

“A MAN UNDER AUTHORITY”

NO. 2434

A SERMON

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S DAY, OCTOBER 13, 1895.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

ON LORD’S-DAY EVENING, OCTOBER 2, 1887.

“The centurion answered and said, Lord, I am not worthy that You should come under my roof: but speak the word, only, and my servant shall be healed. For I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me: and I say to this man, Go, and he goes; and to another, Come, and he comes; and to my servant, Do this, and he does it.”
Matthew 8:8, 9.

WITHOUT any introduction, as we have just been reading Matthew’s record of this notable miracle of our Lord, I shall come at once to the text, and, first of all, *work out the incident, itself*, and then, secondly, *make use of its lessons for our own practical purposes*. There is much to be learned from this narrative for our guidance at the present time.

I. First, then, let me WORK OUT THE INCIDENT, ITSELF.

A centurion, the commander of the detachment of Roman forces then placed at Capernaum, had a servant exceedingly ill. He was paralyzed, or palsied, but it was with that kind of paralysis which still leaves room for great pain. He was grievously tormented and yet palsied. This man of war was evidently a good master, thoughtful of his servants, and when he heard that the great prophet, Jesus of Nazareth, had come to town, he made the best of his way to Him and beseeched Him to heal his servant. The centurion did not ask Jesus to come down and heal him, but the Savior at once replied, “I will come and heal him.” This was more than the centurion had asked—he had pleaded for the healing of his slave—but he had not expected the personal presence of the glorious Master!

You remember that on another occasion, a certain nobleman went to Jesus and beseeched him, saying, “Sir, come down before my child dies.” Jesus did not go down to the nobleman’s child, but He sent His powerful Word and healed him.

In this case, it was a servant, not a child, who was suffering, and, as if the Savior would pay the greater attention where the rank was lower, He showed the condescension of His spirit by saying in this instance, “I will come and heal him. I, Myself, will come and undertake the cure that you request of Me.” See how the Savior grants more than we ask and also how very tender and considerate He is to the poor and needy! He would not have them think that He despises them, and, therefore, while to the *nobleman’s* son a gracious word is sent, to the centurion’s servant the Lord proffers a gracious *visit*: “I will come and heal him.” Jesus is very tender and full of pity. He knows the soreness of human hearts in poverty and sickness and He will not inflict upon them any unnecessary wound. No, He will, as it were, go out of His way by a superior gentleness to those who are of the lowest rank, that He may show that He is no respecter of persons after the manner of men.

Now, look what the centurion does. He had requested the Lord to heal his servant. He is very grateful for the kindness of the Savior in offering to come and heal him, but he is a true gentleman, so he will not put the Savior to any personal inconvenience. He feels that it is not at all necessary that the great Physician should take a journey to his house, so he says to Him, “Lord, I am not worthy that You should come under my roof; but speak the word, only, and my servant shall be healed.” The refining power of faith upon the manners of men is very wonderful! Roman centurions were usually rough, bluff fellows who cared for nobody. On many a hard-fought field they received their training for future service and they forced their way up from the ranks, not by competitive examinations, but by blows, cuffs, bruises and wounds. Yet this officer, being a believer in Jesus Christ, is evidently softened—more or less civilized and cultivated by that very fact! You can notice it often that the roughest men, the least educated of women, will have about them some of the most gentle and sweetest traits of character when they come to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. So the centurion says, “My Lord, glad enough would I be of a visit

from Your august Majesty, but I am not worthy that You should come under my roof, and it is not necessary for You to do so. You can heal my servant with a single word. Therefore, I pray You, speak the word, only, and my servant shall be healed.” It is this beautiful, thoughtful, gentlemanly feeling which I cannot too highly recommend, which led him to speak in this way—and what he said is remarkably instructive!

Let me, then, work out the incident in detail.

Notice, first, that *the centurion drew a parallel between himself and the Lord Jesus Christ*. He said, “I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me,” or, as the Revised Version better renders it, “For I, also, am a man under authority.” Some have tried to shift the meaning, here, and to teach that the centurion meant to say, “I am under authority, only a secondary officer, and yet I can do so-and-so. You are not under authority, but great and powerful, and, therefore, you can do much more.” But that is not the sense at all! The centurion meant that he was, himself, a man under authority, not merely a private individual, but a servant of Caesar! The uniform that he wore marked him out as belonging to one of the legions of the Roman Empire! The insignia upon his uniform denoted that he was a centurion, a commander who derived his position and power from the great Emperor at Rome! He was “a man under authority.”

