

Amazing Faith

Luke 7:1-10

SS Lesson for 04/03/2016

Devotional Scripture: Mark 9:14-29

OUTLINE

INTRODUCTION

OVERVIEW AND KEY VERSE OF THE LESSON

Key Verse: Luke 7:9

Commentary from The Bible Knowledge Commentary

Commentary from The Bible Expositor and Illuminator Commentary

LESSON INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

From the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

MAJOR THEME ANALYSIS

PLEA OF FAITH (LUKE 7:1-3)

A critical need (1-2)

A critical need that seeks the pity of God (Mark 9:21-24)

A critical need that seeks God to be willing to help (Luke 5:12-13)

A critical need that seeks the One who is the only way into Heaven (Luke 13:23-25)

Hearing about Jesus (3)

Hearing about Jesus through preaching (Rom 10:14)

Hearing about Jesus through the Word of God (John 20:31)

Hearing about Jesus through witnesses (Acts 26:17-18)

Hearing about Jesus through the gospel (Rom 16:25)

Requesting Jesus' healing (3)

Requesting Jesus' willingness to heal (Matt 8:2-3)

Requesting Jesus' healing through touching (Matt 9:20-22)

Requesting Jesus' healing through His mercy (Matt 9:27-29)

WORKS OF FAITH (LUKE 7:4-5)

Works of worthiness (4)

Works of worthiness through doing good works (Col 1:10)

Works of worthiness through God's calling (Eph 4:1-2)

Works of worthiness through godly conduct (Phil 1:27)

Works of good deeds (5)

Works of good deeds through living a good life (1 Peter 2:12)

Works of good deeds done in humility and wisdom (James 3:13)

Works of good deeds in family life (1 Tim 5:10)

Works of good deeds through the encouragement of God (2 Thess 2:16-17)

WISDOM OF FAITH (LUKE 7:6-8)

Wisdom of humility (6)

Humility through grace (James 4:6)

Humility before God (James 4:10)

Humility by considering others interest before ours (Phil 2:2-4)

Humility that is not false (Col 2:17-19)

Wisdom of acknowledging Jesus' authority (7-8)

Authority because God put all things under Jesus' power (John 13:3)

Authority because Jesus has all authority (Matt 28:18)

Authority because God exalted Jesus above all powers (Eph 1:20-21)

Authority Jesus is Lord of all (Phil 2:9-11)

GOD'S RESPONSE TO FAITH (LUKE 7:9-10)

Recognition and commendation of faith (9)

Faith beyond cultural boundaries (Matt 15:25-28)

Faith without wavering that God has the power (Rom 4:19-22)

Faith combined with love that is growing (2 Thess 1:3-4)

Faith that starts with giving of ourselves (2 Cor 8:1-5)

Response of healing (10)

Response of healing because Jesus is the only power that heals (Acts 4:7-10)

Response of healing because of humble prayer and repentance (2 Chron 7:14-15)

Response of healing through faith (Acts 3:16)

CONCLUSION AND OTHER THOUGHTS

COMMENTARY THOUGHTS FROM BOB DEFFINBAUGH

CONCLUDING THOUGHT FROM THE NIV STANDARD LESSON COMMENTATOR

PRACTICAL POINTS FROM THE BIBLE EXPOSITOR AND ILLUMINATOR

Introduction

Overview and Key Verse of the Lesson

The lesson examines the truth about the **Amazing Faith** it takes to be healed. The **study's aim** is to recognize the importance of faith and God's will when praying for healing. The **study's application** is to pray for people's physical needs with full confidence that the Lord Jesus can heal.

