

November 10, 2002 by Steve Brandon



The Authority of Jesus Christ - Over Disease (Part 2)

Matthew 8:5-17

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Matthew 8:1-17

And when He had come down from the mountain, great multitudes followed Him. And behold, a leper came to Him, and bowed down to Him, saying, "Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean." And He stretched out His hand and touched him, saying, "I am willing; be cleansed." And immediately his leprosy was cleansed. And Jesus *said to him, "See that you tell no one; but go, show yourself to the priest, and present the offering that Moses commanded, for a testimony to them." And when He had entered Capernaum, a centurion came to Him, entreating Him, and saying, "Lord, my servant is lying paralyzed at home, suffering great pain." And He *said to him, "I will come and heal him." But the centurion answered and said, "Lord, I am not worthy for You to come under my roof, but just say the word, and my servant will be healed. "For I, too, am a man under authority, with soldiers under me; and I say to this one, 'Go!' and he goes, and to another, 'Come!' and he comes, and to my slave, 'Do this!' and he does it." Now when Jesus heard this, He marveled, and said to those who were following, "Truly I say to you, I have not found such great faith with anyone in Israel. And I say to you, that many shall come from east and west, and recline at the table with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven; but the sons of the kingdom shall be cast out into the outer darkness; in that place there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." And Jesus said to the centurion, "Go your way; let it be done to you as you have believed." And the servant was healed that very hour. And when Jesus had come to Peter's home, He saw his mother-in-law lying sick in bed with a fever. And He touched her hand, and the fever left her; and she arose, and waited on Him. And when evening had come, they brought to Him many who were demon-possessed; and He cast out the spirits with a word, and healed all who were ill in order that what was spoken through Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled, saying, "HE HIMSELF TOOK OUR INFIRMITIES, AND CARRIED AWAY OUR DISEASES."

In this section of scripture, we have three miracles of healing: the leper, the centurion's servant, and Peter's mother-in-law. We need to remember why these miracles are here. Two weeks ago, we saw that Matthew's purpose in these verses isn't to give us a strict chronology of the life of Jesus. Piecing together Jesus' ministry from Mark and Luke would lead us to believe that in the ministry of Jesus upon the earth, He healed Peter's mother-in-law before the healing the leper or the centurion's servant. Furthermore, we noted last time that Matthew has bunched the miracles in his gospel in chapters 8 and 9. Out of the 16 healings recorded, 11 of them are contained in the next two chapters (chapters 8-9). From these two observations, we see that Matthew was seeking to give us a picture of Jesus, more than simply give us a chronology of the events in the life of Jesus. There will be a time in Matthew's (beginning in chapter 13), when Matthew will become chronological. But at this point, Matthew is being much more topical.

Political cartoonists often use a caricature when drawing political figures. When they draw former president Reagan, they emphasize his hair, which stuck way up as it was brushed back over his head. They also emphasized a large gap between his nose and his upper lip. For . In these verses Matthew has been giving us a caricature of Jesus. When they draw former president Clinton, they often enlarge his nose, particularly the end of his nose, which tends to be round. Current president Bush is drawn with very large ears and very prominent eye-brows. In these verses, Matthew is giving us a sort-of caricature of Jesus, focussing upon His authority to heal disease.

In these next two chapters, Matthew will demonstrate the authority of Jesus Christ....

In 8:1-17, we see Jesus' authority over disease, as He heals with a word or with a simple touch.

In 8:18-22, we will see Jesus' authority over His disciples, as He challenges a few men who express a desire to follow after Him.

In 8:23-27, we will see Jesus' authority over nature, as He calms the raging storm on the sea.

In 8:28-34, we will see Jesus' authority over demons, as He casts the Legion of demons out of the two men, who were out of control.

In 9:1-8, we will see Jesus' authority over sin, as He proves that He has the authority on earth to forgive sin.

Over the next several weeks, it is my aim to ingrain you with a picture of Jesus' authority. We will encounter Jesus again and again and again, being totally in control of circumstances surrounding Him. He heals when He wants to heal. He demands what He wants to demand of His followers. He stills the sea when He wants to. He tells the demons, "Begone!" and they obey. He forgives sin, and demonstrates that He is able to do so. My prayer for all of you is that you would have a proper view of Jesus Christ. And particularly, that you would come to see the authority that Jesus has. Remember, these events are recorded for our instruction. They are written to direct our attention to Jesus.

