

Luke 7:1-10 – Jesus Heals the Centurion’s Slave

ARE YOU WORTHY?

Introduction — Mormons “Worthiness Interviews”: how do you know if you are worthy or not?

Vv. 1-3 — Introduction

- Jesus finishes His sermon and returns to Capernaum.
- Main characters:
 - Centurion (i.e., a Roman military officer, who was typically hated by the Jews) who is highly regarded by the Jewish elders (cf. 4-5)
 - Slave who is highly regarded by the centurion, but who is now sick and close to death.
 - Jewish elders who love this centurion, because they’ve benefited by his graciousness—theirs is a selfish enjoyment of a uniquely kind ruler.
 - They enjoyed his love for their nation, and they milked out of him one of the nicest synagogues ever built. They didn’t want to lose this resource. So, they would be willing to “scratch his back as long as he scratched theirs.” Notice that they didn’t pay any attention to what Jesus had just taught them in Luke 6:32-36. Their “concern” is superficial—they care more about themselves and what it would cost them to lose this resource, and so they feign concern for him.
 - However, they hated Jesus (cf. 6:11; 9:22; 20:1; 22:52, 66), and didn’t want to “help His cause” in any way; yet, in honoring the centurion and asking Jesus to come heal the slave, they would be honoring Jesus and “helping His cause.” So, they were caught in a pickle

between sacrificing their pride and sacrificing a valuable resource.

- Their self-centeredness won out, and sacrificing their pride, they leave to beseech Jesus on behalf of the centurion.
- **Application:** How do you view other people? Do you use people, or seek to genuinely minister to their spiritual needs? Do people have to benefit you in some way before you pay them any attention? When they don’t treat you well, are you able to see them as they really are and love them still?

Vv. 4-6a — Inciting Moment

- The Jewish elders “earnestly implore” Jesus to come save the centurion’s slave (i.e., to “do this for him”).
- They note that the centurion is “worthy” for Jesus to honor this request. Their reasons (i.e., motivation to get Jesus to do this) are as follows:
 - He loves their nation.
 - He built them their synagogue.
- Two observations about their speech:
 - First, these reasons are external. They cared more about what the centurion had done for them and how he was disposed toward them; they seemingly did not care about his spiritual well-being (e.g., their reasons were not that “he loves our God” or that “he eagerly searches the Scriptures to learn truth,” etc.).
 - Second, they incorrectly assessed the situation. (1) They didn’t accurately reflect the spirit or desire of the centurion—they didn’t honestly state the situation the way in which the centurion himself would have stated it (i.e., “I’m not worthy; so I sent these Jews to implore

you”—which is how the later friends worded it); (2) They didn’t understand true “worthiness”—they have the mindset that “worthiness” is achieved by doing certain things, rather than by having a certain spirit (i.e., humility) that results from an awareness of one’s condition (i.e., “unworthiness”). In reality, however, it is our understanding of our “unworthiness” that makes us a prime candidate for God’s grace (cf. v. 9).

- Jesus doesn’t respond verbally to the Jewish elders’ entreaty. We are left to wonder what his thoughts may have been. However, he does acquiesce and accompany them to visit the centurion.

Vv. 6b-8 — Rising Action

- Just before reaching the centurion’s house, a fresh band of emissaries (lit. *philos*—close friends or family members) sent from the centurion greets Him. They have another message from the centurion—this one more accurately reflects the true spirit of the centurion.
 - He honors Jesus with the title, “Lord.”
 - He seeks to eliminate Jesus’ inconveniences.
 - He believes in Jesus’ divine ability.
 - He admits his own unworthiness to even be in Jesus’ presence (i.e., “I *am* unworthy” not merely “I have done something that makes me unworthy”). He worships Jesus with a proper evaluation of himself and Jesus.
 - He acknowledges Jesus’ complete authority, even over himself.
 - He is absolutely depending upon and humbly requesting Jesus’ favor.

V. 9 — Climax

- Now, we finally hear from Jesus.
 - He amazedly extols the “great faith” of this gentile.
 - This faith had evidenced itself in humility and lowliness of mind—a right view of himself.
 - This faith had evidenced itself in submission to Jesus’ authority and belief in Jesus’ ability—a right view of Jesus.
 - He indicts Israel for her lack of faith.
 - This is astounding, considering that it was Israelites who first introduced this man’s need to Jesus. **Application:** Interestingly, God is using those who are rejecting Him to draw another person to Himself (cf. John 6:44, 65). The Jewish Elders are not commended by this passage (i.e., for their willingness to bring Jesus to the centurion); rather, God’s sovereign grace is magnified by the passage in that in His kind sovereignty He can draw people to Himself against overwhelming odds and opposition (e.g., the Jewish Elders’ hatred of Him).
 - These Jewish Elders had faith—they knew that Jesus could heal the man, for they had been witness to many of Jesus’ miraculous healings, and they even ask Jesus to work another miracle (“do this for him/them”) here. Theirs was not a trusting, depending, saving faith in Christ’s ability to rescue men from sin-sickness. Instead, they merely want to use Jesus in order to safeguard their resource.

Vv. 10—Resolution

- The Jewish elders and the second group of friends return to the centurion's house to find the slave healed.
- No doubt, the centurion himself had experienced Jesus' complete spiritual healing.

Conclusion

- Faith that God honors is evidenced by humility and lowliness of mind, and by unquestioned belief in Jesus ability and submission to Jesus' authority—the right view of oneself and Jesus. If you consider yourself a prime object for God's grace, you probably aren't. It is those who consider themselves "unworthy" who are the most "worthy" of God's grace.
- **Illustration:** Chris Anderson's #grace in almost every FB post → He understands that he doesn't deserve anything good, and all that is good is God's grace.
- So, Jesus is conducting your "worthiness interview"—how do you score?
 - **How do you view others** — Do you love them like the Centurion or use them like the Elders?
 - **How do you view yourself** — Do you consider yourself worthy because of what you do or unworthy because of who you are?
 - **How do you view Jesus** — Do you see Him as a miracle man who owes you something or a powerful King (i.e., Lord/Master) to whom you should submit?