(Adapted from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator Commentary)

Key Verse: Luke 7:9

When Jesus heard these things, He marveled at him, and turned around and said to the crowd that followed Him, I say to you, I have not found such great faith, not even in Israel

Commentary from The Bible Knowledge Commentary

After Jesus' sermon (chap. 6), which was given outside of town, **He entered Capernaum**, His adopted hometown where He performed many of His messianic signs. **A centurion** in the Roman army was a commander of a century, a group of 100 soldiers. This centurion in Capernaum, unlike most Roman soldiers, was well liked and respected by the Jewish people in and around Capernaum because he loved them and **built** them a **synagogue** (7:4-5). This **centurion's servant... was extremely sick and about to die** (v. 2). **The centurion** had faith that **Jesus** would **heal** the servant. Perhaps the reason he sent Jewish **elders** to present his request was that he doubted that Jesus would have heeded a Roman soldier's request. Matthew 8:5-13 records the same event, but Matthew did not record the sending of messengers. He presented the account as if the centurion were present himself. Matthew was reflecting what the centurion meant when he noted that his messengers do his bidding as if he were there himself (Luke 7:8). The centurion realized that his request was brash and that he really was not **worthy to** see Jesus (v. 7). Jesus **was amazed** (*ethaumasen*; cf. comments on 2:18) at the centurion and said, **I have not found such great faith even in Israel**. The concept of faith is extremely important throughout chapters 7 and 8. It is vital to believe who Jesus is (i.e., the Messiah) and what He said. The exercise of faith by Gentiles also becomes prominent later in Luke's book.

Commentary from The Bible Expositor and Illuminator Commentary

The centurion had a horrible problem, Here he was, a man of command, and a specter loomed that he could not control. His favored servant lay at death's door, yet he was helpless to do anything. He could only stand and watch as the servant suffered, growing closer to death each second. Have you ever experienced this? It is likely that, whether as friend or family member, you have been touched by the calamity of serious illness. It is agonizing to stand helpless while a loved one slips away. That was the catalyst for this centurion's actions. Although he commanded a hundred men, he was still a man himself. He still felt very real and deep emotions. I would also guess that he was a very loyal and dedicated master. Notice something interesting here: he did not go out to seek Christ in person. Instead, he sent a delegation of Jewish elders. Why? It would make sense to us that he would just go in person and ask, right? When Jesus heard the request, He set off for the centurion's house. However, He was quickly met by some of this man's friends. They had been sent to tell Christ not to bother Himself to go there. This is where we learn the centurion's reasoning for Christ not to enter his house. "Lord, trouble not thyself: for I am not worthy that thou shouldest enter under my roof" (Luke 7:6). Read that again. This was a Roman official, someone with great power, saying that he was not worthy to have Christ under his roof! To the crowd, this was staggering. The man was telling Jesus not to sully Himself by coming into his house. However, the centurion recognized in Christ something that others did not. First, this man called Jesus "Lord" (Luke 7:6). He knew who Jesus was. It seems possible that he called Jesus this because he knew that Jesus was the Messiah. Second, he understood his sinful state before a righteous God. Unlike the Jews who considered themselves pious, this man acknowledged how undeserving he was to be in Christ's presence.

However, he also understood Christ's great power. This is what made the difference. He did not need Christ to come and put on a show. Unlike some who sought for a sign from Christ (John 2:18), this man's faith required only a spoken word. That faith is what caused Christ to speak so highly of this foreigner (Luke 7:9). This centurion believed with absolute conviction that a single word from Jesus could heal even a fatal illness (vss. 7-8). He was utterly certain of Christ's authority. There was no quibbling, no trace of doubt in his request. He was convinced that all he needed was to come and ask sincerely for that healing. We are told that Christ has healed us through His wounds (1 Pet. 2:24). We read about instances in Scripture in which He healed someone. But do we truly believe that He will do this? Do you have a need for healing? Take it to Jesus. The centurion believed, and his servant was restored with a word. Take it to Him, being confident that He is the Great Physician, the One who is able to heal even the direst case if you ask in faith.

Lesson Introduction and Background

From the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

Have you ever wished that God would simply prove himself to you—prove that he exists, that he loves you, that he has power over your problems—by doing some great thing that would undeniably reveal his presence? We've all felt that way, particularly in times when we realize that we don't have much or any control over negative circumstances. Perhaps this is why serious illness, either our own or that of a loved one, often brings out both the greatest faith in God and the greatest frustration with him. Experiences of this kind test not only our faith in God but also our very understanding of faith itself. While we may think that some personalized, visible sign of God's existence and power would make our faith stronger, the author of Hebrews defines faith as "confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see" (11:1). If faith is indeed belief in something we have not yet achieved or experienced, would some visible "proof" of God's existence actually make our faith stronger, or would it simply turn faith into a form of scientific knowledge? And if we wonder why God has not answered our prayers for healing, does our disappointment mean that we really don't believe in him? Today's lesson tells of an encounter between Jesus and a man who was very much like many of us. The man was a Roman soldier, a person who doubtless had faced death on many occasions. But one day he found himself standing helplessly by the bedside of a beloved household member whose life was ebbing away. Circumstances of this kind can be the truest test of one's heart and convictions.

