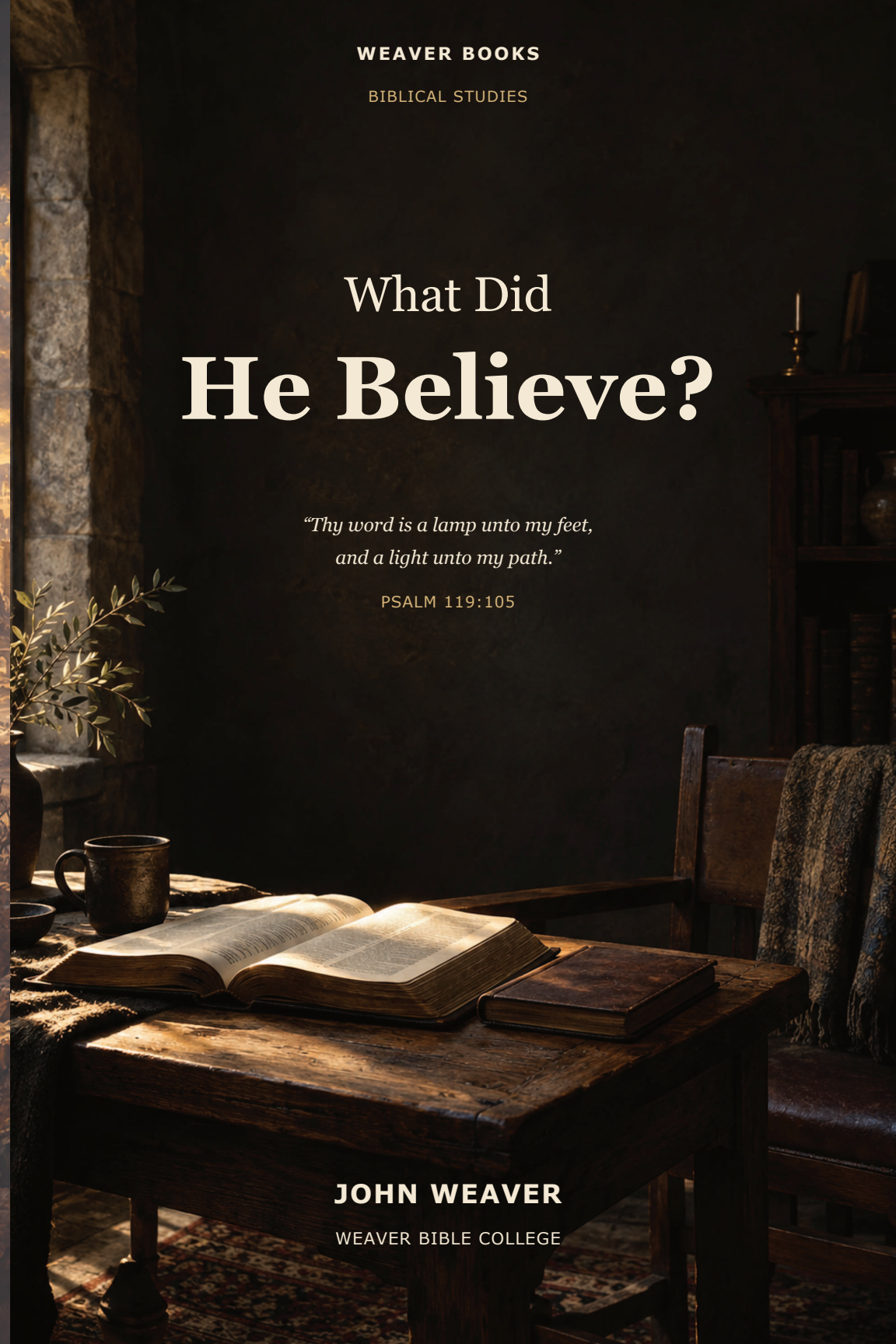
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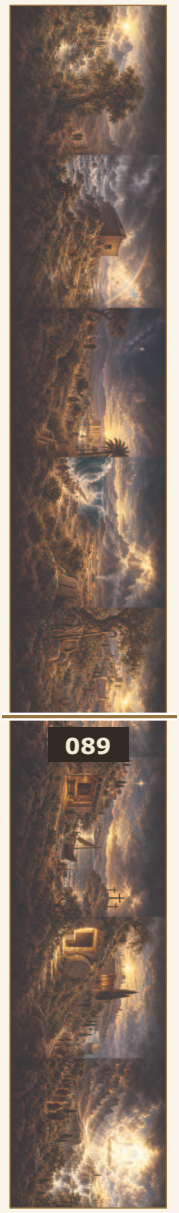
*"Thy word is a lamp unto my feet,
and a light unto my path."*

PSALM 119:105



JOHN WEAVER

WEAVER BIBLE COLLEGE



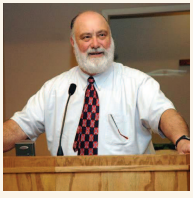
Speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed.

MATTHEW 8:8, EXCERPT

The centurion's faith raises questions about authority and the meaning of belief. John Weaver considers the biblical account alongside the broader testimony of Scripture concerning Christ and salvation. These messages invite readers to examine not only the claim to believe but also the One in whom confidence is placed.

"The first thing for which we should be thankful is that Thou hast revealed Thyself to us."

JOHN WEAVER



John Weaver

John Weaver's sermons form the teaching collection presented by Weaver Bible College. This volume gathers his teaching from that collection.

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CHAPTER 1

What Did He Believe?

Part One

May 23, 2010

Introduction: The Centurion's Great Faith

“And when Jesus was entered into Capernaum, there came unto him a centurion, beseeching him, and saying, Lord, my servant lieth at home sick of the palsy, grievously tormented. Jesus said unto him, I will come and heal him. The centurion answered and said, Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof: but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed.

“For I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me: and I say to this man, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it. When Jesus heard it, he marvelled, and said to them that followed, Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel. And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven. But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness.

"There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. And Jesus said unto the centurion, Go thy way; and as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee. And his servant was healed in the selfsame hour."

Notice verse 13: "And Jesus said unto the centurion, Go thy way; and as thou hast believed, so be it done unto you." Do you remember fishing as a child, that when someone caught a fish, especially a large fish, and as they pulled that large fish out, then you would probably place your line in the exact same spot that your friend just pulled out a big fish?

Many as adults do that today. The thinking is this: well, if I fish in the same spot, with the same bait, in the same way, I may catch a big fish as well. Well, that doesn't necessarily work. I suppose it depends not only whether or not there are any other large fish nearby, but it would certainly also depend upon the providence of God as well. However, there is a principle that our Lord enunciated in Scripture.

