

## The Healing of the Leper and the Healing of the Centurion's Servant

### Matthew 8:1-13

Matthew 8:1-13 - *"When He had come down from the mountain, great multitudes followed Him. <sup>2</sup> And behold, a leper came and worshiped Him, saying, "Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean."*

<sup>3</sup> *Then Jesus put out His hand and touched him, saying, "I am willing; be cleansed." Immediately his leprosy was cleansed.*

<sup>4</sup> *And Jesus said to him, "See that you tell no one; but go your way, show yourself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded, as a testimony to them."*

<sup>5</sup> *Now when Jesus had entered Capernaum, a centurion came to Him, pleading with Him, <sup>6</sup> saying, "Lord, my servant is lying at home paralyzed, dreadfully tormented."*

<sup>7</sup> *And Jesus said to him, "I will come and heal him."*

<sup>8</sup> *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. <sup>9</sup> 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."*

<sup>10</sup> *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!" <sup>11</sup> And I say to you that many will come from east and west, and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. <sup>12</sup> But the sons of the kingdom will be cast out into outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." <sup>13</sup> Then Jesus said to the centurion, "Go your way; and as you have believed, so let it be done for you." And his servant was healed that same hour."*

### Background Notes

In the four Gospels. Matthew presents Christ as King, Mark presents Christ as the perfect Servant, Luke presents Christ as the Son of Man, and John presents Christ as the Son of God. So Matthew is known as the Gospel that presents Christ as King. Matthew left no doubt that Jesus of Nazareth was indeed the promised and predicted Messiah and King of the Old Testament prophecies.

The Old Testament prophet Isaiah predicted that the coming Messiah would do healing miracles. Isaiah 35:5-6: *"Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then the lame shall leap like a deer, and the tongue of the dumb sing. For waters shall burst forth in the wilderness and streams in the desert."* Matthew 8-9 record a number of miracles that Jesus performed in fulfillment of the Messianic prophecies of the Old Testament. This

was conclusive evidence that the Lord Jesus was obviously and certainly the long awaited Messiah. His wonderful display of supernatural power was proof that Jesus was indeed who He claimed to be – the promised Messiah, and the Son of God!

Notice that many of the miracles were done before large crowds. *“When He had come down from the mountain, great multitudes followed Him” (v1)*. The mountain mentioned here was the mountain where our Lord had just given the Sermon on the Mount, covered in Matthew 5, 6, and 7. Notice that great multitudes followed the Lord. Large numbers of people were eyewitnesses of many of the miracles of Christ.

This is good evidence, by the way, for the accuracy of the Scripture record. It’s pretty hard to fabricate the miracles and say that many people observed them if the miracles never actually took place! People don’t accept records like this as true unless there are eyewitnesses and some credible evidence for the miracles. So it’s important to know that the miracles of Jesus were **so** well accredited and acknowledged that **even those who opposed Jesus accepted His miracles as historical fact** - right from the beginning!

## Doctrinal Points

### 1. The Lord Jesus can cleanse from leprosy.

Would you touch a leper, a person who has a disfiguring and contagious disease? Jesus reached out and touched this poor, disfigured leper. The parallel account in Luke 5 says that this man was **full** of leprosy! Remember, Luke was a doctor, so evidently this man had become horribly and unmistakably disfigured but the disease. The Lord Jesus had compassion on this poor outcast from society, and He reached out and **touched** him. I wonder how long it had been since this man had felt a compassionate human touch!

In Bible times, lepers were required to live in their own communities outside the cities and towns. They had to call out “Unclean!” when anyone approached. The Old Testament Law gave a procedure that had to be followed if ever it seemed that there was a possible healing of leprosy. You can read about this in Leviticus 13 and 14. As far as the biblical record goes, only two lepers were ever cleansed in Old Testament times: Miriam, Moses’ and Aaron’s sister, and Naaman, the Syrian military commander.