The Bible records many stories in which Jesus heals someone, and two aspects of today's passage are unusual in that regard. One relates to the nature of the healing itself. Luke 7:1-10 is one of only three instances recorded where Jesus healed someone from a distance—that is, the person who was healed was not in the presence of Jesus when the healing occurred. (The other two distance-healings are recorded in Matthew 15:21-28 and John 4:46-54; some think the account in John and that in today's text are one and the same, but that is doubtful.) The second unusual aspect relates to the nature of the individual who requested the healing in today's lesson: he was a Gentile, and a Roman centurion at that. The Gospels very rarely show Jesus interacting with Gentiles, and in fact record him stating that his mission was focused on Israel (Matthew 10:5, 6; 15:24-26). A centurion was a Roman officer in command of a company of 100 soldiers (compare the English word century, a span of 100 years). The Romans began to rule over the land of Israel in 63 BC, and in Jesus' day the Roman army was an occupation force that maintained law and order. Units of soldiers, commanded by centurions and stationed in local neighborhoods, were the backbone of Rome's program to control the Jewish population.

Major Theme Analysis

(Scriptural Text from the New King James Version; cross-references from the NIV)

Plea of Faith (Luke 7:1-3)

1 Now when He concluded all His sayings in the hearing of the people, He entered Capernaum.

2 And a certain centurion's servant, who was dear to him, was sick and ready to die.
3 So when he heard about Jesus, he sent elders of the Jews to Him, pleading with Him to come and heal his servant.

A critical need (1-2)

A critical need that seeks the pity of God (Mark 9:21-24)

21 Jesus asked the boy's father, "How long has he been like this?" "From childhood," he answered. 22 "It has often thrown him into fire or water to kill him. But if you can do anything, take pity on us and help us." 23 "If you can?" said Jesus. "Everything is possible for him who believes." 24 Immediately the boy's father exclaimed, "I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!"

A critical need that seeks God to be willing to help (Luke 5:12-13)

12 While Jesus was in one of the towns, a man came along who was covered with leprosy. When he saw Jesus, he fell with his face to the ground and begged him, "Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean." 13 Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. "I am willing," he said. "Be clean!" And immediately the leprosy left him.

A critical need that seeks the One who is the only way into Heaven (Luke 13:23-25)

23 Someone asked him, "Lord, are only a few people going to be saved?" He said to them, 24 "Make every effort to enter through the narrow door, because many, I tell you, will try to enter and will not be able to. 25 Once the owner of the house gets up and closes the door, you will stand outside knocking and pleading, 'Sir, open the door for us.' "But he will answer, 'I don't know you or where you come from.'

Hearing about Jesus (3)

Hearing about Jesus through preaching (Rom 10:14)

14 How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?

Hearing about Jesus through the Word of God (John 20:31)

31 But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

Hearing about Jesus through witnesses (Acts 26:17-18)

17 I will rescue you from your own people and from the Gentiles. I am sending you to them 18 to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.'

Hearing about Jesus through the gospel (Rom 16:25)

25 Now to him who is able to establish you by my gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery hidden for long ages past,

Requesting Jesus' healing (3)

Requesting Jesus' willingness to heal (Matt 8:2-3)

2 A man with leprosy came and knelt before him and said, "Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean." 3 Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. "I am willing," he said. "Be clean!" Immediately he was cured of his leprosy.

Requesting Jesus' healing through touching (Matt 9:20-22)

20 Just then a woman who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years came up behind him and touched the edge of his cloak. 21 She said to herself, "If I only touch his cloak, I will be healed." 22 Jesus turned and saw her. "Take heart, daughter," he said, "your faith has healed you." And the woman was healed from that moment.