The dialogue between Jesus and the centurion has four parts to it: (1) the centurion speaks; (2) Jesus speaks; (3) the centurion speaks; and (4) Jesus speaks. I have used each of these speaking sections as a different point in my outline.

Let's first look at the first point ...

1. The Righteous Request (verses 5-6)

Verse 5 begins, "And when He had entered Capernaum ..." In Matthew 9:1, Capernaum is called "His own city" (Matt. 9:1). When Yvonne and I traveled to Israel, I remember visiting Capernaum. When we entered the town, there was a big sign that said, "CAPARNAUM THE TOWN OF JESUS." Jesus was born in Bethlehem, brought up in Nazareth, and spent much of His ministry in Capernaum.

Verse 5 continues, "... a centurion came to Him." It is no accident that here in Capernaum, Jesus would encounter a centurion. Capernaum was located on the northwest shores of the Sea of Galilee. The town was on the border of the territory of Herod Antipas on one side and Philip the Tetrarch on the other side. When you think of a border town, you would expect there to be a high military presence guarding the border. A centurion was a military officer who lead a squadron of 100 men. He was a drill-sergeant. He was an in-your-face military man. But, this military man was also, ...

A Respected Man (verse 5)

We find from Luke's account of this same scene that this centurion was a highly respected man in the Jewish community. Some Jewish elders told Jesus that this man, "loves our nation" (Luke 7:5). This is an astonishing admission on the part of the Jewish elders. In Jesus' day, the Jews were not a free nation. They were under Roman control. They were forced to pay taxes to the Roman government, which was always a point of contention among the Jewish people. The Jews hated paying these taxes. On two different occasions, Jesus was asked concerning this taxation (Matt. 17:24-27; 22:15-22).

A centurion was a visible reminder to the Jewish people, that they were a conquered nation, who was oppressed by the Romans. So, for this reason, we are surprised when we hear these Jewish elders speak so highly of this man. Perhaps some clue comes in Luke 7:5, when these Jewish elders also told Jesus, "It is he who built us our synagogue." I believe that this man's commitment to build a synagogue for the Jews is an expression of his concern for Israel. Perhaps this man was a god-fearing gentile. It is interesting to note that you can visit the very location where this man built this synagogue for the Jews. When my wife and I visited Israel, we saw the ruins of a 4th century synagogue that was built upon the very foundations of the synagogue that this centurion funded.

At any rate, he was a respected man, who had, ...

A Righteous Concern (verse 6)

He said, "Lord, my servant is lying paralyzed at home, suffering great pain" (verse 6). Matthew uses the word, "boy" to describe this servant, while Luke uses the word, "slave." The best way to understand who was sick and suffering great pain is to combine these two words and realize that this was a slave, who was but a boy. The astonishing thing about this concern of the centurion is that he had concern for this slave-boy. Perhaps you know how low slaves were viewed in the times of Jesus. They were considered to be property, rather than people. They were considered to be things, rather than souls. This slave was just a boy. As such, he wasn't in any way crucial to the operations of this man's home. It's not like he was a tremendously productive servant in his home. (If you aren't convinced of this, I ask you mothers and fathers with boys in your home, "Do they make work for you, or do they do work for you? Do you pick up their clothes or do they vacuum your carpet?").

This centurion was concerned for the health of this slave boy. He was "lying paralyzed at home and suffering great pain" (verse 6). This isn't a pretty picture. It is a child, who was suffering greatly upon his bed. Perhaps there were loud cries of anguish. There is something about a suffering child that stirs the heart. This centurion was stirred to seek help, not for himself, but for this young, and insignificant boy.

Like the leper last week, there is something very noble about the way in which this request was made. You remember the leper simply came to Jesus and said, "Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean" (verse 2). This centurion said, "my servant boy is lying paralyzed at home, suffering great pain" (verse 6). This centurion didn't demand anything from Jesus at all. He didn't try to pull rank and his privilege in coming to Jesus. He didn't say, "Look what I have done!" He didn't say, "I deserve it." He didn't even request on his own behalf. It was for another. It was a humble request.