He says it in Matthew 9, in verse 29: "According to your faith be it unto you." In verse 13 of Matthew chapter 8, the equivalent of that is what He told the centurion: "As thou hast believed, so be it done unto you." So it is either "according to your faith, so be it done unto you," or "as thou hast believed, so be it done unto you." Obviously, the centurion believed something correctly, and he believed rightly.

So you have to ask the question: What did he believe? His request was granted. His prayer was answered.

Four Surprising Facts About the Text

Another question that should be asked in light of the context of this message is this: Do you have the faith of a Roman soldier? In reality, we should have a greater faith than this Roman soldier had. Why? Because we have the completed Word of God. We have the full, final revelation of God. Jesus Christ is fully, completely, and totally revealed in His Word. Therefore, we should have a greater faith even than this Roman soldier.

There are four surprising facts about this text. First of all, here was a Roman soldier. He was a centurion, a soldier who was over a minimum of 100 men. In all probability, he was a high-ranking officer. Here was a man who was a soldier, and Roman soldiers

particularly were known for their brutality and wickedness. In fact, most soldiers today are even known for their fierceness and godlessness.

I know that there are exceptions. But especially in Roman times, they were wicked. John the Baptist was preaching the doctrine of repentance, and individuals came to him because he was not only preaching repentance but also declaring and demanding that they bring forth fruits which evidence repentance. In Luke chapter 3 and verse 14, we read: “And the soldiers likewise demanded of him, saying, And what shall we do?” In light of John's preaching and his demand that they repent and bring forth fruits evidencing repentance, what would be the proof that these Roman soldiers had genuinely repented?

And he said unto them, "Do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely; and be content with your wages." John was striking at the predominant sins of the Roman soldiers in his time. They were known for their violence, false accusation, sedition, and rebellion. It is therefore very surprising to find this Roman soldier, who had pagan roots, a believer in Jesus Christ.

The second surprising truth is that this Roman soldier was in Capernaum. The Bible says in verse 5, "And when Jesus was entered into Capernaum, there came unto him a centurion, beseeching him." What was so surprising about Capernaum? As a whole, our Lord's ministry there was rejected. Our Lord Himself was basically despised, and Capernaum was placed under a curse. In Matthew 11, verse 22, our Lord said, "And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell. For if the mighty works which have been done in thee had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day."

Here you find this Roman soldier in Capernaum, the city of the curse, and yet a believer in Jesus Christ. This shows us another truth: no matter how wicked the city, town, state, or nation, our Lord still has some elect scattered practically everywhere.

When Paul went to Corinth, it was a notoriously wicked city, and Paul was frightened. God appeared to him and said, "Be not afraid,

Paul; I have much people in this city." Paul spent eighteen months in Corinth, preached, and a number of people were converted.

The first surprise, then, is that this was a Roman soldier. The second is that he was in Capernaum. The third surprising truth is that this Roman soldier was compassionate. Verse 5 says, "And when Jesus was entered into Capernaum, there came unto him a centurion, beseeching him, and saying, Lord, my servant lieth at home sick of the palsy, grievously tormented." When has a soldier been concerned about a servant? Where are you going to find a compassionate soldier, normally speaking, especially in Roman times?

In verse 6, when he said, “Lord, my servant lieth at home sick of the palsy,” the word “servant” in the Greek literally is “my boy.” “My boy lieth at home sick.” Evidently, this young servant had either been adopted by this man, or at least the man was treating him as a son. He refers to him as “my boy.” He was very compassionate toward this young boy because he was concerned about his health.

The fourth surprising truth we find here, which is absolutely astounding, is the greatness of this centurion’s faith. Look at what our Lord said in verse 10: “When Jesus heard it, he marvelled, and said to them that followed, Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel.” In other words, this Roman centurion had the greatest faith that Christ had ever encountered. He was honored by Christ, not only through Christ’s personal testimony concerning his faith, but also by Christ granting his request. Look at what he said in verse 13: “And Jesus said unto the centurion, Go thy way; and as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee.”

First Belief: The Lordship of Christ

So the question must be asked: What did he believe? Would you like to be honored by our Lord? Would you like to have your prayer request answered as well? Certainly you would. Then you need to drop your line in the same spot that Roman centurion dropped his line. You need to fish where he fished and have the faith that he had. What did he believe that prompted Christ to say, “I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel”?

First of all, he believed in the Lordship of Christ. We are told in verse 5 that the Roman centurion came to Christ, beseeching Him—that is, begging Him and asking for His grace and favor. However, it is only in verse 6 that we see the formal address, the formal salutation: “and saying, Lord, my servant lieth at home sick of the palsy, grievously tormented.”

The Greek word for “Lord” is Kyrios, and it means sovereign, boss, owner, master, or Lord. When this Roman centurion addressed Christ, he addressed Him as the Sovereign, the Boss, the Owner, and the Master. In other words, he was saying to Christ, “I believe that you have complete and absolute and total authority over everything and everyone.”

Now, I want to show you how great this soldier's faith was. You have to consider the fact that our Lord's Lordship was proven and demonstrated by His resurrection and His ascension. At this point in time, Christ had not even been crucified. So the Roman centurion was basically just simply going upon the Word of Christ. Let me show you. Look in your Bibles to two passages. First of all, to Acts chapter 2 and then to Romans chapter 1. Look at Acts chapter 2 and let's begin reading there with verse 36. Peter is preaching in Acts 2 and verse 36, and look what he says. Acts 2 verse 36: Peter says, "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ." That's preaching of the resurrection of Christ. It's the resurrection of Christ that demonstrated that Jesus Christ is indeed Lord and that He is God. If you would turn right over to the book of Romans, chapter 1, and notice if you would please verses 3 and 4 there.

Romans 1, verses 3 and 4. Look what the Bible says. Paul says, "Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh; and declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead." Now what was it that demonstrated that Jesus Christ was God and Jesus Christ was Lord? His resurrection. His ascension into heaven.

So here you have a man who is acknowledging His Lordship before He's ever resurrected, before He's ever crucified, before He

ever ascends. Here you have a man who is acknowledging His Lordship when the Bible says that God hath highly exalted Him and given Him a name above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. So all of this has not even been done yet, and yet the Roman centurion believes that He's Lord.

Let me show you one other thing. Go back to Matthew chapter 7. And there's a distinction you have to make. What did the Roman centurion refer to our Lord as in his salutation? He referred to Him as Lord. Now look in Matthew chapter 7, and notice verses 21 and 22. Our Lord said this: "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?"

"And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity." Our Lord says that not everyone who says, "Lord, Lord," is going to enter into the kingdom of heaven. There is a difference between mouthing words and truly believing what you are saying. Anyone who has a tongue and the ability to speak can say, "Jesus Christ is Lord." But only the Holy Spirit can authenticate that and make it real and genuine.

