is one of the first clues that comes up about something being different about the centurion.

He had a servant that he cared for. I think we're seeing already that God has been working in this man's heart so that servants weren't disposable to him.

He saw this man as valuable and he was sick unto death. And so this centurion took maverick measures. He took steps to come to the aid of this sick servant.

And so what he does is he reaches out to Jesus. And we see in the third verse, it says, when the centurion heard about Jesus.

[10 : 47] I'm sure that it wasn't just at this moment that centurion had first heard about Jesus. Jesus had been in that area for months. He grew up not far from Capernaum, but as he began his ministry, Jesus spent most of his time at this point in his ministry around Capernaum and people were broadcasting his works and his deeds and his teaching all over the place.

I'm sure he had been hearing more and more about this Jesus. And whether it's something new that strikes his heart at this very time or whether it's just the accumulation of all that he's been hearing, he hears about Jesus, as it says.

And he sent to him elders of the Jews. Now, I want to point out something. He says elders of the Jews. These are not Pharisees.

These are not the people who have been working against Jesus. These are elders. And they're probably not rulers of the synagogue that is talked about here.

They may be, but they're probably not. Elders here is referring to older men, leading men in the community, and men who had clout.

[12 : 17] So, you know, you hear in the Old Testament about how the older men of a village would go to the gate, or of the city would go to the gate, and things would be brought to them, and they would make decisions, and they would be, they would have accumulated wisdom because of their years, and so they were looked at as elders of the city.

And I think they were that very thing in this case. I think we get a mixed, wrong message if we think of them as Pharisees.

They were elders of the Jews. And this centurion asked these elders of the Jews to go to Jesus because he had heard that Jesus has done all these things, and he had a servant who needed help, and there were those kinds of things happening to all kinds of people in the area.

Certainly, Jesus can do that for my servant. And so he sends these elders to Jesus. Now, there may have been the idea that he sent these people because they had clout, they could convince Jesus, and I think that that's possibly, probably, what they were to do, but as they went, I think they kind of messed things up a bit.

They, as they went to Jesus, extolled his worthiness. But this centurion is not asking for this help because of his worthiness.

[14 : 07] He had asked these Jewish elders, probably his friends, because he knew that he, as a Gentile, was not worthy to approach and ask Jesus for help.

So what did he do? Well, he had already established a relationship with these elders. Let's ask the elders to go and ask Jesus. I'm not breaking ceremonial laws by doing this.

I'm not this bold, brass Gentile who thinks he can demand something of Jesus. he asked these elders to go. And so as a Gentile, unworthy to approach Jesus, unworthy to ask him for help, as was the thinking of the day, he sends the elders.

And as I mentioned, the elders went and they began to speak of his worthiness. But, and we'll talk more about that in just a second, but as they go and speak of his worthiness, I think they did something for us that they weren't expecting to do.

They unknowingly began to demonstrate that this centurion had faith. And so they go and speak to Jesus about this centurion.

[15 : 33] Now, there was in the Old Testament a way that a Gentile could become a Jew. They would be called a proselyte.

And they would be brought into the Jewish community. They would have to go through circumcision. They would have to participate in some ceremonial things that went on.

And they could indeed be assimilated into the Jewish covenant there.

But, I do not believe he was a proselyte. I do not believe he had become circumcised. I do not believe he had assimilated into the Jewish covenant community.

Because, if this Gentile had indeed become a proselyte, he wouldn't have been able to say, I am not worthy for Jesus to come under my roof.

[16 : 31] I am not worthy to ask Jesus this. I think it is important to see that he hadn't become a proselyte. And I think that is important for Luke's message also.

Because he is going to be writing this letter to people all over the world who will never become Jewish proselytes. And they need to know that this gospel is for them.

And so, these people unwittingly in endeavoring to show the worthiness of the centurion, end up beginning to show us his faith.

They, as they try to convince Jesus that he should come and do this, they tell how he loved their nation. So he is giving testimony.

Jesus, these men are. Jesus, this man, he loves our nation. Now, most centurions would see religion as only something to use.

[17 : 35] And they'd be just as glad to use those who followed Moloch as they would to use those who followed Jehovah. And they couldn't be seen to be saying they loved the nation, they would be glad-handing so as to use the nation.

Use the people of the nation. And these people were saying, this man loves our country. In fact, he loves our country, he loves our nation so much that he undertook to build our synagogue.

Now, it was not uncommon for centurions to help with things like that. again, it was for the purpose of pacifying people, of using people, of getting people on their side.

They'd say, yeah, I'll throw 500 denarii at your synagogue, put my name on a plaque, you'll always remember that I've been kind, so you should be kind to me, and you should listen to me.

And there was this quid pro quo that a lot of centurions would do by giving money, but this man funded the whole of the synagogue. They have the ruins, they have found the ruins of that synagogue in Capernaum.