Out of all of the miracles that Jesus did, I believe that the gospel writers have recorded for us certain miracles, which are particularly instructive for us. I believe, like last week, that this man's request to Jesus is particularly instructive for us this morning. I ask you, "Are your prayer requests similar to this request? Are you self-focussed in your prayers? Are you other-focussed in your prayers? Are you concerned only for others, who will affect you?" It's easy for a parent to pray for his or her own sick child. It's easy for a wife to pray for a job for her husband. But, it is more difficult to pray for the health of someone you barely know or for God to provide a job for an acquaintance. It is hard to pray (as in this case) for a sick child in someone else's family. I know of several tremendously sick children in other families. Yet, I find my own heart rarely drifting their way in prayer for them. But, this was the request of the centurion.

This centurion had heard of Jesus (Luke 7:3), so he sought for help by summoning Jesus. **He was a righteous man with a righteous**

concern and made a righteous request.

Let's now look at ...

2. The Willing Response (verse 7)

This response is so typical Jesus. Jesus simply said, "I will come and heal him." Jesus was ready to come and ready to heal.

Ready to come (verse 6a)

It's not like Jesus wasn't busy. We know that Jesus was tremendously busy in performing miracles and teaching. Just look at verse 16, "When evening had come, they brought to Him many who were demon-possessed; and He cast out the spirits with a word, and healed all who were ill." Yet, Jesus was ready and willing to take the time to do what was needed to minister to others. He was willing to make a house call. Today, doctors rarely make a house call, because it is extremely inefficient, yet, Jesus was willing to make the effort to come to this man's home.

Ready to heal (verse 7b)

Jesus clearly had the ability to heal. In this instance, Jesus was willing to heal. What a great Savior we have.

3. The Humble Hesitation (verses 8-9)

Upon hearing Jesus' He wasn't hesitating at all about the healing portion of Jesus' response. Rather, he was hesitating about the coming portion of Jesus' response. This centurion understood his status as one who was born outside of the commonwealth of Israel. Though he built the Jews a synagogue, I am certain that he still remained an outsider to the Jews. As a gentile, this centurion may not have been welcomed to worship in the synagogue. (I hope that they let him attend the building dedication service). He was prohibited from associating with any of the Jews too closely, because he was considered to be "unclean." Furthermore, no Jew would ever visit his house, because he was a Gentile.

Perhaps you remember how difficult it was for Peter to be convinced to go into the house of Cornelius, who was described as a "righteous and God-fearing man, well spoken of by the entire nation of the Jews" (Acts 10:22). It took three similar visions (Acts 10:16), and a message from God (Acts 10:22) to convince him. When he stepped foot in Cornelius' house, he said, "You yourselves know how unlawful it is for a man who is a Jew to associate with a foreigner or to visit him" (Acts 10:28).

So, imagine the centurion's reaction when Jesus said, "I will come." Here is the greatest holy man of all the Jews, ready to come into his house. The centurion's response was natural for a god-fearer. He sought to keep Jesus away.

But it is interesting to note why the centurion sought to keep Jesus away. He didn't say, "Lord, don't come into my house, for I am a gentile and you are a Jew." Rather, he said, "I am not worthy for You to come under my roof" (verse 8). With this response, this centurion ...

Expresses humility (verse 8a)

He considered himself as unworthy to receive Jesus into his own house (according to verse 8). Furthermore, we discover in Luke's account that this centurion didn't actually talk to Jesus himself. Rather, he sent these Jewish elders to make this request on His behalf. Matthew records the conversation as if the centurion was directly speaking to Jesus. But actually, this conversation occurred through this delegation of Jewish elders whom he sent to speak with Jesus.

There is great application here for us. Here is a centurion interacting with Jesus and we find him thoroughly humbled. Think of this man's profession. He was a military leader over a hundred men. How many drill sergeants have you met that are humble men? Think of this man's wealth. He had the resources to build a synagogue for the Jews. He had enough wealth build a church building for Rock Valley Bible Church, without anybody else contributing to such a cause. How many of these men have you met that are humble men? Yet, when dealing with Jesus, this centurion is a man who doesn't consider himself worthy before Jesus Christ.

We ought also to realize how great and awesome Jesus Christ is. When we come into His presence, we ought always to be humble. Though we who believe in Christ have been called "fellow heirs with Christ" (Rom. 8:17), this isn't a license to come into His presence with arrogance. We ought to come to Christ as humble petitioners, like this centurion, who expresses humility (verse 8a) when he said, "I am not worthy for You to come under my roof. In verses 8b-9, he ...