How did this centurion know that Jesus Christ was Lord when Jesus Christ had not even been crucified, certainly had not been resurrected, and had not ascended into heaven? Matthew 11:27 says, "All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him."

How does one get to know the Father? Only if the Son reveals Him. How does one get to know the Son? Only if the Father reveals Him. So how did this Roman centurion know that Jesus Christ was Lord?

The answer has to be that the Father revealed it unto him. In Matthew chapter 16, when Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, “Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?” Some said that he was Elijah or one of the prophets. Then

he asked, “But whom say ye that I am?” Simon Peter answered, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.” Our Lord said, “Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.”

So how did that Roman centurion really know that Jesus Christ was Lord? It was revealed to him by the Father. It was only by the grace of God that this man recognized and bowed to Jesus Christ.

Our faith should even be greater than this Roman centurion’s faith. Jesus Christ has not only been crucified, resurrected, and ascended into heaven; we have the full, total, absolute, and completed Word of God. There is no reason why you and I cannot know and understand the Lordship of Christ and its implications. Our Lord said it very simply in Luke 6:46: “Why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?”

Lord means boss, owner, master, and sovereign. If I am your boss, owner, master, and sovereign, you are going to obey me. If you call Him Lord and disobey Him, your actions reveal that your profession is false. There are thousands, if not millions, of professing Christians who confess with their mouths that Jesus Christ is Lord, yet deny that truth with their lives daily because they disobey Him.

If Christ is our Lord, we will obey Him. When we understand that Christ is Lord, He has the absolute right to tell us what to believe, how to act, how to live, how to treat each other, and what to do. He is the boss, the master, and the sovereign. Therefore, when this centurion addressed Christ, he said, “Lord.” In other words, “I’m bowing to you; I’m recognizing that you are God.”

Second Belief: The Omnipotence of Christ

The second thing the centurion believed was that Christ had the power to heal. He not only believed in the Lordship of Christ, but said, "Lord, my servant lieth at home sick of the palsy, grievously tormented." When Jesus said, "I will come and heal him," the centurion answered, "Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof: but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed." He believed that Christ was capable of healing his servant even from a distance.

His servant did not have to get in a healing line. Christ is omnipotent; that is, He is all-powerful. Do you understand that the centurion would never have come to Christ to begin with if he did not already believe that Christ could heal his servant? Where did he get that faith? Very obviously from God. Do you realize that you and I cannot have a right conception of God unless we think of Him and believe Him to be absolutely all-powerful as well as all-wise? He who cannot do as He wills and perform all of His pleasure cannot be God. In Isaiah 46, God says, "My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure." If someone is not omnipotent, he cannot be God.

God not only has a will to resolve; He also has power to effect that will and resolution. Stephen Charnock wrote: "The power of God is that ability and strength whereby he can bring to pass whatsoever he pleases, whatsoever his infinite wisdom may direct, and whatsoever the infinite purity of his will may resolve. As holiness is the beauty of all God's attributes, so power is that which gives life and action to all the perfections of the divine nature. How vain would be his eternal counsels if power did not step in to execute them. Without power, his mercy would be feeble pity. His promise is an empty sound. His threatening is a mere scarecrow. God's power is like Himself, infinite, eternal, incomprehensible. It can neither be checked, restrained, nor frustrated by the creature." And that certainly is true.

Now, I ask that you turn from Matthew 8, but turn in your Bibles to Psalm 62. And let me show you a tremendous passage. Psalm 62 and verse 11. Psalm 62 and verse 11, and we're talking about God's power or God's omnipotence. Notice Psalm 62 and verse 11. The psalmist writes: "God hath spoken once; twice have I heard this; that power belongeth unto God." Now, I want you to look at that verse again. God has spoken how many times? Once. But David says, "twice have I heard this." What has he heard? That power belongeth unto God. Psalm 62 verse 11: "God hath spoken once; twice have I heard this; that power belongeth unto God." Now hold 62. Psalm 62 verse 11. Now, I want you to look in Psalm 33, verse 6. Psalm 33, verse 6. Remember, God has spoken once. Notice Psalm 33 and verse 6. Look what the Bible declares.

"By the word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth." Here's my question: how many

times did God have to speak to create the world? Once. God has spoken once. God does not have to speak a second time. Why? Because power belongs unto God. God can effect, God can bring to pass whatever He speaks. Turn in your Bibles to Psalm 89. Look in Psalm 89 and verse 35. Psalm 89, verse 35. Look what the Scripture says. Psalm 89, verse 35.

"Once have I sworn by my holiness that I will not lie unto David." How many times does God have to speak? How many times does God have to say something? Once. Let me ask you a question. I want you to think on this now. If God is all-powerful, if He is omnipotent, if He only has to speak once and the world is created, He speaks once and a covenantal relationship is cemented, if He is omnipotent and all-powerful, how many times does He have to offer Himself a sacrifice for sin? Help me out: how many? Once. I want you to turn in your Bibles if you would please.

First of all to Hebrews 9 and then to 1 Peter chapter 3. I'm telling you this to show you there's no such thing as an unbloody sacrifice. There's no such thing as a continual and constant sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Hebrews 9, look if you would please at verse 28. Hebrews 9 verse 28: "So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation." For Christ was once offered. Look in your Bibles if you would, to 1 Peter 3 and verse 18. 1 Peter 3 verse 18.

1 Peter 3, verse 18: "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit." Notice, "for Christ also hath once suffered for sins." If Christ is omnipotent, whatever He does, He does once. That is why He said on the cross, "It is finished." Once and for all. There is no continual sacrifice of Christ. There is no unbloody sacrifice. Scripture says, "without the shedding of blood, there's no remission of sins." Christ shed His blood once and for all. All He has to do is speak once. All He has to do is act once, and it is over with.

The Roman soldier believed in the omnipotence of Christ. When Christ said to him, "I'll come to your house and heal your servant," he said, "No, no, there's no reason for you to come. Just speak the word. You're omnipotent. You don't even have to be there."

Psalm 62, verse 11: "God hath spoken once; twice have I heard this; that power belongeth unto God." When the Roman centurion recognized the omnipotence of Jesus Christ, he recognized and confessed that Jesus Christ was God, for only God is omnipotent. There is not an individual who has lived, who is living, or who will ever live who has an ounce of power in and of himself.

We talk about the powerful men who rule the world. No. There is not one who can maintain his breath for another second. There is not one who can live beyond a second when God has decreed that he die. Any power that anyone has is delegated and received from God. God alone is inherently powerful. God alone is inherently omnipotent. God's power, said Spurgeon, is like himself, self-existent, self-sustained. The mightiest of men cannot add so much as a shadow of increased power to the omnipotent one.