Requesting Jesus' healing through His mercy (Matt 9:27-29)

27 As Jesus went on from there, two blind men followed him, calling out, "Have mercy on us, Son of David!" 28 When he had gone indoors, the blind men came to him, and he asked them, "Do you believe that I am able to do this?" "Yes, Lord," they replied. 29 Then he touched their eyes and said, "According to your faith will it be done to you";

Works of Faith (Luke 7:4-5)

4 And when they came to Jesus, they begged Him earnestly, saying that the one for whom He should do this was deserving,
5 "for he loves our nation, and has built us a synagogue."

Works of worthiness (4)

Works of worthiness through doing good works (Col 1:10)

10 And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God,

Works of worthiness through God's calling (Eph 4:1-2)

4 As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. 2 Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.

Works of worthiness through godly conduct (Phil 1:27)

27 Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm in one spirit, contending as one man for the faith of the gospel

Works of good deeds (5)

Works of good deeds through living a good life (1 Peter 2:12)

12 Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.

Works of good deeds done in humility and wisdom (James 3:13)

13 Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show it by his good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom.

Works of good deeds in family life (1 Tim 5:10)

10 and is well known for her good deeds, such as bringing up children, showing hospitality, washing the feet of the saints, helping those in trouble and devoting herself to all kinds of good deeds.

Works of good deeds through the encouragement of God (2 Thess 2:16-17)

16 May our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father, who loved us and by his grace gave us eternal encouragement and good hope, 17 encourage your hearts and strengthen you in every good deed and word.

Wisdom of Faith (Luke 7:6-8)

6 Then Jesus went with them. And when He was already not far from the house, the centurion sent friends to Him, saying to Him, "Lord, do not trouble Yourself, for I am not worthy that You should enter under my roof. 7 Therefore I did not even think myself worthy to come to You. But say the word, and my servant will be healed. 8 For I also am a man placed under authority, having 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."

Wisdom of humility (6)

Humility through grace (James 4:6)

6 But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says: "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."

Humility before God (James 4:10)

10 Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.

Humility by considering others interest before ours (Phil 2:2-4)

2 then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. 3 Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. 4 Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.

Humility that is not false (Col 2:17-19)

17 These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ. 18 Do not let anyone who delights in false humility and the worship of angels disqualify you for the prize. Such a person goes into great detail about what he has seen, and his unspiritual mind puffs him up with idle notions. 19 He has lost connection with the Head, from whom the whole body, supported and held together by its ligaments and sinews, grows as God causes it to grow.

Wisdom of acknowledging Jesus' authority (7-8)

Authority because God put all things under Jesus' power (John 13:3)

3 Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God;

Authority because Jesus has all authority (Matt 28:18)

18 Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

Authority because God exalted Jesus above all powers (Eph 1:20-21)

20 which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, 21 far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come.

Authority Jesus is Lord of all (Phil 2:9-11)

9 Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, 10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11 and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

God's Response to Faith (Luke 7:9-10)

9 When Jesus heard these things, He marveled at him, and turned around and said to the crowd that followed Him, "I say to you, I have not found such great faith, not even in Israel!"
10 And those who were sent, returning to the house, found the servant well who had been sick.

Recognition and commendation of faith (9)

Faith beyond cultural boundaries (Matt 15:25-28)

25 The woman came and knelt before him. "Lord, help me!" she said. 26 He replied, "It is not right to take the children's bread and toss it to their dogs." 27 "Yes, Lord," she said, "but even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table." 28 Then Jesus answered, "Woman, you have great faith! Your request is granted." And her daughter was healed from that very hour.

Faith without wavering that God has the power (Rom 4:19-22)

19 Without weakening in his faith, he faced the fact that his body was as good as dead — since he was about a hundred years old — and that Sarah's womb was also dead. 20 Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, 21 being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised. 22 This is why "it was credited to him as righteousness."

Faith combined with love that is growing (2 Thess 1:3-4)

3 We ought always to thank God for you, brothers, and rightly so, because your faith is growing more and more, and the love every one of you has for each other is increasing. 4 Therefore, among God's churches we boast about your perseverance and faith in all the persecutions and trials you are enduring.