Expresses faith (verses 8b-9)

He said, "just say the word, and my servant will be healed." I think that this centurion understands! He understands who Jesus is. I remember growing up having a view of Jesus as a soft-spoken, gentle, and even wimpy sort of a man, who walked the earth doing good things and speaking good things. It was never clear in my mind that this same, gentle, Jesus was the one who had authority over it all and could do whatever He wished to do. But the centurion understands the authority of Jesus.

Look at verse 9, "For I, too, am a man under authority, with soldiers under me; and I say to this one, 'Go!' and he goes, and to another, 'Come!' and he comes, and to my slave, 'Do this!' and he does it." As a commander of a hundred men, this Centurion understands authority. This is how the military works. When the superior officer says, "Go," the enlisted man will go. If they don't go, they are in big trouble. In boot camp, it means a few pushups. In active service, it means disciplinary action. This is how the work-force works. When the boss says, "Do this," the employee will do it. If they don't they are disciplined. If they develop such a pattern of disobedience, they are fired. This is how the home works. When dad says, "Come," the child should come. Never mind the book they are reading, or the television show they are

watching. If they don't obey their parents, there should be consequences.

This is how Jesus works. After His temptation, Jesus told Satan, "begone!" and Satan left him (Matt. 4:10,11). To Matthew, Jesus said, "Follow Me!" and Matthew rose and followed Him (Matt. 9:9). To the goats at the final judgment, Jesus will say, "Depart from Me, accursed ones" (Matt. 25:41), and they will depart. But the authority of Jesus extends beyond directing people. It extends to the water at Cana, that became wine (John 2:7-10). It extends to the bread and the fish that were multiplied to feed the 5,000 men (Matt. 14:13-21). It extends to the fig tree that Jesus cursed, which withered before their eyes (Matt. 21:18). It also extends (in our case this morning) to disease. Jesus can heal with a word. How unlike a doctor this is. My father is an orthopaedic surgeon. I have heard him say (and tell his patients) on many occasions that he cannot heal anybody. He can only straighten the bones. He can only put them in a position for God to heal them. A modern doctor today cannot heal, "with a word," like Jesus can.

This centurion was saying to Jesus. "I understand authority. When a commanding officer tells me to go, I go. When I tell a subordinate officer to go, they go." By implication, the centurion was saying, "I know that you have authority as well. You have authority over disease. When you tell disease to go, it will go! So, just say the word, and my servant will be healed" (verse 8). We will find Jesus healing with a word later in Matthew. In verse 16, Jesus will be casting out spirits "with a word." In Matthew 8:32, the legions of demons are cast from the two men with a single word of Jesus, "Begone!" In Matthew 9:6, Jesus will say to the paralytic, "Rise, take up your bed, and go home." The man walked home. In Matthew 17:18, Jesus will rebuke a demon, who will come out of the lunatic.

Church family, this is Jesus Christ. He is the one endowed with all authority. The very last words of Jesus will be, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth" (Matt. 28:18). He is the one who can heal with a word. Think about how many people have longed for this! We have fairy tales about the "fountain of youth." It may as well be called, "the fountain of health." We are a health crazed society today. We spend billions of dollars each year on health products and health research. This is why I believe that so many supposed "faith-healers" have risen. We crave health so badly, yet, fail to believe that our health is held in the hand of Jesus. We are told that in Jesus, "all things hold together" (Col. 1:17). This includes our health. Do you have a sore throat? Do you have a headache? Do you have a broken ankle? Do you have pneumonia? It is all in the hands of Jesus.

This centurion certainly believed that Jesus could heal with a word. This ought to be our faith as well. Jesus never tries to do anything where He fails to accomplish it. When Jesus doesn't heal, it isn't because He isn't able to heal, because He certainly has the authority to do so. Rather, when Jesus doesn't heal, it is because He has a better plan.

I read this week of a 39 year old woman here in Rockford, who passed away after battling with breast cancer for three years. She left a husband, and four children (between the ages of 14 and 8). Some of you here this morning knew this woman. We might consider this to be a great tragedy. Yet, great tragedies can often turn into opportunities for great testimony.