Spurgeon said this about God: "He sits on no buttressed throne and leans on no assisting arm. His court is not maintained by his courtiers, nor does it borrow its splendor from its creatures. He is himself the great central source and originator of power." God is omnipotent. Power, in reality, is another name for God.

Christ is standing before the high priest. The high priest asked Him, “Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?” And Jesus said, “I am: and ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.” Power is another name for God. He is sitting on the right hand of power—the right hand of God. God is power. Stephen Charnock said, “God and power are so inseparable that they are reciprocated.”

“As His essence is immense, not to be confined in place; as it is eternal, not to be measured in time; so it is almighty, not to be limited in regard to action.” You cannot limit God. God is infinite in every one of His attributes. He is the eternal, omnipotent God. This Roman centurion believed that Christ was God. He believed that Christ was omnipotent. He believed that Christ was Lord.

Do you really, genuinely believe, first of all, that Jesus Christ is the Sovereign? Secondly, do you really, genuinely believe that Jesus Christ is omnipotent? If He is omnipotent, He cannot fail. He cannot be defeated. He is not a victim; He is the victor. He will crush His

enemies with a rod of iron. He must reign until He puts all of His enemies under His feet. If you believe that Jesus Christ is omnipotent, He can do anything and everything.

He can answer every prayer. He can heal every hole. He can touch any individual. He is God. This Roman centurion said, “Look, I know that you’re Lord and I know that you’re omnipotent.” If you believe that Jesus Christ is omnipotent, you believe that He has all power, that He cannot be overthrown, hindered, thwarted, delayed, or stopped. He is God, He is all-powerful, He is on the throne, He is absolute, and He is in control. He can do anything because He is God and He is omnipotent. Period.

Third Belief: Personal Unworthiness

"You don't need to come to my house. Just speak the word. Because you're God. You're omnipotent." We need to understand the omnipotence of Christ. This is the third point, and it is the only point I am going to deal with today, because the other points need to be emphasized individually as well. Go back to Matthew chapter 8, verse 8: "The centurion answered and said, Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof: but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed." Now what did this Roman centurion believe? Listen carefully. First of all, he believed in the Lordship of Christ. Secondly, he believed in the omnipotence of Christ. Thirdly, he believed that he was a sinner and unworthy of the presence of Christ in his home.

When he said to Christ, "I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof," he was not rejecting Christ or despising the presence of Christ. That statement was an expression not only of his modesty, but of his humility and the consciousness of his own vileness and corruption.

Do you realize what most of us have never, ever really seen? And believe me, we really don't want to see it in one sense of the word: the depth of our own vileness and corruption. If you really want to be genuinely, totally, and absolutely humble, ask God to show you three things. Number one, ask Him to show you how great and how glorious He is. Number two, ask Him to show you how vile and how

corrupt you are. Number three, ask Him to show you that Jesus Christ is the answer to our vileness and our corruption.

Do you remember when Isaiah, in Isaiah chapter 6, said, “In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple”? The seraphim had six wings; with twain they covered their face, with twain they covered their feet, and with twain they did fly. They ceased not saying, “Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty.” What did Isaiah say?

He said, “Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts.” Isaiah saw himself. He saw the Lord. He saw his people as corrupt as well. Here is this Roman centurion who says, “Lord, I am not worthy.” Listen carefully. Here was a man who understood his corruption and depravity to such an extent that he felt himself unworthy for Christ to come under his roof.

For just a few minutes. Let this sink in. Here was a man who understood his corruption and vileness to the extent that he believed himself unworthy for Christ to come and spend just a few minutes under his roof. And yet the miracle of miracles is this: as vile, wicked, and corrupt as we are, Christ condescends to live in our hearts permanently.

There are so many Scriptures: “And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.” Vex not the Holy Spirit. We never stop to think that when we deny the Lordship of Christ by disobeying His word, we are vexing and grieving the Holy Spirit who indwells us. Here is a man who said, “Lord, I am not worthy for you to come under the roof of my house just for a few minutes.”

He believed himself so vile, corrupt, and unworthy. The Apostle Paul declared himself the chief of sinners. He said in 1 Timothy, chapter 1, verse 15, “This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.” Anyone who has ever been convicted of his sins and seen his own corruption and depravity would be willing to fight the Apostle Paul for that position.

You remember the prodigal boy in Luke 15. I am so glad some of these things did not happen to me. If my son had come to me and said, "Father, divide to me the portion of goods that falleth to me," because he was leaving me, I would have said, "Son, if you are going to leave me, you are going to leave me penniless. Bye." I would never have given in to an arrogant, rebellious child like that. But the father divided his living. What did the boy do?

He turned around and threw it all away, wasting it with riotous living, the Bible says. Finally, he was so hungry that he was eating with the hogs. He said to himself, "What a fool I am. My father has plenty in his house. What a fool I am to be out here in this hog pen." Then he said, "I know what I am going to do. I am going to go, and I will say to my father, 'I am no more worthy to be called thy son.' Make me as one of thy hired servants."

When he got up and left the hog pen, when he repented, he saw his father and said, "Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son."

Do you realize that there is not one individual who is worthy to be a child of God? I can understand what David meant when he prayed, "Remember not against me the sins of my youth." I have learned to pray, "Lord, remember not against me the sins of my old age too. And do not forget my middle age."

In all our unworthiness, vileness, and corruption, there is one important truth: He makes us worthy. When our Heavenly Father looks at us, He does not see our disobedience and wickedness, but the righteousness of His Son, Jesus Christ. For He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. We can only say that He makes us righteous; He makes us worthy.

Applications: The Importance of Right Belief

I have been thinking all week about the song: "Hallelujah! What a Savior! Bearing shame and scoffing rude, in my place condemned He stood. Sealed my pardon with His blood. Hallelujah! What a Savior! When He comes, our glorious King, all His ransomed ones to bring, then anew this song we'll sing. Hallelujah! What a Savior!"

Think about this: You want to see a real demonstration of humility? The Roman centurion was part of an empire that had conquered Judea.

The Judeans were despised, despicable people to the Romans. Here this Roman soldier is looking to this Judean whom he was supposed to be ruling over, saying, "I'm not worthy for you to enter under the roof of my house." He was saying, "Christ, you've never been conquered. You are the conqueror. And I bow before you." He understood his own corruption.

It is important what we believe. All of us have heard people say, "Well, it doesn't really matter what you believe just so you're sincere in it." Well, you may sincerely believe that strychnine is not a poison, but if you drink it, you will be sincerely dead. It does matter what you believe.

