

## Matthew: 8:5–13

### From Catena Aurea:

5. And when Jesus was entered into Capernaum, there came unto him a centurion, beseeching him,

6. And saying, Lord, my servant lieth at home sick of the palsy, grievously tormented.

7. And Jesus saith unto him, I will come and heal him.

8. The centurion answered and said, Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof: but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed.

9. For I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me: and I say to this man, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it.

AUGUSTINE. (Serm. 62, 4.) This centurion was of the Gentiles, for Judæa had already soldiers of the Roman empire.

CHRYSOSTOM. (Hom. xxvi.) But some say that he says these things in excuse of himself, as reasons why he did not bring the sick man himself. For it was impossible to bring one in a palsy, in great torment, and at the point to die. But I rather think it a mark of his great faith; inasmuch as he knew that a word alone was enough to restore the sick man, he deemed it superfluous to bring him.

HILARY. Spiritually interpreted, the Gentiles are the sick in this world, and afflicted with the diseases of sin, all their limbs being altogether unnerved, and unfit for their duties of standing and walking. The sacrament of their salvation is fulfilled in this centurion's servant, of whom it is sufficiently declared that he was the head of the Gentiles that should believe. What sort of head this is, the song of Moses in Deuteronomy teaches, He set the bounds of the people according to the number of the Angels. (Deut. 32:8.)

JEROME. The Lord seeing the centurion's faith, humbleness, and thoughtfulness, straightway promises to go and heal him; Jesus saith unto him, I will come and heal him.

CHRYSOSTOM. Jesus here does what He never did; He always follows the wish of the supplicant, but here He goes before it, and not only promises to heal him, but to go to his house. This He does, that we may learn the worthiness of the centurion.

JEROME. As we commend the centurion's faith in that he believed that the Saviour was able to heal the paralytic; so his humility is seen in his professing himself unworthy that the Lord should come under his roof; as it follows, And the centurion answered and said into him, Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldst come under my roof.

AUGUSTINE. (ubi sup.) By declaring himself unworthy, he shewed himself worthy, not indeed into whose house, but into whose heart, Christ the Word of God should enter. Nor could he have said this with so much faith and humility, had he not borne in his heart Him whom he feared to have in his house. And indeed it would have been no great blessedness that Jesus should enter within his walls, if He had not already entered into his heart.

CHRYSOLOGUS. (Serm. 102.) Mystically, his house was the body which contained his soul, which contains within it the freedom of the mind by a heavenly vision. But God disdains neither to inhabit flesh, nor to enter the roof of our body.

JEROME. The thoughtfulness of the centurion appears herein, that he saw the Divinity hidden beneath the covering of body; wherefore he adds, But speak the word only, and my servant will be healed.

HILARY. Also he therefore says that it needed only a word to heal his son, because all the salvation of the Gentiles is of faith, and the life of them all is in the precepts of the Lord; therefore he continues saying, For I am a man set under authority, having soldiers under me; and I say to this man, Go, and he goeth; to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it.

AUGUSTINE. (ubi sup.) If I who am under command have yet power to command others, how much more Thou whom all powers serve!

GLOSS. (ord.) Thou art able without Thy bodily presence, by the ministry of Thy Angels, to say to this disease, Go, and it will leave him; and to say to health, Come, and it shall come to him.

AUGUSTINE. (Cons. Evan. ii. 20.) What is here said seems to disagree with Luke's account, When the centurion heard concerning Jesus, he sent unto him elders of the Jews, beseeching him that he would come and heal his servant. (Luke 7:3.) And again, When he was come nigh to the house, the centurion

sent friends unto him, saying, Lord, trouble not thyself, for I am not worthy that thou shouldest enter under my roof.

CHRYSOSTOM. But some say that these are two different occurrences; an opinion which has much to support it. Of Him in Luke it is said, He loveth our nation, and has built us a synagogue; but of this one Jesus says, I have not found so great faith in Israel; whence it might seem that the other was a Jew. But in my opinion they are both the same person. What Luke relates that he sent to Jesus to come to him, betrays the friendly services of the Jews. We may suppose that when the centurion sought to go to Jesus, he was prevented by the Jews, who offered to go themselves for the purpose of bringing him. But as soon as he was delivered from their importunity, then he sent to say, Do not think that it was from want of respect that I did not come, but because I thought myself unworthy to receive you into my house. When then Matthew relates, that he spoke thus not through friends, but in his own person, it does not contradict Luke's account; for both have only represented the centurion's anxiety, and that he had a right opinion of Christ. And we may suppose that he first sent this message to Him by friends as He approached, and after, when He was come thither, repeated it Himself. But if they are relating different stories, then they do not contradict each other, but supply mutual deficiencies.