Faith that starts with giving of ourselves (2 Cor 8:1-5)

1 And now, brothers, we want you to know about the grace that God has given the Macedonian churches. 2 Out of the most severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. 3 For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own, 4 they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the saints. 5 And they did not do as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then to us in keeping with God's will.

Response of healing (10)

Response of healing because Jesus is the only power that heals (Acts 4:7-10)

7 They had Peter and John brought before them and began to question them: "By what power or what name did you do this?" 8 Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them: "Rulers and elders of the people! 9 If we are being called to account today for an act of kindness shown to a cripple and are asked how he was healed, 10 then know this, you and all the people of Israel: It is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified but whom God raised from the dead, that this man stands before you healed.

Response of healing because of humble prayer and repentance (2 Chron 7:14-15)

14 if my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land. 15 Now my eyes will be open and my ears attentive to the prayers offered in this place.

Response of healing through faith (Acts 3:16)

16 By faith in the name of Jesus, this man whom you see and know was made strong. It is Jesus' name and the faith that comes through him that has given this complete healing to him, as you can all see.

Conclusion and Other Thoughts

Commentary Thoughts from Bob Deffinbaugh

The story of the healing of the centurion's son is a remarkable one, but let us focus on some of the critical features which Luke and Matthew include in their accounts of this event.

First, note with me that there are some very perplexing differences between Luke's account and that of Matthew. It is not difficult to conclude that the accounts in Matthew 8:5-13 and Luke 7:1-10 are a record of the same incident. What is difficult to grasp is why Luke's gospel makes a point of telling us that the centurion never personally spoke with Jesus, while Matthew's account clearly gives us this impression. Matthew's account seems to describe a face-to-face conversation between the centurion and Jesus, while in Luke's account two delegations are sent by the centurion to Jesus in the man's behalf. He even explains why he did not come personally to petition Jesus to heal his servant (Luke 7:7). The issue which faces any conservative student of the Bible is the explanation for the apparent discrepancy between the two gospel accounts. Since we believe that the Bible is free from error, we must also hold that there are no unexplainable discrepancies in parallel gospel accounts of the same incident. How, then, can we explain the apparent contradictions in these two accounts?

My first answer is that we should not feel obliged to give a full explanation where one does not exist. We are not to close our eyes to problems in the text, but faith allows us to live with apparent inconsistencies, knowing that God's word is inerrant and infallible, and that our understanding of His word is neither of the above. Faith is not opposed to the facts, but it is not troubled when all the facts are not made known. Let us remember that the gospel writers were aware of the writings of others (cf. Luke 1:1-2), and yet they felt free to have differences in their accounts—not differences which made another biblical author in error, but perhaps differences which remind us that we have only partial accounts of any incident in the life of Christ.

For example, in Luke's account of the healing of the paralytic (Luke 5:17-26), he informs us that he was let down through the roof. In Matthew's account, this is never mentioned (Matt. 9:2-8). From reading only Matthew's account, we would never have guessed that the man who was healed had a most unusual "entrance." Neither account is in error, and both can be harmonized. We must suppose that in some cases, if all the facts were reported, apparent discrepancies would be explained, but the purpose of the accounts was not so much to convince critics as it was to proclaim the gospel, from different points of view. Apparent discrepancies should not be avoided, but neither should they make us feel compelled to answer every problem when only limited information is given.

I have a friend who is an attorney. He once had a client who was involved in a traffic accident. His client had been struck by another car in an intersection. The light was green for his client. He had two police officers who saw that the light was green. The other party insisted that his light was green, and he had two deputy sheriffs to testify to this, who were standing on the opposite corner. The bottom line was that the traffic light was malfunctioning. Knowing the malfunction of the light cleared up all of the discrepancies in the two accounts.

Having said this, there are various ways of explaining the differences between these two gospel accounts. The first is to view the centurion as not coming initially, but personally appealing to Jesus later on, perhaps as the

servant became more critically ill and his pain intensified. I find this a little hard to accept. Another explanation is simply that Matthew's account is the more abbreviated, and that he meant us to understand that the centurion appeared before Jesus and appealed to Him by means of his representatives. We know that this was Matthew's meaning in a text which is somewhat parallel in this regard:

Then he [Pilate] released Barabbas for them; but Jesus he scourged and delivered over to be crucified (Matt. 27:26).

