

BIBLE LIFE MESSAGES

How to Have Effective Prayers

Matthew 8:5-13

¹ How can you have effective prayers? Matthew, chapter 8, verses 5 through 13, should help us. ² It reads, When Jesus had entered Capernaum, a centurion came to him, asking for help. “Lord,” he said, “my servant lies at home paralyzed and in terrible suffering.” Jesus said to him, “I will go and heal him.” The centurion replied, “Lord, I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. But just say the word, and my servant will be healed. For I myself am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. I tell this one, ‘Go,’ and he goes; and that one, ‘Come,’ and he comes. I say to my servant, ‘Do this,’ and he does it.” ³ ¹

When Jesus heard this, he was astonished and said to those following him, “I tell you the truth, I have not found anyone in Israel with such great faith. I say to you that many will come from the east and the west, and will take their places at the feast with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. But the

¹ v5-9.

subjects of the kingdom will be thrown outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” Then Jesus said to the centurion, “Go! It will be done just as you believed it would.” And his servant was healed at that very hour. ⁴ ²

The first thing about prayer that this passage helps us understand is to . . . ⁵

I. Recognize the Power of God.

Recognize the power of God.

Who was the servant? The word “servant” here ³ in the original language ⁴ means a young male child, in pre-puberty. He could have been his son or a slave. This word doesn’t make that distinction. ⁶ However, when this event is recorded in Luke, chapter 7, verse 2 ⁵ the word for “servant” is different. ⁶ This word is the

² v6-13.

³ v6 - “Lord,” he said, “my servant lies at home paralyzed and in terrible suffering.”

⁴ παῖς.

⁵ Luke 7:2 - There a centurion’s servant, whom his master valued highly, was sick and about to die.

⁶ δοῦλος.

common word for slave. ⁷ So he was a young male slave who had his master's affection. ⁸

What was this boy's condition? Verse 6 ⁷ tells us it was a hopeless situation. Luke 7 tells us he was **about to die!**

Palsy was a progressive paralysis caused by brain and nerve damage. It caused spasms and painful respiratory movements. It was incurable and always resulted in death. ⁹

What was the Centurion's attitude? He was a military man in charge of 100 soldiers. He would probably be equivalent to an army first sergeant or company commander. Verse 9 ⁸ tells us he lived under a chain of command. He had the responsibility to carry out orders from his superiors and the authority to give orders to his subordinates. ¹⁰ Verse 8 ⁹ says he

⁷ v6 - "Lord," he said, "my servant lies at home paralyzed and in terrible suffering."

⁸ v9 - For I myself am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. I tell this one, 'Go,' and he goes; and that one, 'Come,' and he comes. I say to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it.

⁹ v8 - But just say the word, and my servant will be healed.

believed Jesus had that same authority over creation that he had over Roman soldiers. ¹¹

Like the Centurion, you should trust that no circumstances in this life are too big for God to overcome! ¹² We have a big God. You can pray for big things! God is willing to display His power if you are willing to receive it. ¹³

This miracle was performed in public. Verse 1 ¹⁰ says this was the same crowd who heard the Sermon on the Mount in the last three chapters. Also, Capernaum, where this miracle occurred, was a big city on the northern shore of the Sea of Galilee. There must have been a lot of people around. ¹⁴

Lord Jesus was even willing to defile Himself ceremonially by entering the home of a Gentile (a non-Jewish person)! The Pharisees believed ceremonial cleansing was necessary for anyone who came in contact with anything even belonging to a Gentile. That's how willing Lord Jesus is to answer prayer! ¹⁵

¹⁰ v1 - When he came down from the mountainside, large crowds followed him.

The second thing about prayer this scripture helps us understand is to . . .

II. Recognize Your Own Condition

Recognize your own condition. ¹⁶ A Centurion was important! He was an officer in an army that occupied Palestine for over 100 years. He had absolute authority over 100 soldiers. ¹⁷

But this Centurion was also humble. ¹⁸ In the passage in Luke he didn't even approach Jesus personally ¹¹ . He sent the elders of the city to represent him. ¹⁹ He was popular with the community having built the local synagogue ¹² . ²⁰ In fact, he denied he was even worthy to stand in the Lord's presence ¹³ . ²¹

Like the Centurion, you need to constantly see yourself only as sinners redeemed by grace! ²² You need to say like the Prodigal Son, Father; I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no

¹¹ Luke 7:3 - The centurion heard of Jesus and sent some elders of the Jews to him, asking him to come and heal his servant.

¹² Luke 7:5 - . . . because he loves our nation and has built our synagogue.

¹³ Luke 7:7 - That is why I did not even consider myself worthy to come to you.

longer worthy to be called your son. ¹⁴ ²³ The stronger your faith, the higher you think of God and the lower you realize you are! ²⁴

The third thing about prayer this passage helps us understand is to . . .

III. Recognize the Way to Pray

Recognize the way to pray. ²⁵

God is pleased when faith is expressed. ²⁶ Your faith should not be blind. The Centurion's faith was built on evidence. He may have been acquainted with the Messianic prophecies of the Old Testament since he was so close to the Jewish leaders in Capernaum. ²⁷ He may have heard about the Lord's reputation for healing since the healing of the paralytic who was carried by his four friends took place there. ¹⁵ Remember the Lord healing Peter's mother-in-law?

¹⁴ Luke 15:18-19.

¹⁵ Matthew 9:1-2 & 7 - Jesus stepped into a boat, crossed over and came to his own town. Some men brought to him a paralytic, lying on a mat. When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Take heart, son; your sins are forgiven." . . . And the man got up and went home.

Verse 14 records, When Jesus came into Peter's house, he saw Peter's mother-in-law lying in bed with a fever. He touched her hand and the fever left her, and she got up and began to wait on him. This event took place in Capernaum! ²⁸

There are only two times in the Bible that says Jesus marveled. Here when unexpected faith was observed ¹⁶ and in Nazareth, His hometown, when He expected faith, and it wasn't there! ¹⁷ ²⁹

Faith is the criteria for a relationship with God, not heredity! The Centurion was not part of the "in" crowd. He was a Gentile, a non-Jew. Jews were supposedly unclean if they went into a Gentile's home. ³⁰ But verse 7 ¹⁸ says Jesus was willing to do just that! ³¹

¹⁶ v10 - When Jesus heard this, he was astonished.

¹⁷ Mark 6:6 - And he was amazed at their lack of faith.

¹⁸ v7 - Jesus said to him, "I will go and heal him."

Isaiah, chapter 11, verse 10,¹⁹ says that Jews and Gentiles alike would come to God by faith. This happened twice: ³² the conversion of the Ethiopian in Acts, chapter 8,²⁰ ³³ and the conversion of the Centurion Cornelius in Acts, chapter 10!²¹ ³⁴

Like the Centurion, you must pray with the faith that God is present, that He hears you and that He answers!³⁵

Recognize the power of God. Nothing is too big for Him!

Recognize your own condition. You are a sinner saved by grace!

Recognize the way to pray. Pray with the faith that God hears and answers!

<http://www.biblelifemessages.org>

¹⁹ Isaiah 11:10 - In that day the Root of Jesse will stand as a banner for the peoples; the nations will rally to him.

²⁰ Acts 8:26-39.

²¹ Acts 10:1-48.