I read her obituary this week. In the obituary (for all of Rockford to read), I found out that she wrote in her Bible, "Death is God's servant who will carry me to my Savior." This was an opportunity for testimony. She was a very gifted speaker. I know that she spoke at a ladies luncheon about a year ago, in which several hundred women attended. I know that the gospel was clearly presented. Our neighbor attended this and clearly heard the gospel. Furthermore, her funeral was held at one of the largest churches in town, because of the number of people they expected to be attending.

Whenever someone dies young, it is often a great opportunity for the gospel, as we all are forced to think of our end! Charles Spurgeon used to take his twin boys, Charles and Thomas, to the grave yard with a measuring tape. He wanted to teach them practically how soon they might die. They would go to the tombs of children and measure how long they were. He found several that were shorter than his two sons. He sought to press this upon their conscience, that they might take it to heart (A Pictorial Biography of C. H. Spurgeon, p. 53). Whenever someone dies at a young age, it is a great opportunity for other young people to take their own mortality to heart.

Could Jesus have healed her? Yes. Did He? No. Why? He had a better plan. We need to trust this. Furthermore, we need to trust this today, so that when we are sick, we can give great testimony to others. When someone isn't healed, it isn't because Jesus can't heal them. It is because He, in His infinite wisdom, allows it for His greater glory. In the case of this boy slave, who was about to die (Luke 7:2), Jesus was ready to heal.

4. The Miraculous Healing (verses 10-17)

The healing takes place in verse 13, when "Jesus said to the centurion, 'Go your way; let it be done to you as you have believed.'" And the servant was healed that very hour. Yet, before the healing moment, Jesus took advantage of the ...

The Teaching Moment (verses 10-12)

I spent a couple of summers when I was in college as a camp-counselor at a Bible-Camp for children. I remember one of the things that was emphasized during my training was that I needed to be on the alert for the teaching moments, where you can stop all of your children and explain something important. For instance, suppose you are walking through the woods, and a child trips and falls and scuffs his knee. You notice that most of the kids keep right on walking. Some of the children even walk around the fallen child. But one of the children has a tender heart and kneels down to help the child who has fallen. That's a teachable moment. We were told to stop everybody and bring everybody around the child who was on the ground. When all of the children were gathered, you could explain what just happened. "Children, did you notice what happened here? Jimmy fell down and screamed a little bit. Those of you in front, were so interested in being first that you simply kept on marching ahead. Some of you walked right around Jimmy, although you could see that he was hurt. But did you notice what Charlie did? He stopped to see if Jimmy was OK. He tried to help him. See what a good attitude Charles had? You all ought to notice this, so that next time, you can respond like Charles did. OK?"

This past fall, I coached a soccer team of five and six year olds. Some call this "bunch ball," because of the tendency of the children to bunch

closely together around the soccer ball. One practice we coaches decided to help them learn how bunched up they were getting. Whenever it was getting particularly bad, I would blow a whistle and stop everybody on the soccer field. Then, they would all look around and notice that they were indeed bunched all over on one side of the field, with much of the field left unoccupied. We thought that stopping all of them would give us a teaching moment.

Jesus certainly saw this as a teaching moment. Before he ever gets to the point of actually healing this servant-boy, He is first going to teach those around Him about this man's faith. "Now when Jesus heard this, He marveled, and said to those who were following, 'Truly I say to you, I have not found such great faith with anyone in Israel'" (verse 10). Note that Jesus "marveled" at the words of this centurion. The only other time that Jesus is said to have "marveled" was at the unbelief of those at Nazareth (Mark 6:6). In this instance, he was marveling at the belief of this man. What an opportunity Jesus had to teach Israel of their own lack of faith.

The ministry of Jesus was initially focussed upon the people of Israel. We will see in chapter 10, when He sends out His disciples, that He instructed them, "Do not go in the way of the Gentiles, and do not enter any city of the Samaritans; but rather go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (10:5,6). It was the people of Israel who were to believe that Jesus was indeed the Messiah. Many of the people of Israel had missed it. Though Israel had been "entrusted with the oracles of God," (Rom. 3:2), though they had read about the Messiah in the Old Testament (Is. 42; 53), though they heard Moses preached in the synagogue week after week (2 Cor. 3:15), though they had witnessed firsthand many of the signs that they demanded (Matt. 12:38), (the crowds and the leper), yet, many still didn't believe.