Pilate did not personally scourge Jesus or hand Him over to be crucified; he did so through his agents. So, too, we could say that Matthew intended us to understand his account of the petition of the centurion's representatives.

Second, note that the centurion is never named, even though Luke is a man of great detail. I believe that this is for several reasons. Luke was more interested in describing the man's character than giving us his name. He was also intent upon focusing on the man's position and power as a centurion. Luke wanted us to think of this man as a Gentile, which he most certainly must have been. Finally, Luke wanted us to see this man in terms of his position of power. This centurion was a military officer, attached to the occupation forces in Israel. His power with respect to the nationals was almost unlimited. He, like Naaman, could have attempted to secure healing for his servant by using his political connections, but he laid all these things aside. Rather than appealing to Jesus as a man of great position and power, he approached Him as an unworthy Gentile. He demanded nothing, but pled for grace.

Third, note that the centurion asked nothing for himself, but was seeking physical healing for his servant, a young lad who was very likely a Jew.

Fourth, the only motivation to which the centurion appealed was the mercy of our Lord. In Matthew's account especially the condition of the servant is described as being very painful. The basis upon which Jesus was approached was that of human need, not of human power or worthiness or merit. So, too, the centurion offered nothing in return for the healing of the servant.

How interesting to contrast the humility of the centurion with the hypocrisy of the Jewish elders, who pled his case before Jesus. Only Luke provides us with the details on this matter, including the petition of the Jewish elders to Jesus on the behalf of the centurion:

"This man deserves to have you do this, because he loves our nation and has built our synagogue" (Luke 7:4b-5).

The centurion saw himself as unworthy of the grace of God. He did not feel worthy to have Jesus come under his roof (v. 6), nor even to personally come to appear before the Master (v. 7).

The Jewish elders, however, saw the centurion as very worthy. The basis of his worthiness was his favorable attitude and actions toward the Jews. Far from disdaining the natives who were under the authority of Rome, this man loved the nation of Israel. He greatly valued them as a nation, and thus, I believe, had a considerable respect for their religion. This love for the nation was expressed by his role in building (or helping to build) their synagogue. At the bottom line, the Jewish elders were much like some institutional Christians today, they believed that big donors were to receive "special handling" by religious leaders. Perhaps they had another fund-raiser planned and were hoping to hit this man up for another donation. Frankly, the whole thing stinks. The true attitude of the Jews toward Gentiles of a lesser "value" can be seen from Luke 4:22-30 and Acts 22:21-23). Man surely does discriminate, and on the basis of outward appearances.

Jesus went with the Jewish elders, toward the house of the centurion, but for very different reasons than they had suggested. Jesus acted apart from selfish interest, and out of a heart filled with mercy. They acted out of self-interest, for very selfish reasons. Rich and generous Gentiles were worthy of Jewish ministry, but the unworthy were worthy of rejection, disdain, and even eternal damnation, at least in the minds of many Jews.

Fifth, the centurion made his request, based upon what he had heard of Jesus. So far as we know, these two never met. So far as the centurion was concerned, there was no need. Being from or near Capernaum, the headquarters of Jesus, there must have been a great deal to hear about Jesus (such as the healing of the paralytic, lowered the roof, whose sins were forgiven—Luke 5:18-26), and this man had a listening ear.

Sixth, the centurion must have had a fair understanding and appreciation for the Jew's religious beliefs. Notice that the centurion did not wish to have Jesus put in the position to have to come into his house. This was not because the official was unwilling to have Jesus, but, due to his contact with the Jews, he understood the Jewish reticence to have any intimate contact with a Gentile. Furthermore, the centurion built their synagogue, so he had to have known a good deal about their religious beliefs and practices. He was not offended by these views, nor did he in any way challenge them. Indeed, he accommodated them. This was a very humble thing for a military superior to do for a captive people.

