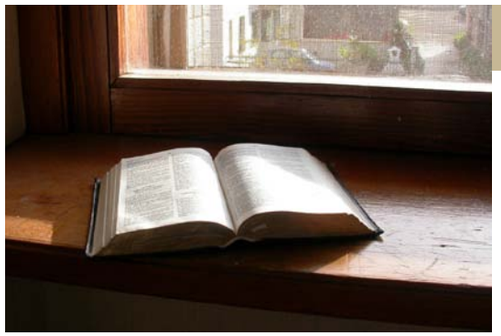


ity of God. To respect God's word is not "legalism" but a gesture of humble obedience and faith in the One who authored that word.

Jesus praised the man's faith and went on to foreshadow the inclusion of the Gentiles in the gospel message (Matt. 8:10-12). But what happened to the servant? The text records that Jesus said to the centurion, **"Go your way; and as you have believed, so let it be done for you"** (Matt. 8:13a). Matthew tells us, **"his servant was healed that same hour"** (Matt. 8:13b). Jack P. Lewis notes that the phrase "that same hour"—"is for the Gospels a phrase unique to Matthew (8:13; 9:22; 15:28; 17:18)" (*Commentary on Matthew* 1.123). Jesus's healings were immediate. Luke records, **"those who were sent, returning to the house, found the servant well who had been sick"** (Luke 7:10, NKJV). When Jesus spoke, the servant was healed. If this Roman centurion showed such great faith in and respect for the word of Jesus, should we show any less?.

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Faithful Sayings

BULLETIN OF THE OLSEN PARK CHURCH OF CHRIST

Services
Sunday: 9:00 AM
9:30 AM
10:30 AM
Wednesday: 7:00 PM

Elders:
Patrick Ledbetter
Brady McAlister
Jeff Nunn

Deacons:
Ben Hight
Blake McAlister
Walker McAnear
Sam Nunn
Lance Purcell
Justin Smiley
Trevor Yontz

Evangelist:
Kyle Pope

The Healing of the Centurion's Servant by Kyle Pope

Matthew 8:5-13 records a remarkable healing which Jesus performed for a most unlikely person. The account begins**, "Now when Jesus had entered Capernaum, a centurion came to Him, pleading with Him"** (8:5, NKJV). A Roman centurion, lit. "an *archos* of one hundred," was a position of great military authority. "They were the representatives of Roman law and order and were men of force of character" (A. T. Robertson, *Commentary,* 121). We are not told how this man learned about Jesus, but it is clear that he had a good relationship with the Jews of Capernaum. Luke records that he built their synagogue and loved their **"nation"** (Luke 7:5). Perhaps the centurion had heard from the Jews things that Jesus had done. However he came to learn about Jesus, this non-Israelite would demonstrate greater faith than many of the Jews had up to that point in Jesus's ministry.

Matthew records that the centurion **"came to Him"** and was **"pleading with Him."** Luke informs us that this inquiry actually came through the elders of the Jews whom the man had approached after hearing about Jesus. The elders came to Jesus and, **"begged Him earnestly, saying that the one for whom He should do this was deserving"** (Luke 7:4b-5). At this word Jesus went with them (Luke 7:6). Modern critics have argued that this difference be-

tween Matthew and Luke is a contradiction, but we contend that both accounts are given by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit (2 Tim. 3:16) and contain no elements that cannot be harmonized with one another.

The message which the centurion brought was simple, **"Lord, my servant is lying at home paralyzed, dreadfully tormented"** (8:6). Matthew uses a word for **"servant"** (*pais*) that can mean either *child* or *servant*. The parallel account in Luke uses a word for **"servant"** (*doulos*) which would not be applied to one's child (Luke 7:2). The affection and concern for the servant as one **"dear to him"** (Luke 7:2) may explain Matthew's use of the more familial term. Luke adds the fact that the servant **"was sick and ready to die"** (Luke 7:2). Our English word "paralytic" is derived from the word Matthew uses here which the KJV rendered **"palsy."** Most translations of this century and the last transliterate the word or refer to the servant as **"paralyzed."** The centurion's servant in our text was not only paralyzed but was also **"suffering great pain"** (NASB).

In response to the request from the centurion, Jesus replied, **"I will come and heal him"** (8:7). After the Jewish elders relayed the message, Jesus **"went with them"** (Luke 7:6a). As He approached the house, **"The centurion answered and said, 'Lord, I am not worthy that You should come under my roof. But only speak a word, and my servant will be healed'"** (Matt. 8:8). This discourse is also relayed to Jesus, but by friends of the Centurion. Luke records, **"when He was already not far from the house, the centurion sent friends to Him"** (Luke 7:6b). The words the centurion relayed to Jesus represent some of the most humble and moving words ever spoken. It is striking that this powerful Gentile officer speaks to a simple Jewish carpenter's son, calling Him **"Lord."** Most commentators see in his reluctance for Jesus to come to him a demonstration of respect for Jewish separatism from Gentiles. Yet the centurion's declaration **"I am not worthy"** addresses more than ceremonial cleanliness. In Luke's account he relays to Jesus, **"I did not even consider myself worthy to come to you"** (Luke 7:7). The fact that the centurion immediately turns to issues of authority and rank make it more likely that the centurion, recognizing Jesus's miraculous authority, acknowledges his own deficiency in such matters.



He then declares, **"only speak a word, and my servant will be healed"** (Matt. 8:8b). The centurion's statement reflects both faith and a respect for authority. As was true of his own rank he knew that one in a position of authority could command others and carry out his wishes through subordinates. Did the man expect Jesus's disciples to carry out the healing in His place, or did he understand that Jesus's authority extended beyond the material world? In either case he treats Jesus, not as an inferior in a conquered land, but one worthy of respect, with authority greater than his own. In our day, how badly we need more souls like this noble man—souls who recognize that the power Christ possessed to **"speak the word only"** and accomplish His will, still resides in that word which has been revealed. We are **"not worthy"** to go beyond what has been spoken, so we must respect the authority of God which rests in His word.

The centurion continued, **"For I also am a man under authority, having soldiers under me. And I say to this one, 'Go,' and he goes; and to another, 'Come,' and he comes; and to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it"** (Matt. 8:9). Jack Russell Shaffer thinks that part of this message may have been delivered by the centurion directly. He reasons, "Seeing Jesus near his house and having already sent the second delegation, the centurion came personally to meet Jesus and restates the problem in more detail" ("A Harmonization of Matthew 8:5-13 and Luke 7:1-10." *The Master's Seminary Journal* 17.1 (2006): 48). Whether Jesus personally spoke with the man or not, his faith and respect for authority impressed Jesus.

He identifies himself as a man **"under authority"** As a Gentile, this man may have known only a little about the God of Israel, but he understood well the nature of authority. Since the centurion had come to believe that Jesus had power to heal disease, he reasoned that Jesus's authority would function as his own authority did. He had power to command, and his word alone accomplished his will. Brother Kenneth Chumbley, in his commentary on Matthew offers the insightful analysis that "the centurion reasoned inductively that they were both *under* authority. He understood that only those who can take orders are allowed to give orders" (153). What a wonderful demonstration of faith that this man understood that Jesus could simply speak and his servant would be healed.

Those who would follow Jesus today must recognize that as servants of God we are "under His authority." No, we do not hear the voice of Jesus commanding us directly, but as His servants we are given instruction through His revealed word in Scripture. This word guides us through all that it contains, in its direct statements, its descriptions of what pleases God, and in the truths it infers. To presume to direct our own steps in matters of worship, teaching, or lifestyle is to reject the author-