[18 : 54] You can go online and see the pattern of the ruins. Now, there was another later synagogue built on the very same spot, different color stone, and that's fallen down too, and that's the synagogue that remains in ruins today, but the layout is there, it was quite a synagogue, the synagogue in Capernaum had columns, and it had stone seats on the side, and a place for the person who was teaching, and a place for the scrolls to be kept.

It was an amazing thing. This man laid out some money, and he funded that synagogue in Capernaum, and that impressed those elders.

These were not the actions of a Roman soldier just trying to pacify or gain somewhat of trust of the Jews.

This man was beginning to give evidence to trusting in the God of Israel. So these elders come and they convince Jesus, this man is worthy.

And so Jesus begins going to his house. Now I don't think this is a long trip. I think it's within Capernaum. We don't know. That's just my assumption. It doesn't say that it took three days, or the next day, or anything like this, but he begins to set out to go to the centurion's house.

[20 : 28] But in verses 6b through 8, a correction had to be made. A correction to what the elders had done.

And so it goes on talking about that before Jesus arrived, as he gets close to the house, the centurion sends out a different group of people.

These were just his friends. And they're sent out with a clearer message. So here the elders have gone, they've spoken of the worthiness of the centurion, and said, will you come heal his servant?

I think Jesus would have gone, even if they hadn't. But Jesus is gone, he's getting close, and I think that the centurion heard that Jesus was on his way. I think that was pretty evident by the way the events go here.

He heard that Jesus was on his way, and the centurion know that if Jesus was on his way, the elders did not convey the message the centurion wanted.

[21 : 34] sure, they told Jesus that his servant needed to be healed, but he hadn't conveyed the attitude of the centurion.

They hadn't conveyed the wishes of the centurion. The centurion had asked the elders to say that he was unworthy to come, but the elders said he's worthy of that.

The elders saw what the centurion had done for them as making him very worthy of Jesus' aid, so they conveyed that to the people that the centurion was worthy.

But the friends convey a different message. They're careful to come and say exactly what the centurion wanted.

They conveyed his words rather than their impression of this man. And so their words speak about what's going on, so the words that we read are words that the friends spoke, but they were coming as ambassadors.

[22 : 55] They were speaking the words they were sent to speak, so the words as we read them, they're coming out of the friends' mouths, but they're from the centurion. And so the first message is Lord, do not trouble yourself.

And I think there's more involved in that than just saying, oh, I don't want you to expend the energy. Jesus coming there would have had repercussions amongst Israel, amongst all who had heard their message.

for Jesus to go to the centurion's house. And he says, Lord, do not trouble yourself. Don't put yourself in this circumstance. And the centurion goes on to say, I am not worthy to have you come under my roof.

Why did the centurion feel unworthy for Jesus to come under his roof? Most centurions of that day would have been boastful, would have been thought, oh, yeah, I can let this little guy come into my house.

His popularity will be boosted by my greatness and my fame. But that's not the attitude of the centurion. I'm not worthy to have you under my roof.

[24 : 12] And I think it goes even farther than that. You'll see in what we're reading through here, this man had quite an eye to the things of the Jewish faith.

He understood what was going on. And so this centurion knew Jewish law that it was not lawful for a Jew to go into a Gentile's house.

You say, really, is that true? Well, we could turn to Acts chapter 10. I'll just tell you the story for time's sake. But Acts chapter 10, we have the situation of another centurion, another godly centurion, and this centurion is curious about the things of God, and as God prepares Peter and Cornelius, that was his name, as God prepares both of them, he has to teach them the importance or teach them that they need to be careful not to call that which God calls clean, don't call that unclean.

And the whole business, remember Peter has this vision where he's hungry and in his dream a sheet is let down with all kinds of animals, clean and unclean, mainly unclean, and the Lord says, rise up, kill and eat, and Peter says, oh no, I've never eaten anything unclean, and that happens three times, and Peter begins to understand through this vision that I should not call unclean that which God calls clean.

and so Peter had strong scruples about going to the Gentiles house. As he finishes up his last part of the vision, people knock at the door, they're soldiers from Cornelius, they're Gentiles, they're Roman soldiers, they're knocking at the door, and God says to Peter, go with them.

[26 : 11] Why did God have to say to Peter, go with them? Because Jews were not to go into Gentiles houses. they were not to have association with them.

Acts 10, 28, he said to them, this is as he's relating to others what went on, you yourselves know how unlawful it is for a Jew to associate or to visit anyone of another nation, but God has shown me that I should not call any person common or unclean.

And then in the next chapter, so when Peter went up to Jerusalem, the circumcision party criticized him saying, you went to the uncircumcised men and ate with them.

All this to prove that the centurion that Jesus was dealing with knew that Jesus coming to him was a big deal.