But here was this centurion, who believed, only by hearing a second-hand testimony about Jesus. Luke tells us that this man only "heard about Jesus" (Luke 7:3). Yet, he believed that Jesus had the authority over disease. He believed that Jesus simply needed to "say the word," and his servant-boy would be healed of his paralysis. This man's faith was an indictment against Israel and an indication of what was coming with the ministry of Jesus, the inclusion of the gentiles into the kingdom.

Jesus said, "And I say to you, that many shall come from east and west, and recline at the table with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven; but the sons of the kingdom shall be cast out into the outer darkness; in that place there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (verses 11-12). Jesus is saying that those on the outside will come in and those on the inside will go out. We must realize that we are the products of this promise (at least those of us who aren't Jewish). As Gentiles in the flesh, we were without promise of Messiah, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world (Eph. 2:11-12). As Gentiles, we were outside of the kingdom, but "in Christ Jesus, you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ" (Eph. 2:13). Paul said elsewhere that the Gentiles, were grafted into the olive tree, which represents the great promises of God to His people, the Jews (Rom. 11:11-24). We ought to realize the tremendous gift of grace that we have received in being included into God's family by faith in Jesus. We will sit next to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the patriarchs of old!

Yet, those who were in, will be thrown out. Here Jesus is obviously talking about the Jewish people, whom He identified as "sons of the kingdom" (Matt. 8:12), physical heirs of the promise. These people, who were branches in the olive tree, would be "broken off" (Rom. 11:19). They were to be "cast out into the outer darkness; in that place there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matt. 8:12). This is Jesus' favorite description of hell: "weeping and gnashing of teeth." We will see this exact phrase come up six times in Matthew's gospel (Matt. 8:12; 13:42; 13:50; 22:13; 24:51; 25:30). It describes a terrible place. It describes a place where you don't want to be. Many Jews entered that place through their unbelief in Jesus.

I fear today, that there are many within the church who will find themselves in the same place, banished from God into the outer darkness forever. The Jews had the form of religion, but they missed the substance of faith, Jesus Himself. Several of the men in this congregation will begin today reading J. C. Ryle's book, *Practical Religion*. In reading the first chapter with my wife, we were both struck how Ryle's description on 18th century England sounds so accurate for today. J. C. Ryle describes those within the church, who are missing the substance of Christ. He writes, "They are careful to attend all the services of their place of worship, and regular in using all its forms and ordinances. They are never absent from Communion when the Lord's Supper is administered. Sometimes they are most strict in observing Lent, and attach great importance to Saints' days. They are often keen partisans of their own Church, or sect, or congregation, and ready to contend with any one who does not agree with them. Yet all this time there is no *heart* in their religion. Anyone who knows them intimately can see with half an eye that their affections are set on things below, and not on things above; and that they are trying to make up for the want of inward Christianity by an excessive quantity of outward form. And this formal religion does them no real good. They are not satisfied. Beginning at the wrong end, by making the outward things first, they know nothing of inward joy and peace" (emphasis his, J. C. Ryle, *Practical Religion*, p. 7).

There is great warning for us in these words. There are plenty of people filling the pews across our land, who lack faith in Christ. Sure, these people may say the right words and live in a moral way, but with a complete lack of faith in Jesus' authority. There is no sensitivity to their own sin. There is no passion to share the gospel with others. Though moral, the home is practically without God. There is no passion to see Jesus lifted high in His glory. These types of things, which arise from faith in Jesus are absent in many in the church, because faith in Jesus is non-existent. The Jews thought that they had it all! They were God's chosen people. They had the law! Yet, many knew little of faith. The Pharisees and Sadducees were typical of many. May we learn from Jesus' teaching moment.

We come now to the ...

The Healing Moment (verse 13)

Having taught the crowd about the importance of faith, Jesus now deals with the problem at hand: a servant-boy, lying paralyzed in great pain, and about to die. In verse 13, Jesus said to the centurion, "Go your way; let it be done to you as you have believed." The authority of Jesus to heal ought to cause us to marvel!

Think about when you are sick and you go to a doctor. What happens? You say, "I have a sore throat!" First, the doctor looks at you and your skin color. Then, he starts feeling your neck, to see if you have any swollen glands. Then, he might apply a little pressure to your neck and ask you if it hurts. Then, he asks you to open your mouth, that they might see what your mouth looks like. He looks at your tongue and your tonsils and the roof of your mouth and your teeth. Perhaps he orders a throat culture to determine what sort of bacteria is in your mouth.