It is not to our great Master’s dishonor, but quite the opposite, that this centurion meant to say, “I recognize in You, also, a man under authority,” for this blessed Christ of ours had come into the world commissioned by God. He was not here merely in His private capacity, as the Son of David, or as the Son of Mary, or even as the Son of God—He was here as the One whom the Father had chosen, anointed, qualified and *sent* to carry out a divine commission! This officer could see about the person of Christ the marks of His being commissioned by God. By some means, I know not how, he had arrived at this very safe and true conclusion that Jesus Christ was acting under the authority of the great God who made heaven and earth! And he looked at Him, therefore, under that aspect—as duly authorized and commissioned for His work.

Now go a step further. He who is commissioned to perform any work is also *provided by the superior authority with the power to carry out that work*. A centurion, therefore, has soldiers under him. “I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me—men put under me for the carrying out of my commands—because my commands are authorized by the superior authority of Caesar.” So this man seems to say to Christ, “I believe that You are provided with due assistance for the carrying out of all the purposes for which You have come into the world. If I have an order to send,” he said, “I say to my servant, ‘Go,’ and he goes. If I want another to come, I say, ‘Come,’ and he comes. If there is something to be done, I summon one of the men under my authority and I say to him, ‘Do this,’ and he does it.” He seems to say to the Savior, “You, also, commissioned and appointed of the great God, must have had servants appointed to wait upon You. You are not sent to a warfare at Your own charges. You are not left to do this work alone. There must be, somewhere about, though I perceive them not, soldiers under You, and servants under You who wait to do Your bidding.” You catch that idea, do you not? The parallel is very clear and I do not wonder that the Savior greatly admired the man’s faith which had enabled him to perceive this great truth of God!

The centurion went, therefore, a step further in his argument. “I, a man duly commissioned, have under me servants to carry out my will, and *these servants of mine I keep well in hand*.” You know that there are masters who have servants to whom they say, “Go,” and they do *not* go, or to whom they say, “Come,” and they do *not* come—at least, they do not come very quickly! They must say, “Come,” or, “Go,” several times before the servants actually do come or go. And there are masters who may say, “Do this,” and they may again say, “Do this,” and they may yet, again, say, “Do this,” but it is not done! But this centurion was a man who knew how to manage men. He was a master, a real master—not in name, only, but in fact. He did not, within his domain, tolerate anything like delay. He said to Christ, “I say, ‘Go,’ and they go, or, ‘Come,’ and they come.” He did not allow anything like mutiny or the resistance of his will. He had his whole household so well in hand that when he said to his servant, “Do this,” he did it. This is the right kind of master and servants, in the long run, like a master who will be obeyed. The centurion was a disciplinarian of that sort, as kind as the sunlight, for he sought Christ’s aid for his sick servant, but also as true and firm as steel, so that, what he said was to be done, was to be done, and done at once!

He transfers that characteristic to the Savior. He does not, he *cannot*, do Christ the discredit of supposing that He has not His household well in hand—that He has servants who dare to trifle with His

commands—that there are agencies which have broken loose from beneath His rule and will go whichever way they please. “No,” he says, “Savior, commissioned of the Father, You have Your soldiers and Your servants, and I believe that You have them under such control and subject to such discipline that You have but to speak, and the act You order is done, or to command, and it stands fast forever.” I trust that none of us would dishonor the Savior by questioning the truth of this parallel which the centurion so thoughtfully drew.

Once more, the centurion went a little further and implied that, as Christ had the power to perform the divine Will and had that power well in hand, *he believed He was willing to direct all that power to the one objective of healing his servant*. I believe that many of you know that the Lord Jesus Christ is almighty. You do not doubt that fact, but the question is—Is He almighty to save *you*? You do not doubt that, if the Savior wills it, He can make your spirit whole, but you ask—Will He will it? Will He turn that power in our direction? It does not enter into the centurion’s head that there will be any difficulty in his case. “No,” he seems to say, “King of kings, omnipotent Master and Lord, You can, at once, direct an angel to fly to my servant, or You can bid the disease quit my dwelling, or You can speak to the palsy and the palsy, itself, will be *Your* servant and will fly away at once at Your command. You have only to put forth Your power upon my servant and he will at once be healed.” I want you to believe, dear hearts, that our Lord Jesus Christ, no longer here in the flesh, but risen from the dead, is clothed with power equal to that which He had in the centurion’s day! No, that He is clothed with *even greater* power, for after His resurrection He said, “All power is given to Me in heaven and in earth.” And then I want you to believe that He is prepared to turn all that power in *your* direction so as to work for *your* deliverance from spiritual death, *your* rescue from the power of sin, *your* help in the way of providence, *your* guidance in the way of wisdom, or whatever, out of ten thousand things, may happen to be the need of this present moment! Oh, that He, who gave such faith as this to the centurion at Capernaum, would give like precious faith to many of you, that you, also, may glorify and bless His holy name!

