

THE FAITH OF THE SOLDIER

Matthew 8:10 ... "When Jesus heard it, he marveled, and said to those who followed, 'Assuredly, I say to you, I have not found such great faith, not even in Israel!'"

Please re-read and carefully consider today's verse. This is Jesus talking. He is using the words "assuredly," which means absolutely, and "great" which in Christ's vernacular means something very special. We use the word "great" for everything from ice cream to movies. But Christ reserved his use of the word for things that were very powerful spiritually.

Jesus said these words, not about a Jewish priest or one of his disciples, or his mother, or even one of his predecessors, such as Abraham or David. He used these words for a Gentile, and more amazing than that, a Roman soldier. The man, a Centurion in the Roman army, approached Jesus and asked him to heal his servant. He told Jesus in verses 8 and 9 that he was not worthy for Jesus to enter his home, but he was confident his servant would be healed if Jesus would only speak a word from a distance.

Jews despised Roman soldiers because of constant persecution and daily executions. Roman soldiers later carried out the execution of Jesus on the Cross. Was it because of what the Centurion said that convinced Jesus of his genuine faith? The man could have been lying or saying things to impress or trap Jesus. To answer these questions, we have only to look at ourselves. If you go to church every week and pray over your meals, that does not make you a person of faith. Many people do those acts out of habit. You cannot fool God by saying the right words. God sees your heart. Despite what you say, God knows who you are, what you believe, and what you do. And this is what happened with the Centurion, who told Jesus only that "Lord, I am not worthy that you should come under my roof. But only speak a word, and my servant will be healed."

Jesus discerned through the Holy Spirit that the Centurion truly believed in him and had made him his personal savior. It was not because of what the Centurion said, but in what Jesus saw in the man's heart. Most Jews were rejecting Christ as their Messiah, but the Gentile Roman soldier believed. Because of that, the servant was instantly healed without Jesus seeing or touching him. What does Jesus see in your heart? Your words, rituals and spiritual habits mean nothing to God. What matters is the condition of your heart and that will determine if you are headed for heaven, not what you say.

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