Your sincerity will not save you. Sincerity has never saved anyone. You may be sincere in your atheism, your agnosticism, or any other ism. But if you fail to repent of your sins and trust in Jesus Christ, you will still die in your sins and be lost. Likewise, if you believe wrongly concerning Christ and any of His attributes or His word, you're not only wrong, it is a sin, and it will most definitely hinder you in your prayers and cause you irreparable loss. You are responsible to search out the Scriptures and understand and comprehend the attributes of God.

Our words, our actions, and our conduct are based upon our doctrine. We literally act out that which we believe. David said, "I believed, therefore have I spoken." The Roman soldier's words and actions demonstrated that he genuinely and truly believed that Jesus Christ was God, that Jesus Christ was Lord, and that Jesus Christ was omnipotent. His actions demonstrated that he was humbled with his own depravity and corruption. It doesn't matter how loudly we profess Christ if we deny Him in our actions. If we want to be honored the way this Roman soldier was honored, we must believe the Lordship of Christ, the omnipotence of Christ, and our own unworthiness.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we do ask that you help us, teach us, Lord, build us up in the most holy faith. And oh Lord, today

may we understand and comprehend in some measure your Lordship, your omnipotence, our own unworthiness. And, O Father, we do thank You today that although we are unworthy in and of ourselves, Thou hast made us worthy through Thy Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, who is our righteousness, and in whom we boast, and in whom we glory, and in whom we serve.

Give us, Lord, Your grace and Your mercy for Christ's sake. In His name we pray, Amen.

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CHAPTER 2

What Did He Believe?

Part Two

May 30, 2010

SCRIPTURE READING - Matthew 8:5-13 (KJV)

Introduction and Review

Matthew chapter 8, verses 5 through 13:

"And when Jesus was entered into Capernaum, there came unto him a centurion, beseeching him, and saying, Lord, my servant lieth at home sick of the palsy, grievously tormented. And Jesus saith unto him, I will come and heal him. The centurion answered and said, Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof: but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed.

"For I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me: and I say to this man, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it. When Jesus heard it, he marvelled, and said to them that followed, Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith,

> no, not in Israel. And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven. But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness.
>
> "There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. And Jesus said unto the centurion, Go thy way; and as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee. And his servant was healed in the selfsame hour."
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> This message emphasizes how important it is to believe rightly. Sincerity does not mean anything; you may be sincere, but you may be sincerely wrong. We must believe the Word of God. It does not matter how sincere anyone is in a false religion. If they do not believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, they are simply lost. The truth is that what we genuinely believe is also evidenced by our conduct.

By our words and by our actions as well, we reap rewards according to our faith. Our Lord enunciated a tremendous principle to this Roman centurion: "As thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee." Do we realize that we reap rewards of our faith? If we have small faith, we reap small rewards. If we have great faith, like this centurion, then we reap great rewards as well. Our Lord said it in Matthew 9:29: "According to your faith be it unto you," or, "So be it," period. This is a principle. If we are going to be blessed and honored by our Lord as this man was, we have to believe, at a minimum, what this individual believed.

Our Lord not only granted the Roman centurion's prayer request, but He also praised his faith: "When Jesus heard it," that is, what the centurion said, "he marvelled, and said to them that followed, Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel." Our Lord was praising this man's faith. We must remember that he was a Roman, not an Israelite. He was a soldier, not a citizen, scholar, or scribe, and yet he was praised for his great faith.

What did he believe? First, he believed in the Lordship of Christ, because in verse 6 he came and said, "Lord." The word "Lord" means boss, owner, sovereign, and master. Thus, he was acknowledging Jesus Christ as sovereign. The important thing is that, according to

Romans 1:3-4 and Acts 2, it was only the resurrection from the dead that demonstrated our Lord's Lordship. Yet this man acknowledged and confessed that Jesus Christ was Lord before Christ was ever crucified. Very obviously, he believed in the Lordship of Christ.

Secondly, he believed that Christ was omnipotent—that He had all power. Scripture says, "Power belongeth unto God." Since he was ascribing omnipotence to Christ, he was also ascribing Godhood to Christ. He was confessing that Jesus Christ was and is indeed very God, a very God. Thirdly, the centurion said in verse 8 that he was not worthy for Christ to come under his roof. He acknowledged and understood that he was a sinner.

He was vile, corrupt, and undone. He said, "Lord, I'm just not worthy." Truly, without Christ, we are totally and absolutely unworthy. However, Christ makes us worthy. Remember 1 Timothy 1, where the Apostle Paul said, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief." Every genuinely convicted sinner would almost be willing to fight the Apostle Paul for that position, because each of us understands, once convicted by the Holy Spirit, how wicked and wrong we are.

We can see, then, that this Roman centurion's faith not only affected his life but should affect ours as well. What are we to learn from this passage and apply to our lives today? At a minimum—and we should believe far more—we should believe what this man believed. In reality, our faith should be greater than this Roman soldier's faith. Why? Because we have the completed Word of God. We have the full and final revelation, revealed not only in Jesus Christ but also in the written Word. He did not have that; we do.

Christ Has All Authority and Power to Speak the Word

First of all, I want you to understand, fourthly, that this Roman centurion believed Christ had all authority and all power, and that it was sufficient for Christ simply to speak. I hinted at this last week under my second point but did not develop it. The next point, point five, and point four are very intimately connected, so listen carefully. The formal thing I am pointing out is this: the man believed that

Christ had all authority and all power, and that it was sufficient for Christ simply to speak the word.

This centurion did not ask Christ to pray to the Father, although Christ, as the Son and as the Servant, did on occasion pray to His Heavenly Father. The centurion simply recognized Him as God. He did not ask Christ to send medication, nor did he ask Him to send someone to lay hands on his servant. He simply said to Christ, "Speak the word and my servant shall be healed." Thus, he understood that distance was no barrier to the Son of God.

Jesus Christ is not physically present with us in this room. He is not physically present anywhere on this earth right now. Certainly the Holy Spirit is omnipresent. God is omnipresent; He is everywhere at one time in the totality of His being. But Christ is seated at the right hand of God the Father, the Bible tells us. Do you think for one instant that Christ's being seated at the right hand of God the Father creates any problem for Him hearing and answering our prayers? If you think that, you think wrongly. Certainly, you do not understand the sovereignty of God or the omnipresence of God. Christ is God. He is everywhere at once in the totality of His person, although, bodily speaking, He is now seated at the right hand of God the Father.

Now let me distinguish two things, and you will understand the request of this Roman centurion. He said, "Speak the word and my servant shall be healed." He understood that Christ was not bound or tied to what you and I would call the use of means. Let me distinguish between two theological words: "immediately" and "mediately." When we use the word "immediately," we mean right now. But that is not the way the word is used theologically. Theologically, "mediately" means that God works through means. Oftentimes you read, in the Old Testament and in the New Testament, that God does use secondary causes or secondary agents, and that He does indeed work through means.