Now observe that there was only one further thing which was on this centurion’s mind, and that was this. He looked upon Christ as a Master over all kinds of powers, powers sufficient for all His purposes. He looked at Him as having them all well in hand, so that He could have His own bidding done in a moment, and *he was anxious to keep his own place*. You ask me how I know this. I am sure it was so because, when the Savior was willing to come down to his house, he shrank from having such an honor conferred upon him! He seemed to feel that he was being put into a wrong position. He was, himself, only a servant, and he felt that, in the particular character which he was then bearing, he was not worthy that his master should come under his roof. So he said, “Speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed.”

I think that this is the principal thing you and I have to do. When we think about our Lord Jesus Christ, we need not worry ourselves about how He will effect His purposes—how the decrees of God will be carried out, or how His promises will be fulfilled. The principal thing we have to do is this—to be, ourselves, the Lord’s servants. And when He says to any of us, “Go,” to mind that we go, and when He says, “Come,” to see that we come, and when He says, “Do this,” to be sure that we do it! You would rule the seas? You had better rule *yourself*. You would purge the Church? You had better see to it that your own heart is purged! You would reform the world? Out with you! What have *you* to do with reforming the world till you have first washed your own hands in innocence? Get to your right place and do your own work and it shall be well with you. What are you, after all, but as a tiny worker on a little anthill? You have your one grain of wheat to carry and that is enough for you—do not worry yourself about all the concerns of the anthill! If you do, at least do not fret yourself about the whole planet on which you live, still less about the complete solar system, for what can you do with it if you worry you poor antship even unto death? No, but do your little share of work upon your own anthill! Carry your own grain of wheat to the general store so you shall have answered the purpose of your being and it shall be well with you. May God, even our Lord Jesus Christ, give us the grace to set Him up very high as Lord and Master, full of power, wisdom and love—and then to set ourselves down very low and to ask that, as His servants, we may serve Him faithfully all the days of our life!

Thus I have, as best I could, worked out the incident, itself.

II. Now, secondly, I want to MAKE USE OF ITS LESSONS FOR OUR OWN PRACTICAL PURPOSES.

First, then, dear friends, it seems to me that this little narrative should be used to urge us to *believe in the power of the Lord Jesus Christ, even if He does not speedily come in the glory of the second advent*.

I am frequently talking with Christian friends about these evil days in which we live and of the mischief of the times in which our lot is cast. Certainly, it is not a very cheering subject, and generally I find that friends wind up with some such remark as this: “Well, the comfort is that the Lord Jesus Christ will come very soon. The defections in the professing church, the blasphemies of the world—are they not among the special tokens that the end is hastening on? When our Lord comes, then all these difficult problems will be solved and all that grieves us will come to an end.” Yes, yes, all that I fully believe, and I look upon the second glorious advent of our Lord Jesus Christ as the brightest hope of His Church. But, still, do you not think that a more practical and a more *God-honoring faith* would say, without putting aside the blessed hope of the second advent, “Yet the Lord Jesus Christ can deal with the present evils of the Church and of the world without actually coming into our midst.” He can say a word while yet remaining in the highest heavens and the splendors of the sacred worship of the New Jerusalem! He can speak a word, there, and so effect His purpose *here*. Does not that truth of God seem to flow naturally out of the faith of this centurion? Our blessed Lord, there is no need that You should, at present, rend the heavens, and, in majesty, come down! There is no need that You should literally touch the hills and make them smoke, and that the glory of Your divine presence should consume Your adversaries! If it so pleases You, You can do Your bidding where You are, without disturbing this dispensation, without even working a miracle, allowing things to take their usual course and yet accomplishing Your supreme purposes!