The Lord instructed the cleansed leper not to broadcast his healing, but to go to the high priest and show himself, in accordance with the Law of Moses. Can you imagine the surprise of the high priest and other priests when this former leper showed up and asked them to declare that he was healed? They had never seen anything like this before! But the miracle could not be denied. Here was the Lord’s “calling card” for the whole priesthood - the Messiah had arrived!

This wonderful miracle has its spiritual teaching for us. The Lord Jesus can cleanse from the disease of sin. In the Bible, leprosy is a picture of sin. Just as leprosy was a disease that was loathsome and contagious and incurable, apart from a miracle, so is sin a disease that leads to death. But Jesus can cleanse a person from the disease of sin.

Notice the leper's faith in verse 2: *"Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean."* That's all it takes to be cleansed from the disease of sin, because Jesus is willing to cleanse anyone who asks Him for cleansing: *"I am willing; be cleansed"* (v3). When someone comes to the Lord Jesus Christ in faith, acknowledges his or her sin and asks for salvation, a miracle takes place. That person is now a forgiven sinner and is "born again," with new life in Christ. Eternal life! The Lord Jesus can cleanse from leprosy, and He can cleanse us from our sin! Does everybody see the teaching in this miracle? It's a wonderful teaching about salvation.

## 2. The Lord Jesus can heal with a word.

*"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.' 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. 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.'" 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! And I say to you that many will come from east and west, and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven.<sup>2</sup> But the sons of the kingdom will be cast out into outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."<sup>3</sup> Then Jesus said to the centurion, "Go your way; and as you have believed, so let it be done for you." And his servant was healed that same hour" (v5-13).*

The most amazing aspect of this healing miracle is that it was done from a distance. The Lord Jesus didn't have to go to the house and lay hands on the centurion's paralyzed servant. All the Lord Jesus had to do was just speak a word, exactly as the centurion had asked - and the centurion's servant was healed that same hour!

A centurion, by the way, was a Roman military officer in charge of 100 soldiers. This centurion was stationed in Israel. He showed unusual compassion for his servant, for Roman soldiers were notoriously brutal. But this Roman soldier was concerned about his sick servant. so he came to Jesus. He showed great faith and respect when he addressed Jesus as **Lord!** And he believed that if Jesus just spoke the word, the servant would be healed.

Can the Lord "heal by just speaking a word" today? Of course He can! However, that doesn't mean that every believer who is sick and asks the Lord for healing will be healed. In addition, it doesn't mean that those who are not healed didn't have enough faith to be healed.

But Jesus hasn't changed, so this miracle teaches that as Jesus healed from a distance then, He can do so today. Healers and healing services are not necessary for healing. The centurion simply asked the Lord to heal his servant and the Lord did so - from a distance! The Lord can certainly answer our prayers for healing in the same way today. The Lord Jesus can heal with a word.

By the way - what did Jesus mean when He said, *"And I say to you that many will come from east and west, and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. But the sons of the kingdom will be cast out into outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth"* (v11-12). What did our Lord mean? He meant that many Gentiles from around the world, from east and west (like the Roman centurion in this miracle), would become believers and enter the kingdom of heaven by faith. However, many of *"the sons of the kingdom"* (that is, the Jewish people) would end up in "outer darkness," or hell, because of they refused to believe. This truth is certainly taught in the rest of Scripture.

## Practical Application

### Do we have great faith?

*"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" (v10).*

Why did the Lord Jesus say that the centurion had great faith? Answer: Because, as a soldier, **the centurion understood authority**. He understood that the one who has the power of authority is in charge. He gives the orders, and the orders are obeyed. We see that in what the centurion said: *"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."* This centurion understood authority and authority structures, and he knew that Jesus was the Authority. The Lord marveled at his understanding, and said that this man had great faith. **The centurion believed that the Lord was sovereign and had the power of authority.**

Do we have great faith? Do we **really believe** that God is all-powerful, and sovereign, and in total control of all things? That all He has to do is speak a word, and His will is carried out? Whether it's our health, or our finances, or some other problem that we are facing, the Lord knows all about it. He is in Authority, and He can speak a word. If it's His will, our requests will be answered.

Do we **really** believe this? Do we have great faith?