For instance, when Hezekiah became sick and was about to die, he cried to the Lord. God told Isaiah to take a poultice of figs and put it on his boil, and Hezekiah recovered. That was the use of means. What the figs did, I do not know particularly, but he was healed through laying them on the boil.

Naaman the leper was cleansed by washing in the Jordan River. That was means; God used the Jordan River to cleanse him. In Luke 4:40, Christ healed some by laying His hands upon them. In Luke 22, our Lord touched Malchus's ear, which Peter had cut off with his sword, and healed it. That was simply the use of means.

Theologically, when you use the word “mediately,” it means that God often works through means. When you use the word “immediately,” it means that God does not necessarily use means. He is not bound to means. God may simply speak the word, and it happens.

That is the way the worlds were created. Psalm 33:6 says, “By the word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth.” God simply spoke the worlds into existence. There was nothing—no dust, no matter, nothing. God created everything out of nothing. Thus, when He created the worlds, He created them immediately.

But when God created man, He created man mediately. Genesis 2:7 says, “And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.” God used means: He took the matter He had created immediately, used it mediately, and made man; then He breathed into him, and man became a living soul. The point is simply this.

God may bless, heal, touch, or answer prayer either mediately through the use of means, or immediately without any use of means whatsoever. It is totally and absolutely up to God how He moves. Whatever He does, He is not limited to means or bound to do things in a certain way. He may act however He chooses.

It is God and God alone who is able to accomplish by a word whatsoever He pleases. We are told in Ecclesiastes 8:4, "Where the word of a king is, there is power: and who may say unto him, What doest thou?" If this was true concerning earthly kings in those days, how much truer is it concerning the King of kings, the Lord Jesus Christ?

In Isaiah 55:11, God said, "So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing

whereto I sent it." The word that goes out of God's mouth will accomplish whatever He sends it to do and prosper in whatever He pleases it to do. Where the word of a king is, there is power; and where the word of the King of kings is, there is power as well.

This Roman centurion believed that Christ had all power and all authority, and that all Christ needed to do was speak the word. He did not have to use means, send medicine, or send a servant to lay his hands on the sick man. All Christ had to do was speak the word.

The Centurion Believed in a Theocentric Universe

It was after the resurrection of Jesus Christ that our Lord said in Matthew 28:18, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth." This Roman centurion believed that before Christ even said it. He believed that Christ had all power in heaven and earth. The word "power" refers to authority, jurisdiction, strength, and power. Every jurisdiction, every power, every bit of strength, and every bit of authority is given to Jesus Christ, and this Roman soldier believed that. Since he believed this, he believed that Christ could do whatever He was pleased to do.

Only God can do as He pleases. We cannot. We may say, “I’ll do as I please,” but we do not, and we cannot do as we please. Ed was pleased to try to go up a rope today, but he could not do it. You cannot do what you please to do. Only God can do as He pleases. In Isaiah 46:10, He said, “My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure.” How much of God’s pleasure will He perform? All of it. Whatever God is pleased to do, that is what He will do. God is the only one who does as He pleases, only as He pleases, and always as He pleases. None can thwart Him. None can stop Him. None can hinder Him. He is God.

When the Roman centurion came to Christ and simply said, “Speak the word,” he recognized that Christ had all authority and all power in heaven and on earth. The Roman centurion believed in a theocentric universe. What is that? “Theos” is the Greek word for God; theology is the study of God. Theocentric simply means God-centered. It means that everything revolves around God.

In contrast to that is the anthropocentric universe. “Anthropos” is the Greek word for man. There are truly only two philosophies, only two theologies: one is God-centered and one is man-centered. If you really want to know the difference between Calvinism and Arminianism, that is the answer. One is God-centered; one is man-centered. To believe in a theocentric universe is to say that God is the center of everything, that everything revolves around God, and that God’s will is paramount.

To believe in an anthropocentric universe is to say that man is the center of everything and that man’s will should be supreme. But man is not the center of anything except sin, rebellion, and wickedness. Man cannot do as he pleases. The world does not revolve around man. It does not. There is evidence of that: each one of us is going to die, and the world keeps on going. It cannot revolve around man. No. The centurion believed that everything was theocentric—that God was at the center.

Now, let me show you. I want you to hold Matthew 8, but look in your Bibles first to the book of Revelation chapter 4 and verse 11. Revelation 4:11. I want you to see the Bible clearly teaches what is known as a theocentric universe. Watch carefully. Revelation 4:11. We're going back to the book of Romans in just a moment. But look in Revelation chapter 4 and verse 11. Look what the Word of God says.

"Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created." Now let me ask you, do you know why God created the world? Because it pleased Him to do it. He did it for His pleasure. Do you know why God created you? It pleased Him to do it. Everything revolves around God. It is for His pleasure. It is for His honor. It is for His glory. It's not for man's honor.

And don't hand me that—I get so upset. "Why did God create the world?" "Well, because He was lonely and He needed fellowship." That's hogwash. If you say that God was lonely, then there's a deficiency in God. He is not all-sufficient. He is not independent. He is not the self-existent One. God created the world and everything in it for His pleasure. Period. If you'll go back in your Bibles to Romans chapter 11 and look, if you would please, at verse 36. Romans 11:36.

And then we're going to go back to Matthew 8, but look in Romans 11:36. Look what the Apostle Paul says. Romans 11:36, in talking about God once again, showing you this is a theocentric universe. Everything centers around God. Romans 11:36, the Bible says, "For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen."

"For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen."

Now, let's look at that just for a moment. "For of him," that is originally, "and through him," that is providentially, "and to him," that is ultimately, "are all things." Well, who does the universe revolve around? It revolves around God. For everything is of Him originally. It is through Him providentially and it's going to be to Him ultimately. Every knee shall bow and every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

Let us go back in our Bibles to Matthew chapter 8 to grasp the reasoning of this Roman soldier. He believed that Christ had all authority and all power. Intimately connected with that, he believed in a theocentric universe. Notice what he said in verse 8: “The centurion answered and said, Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof: but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed. For I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me: and I say to this man, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it.”

The Roman soldier was comparing his position with the position of Christ. However, he was not claiming equality by any stretch of the imagination. He was reasoning from the lesser to the greater. If something was true in his life as a soldier, how much truer would it have to be in the life of Christ?

This was his reasoning: “I am a man under authority.” That means there is someone above him who tells him what to do. But he was also a man with authority, having people under him whom he told what to do. When his superior gave him an order, he had to obey; when those under him received an order from him, they had to obey.

