

July 5, 2026

“The Believing Centurion”
Lesson 1

Matthew 8:5-13

Intro

Jesus has just finished the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5-7). He has identified Himself as the Lord to whom all owe obedience (7:21-23). He compared His teachings to a foundation stone (7:24). They ensure stability to all who live by them (7:24-27). As he comes down from the mountain, a leper comes to Him, asking to be healed. Jewish purity laws prevent any contact between a leper and others so that they do not become impure. But the leper has faith in Jesus’ authority over sickness. When Jesus touches the man to heal him, he accepts the ritual impurity. But He also displays the capacity to heal diseases the Law of Moses carefully regulated. Jesus heals the man with a touch. This sets the stage for our passage today, a second healing without physical contact.

Read Matthew 8:5-13

1. vs. 5: A centurion comes to Jesus as He enters Capernaum

Capernaum was a town on the northwest side of the Sea of Galilee

Jesus used this town as his base for his ministry on earth

The centurion was an officer of the Roman army, over between 60-100 men

He is used to having authority, but here he asks Jesus for help

In Luke’s version, the centurion sends others to ask Jesus for help

Either of these actions show the centurion regarding Jesus as superior to himself

2. vs. 6: The centurion calls Jesus “Lord”

This word can refer to God, being used instead of Yahweh, which Jews wouldn’t say
Lord can also be a title of respect, like “Sir”

The centurion is showing Jesus additional honor and respect in how he talks to Him

The centurion’s servant needs healing, but he isn’t brought to Jesus

Jesus is capable of healing the servant, even from a distance, in the centurion’s mind

3. vs. 7: Jesus asks a simple question: “Shall I come and heal him?”

There are several things we can take from this little question

First, Jesus is willing to go and heal the centurion’s servant

The centurion represents Rome, an oppressing foreign power

Many hate the Romans at this time

But Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount to “love your enemies”

Here, He does what he preached; he shows care and concern for an “enemy”

Second, He puts the emphasis on Himself by saying “I”

This is a reminder of who Jesus is—the One with power to heal diseases

This one word is a reminder of his identity, his status, and his authority

4. vs. 8: The centurion's reply goes opposite of what Jesus asks him

He tells Jesus that he doesn't want Jesus to come to his house, but to "just say the word"
Two things are at work here

First, he doesn't want Jesus to come because he says he doesn't deserve it

Here again is the humility at recognizing Jesus' superior position to his own

He is a person beneath the deserving of having so great a person in his home

Second, the centurion acknowledges Jesus' power: "Just say the word"

In the case of the leper (see intro), Jesus touched the man and he was healed

Here, the centurion recognizes that Jesus doesn't need to touch his servant

All that is needed is for Jesus to speak the healing, and it will be done

This is the same thing that happened at creation in Genesis

God spoke, and life came into existence

Jesus here is seen as having the same power over life as God; He is divine

5. vs. 9: The centurion here gives his reason for what he says to Jesus in vs. 8

He understands power and authority structures

As a centurion, he has power and authority over the men in his division

He has the same power and authority over his servant

They go or come or do what he tells them to

He understands Jesus' position of power and authority

Whatever he says, it will happen; it must

The centurion understands, because he is "a man under authority"

He does what his superiors command, as his men do what he commands

Jesus has that same situation, doing what His Father commands

Jesus says in Matt. 5:36 that "all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me"

The centurion, despite being a Gentile, understands perfectly Jesus' power and authority

6. vs. 10: When Jesus hears what the centurion says, He is "amazed"

Jesus is amazed at the centurion's faith

The Jews have had the Law of Moses for hundreds of years

They have seen God work in rescuing / delivering them over time

The centurion does not have the Scriptures, or having grown up in the faith

Jesus says He hasn't seen this kind of faith in anyone in Israel

Faith here means "trust" and "fidelity"

The centurion trusts that Jesus will hear his request, and will respond with favor

The people of Israel have not demonstrated this degree of faith, says Jesus

7. vs. 11: Jesus tells his listeners about who will get into the kingdom of God

He says "many will come from the east and the west"

It won't be just Jews in Israel; it will include "outsiders" like the centurion

The ones who demonstrate / live by faith will be included

Jesus says they will "take their places at the feast"

In Revelation 19, the wedding feast of the Lamb is described

Jesus is referring to this ultimate inclusion and feast about the "outsiders"

8. vs. 12: Jesus concludes his comments about the kingdom with a warning

“The subjects of the kingdom will be thrown outside”

Those who think they are “in” will be “out”

Family history and religious background aren't the standards that qualify

This must have been shocking to many in that day

People need to have the faith that the centurion has shown

There are serious consequences for unfaithfulness

9. vs. 13: Jesus here acts exactly as the centurion has asked

His servant was healed by Jesus' words "at that moment" that he spoke them

The centurion believed Jesus had this power and authority, and so was answered

Jesus says "Let it be done just as you believed it would"

Jesus doesn't act without our participation in our prayers and requests

In Matt. 13:58, Jesus will refuse to perform healings when the audience lacks faith

The centurion's faith is rewarded with the exact thing he had faith in

Application: The way that the centurion approaches and interacts with Jesus provides us with an example to follow. He acknowledged Jesus as Lord, submitted to God's authority, and did this with humility. He also appealed to the Lord's mercy. He held complete confidence in Jesus' ability and authority over disease, even from a distance. This story demonstrates that we can be confident like the centurion in our interactions with and petitions to Christ. Faith, as shown by the centurion, sees beyond the physical to spiritual realities that are deeper. Faith understands Jesus' divine authority over all things, gives us boldness to act and ask with confidence, and makes us children of God.

Prayer: Father God, teach us to approach You like the centurion. May he also boldly intercede on behalf of those who suffer. Grant us complete faith in Your authority. In Jesus' name, Amen.