Beloved, I want you to exercise this faith continually. You are, perhaps, in a little church, and when that goes to the bad, you say, “Oh, well, we cannot make it better! We must wait till the Lord comes.” Not a bit of it! Begin to stir up His strength now, for He can work *before* that second advent, and work right gloriously, too! You turn over the newspaper, and you say, “I am weary and well near sick unto death of all this evil.” Yes, and so am I, but what then? “Oh,” you answer, “we had better go upstairs to bed and wait till the Lord comes.” Not at all! Let us go and sharpen our swords and attack the enemies of our Lord more earnestly than ever! We will yet have another battle or two before He comes! Who knows how long He may tarry? But, whether He tarries or whether He comes soon, let us not be at all disquieted, as though His power could not be seen apart from His second advent! The power is given to Him in heaven and in earth. Even *now* the name of Jesus is “high over all.” He is *now* the great attraction to men, the great destroyer of Satan! Let us not begin, then, to think little of our absent Lord’s present power, and to hang all our hopes upon His literal presence among us! I say, again, that I am not depreciating that glorious coming of His—God forbid that I should do so! It is still our grandest hope! But let us not put it out of its place so as to make us at all despondent or distrustful about what our risen Lord is able to do for us even now! He can still do “exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think.”

I want you, next, dear friends, *to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ’s unseen servants*. You look around, or you look abroad and try to find men who shall proclaim the gospel vigorously during the next 20 years—and you say you cannot perceive them. No, nor do I. Now think a moment—when this centurion saw Jesus of Nazareth standing in the midst of His disciples, what did he see? He saw a lowly-looking man—in appearance very much like other men, but certainly not attended by any court, or guarded by any soldiers! Yet he believed, concerning this man, that He was surrounded by invisible bands who, in a moment, would do His bidding! I want you to think thus of your Lord. At this day, the Christ of God on earth is attended by all the servants that He needs for His great cause. The scoffers say, “Ah, the old truth is dying out! Where can they find men of mind to preach it?” But our eyes, enlightened by *faith*, can see a great multitude who shall publish the same old truth of God until Christ shall come! The mountain is full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha—there shall yet be found myriads of burning spirits to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ until He comes again! I like that couplet—

**“Remember that Omnipotence
Has servants everywhere.”**

You cannot see them, but they are waiting for their Lord’s orders, and *He* can see them! He knows where He has put them and when He will call them to Himself and bid them do His work! Therefore, let us not be in the least disheartened or discouraged because of what we see, or what we do *not* see. Let us rely upon the invisible—let us *expect* the unexpected! Yes, I *meant* to say, let us *expect* the unexpected. That which we cannot dream of as possible or probable, let us, nevertheless, believe shall be done, for God must be true, Christ cannot be defeated, Calvary never will and never can become, in any measure,

a defeat! The death of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, must accomplish the purposes for which it was worked out. Let us rest assured, then, that He has His servants waiting to do His bidding.

Now apply this subject a little more closely. I wish that some poor soul would even now *believe that the Lord Jesus Christ could save him at once with a single word*. I know you are apt to think that the conversion of men must be worked in some very particular and special way. Pictorial and descriptive accounts of striking conversions have been repeated so often that many people get the idea that the *scenery* is necessary to the effect! But I want you to put all such ideas away from your thoughts. If you needed any scenery, it is here before your eyes, but you do not need it. Otherwise, for a preacher to stand in this dense heat in the midst of 6,000 immortal souls is scenery enough for anyone who needs something striking! And if the Lord shall come to you and in a moment save you, there will be quite enough of the special and the particular in the mere fact that you are the subject of the Lord's mighty working! But I want you to believe that this work of divine grace upon the soul has not to do with any particular position in which a man is found. The Lord Jesus Christ can save a man when he is in bed, when he is putting on his clothes, when he is walking the street, when he is at his business, or when he is not at his business, but indulging in sin! I could give many instances to show that there is nothing needed in the way of peculiarity of position in order for Christ to save.