Thus he reasoned, “I am in subjection to others; I am under authority. I have others in subjection to me; I have authority over them.” Those above him had limited authority: they told him what to do, but they did not tell his soldiers what to do. His own authority was limited as well; he could direct his soldiers, but not those above him.

“So,” he reasoned, “I am subject to man, and man is subject to me. But Christ, You are God. You are not subject to any man. You have all authority. You have all power.”

“You are the center of this universe. Everything centers around You. And just like when I speak the word to my servants, I tell one to go and he goes, I tell one to come and he comes. They have to obey because I am their authority. Now,” he said, “how much more You, who have all power and all authority in heaven and earth, since You are God and everything revolves around You? Nothing and no one can withstand Your word. So, Lord, You just speak and it will be done.”

The Roman soldier was reasoning correctly. He was reasoning biblically. Ephesians 1:20 speaks of “his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places.” Christ is in the context, and the Bible tells us very plainly in verse 21 that He is “far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come.” Does Christ have all power and authority? Yes. Is He over and above everyone and everything? Yes. Does the universe revolve around Him? Yes.

Colossians 2:10 says, “And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power.” Jesus Christ is the head of everything. He has all authority. He has all power. And the universe revolves around Him.

Here is what that Roman soldier said: “Lord, I’m not worthy to have You come under my roof. I understand authority. I’m a man under authority. I have authority over others. They’re subject to me. And Lord, I don’t have to do any servile work. I’m a commander. If I want a fire started, I tell one of my soldiers to start a fire. If I want

water drawn, I tell one of my soldiers to draw the water. Lord, if I'm a commander, and I have that authority and that power, how much greater is Your authority and Your power? And Lord, I know You don't have to go and lay Your hands on my servant."

"You just simply speak the word because You're Christ, the Son of God." The centurion realized that Christ only needed to speak the word because Christ was and is the original source of power and has control over all things. Isn't it amazing how this man reasoned?

Charles Haddon Spurgeon said: "He would not put the Lord Jesus to so much trouble as to come to his house. He felt unworthy to be served at such a cost by such a Lord. He argues that a word will do it. He was under authority himself and hence his power to exercise authority over others. He believed that the Lord Jesus had a commission also from God and that this would gird him with a command over all the minor forces of the universe, a command which he could exercise from a distance with a single word. If soldiers would come and go at a centurion's bidding, much more would diseases fly at the word of the Lord Jesus."

"It was a thoughtful argument, but it was fair and conclusive. May we know Jesus under authority, Jesus with authority, and ourselves under the authority to Jesus. May we also believe in the omnipotence of the divine word and go forth and prove its power in the hearts of men. O thou who art King, display thy royal power." Uncertainly, the centurion believed in a theocentric universe, that everything revolved around our sovereign Lord.

The Centurion's Faith Condemned Unbelievers

Look in Matthew chapter 8, verses 11 and 12. We are talking about this Roman centurion's faith, and there is an application to our faith as well. Our Lord said, "And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven. But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

The faith of the Roman centurion condemned those who refused to believe. "Many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit

down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven. But the children of the kingdom"—those who refuse the Lord, those unbelieving Jews—"shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

The Ministry of Condemnation

Here is an aspect of faith that is rarely considered: Has it ever dawned upon you that the very fact that you believe in Jesus Christ and in the Word of God—that your belief, your faith—condemns those who do not believe? The Bible speaks about a ministry of condemnation as well as a ministry of reconciliation. Most people hear about a ministry of reconciliation all the time, but very seldom do we hear about a ministry of condemnation. Yet the ministry of condemnation is equally important and is equally an aspect of our faith.

Consider your family and your friends who are around you constantly and consistently, yet refuse to believe. They have opportunity to talk with you and to ask you questions about Christ and the Word of God. They see your faith; they see your obedience. And yet they refuse. By the very virtue of the fact that you believe, you condemn their unbelief. That is what he is saying in Matthew 8.

Isaiah 54:17 says, "No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn." Then it says, "This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord." What? "Every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn"? Then he says, "This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is of me."

"No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord."

How then do we condemn those who are wicked, wrong, and ungodly? The answer is by our faith and our obedience. All who condemn the children of God with their lies, slanders, rumors, and

refusals to believe shall be condemned by the very ones that they are condemning.

Hebrews 11:7 teaches an aspect of faith that is not very well thought of or understood, but is clearly taught in Scripture: "By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith." How did Noah condemn the world? By his faith and obedience. He believed God. He acted upon that faith. The very fact that he believed God, the very fact that he obeyed God, and the very fact that he walked with God condemned those who did not. Noah was warned of God of things not seen as yet, yet he moved with fear and prepared an ark to the saving of his house.

Matthew 12 shows two very prominent excuses usually given by people who refuse to come to Christ and refuse to hear the Word of God. Our Lord says, "The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: because they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here."

He also says, "The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here." The queen of the south was the Queen of Sheba. How and why shall she condemn this generation? Here is the answer: she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon. She traveled on a camel across the desert for days and weeks to get to Solomon to find out the truth. Yet a greater than Solomon was there.

I hear people say, “Well, there’s just not a Bible-preaching church near me.” But I’ve got news for you: if there’s not a Bible-preaching church near you, drive. Ride a camel. Get there. What did this woman do? She crossed the desert just to hear the truth. Our Lord said, “A greater than Jonas is here, and a greater than Solomon is here.” Some people say, “Well, I just don’t have anything near me.” You need to travel. You need to get where there is the preaching and teaching of the Word of God. Period.

It has always been strange to me how people will drive from South Georgia to Atlanta to see a ballgame, or to go to a movie or some play, but they will not walk across the street to hear the truth. Our Lord said the Queen of Sheba is going to condemn this generation. Why? She came across the desert. She wanted the truth. She traveled for the truth, and she will condemn those who refuse it.

Then consider verse 41: "The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it." Why? "Because they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here." Here is the second great excuse: "It was only so far away, but I didn't hear it often enough. I should have heard it more frequently." How many times did Jonah preach to Nineveh? Once, as he was running through? He really did not want the Ninevites converted anyhow. All he did was preach one time, and they repented. How many times have you heard the gospel? How many times have you heard the Word of God and failed to repent?

Our Lord said, "The men of this generation is going to rise up and condemn." Why? The men of Nineveh will condemn this generation because they repented at the preaching of Jonah. They heard it one time, and that was sufficient. Look at the people who refuse after they have heard the truth over and over and over. I have news for you: when you stand before God, no excuse will be accepted—none whatsoever.

In Acts 13, Paul had been preaching to the Jews. Verse 45 says, "But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy, and spake against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming. Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles."