And the centurion didn't want to put Jesus through that trouble. And she says, oh Lord, don't trouble yourself. And it's also why he goes on to say, therefore, I did not presume to come to you.

[27 : 25] The centurion could have walked out of his house and went to Jesus, but it would have been the same thing. It wouldn't have been Jesus under the centurion, the Gentiles roof, but now it would have been Jesus associating with a Gentile.

This is a man who understood the things of the Jewish religion. But this man's faith was amazing. He says, I didn't want you to come to me, and I didn't think it was right for me to go to you, but I've asked for my servant to be healed, and all I ask is that you speak the word.

this centurion trusted that Jesus could heal his servant and also keep the Jewish law.

I believe at this point, this was a statement of his faith. I believe that you can speak the word, my need will be met, and everything will be kept, if I could use the word kosher, because I believe you are a man of authority.

I believe you are a man of authority. And so he gives example of how those who have authority carry out orders, and orders are carried out for them.

[29 : 04] A soldier in the army, commanding officer nowadays gets on some sort of radio and talks across the world to a person thousands and thousands of miles away and said, my order to you is that order, it is expected will be carried out.

Why? Because the person that gave the order has authority, and what he says is to be done.

The officer doesn't have to be present. His authority, his word has authority wherever it is heard.

and that's what this centurion believes about Jesus. Jesus is a person who has authority.

And think about it, what kind of authority does he have? Well, amongst the other things you could see, this centurion recognizes that Jesus has the authority to heal a person from afar.

[30 : 23] he sees that Jesus' words are obeyed wherever they are sent. Demon people, demon possessed people had been brought to Jesus, his word had authority, the demon was cast out.

Sick people were brought to Jesus, Jesus spoke to them, the sickness was healed. Jesus is fishing with Peter one day, cast the net down.

Lord, we've labored all night and caught nothing, but at your word we'll let our net down. Jesus' word has authority. So when Jesus speaks, fish gather together and the net is so full that it is about to break.

Jesus, I'm sorry, the centurion believes that Jesus is divine.

His word has authority. And verse nine is the climax of this story, which is such an odd thing.

[31 : 41] Verse nine, says, when Jesus heard these things, he marveled at him and turning to the crowd that followed him said, I tell you, not even in Israel have I found such faith.

There are only two places in scripture where it speaks of Christ marveling. The first one we've already covered. When he went into the synagogue, in Nazareth, at the very beginning of his public ministry, gets out the role of Isaiah, scrolls to almost the very end of it, to where he looks at Isaiah, what we call 61, 1 and 2, and he reads all of 1 and half of, or three quarters of verse 2, and said, this day is this scripture fulfilled in your hearing.

and they drove him to the edge of the cliff and wanted to kill him. And he marveled at their unbelief.

Same word. But now, as a Gentile man recognizes the authority of Christ, recognizes that Jesus can speak a word, and his servant can be healed without Jesus being in the servant's presence, or without the centurion being in Jesus' presence, it just happens, because Jesus has authority.

And Jesus marvels at this man. I can't imagine the look, can you imagine sitting there and this man says this, and you look at Jesus, and he has this look of marvel on his face.

[33 : 47] But he marvels at this man. What kind of faith did this centurion have? He had faith that believed even though he did not see Jesus or see him do any sign.

We have no record that this centurion was ever amongst any of the crowds and witnessed Jesus doing anything. We have no record.

It may have taken place, but it didn't need to take place, because this centurion believed that it could take place, without ever having seen it.

Excuse me. This centurion had faith that did not center on him getting any attention. If the situation had played out differently, the elders had gone and said, oh, this man is worthy.

Yes, he's worthy. He loves our nation. He's built our synagogue and Jesus is walking to him. And can you imagine the man approaching Jesus with his hands folded across his belly, walking stiff because he sees himself as someone, as something?

[35 : 15] Yes, I am worthy of this. Look what I have done. That is not at all the mentality of the centurion. He cared not for attention.

He cared that a servant was healed, but he saw Jesus as the all-important one, as the one who had authority. And the centurion's faith was also a faith that recognized that Jesus had the authority to do as he said.

And as I've already mentioned, this points to the centurion believing, I believe, the centurion believed that Jesus was divine.

He was God. And the centurion had faith that expected Jesus' words to be carried out. So Jesus turned to the crowd and made sure that they notice what it is that Jesus marvels at.

Now, the centurion has made his statements through these friends. Jesus marvels. He's not looking at the centurion inside his house.

[36 : 35] He's looking at the friends who are bringing the centurion's words. And as he hears these words, he's marveling. And as he stands there, he turns to all these people who are disciples, most all of them Jews, and says, do you see this?

This is the greatest faith that Jesus had seen to this point in his earthly ministry. That's amazing.

faith that he had seen in his earthly ministry was not a Jew. Did this include Mary?

