

INTRODUCTION:

Religious faith & the military profession.

Illustrate.

Introduce setting of scripture passage in Mt 8:5-13.

I. FAITH SEEKING, vs 5-6

A. Who was the centurion?

B. Notice that he took the initiative and

"came forward to Jesus."

C. He came beseeching, or begging.

D. His prayer, "Lord, my servant is sick." paralyzed
(with arthritis or hysteria) + suffering great pain

1. Implies great faith

2. Petition was unselfish

He came not for himself but for another --
for one not even present.

II. FAITH ANSWERED, vs 7.

A. God always responds to faith --

no matter who expresses faith,
or how it is expressed.

B. A simple, positive reply:

"I will come and heal him."

1. No complications

2. No conditions

3. No hesitation

4. No uncertainty

III. FAITH HUMBLED - vs 8-9

A. Unworthiness pleaded.

B. The all-sufficient power of Christ pleaded.

C. Understanding of authority.

1. I know what authority is.

2. I have auth. myself in a human sense.

3. I know you have divine auth. & can do this.

D. This is evidence of his genuine faith.

Here is an intelligent man who has thought it all out.
He has heard of the Kingdom of Heaven,
and he knows that this is the King.

Reasoning from what he knows of the Roman Kingdom,
how orders given from a central authority can be
dispatched to the outskirts of the empire,
and be executed there with as great certainty as if
the Emperor himself had gone to do it,
he concluded that the King of the spiritual world
must in like manner have means of communication
with every part of his dominion;
and just as it was not necessary,
even for a mere centurion,
to do personally everything he wanted done,
having it in his power to employ some servant
or soldier to do it,
so it was unreasonable to expect the King of Heaven
Himself to come in person and heal his servant:
it was only necessary, therefore,
that he should speak the word,
and by some unseen agency the thing would be done.

He accepted Jesus as the Master of sickness and
Master of spirits, as he -- the centurion --
is the commander of his soldiers.

With the logic of a soldier who knows what it is
to obey and to command,
he recognized in Jesus an authentic authority
which came to him from the highest source ---
from God Himself.

IV. FAITH COMMENDED - vs 10-12

- A. Here Jesus was SURPRISED by such great faith.
He MARVELED - at the intelligence of his faith.
You have heard of "simple" faith.
His faith was based on a true philosophy of life.

B. He said to his followers or disciples -

"not even in Israel (where I would expect to find it), have I found such faith (much less in a pagan Roman Gentile).

C. Faith may be found in anyone, regardless of his race, color, creed, nationality, profession, or situation in life.

D. Jesus says that many Gentiles will be redeemed (because of their faith), whereas many Jews will be lost (because of their lack of faith).

However, this warning is addressed not only to Jews. It is addressed also to Christians. Doesn't the faith and love of people who have recently become Christians often put to shame the inertia and indifference of many who have nominally belonged to the church for years?

V

FAITH REWARDED - vs 13

A. Jesus said, "Go; be it done for you as you have believed."

1. Note the relation between FAITH and EVENTS.

2. For a believer, things don't just happen -- accidentally or blindly -.

They happen according to the FAITH of the believer.

B. Faith is not merely its own reward; faith HAS its reward in receiving the thing believed ⁱⁿ.
Here is a great eternal principle of the universe.

C. The servant was healed at that very moment.

CONCLUSION

Not sometimes way out yonder in the future,
but right here and now, faith that comes humbly
to Jesus Christ, shall be answered, commended,
and rewarded by the Marvelous Saviour who is
"the same yesterday, and today, and forever."

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Think of what the Roman Army Officer COULD have done as compared to what he really DID do. He COULD have despised the conquered Jews, but he built them a synagogue and loved their nation.

He COULD have been brutal to his servants, but instead he sought the help of Christ to heal a favorite young servant.

He COULD have trampled on the prejudices and scruples of the Jews, but instead he understood and acknowledged them. He COULD have trusted only in brute force, but he was a man of faith and aware of a spiritual world.

His heart went out in confident trust to Jesus. His faith was a far cry from the usual Roman pride and the worship in pagan temples.

Have you faced certain times in your life when you COULD have acted according to human pride, doubt, and godlessness under testing?

And what did you do then?

Did you rise to the challenge of greatness and faith, or did you yield in defeat to your unbelief and weakness?