When you are at home, you say to your servant, “Mary, go to such and such a place,” and Mary goes. Or you say, “Sarah, come here,” and Sarah comes. If there is anything to be done, you say, “Jane, do this,” and she does it. Yet you do not put a paragraph in the newspaper saying, “Here, on the second day of October, 1887, Jane So-and-So made a cup of tea for her mistress.” It is such a usual and ordinary thing in context with the duties of the household, is it not? Very well, just so is the work of conversion in context with the Church of Christ! Jesus, Himself, has but to speak the word and the great work is straightway done! The surroundings of the sinner do not matter at all to Him. He can now, under the present circumstances in which you are, come to you and pluck you out of death into life—out of darkness into light! Out of all your wanderings He can bring you home at once. If you truly believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, you are born of God. If you now, at this very moment, trust Christ with your soul, you have passed from death unto life! If, at this instant, you will have done with every other hope and just come and rest yourself upon the finished work of Jesus Christ, the Savior, you, John, Thomas, Mary, Jane, Sarah—whoever you may be—you are saved! I put it in a very homely way just now, intentionally, for I want to bring it down to this point—that, just as the centurion said, “I have only to say to my servant, ‘Do this,’ and he does it,” so has Christ only to speak the effectual word of His grace, and the devil will fly, sin will be removed, grace will be infused and the soul will be saved! Oh, what a mercy this is!

To you who are the people of God I would apply this subject in this way. If it is as I have said concerning the sinner, that he must trust in Christ if he is to be saved, it is also true that you should *believe for your servants, your friends and your acquaintances*. Your children are still unconverted—have you ever prayed for them, believing in the power of Jesus Christ to convert them? One said, the other day, of a certain person, “It seems no use praying for such a fellow as that.” Of course it is no use to pray such prayers as *you* would be likely to present if you talk like that! When you have given a person up, and you have no further hope concerning him, what *prayer* can *you* offer for him? I want you, my brother, my sister, to believe, concerning your child, your brother, your friend, your unconverted neighbor, just as this centurion believed concerning his sick servant—that Jesus had but to speak the word and his sick servant would be healed! “Oh, but the doctor says that this is a case of paralysis! He says that he will never get over it. It is impossible for him to be cured—the disease is complicated in such a peculiar way that we must give up all hope.” Ah, but this centurion does not look at the *patient*! He looks at the *Physician*! And he says, and says rightly, “Jesus can as easily bid this disease depart as I can bid my servant go when I wish him to start upon an errand.” Think not of the sinner, or of the greatness of his sin, but think of the greatness of the Savior! I am sure that if we preached with more faith in Christ, we would see more results. Perhaps you do not see conversions in your work because you keep looking to the people—looking to the sinners—looking to the hardness of their hearts. What has all that to do with Christ's power to save? If this man, in addition to being paralyzed, could have had fever, leprosy, dropsy and all other diseases at once, it would not have mattered in the least to the great Physician, for when Christ comes on the scene, if you have one impossibility, He can meet it, and if you have 50 impossibilities, He can meet them all just as easily! Granted an almighty Savior, what room is there for doubt as to what He can do?

I wish I could drive this truth of God home into some who have been praying for others, but who have never prayed the prayer of *faith*. It is the prayer of *faith* that saves the sick! It is the prayer of *faith* that saves the sinful! It is the prayer of *faith* that makes everything of Christ and takes Him at His right valuation as being a Master of every situation! That is what you should do—make Jesus Christ Master of the situation and plead with Him in that capacity, and you shall not plead in vain, and your child, your friend, your servant shall yet be saved.

Let the practical close of this evening’s meditation be that we *believe in Jesus a great deal more than we have ever believed before*. If we have believed in Jesus, let us have still more confidence in Him. I think it is a sad pity when a man preaches the gospel with a doubt at the back of his throat. What good can come of his preaching? They sometimes charge us with dogmatism. We would be *more dogmatic* if we could be, for we speak what we know, and testify what we have seen! And if men receive not our witness, we cannot help that. We cannot change our witness because men do not care to receive it! Go forth, minister of God, and preach the gospel as a *certainty*—and you shall *prove* it to be a certainty! If you preach it as a something which *may or may not* be true, it will paralyze you—and it will not profit your hearers! In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, I claim from every man to whom I preach that he should believe in Him, accept His great salvation, and bow before Him! If you do so, dear friends, you shall be saved! But if you will not, it is not left as a matter of choice with you—the Lord Jesus has, Himself, declared, “He that believes not shall be damned.” He will not allow us to trifle with Him! He is a sovereign, He is the King of kings, and Lord of lords and He calls upon us to kiss His feet, bow down before Him and acknowledge Him as our Lord and God!

