

A MAN OF GREAT FAITH

By Keith Greer

Jesus, following His baptism, spent three years in what many call His, "public ministry". During this period of His personal teaching, we meet many remarkable individuals. Some of the most vivid lessons on faith come from "common everyday people". One such person, is the centurion we will discuss today.

One of the most important attributes of this man is often overlooked. When Jesus entered Capernaum, a centurion came to Him pleading, " Now when Jesus had entered Capernaum, a centurion came to Him, pleading with Him, saying, "Lord, my servant is lying at home paralyzed, dreadfully tormented." {Matthew 8:5,6} This man truly cared for another person. "Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also the interests of others." {Philippians 2:4} This was a worthy trait for a leader of men, who cared much for one of his servants.

When the Lord told him He would come and heal him, what was his reaction? " And Jesus said to him, "I will come and heal him." 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." {Matthew 8:7,8} Such humility! This man understood his unworthiness before the Son of God. Yet, I'm reminded of the words of James, "But He gives more grace. Therefore He says: "God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble". [James 4:6} People talk about humility, but let us discuss an example of it.

The centurion continued, " ... But only speak a word, and my servant will be healed. " {Matthew 8:8} A centurion is a commander of soldiers and has some authority. He tells the Lord he can tell his servants to "come and go", at his bidding. Yet, this pales when we think of the power that Christ's words have on the hearts of men!

What did Jesus think of this man? " ... Assuredly, I say to you, I have not found such **GREAT FAITH**, not even in Israel! {Matthew 8:10} Could one receive a higher compliment than from the Son of God? Christ said not even among His own people had such faith been in evidence. What were the results of the centurion's request? " ... Go your way; and as you have believed, so let it be done for you." And his servant was healed the same hour." {Matthew 8:13}

What may we learn from this man of "great faith"? Two very important lessons stand out before me. One, the need to "really" care about others. The Christian who cares only for self, can never be pleasing to God. The life of a Christian is one of caring and service. Please consider the glimpse of the judgment scene in Matthew 25:31-46. What was one of the examples of the things that men will be judged by? Our service rendered unto others! Our Lord powerfully sent home an important lesson for us to grasp. One of the things I will be judged by are the opportunities we were presented to help others and how we responded to those opportunities.

Second, the power of faith! " And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. Confess your trespasses to one another,

and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much." {James 5:15,16} Yet, if we have no faith, it is just empty words.

May we live each day of our lives with compassion for others. This world can sometimes be a very cruel place. Look for and react to opportunities to uplift another life by just being compassionate and caring to our fellow man. Never underestimate the power of God's mercy or prayer. Prayer is a special blessing that only God's children have been afforded. May God help us to see that power and use it often in our lives to help not only self but others! We must also be people of "great faith." ***