Once he has diagnosed your problem, he then can seek to cure you. But Jesus did none of this with this servant-boy. Without touching him, without seeing him, without hearing him breathe, without seeing where it hurts, without listening to his heart, and without seeing his appearance, Jesus healed him with a word.

Jesus healed him instantly, "And the servant was healed that very hour." The sense isn't that it took an hour for the servant-boy to be healed. The sense is that the servant-boy was healed at the same time Jesus said, "Let it be done as you have believed." They didn't have Timex watches back then. They could tell time by the hour, not by the minute. The idea here is that at the same moment that Jesus said, "Let it be done," he was instantly healed in the home of the centurion.

I want to take this opportunity now to show you ...

The Healing Pattern (verses 14-17)

1. Jesus healed instantaneously.

We saw the leper last week be healed "immediately" (verse 3). We saw that this meant that the leprous hand, which was filled with scar tissue and bumps and worn away fingers, began to smooth out and be restored to look like a normal hand. Look also at Peter's mother-in-law (verses 14-15). We are told so little about this miracle, but it helps establish the point that Jesus healed instantaneously. Verse 14, "And when Jesus had come to Peter's home, He saw his mother-in-law" (by the way, this indicates that Peter was married. This woman was the mother of his wife. Those who teach that Peter was the first pope and that marriage is forbidden among the clergy, err greatly).

She was "lying sick in bed with a fever." In that time, fever was viewed as any other disease. We often view fever today as a symptom to a disease, but they considered it a disease in and of itself. She was sick.

My mother-in-law, Lola, has been in town for the past several weeks. She is here with us now. I know how Peter would feel if his mother-in-law was sick with fever. Lola has served us greatly, especially yesterday, when Yvonne was gone all day and I had much still to prepare for this morning. I can tell you from the bottom of my heart, that if my mother-in-law were sick and Jesus was in our presence, I would certainly request of Him that he heal her. Now, for some of you, you might not feel this way about your mother-in-law. For some of you, it might be bliss to have your mother-in-law sick in bed. But not for me.

Verse 15 indicates that Jesus was willing to heal her, "And He touched her hand, and the fever left her; and she arose, and waited on Him." We are making the point here that Jesus heals instantaneously. I don't know about you, but whenever I am sick and get better, my first response isn't to get up and be a servant. It often takes me some time to recover. This past Wednesday, I was feeling terrible. My body ached all over the place. Perhaps I was slightly feverish. I took a three hour nap (which is somewhat unusual for me). When I awoke, I still wasn't feeling so great to serve my family. But when Jesus heals, He heals in a moment. The effects of the disease (or fever in this case) are gone. People are back to normal. Peter's mother-in-law was able to be the servant, "she arose, and served Him."

2. He healed completely.

The leper was completely healed, which is the point of verse 4, "show yourself to the priest, and present the offering that Moses commanded." The servant-boy was completely healed. Luke says that "they found the slave in good health" (Luke 7:10). Peter's mother-in-law was healed completely. "She served Him" Look further to the crowds that came to him at evening, "they brought to Him many who were demon-possessed; and He cast out the spirits with a word, and healed all who were ill" (verse 16). People weren't leaving Jesus' presence still sick. When people weren't coming to Jesus and leaving disappointed.

There is no comparison to the healing ministry that Jesus was doing and the so-called faith-healers of today. There is no big up-front presence with people being induced into hysteria. People weren't healed of cancer and bad backs and nasal drip. No, people were being healed of leprosy and paralysis and blindness and deafness and demon possession. If you ever see any of this sort of activity on television, I would encourage you to take your Bible and open it up to Matthew 8 and put it next to the television screen and see if what Jesus did matches what the so-called faith-healers of today do. You will find that there will be no comparison. This is my point. Nobody has authority like Jesus to heal in this way.

Look at verse 17, because it is the purpose of this section, "In order that what was spoken through Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled, saying, 'He Himself took our infirmities, and carried away our diseases.'" Matthew quotes Isaiah 53, which points to the Messiah. The Messiah is the one who takes away our infirmities and our diseases and our sin and our despair. Jesus is the one who fulfilled this prophesy. Our Messiah is authoritative and we ought to follow Him. Just as Jesus has authority to heal diseases, so also does Jesus have the authority to forgive your sins. May we look to the authority of our Messiah!

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on November 10, 2002 by Steve Brandon.
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