Our chief business just now is not so much to think of what Christ can do in the great battle of the present, or what He will do in the dread conflict of the future, but of what *we* have to do, and I think that what we have to do is *to so believe in Christ as to be His obedient servants*. If He says, “Go,” let us go! If He says, “Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden,” let us come unto Him! If He says concerning any service, “Do this,” let us do it! And if, instead of bidding us do anything, He bids us *believe* Him, let us come and believe Him—for this will be our wisdom, this will be our happiness, this will be our heaven—to be the obedient servants of Him who must be Ruler over all! God has decreed that this shall be His glory—He set Him on His throne expecting till His foes be made His footstool. If you choose to be His enemies, you shall choose it to your own destruction! But if you will come and bow before Him and be His servants, you shall find that heaven and earth are waiting at His back to bless you—and you shall go from strength to strength beneath His loving and unfailing care!

The Lord bless you, dear friends, for Jesus’ sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: MATTHEW 8:1-27.

Verses 1, 2. *When He was come down from the mountain, great multitudes followed Him. And, behold, there came a leper and worshipped Him.*

Great multitudes often count for nothing—it is, here or there, *one* who is the notable individual. There may be a great company come up outwardly to worship, but it is the soul that comes into contact with Christ that is the most worthy of observation. There is no, “Behold!” when the great multitudes are mentioned by Matthew. But there is a, “Behold!” before the record of the leper coming to Christ: “Behold, there came a leper and worshipped Him.” Let us all be of the leper’s mind! Let us worship Christ! Surely we may do so, if only out of gratitude for having escaped from so dire a disease, but, inasmuch as, spiritually, by nature that disease is upon us, we have good reason to come to Jesus as the “leper came and worshipped Him”—

2, 3. *Saying, Lord, if You will, You can make me clean. And Jesus put forth His hand, and touched him, saying, I will; be you clean. And immediately his leprosy was cleansed.*

Come, then, to Christ, even though your faith is very incomplete! There may be, as there was with the leper, an, “if,” about it, and an, “if,” about a very vital point, namely, concerning the Master’s will-iness, but He will shut His eyes to that imperfection and only look at that part of your faith which is acceptable to Him, that is, your faith in His *power*. “You can make me clean,” said the leper, and Christ dealt with him upon the terms of that, “You can.” And as to the, “If You will,” He blotted that out by saying, “I will; be you clean.” So, sinner, come to Jesus, even though the doubting phrase, “If You will,” shall still linger on your lips. If the leprosy shall show itself even there, in your unbelief as to Christ’s

willingness to cleanse you, yet come to Him and He will say to You, “I will; be you clean,” and it shall be with you as it was with the leper: “immediately his leprosy was cleansed.”

4. *And Jesus said unto him, See you tell no man.*

He will never say that to you or to me, but while He was here on earth, our Lord was very modest and retiring. He wished to conceal Himself as much as possible. He did not strive, nor cry, nor cause His voice to be heard in the streets. He sets us an example of what true power is, for true power does not flaunt itself before the eyes of men, or advertise itself at every corner of the street—it longs rather to conceal itself, being well aware that it will have all the publicity that is necessary—for such wonders cannot be hid.

4. *But go your way, show yourself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them.*

The man was to make his cleansing known in the legal way. Our Lord Jesus Christ was very scrupulous to observe the law while it still stood, and we, also, should take care not to observe that ceremonialism which has passed away, but diligently to keep that which still is of divine authority and of present force.

5. *And when Jesus was entered into Capernaum, there came unto Him a centurion.*

There came, doubtless, a great number of people when Jesus entered into Capernaum, but Matthew does not mention them. Yet he does say, “There came unto Him a centurion.” Notice how these *individuals* are brought out by the Scriptural narrative: “a leper”: “a centurion.” May there not also be some here who will come to Jesus and prove in their own persons, or in the persons of others for whom they shall pray, His power to bless and save? The Lord grant it!

5-8. *Beseeking Him, and saying, Lord, my servant lies at home sick of the palsy, grievously tormented. And Jesus said unto him, I will come and heal him. The centurion answered and said, Lord, I am not worthy that You should come under my roof.*

What a blessed thing it is to have that sense of unworthiness! Some are very flippant in the expression of their piety. After they have heard half-a-dozen sermons, they attain to perfect holiness! I wish that they were half as deeply *humbled* and knew half as much of themselves as this centurion did! “Lord, I am not worthy.” That is a good lesson for anyone to learn. Still, when we can say, “Lord, we are not worthy,” do not let us, therefore, think that Christ may not come to us. Let us ask Him to come whatever we may be, for our lack of worthiness must not stint or limit the condescension of our Divine Master. However, in this case, albeit that the centurion seemed almost to decline the privilege of having Christ come under his roof, yet he gave to Jesus high honor by believing in the power of His word even without His presence

8, 9. *But speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed. For I am a man under authority.*

He was, therefore, only a subordinate officer, for he was subject to his superiors.