You do not want it? You do not want to hear it? You do not want to travel to get it? You do not want to believe it when you hear it? What are you doing? You are judging yourselves unworthy of everlasting life. You are saying, "I'd just rather not have it. I refuse it. I don't want it."

Our Lord said in Matthew 8:11, “And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven. But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” They refuse to believe and judge themselves unworthy of everlasting life.

Very quickly, here is what Albert Barnes said on verse 12. I think this is a very good illustration. Albert Barnes commented, “It is not improbable that the image was taken from Roman dungeons or prisons.”

They were commonly constructed underground and shut out from the light of the sun. They were, of course, dark, damp, unhealthy, and probably the most filthy. Masters were in the habit of constructing such prisons for their slaves, where the unhappy prisoner, without light or company or comfort, spent his days and nights weeping from grief and vainly gnashing their teeth from indignation.

The image expresses the fact that the wicked who are lost will be shut out from the light of heaven and from peace and joy and hope. They will be confined in gloomy darkness, weep in hopeless grief, gnash their teeth in indignation against God, and murmur against His justice. What a striking image of future woe. Go to a dark, damp, solitary, and squalid dungeon; see a miserable and enraged victim; add to his sufferings the idea of eternity; and then remember that this, after all, is but an image—a faint image of hell.

So, I said, the children of the kingdom shall be cast out. Now, I want to show you one final passage on this point. Turn to 2 Corinthians chapter 2, and then we will go back to Matthew 8. We are talking about the fact that the faith of this Roman centurion condemned those who did not believe. Notice what Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 2:14-16: “Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ,”—note that, we always triumph in Christ, never a failure, never defeat—“and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place. For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish: to the one we are the savour of death unto death; and to the

other the savour of life unto life. And who is sufficient for these things?"

You say, "Well, preacher, folks do not necessarily get saved every time you preach." No, they do not. But folks do get condemned every time I preach. What are you talking about? Watch. Paul says, "For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ." Now let me show you what he is talking about. It is like those sacrifices in the Old Testament. When they offered them, that sweet smell went up, especially when they put the incense and everything there. It was a sweet smell. It is kind of like when you go out in your backyard and your neighbor is out in his backyard grilling steaks. You get that little smell, and they do smell good. That is a sweet savour.

The Apostle Paul says, "We are a sweet savour unto God in them that are saved and in them that perish." To the one we are the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life. And who is sufficient for these things?

Here is the illustration. Suppose a preacher stands before a room of 300 sinners, all unconverted and unsaved, and Jesus Christ is preached. Suppose every man, woman, boy, and girl in that room is converted by the grace of God. God sends His power and His Spirit; God convicts and converts. If all 300 are saved, that is a sweet smell: God's Son is preached.

But suppose the preacher proclaims the same message, and at the end of the sermon the people clench their fists, grit their teeth, and say, "Get out of here, or we'll kill you. We don't want to hear this." None are convicted or converted, and they run him out of town. What does God say? That is a sweet smell: His Son is preached. We are the savour of life unto life to those who believe, and death unto death to those who do not believe. There is a ministry of condemnation. The very fact that you believe and obey condemns those who disbelieve and disobey.

The Centurion's Faith Was Recognized and Rewarded

One last thing: in Matthew 8:13, seventhly, this man's faith was recognized and rewarded. It was recognized in verse 10: "When Jesus heard it, he marvelled, and said to them that followed, Verily I

say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel." Then verse 13 says, "And Jesus said unto the centurion, Go thy way; and as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee. And his servant was healed in the selfsame hour."

This man's faith was not only recognized; it was rewarded. Why? Because he came to Christ in deep humility and a sense of unworthiness, recognizing the position, person, and power of Jesus Christ. We have great needs, and we are unworthy to have any of those needs met.

The very fact that our Lord condescends to grant us any blessing is a marvelous, miraculous work of His grace and mercy. He does not owe us anything but justice, and I do not want any of that. I want grace. I want mercy. When we come to Him, we must realize that we are unworthy in and of ourselves and have nothing in ourselves. But He is the God of all grace and mercy. Whatever He gives us, He gives us from the freeness of His grace, the richness of His mercy, and the sovereignty of His power. He is God, and He must receive all honor, all power, and all glory.

Applications for Believers

Let me make a couple of applications. First, if we believe as the centurion believed, we must believe that Christ has all authority and all power. That should make us bow in submission to Him. Some of us were in the military. When that sergeant spoke, we jumped; when that lieutenant or captain commanded, we moved. Why? They had limited power and authority. If Christ has unlimited power and authority, we must submit to Him and be willing, ready, and eager to obey what He speaks.

Secondly, this should make us trust Him even more, since nothing is impossible to Him. Jeremiah said, "Ah Lord God! behold, thou hast made the heaven and the earth by thy great power and stretched out arm, and there is nothing too hard for thee." God said, "Behold, I am the Lord, the God of all flesh: is there any thing too hard for me?" The answer is no. Our Lord said in Mark 10:27, "With God all things are possible." How can we not trust such a God?

How can we not go to Him and beg Him for the salvation of our children, the salvation of our friends, our family? Nothing is too hard for Him.

Secondly, we should study, pray, obey, and exercise the faith that we have, and ask God to make it into a great faith. However tiny, however small, however minute, however seemingly insignificant our faith is, if we have any faith at all, it needs to be exercised. It needs to be used. It needs to be developed. At the same time, we need to beseech our Lord, as the one man did, saying, "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief." And how the disciples prayed, "Lord, increase our faith."

Thirdly, we have to realize that we not only have a ministry of reconciliation, but we also have a ministry of condemnation. Those who refuse to hear and believe in Jesus Christ, the sovereign God of heaven and earth, and those who refuse to hear and obey His Word shall be condemned. They will and are condemned by our testimony. Do you realize that, if we remain faithful and obedient, God is going to use us, either in reconciliation or condemnation? He will use us because His Word will not return unto Him void.

Let us pray. Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we ask You for Your grace, Your mercy, and Your help today. Lord, there are great implications to faith, some we have never seen before. And yet, Lord, Thou art sovereign, guard and control. The first thing for which we should be thankful is that Thou hast revealed Thyself to us. For, Lord, if it had not been for Your grace, we would be just like every other unbeliever who despises Thee and Thy Word. Lord, we are thankful for life, so great salvation that has purchased and brought. In order, we do pray for our families, our children, and our friends. Lord, help them to see the importance, the absolute necessity, of bowing to Jesus Christ. We pray, Father, for repentance and faith to be given to them. We ask, Father, for Your grace and help in their lives. Lord, give us grace that we may serve Thee acceptably with reverence and godly fear. In Thy name we pray, Amen.

Source Notes

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Chapter 2: What Did He Believe? Part 2
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