Seventh, the centurion had a grasp of the meaning of authority. The centurion was a man of authority himself, but he was quick to recognize that his authority did not extend to the healing of dying men. Jesus' authority did. Jesus' authority was greater than the centurion's. Thus, the centurion does not mention his own authority, except to illustrate why Jesus need not be personally present to heal his servant. A man of authority need only speak the word. Jesus, the centurion had concluded from the reports he had heard, was a man of greatest authority. He even had authority over nature. Thus, He could order sickness to depart and it would do so, whether or not He was present. He also recognized that Jesus' authority, like his own, was the result of a higher authority ("I myself am a man **under** authority," v. 7). A man of authority, like the centurion, could quickly recognize and appreciate the superior authority of Jesus.

Eighth, each of the accounts of the healing of the centurion's servant in Matthew and Luke have a unique emphasis. Luke's account, addressed primarily to a Gentile audience, provides great encouragement for Gentile readers because here the faith of a Gentile is praised by our Lord as superior to that of Israelites. There is hope for Gentiles. Also, though, there is conveyed the great respect which the centurion had for Judaism and for the Jews, which caused him to send a delegation of Jewish elders to petition Jesus for the healing of his servant. Matthew's gospel, on the other hand, written with a Jewish audience in mind, tends to humble the reader by including Jesus' words that not only commended this Gentile's faith, but which also spoke of the fact that in the kingdom many Jews would be absent, while many Gentiles would be present (Matt. 8:10-12).

(Adapted from URL:<https://bible.org/seriespage/jesus-healer-luke-71-17>)

Concluding Thought from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentator

Several themes from Jesus' Sermon on the Plain (Luke 6:17-49) are reflected in today's lesson. In that sermon, Jesus pronounced blessings on those who grieve (as the centurion was doing; compare v. 21b) and are hated (as the centurion would have been hated by many Jews; compare v. 22a). Jesus also taught people to love their enemies and do good for them, because this is how God himself treats all people (note the love of the centurion for Israel as described by the Jewish elders; compare vv. 27-36). Further, Jesus' Sermon on the Plain noted that people, like trees, define themselves by the "fruit" (behavior) they produce (as the centurion revealed his true nature through his actions; compare Luke 6:43-45). Jesus went on to instruct that the wise person builds life on his teaching, just as a wise builder lays the foundation of his house on rock rather than sand (and as the centurion placed trust in Jesus; compare vv. 46-49). Such connections would have been quite unexpected in Jesus' day in view of the fact that the centurion was a Gentile and a servant of the Roman Empire—someone whom devout Jews would not normally view as a candidate either for God's love or their own. All these thematic connections sharpen the point of our story: you can't judge a book by its cover. As Jesus himself declared, "I have not found such great faith even in Israel." May our faith match that of the centurion's!

Fortunately for the centurion and his servant, our story has a happy ending: healing was needed, healing was granted, and the servant was saved from death. As we all know from experience, however, the outcome isn't always so positive. All the faith in the world has never kept, nor can ever keep, a person alive indefinitely. Sometime after the events of Luke 7, the centurion's servant did indeed die as all humans eventually do. At

that time, no amount of prayer could have saved him, as we know from the simple fact that that individual is not alive today. Sometimes God says no, and when it comes to health issues, he always says no in the end. Rather than being a source of discouragement, the fact that faithful people can't always pray someone out of the hospital should help us better understand the point of stories like today's. While faith can be powerful to effect healing, the main issue for God isn't the healing; it's the faith. The real victory for the centurion in today's passage did not come when Jesus healed his servant, but before the healing: the centurion had already proven his faith by believing before Jesus answered his request.

Practical Points from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator

1. We are blessed to have people to intercede for us before the Lord (Luke 7:1-3)
2. Kindness, generosity, and respect can overcome nearly any human barriers (vss. 4-5)
3. We should always approach Jesus in humility and awe (vss. 6-7)
4. Recognizing Jesus' authority is a major part of true, biblical faith (vs. 8)
5. Nothing delights our Lord so much as genuine faith in Him (vs. 9)
6. Jesus' timing in meeting our needs is always perfect, even if we would prefer a different time frame (vs. 10)