9. *Having soldiers under me: and I say to this man, Go, and he goes; and to another, Come, and he comes; and to my servant, Do this, and he does it.*

He left the Savior to infer what he meant, namely, that Christ, who acted under the authority of God, could readily speak to palsies and fevers, and say to them, “Go,” and they would go just as quickly as a soldier would obey his officer’s command. Brother, you are a Christian, and you have known the Lord for 20 years—have you as much faith as this Roman centurion had? Do you believe that your Master’s word can remove sickness, that He can clear difficulties, that He can supply needs, that He can break bonds, that He can send, by whichever angel or man He chooses, whatever blessing He pleases? Oh, that we did all believe as truly as this man did!

10-12. *When Jesus heard it, He marveled, and said to them that followed, Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel. And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven. But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.*

Some of the rank outsiders shall be brought in by rich mercy, while others, piously trained, nursed at the very gates of the Church, shall, nevertheless, for lack of faith in Christ, be utterly cast away!

13. *And Jesus said unto the centurion, Go your way; and as you have believed, so be it done unto you. And his servant was healed in the same hour.*

Oh, pray for your friends, pray for your children, pray for your servants! And if you have faith like that of the centurion, according to your faith, so shall it be done unto you!

14, 15. *And when Jesus was come into Peter's house, He saw his wife's mother lying sick of a fever. And He touched her hand, and the fever left her: and she arose, and ministered unto them.*

Peter had a wife, you see. Romanists say that he was the first “pope”; therefore the first pope had a wife, and, mark you, if other popes had had wives, there would not have been any declaration of “infallibility,” for there is no man who will believe himself to be infallible if he has someone near enough to remind him that he is not! But one evil usually goes with another—so it is recorded here that Peter had a wife as a kind of incidental rebuke of the sin of compulsory celibacy that was yet to be committed by priests and “popes”!

16. *When the evening was come, they brought unto Him many that were possessed with devils: and He cast out the spirits with His word, and healed all that were sick.*

Was not that centurion a kind of prophet? He had not long spoken about Christ's command over this man, and that before Christ had an opportunity of putting His words to the test, Jesus cast out devils, and cast out sicknesses—

17. *That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bore our sicknesses.*

That is an amazing quotation and it teaches us that Christ has power to heal because He “Himself took our infirmities, and bore our sicknesses.” Am I not to understand, from the context, here, that Jesus Christ's power is to be seen in His suffering, in His humiliation and especially in His wounds and in His death? He would have had no power to meet our maladies if He had not, Himself been compassed with infirmities for our sake! O blessed Master, You teach us where power lies—not in grandeur, but in self-sacrifice! Not in personal glory, but in personal humiliation!

18-24. *Now when Jesus saw great multitudes about Him, He gave commandment to depart unto the other side. And a certain scribe came and said unto Him, Master, I will follow You wherever You go. And Jesus said unto him, The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man has not where to lay His head. And another of His disciples said unto Him, Lord, allow me first to go and bury my father. But Jesus said unto him, Follow Me; and let the dead bury their dead. And when He was entered into a ship, His disciples followed Him. And, behold, there arose a great tempest in the sea.*

We may go where Christ goes and yet we may get into danger! Never judge the rightness of your path by the providence which attends it. You may have safe sailing to the *port of destruction* and you may have a rough voyage when you are bound for heaven! “When He was entered into a ship, His disciples followed Him. And, behold, there arose a great tempest in the sea”—

24. *Insomuch that the ship was covered with the waves: but He was asleep.*

Weary with His toil, He lay down to rest. There was His *humanity* serenely confident, and, therefore, sleeping through the storm! There was the glory of His innocence: “He was asleep.” And there was also the majesty of His deity, only waiting for the moment when He should arise and still the tumult of the winds and waves.

25-27. *And His disciples came to Him, and awoke Him, saying, Lord, save us: we perish! And He said to them, Why are you fearful, O you of little faith? Then He arose and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm. But the men marveled, saying, What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey Him?*

Glory be to His blessed name! Amen.

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