Did this include Simeon? Did this include John the Baptist? Baptist? Well, we don't know, but he makes the statement, I have never seen faith like this in Israel.

And now, he doesn't say this, but the situation screams it, and it's the faith of a Gentile. I've never seen faith like this in Israel, and it's the faith of a Gentile.

[38 : 02] it's a faith of a Roman. It's a faith of a Roman soldier. It's the faith of these glory hogging Roman centurions.

Now, step back, and I think it's so good to keep in mind the purpose for Luke writing this, the purpose for Luke recording the events in Jesus' life, the way that he recorded them, remember, he's writing to Gentiles, and as he writes this phrase, every Gentile who hears this, hears that Jesus is amazed that the greatest faith he had seen was in a Gentile.

Luke recorded this event in this way to encourage the Gentiles that he was writing to. Jesus was willing to meet the need of a Gentile who reached out to him.

Someone everyone called, and someone the centurion recognized was seen as someone you couldn't associate with.

but yet Jesus was willing to meet the need of a Gentile. And this passage also screams one does not have to be a Jew to have great faith.

[39 : 42] people across the world as they read that I'm sure were reassured that the faith that God was working in them was sufficient that God would indeed be willing to accept them.

If Jesus was willing to respond to the faith of this Gentile he would be willing to hear the Gentiles Luke was writing to and he was willing to respond to their faith.

He's willing to hear us. We do not have a sense of how separated Gentiles would have felt as they heard the gospel if it weren't for these things that Jesus taught and that Paul taught and that Peter taught that Jesus was indeed willing to save those who were Gentiles.

so it's good news. Well in verse 10 the centurion's faith is rewarded. Jesus never sees the centurion the centurion never sees Jesus we don't know how close they got we don't know if even the centurion looked out the window but while this man was at home caring or watching over the care of the servant that he cared for he watched this man be healed and when the servants or the friends who had came to Jesus to clarify the matter went home they went home to see this man healed I thought about this yesterday this these friends faith I'm sorry the centurion's faith was like the friends who brought the paralytic to Jesus you know the ones who carried him got up on the roof tore the roof open let him down in front of

Jesus Jesus says your sins are forgiven and this centurion is like that if I can just get the message to Jesus my servant would be healed some things to garner from the whole thing here humility and a sense of unworthiness are evidence that God has been working in the centurion's heart man doesn't seek God on his own John 12 36 to 40 while you have the light believe in the light that you may become sons of the light when Jesus had said these things he departed and hid himself from them though he had done so many signs before them they still did not believe in him so that the word spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled from us and to whom has the arm of the

[42 : 53] Lord been revealed therefore they could not believe for again Isaiah said he has blinded their eyes and hardened their hearts lest they see with their eyes and understand with their hearts and turn and I would heal them and here is a Gentile who saw who believed that means God had worked in his heart already and his humility and his seeking Jesus and his trusting Jesus were evidence of that if God doesn't open the eyes 2nd Corinthians 4 4 through 6 talks about if God doesn't open the eyes their eyes remain blinded by Satan and they cannot come God has been working in this Gentile God moves in people to cause them to seek him and then rewards the desires he gives them to seek him and so we come back to our call to worship the steadfast love of the

Lord the mercy of God to forgive sins we can't engender that in ourselves God works the work so those of us who are in Christ should praise him for his mercy and his grace and opening our eyes to see our need and bringing us to himself this man also this man's need was met because of his faith in Christ Hebrews 1 1-6 speaks about those who trusted Christ verse 6 says without faith it is impossible to please him for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him and that is indeed what this Gentile centurion did he believed and God rewarded him who was seeking God now he rewarded him with a healed servant but I think there was also this reward of a Gentile who sought the

Lord who was found by the Lord this man was trusting Christ overall Luke is pointing out to Gentiles that Jesus is working in the Gentiles I'm not exactly sure this is absolutely true but to my best of my thinking this is the first Gentile to experience the miraculous power of the Savior now there were Old Testament Gentiles Naaman was a lot like this but this is the first in the New Testament a Gentile had experienced the miraculous power of the Savior and Jesus is willing even here to meet the need of a Gentile we'll see that again a little later in a woman's life but Jesus is willing to show grace and mercy to all who will come to him so is Jesus willing to hear the prayer of an unworthy person like

Cornelius I'm sorry like the centurion maybe a good question for you to ask yourself is Jesus willing to hear the prayer of an unworthy person as they sit in this room and hear the word of God yes yes he is turn to him let's pray thank you father thank you for this encouragement of your willingness to answer the requests of those who seek you thank you that you have been gracious to work in hearts and pray that you would be with us help us to be people who see you for who you are who rest and trust in you like the centurion I pray that you would be with any who don't know you today that they would take courage from this passage that

Jesus is willing to hear the prayer of those who will seek him I pray your blessing