AUGUSTINE. (ubi sup.) Matthew therefore intended to state summarily all that passed between the centurion and the Lord, which was indeed done through others, with the view of commending his faith; as the Lord spoke, I have not found so great faith in Israel. Luke, on the other hand, has narrated the whole as it was done, that so we might be obliged to understand in what sense Matthew, who could not err, meant that the centurion himself came to Christ, namely, in a figurative sense through faith.

CHRYSOSTOM. For indeed there is no necessary contradiction between Luke's statement, that he had built a synagogue, and this, that he was not an Israelite; for it was quite possible, that one who was not a Jew should have built a synagogue, and should love the nation.

8:10–13

10. When Jesus heard it, he marvelled, and said to them that followed, Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel.

11. 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.

12. But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

13. And Jesus said unto the centurion, Go thy way; and as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee. And his servant was healed in the selfsame hour.

CHRYSOSTOM. As what the leper had affirmed concerning Christ's power, If thou wilt, thou canst cleanse me, was confirmed by the mouth of Christ, saying, I will, be thou clean; so here He did not blame the centurion for bearing testimony to Christ's authority, but even commended him. Nay more; it is something greater than commendation that the Evangelist signifies in the words, But Jesus hearing marvelled.

AUGUSTINE. (super Gen. c. Man. i. 8.) But who was He that had created this faith in him, but only He who now marvelled at it? But even had it come from any other, how should He marvel who knew all things future? When the Lord marvels, it is only to teach us what we ought to wonder at; for all these emotions in Him are not signs of passion, but examples of a teacher.

CHRYSOSTOM. Wherefore He is said to have thus wondered in the presence of all the people, giving them an example that they also should wonder at Him; for it follows, And he said to them that followed, I have not found so great faith in Israel.

AUGUSTINE. (cont. Faust. xxii. 74.) He praises his faith, but gives no command to quit his profession of a soldier.

JEROME. This He speaks of the present generation, not of all the Patriarchs and Prophets of past ages.

CHRYSOSTOM. For it is a different thing for a Jew to believe and for a Gentile.

JEROME. Or perhaps in the person of the centurion the faith of the Gentiles is preferred to that of Israel; whence He proceeds, But I say unto you, Many shall come from the east and from the west.

AUGUSTINE. (Serm. 62. 3.) He says, not 'all,' I but many; yet these from the east and west; for by these two quarters the whole world is intended.

JEROME. Because the God of Abraham, the Maker of heaven, is the Father of Christ, therefore also is Abraham in the kingdom of heaven, and with him will sit down the nations who have believed in Christ the Son of the Creator.

AUGUSTINE. (ubi sup.) As we see Christians called to the heavenly feast, where is the bread of righteousness, the drink of wisdom; so we see the Jews in reprobation. The children of the kingdom shall be cast into outer darkness, that is, the Jews, who have received the Law, who observe the types of all things that were to be, yet did not acknowledge the realities when present.

JEROME. Or the Jews may be called the children of the kingdom, because God reigned among them heretofore.

CHRYSOSTOM. Or, He calls them the children of the kingdom, because the kingdom was prepared for them, which was the greater grief to them.

AUGUSTINE. (cont. Faust. xvi. 24.) Moses set before the people of Israel no other God than the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and Christ sets forth the very same God. So that so far was He from seeking to turn that people away from their own God, that He therefore threatened them with the outer darkness, because He saw them turned away from their own God. And in this kingdom He tells them the Gentiles shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, for no other reason than that they held the faith of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. To these Fathers Christ gives His testimony, not as though they had been converted after death, or had received justification after His passion.

JEROME. It is called outer darkness, because he whom the Lord casts out leaves the light.

JEROME. Weeping and gnashing of teeth are a proof of bones and body; truly then is there a resurrection of the same limbs, that sank into the grave.

CHRYSOSTOM. But that none might suppose that these were nothing more than fair words, He makes them credible by the miracles following, And Jesus said to the centurion, Go, and be it done to thee as thou hast believed.

CHRYSOSTOM. Wherein admire the speediness, shewing Christ's power, not only to heal, but to do it in a moment of time.

AUGUSTINE. (Serm. 62. 2.) As the Lord did not enter the centurion's house with His body, but healed the servant, present in majesty, but absent in body; so He went among the Jews only in the body, but among other nations He was neither born of a Virgin, nor suffered, nor endured human sufferings, nor did divine wonders; and yet was fulfilled that which was spoken, A people that I have not known hath served me,

and hath obeyed me by the hearing of the ear. (Ps. 18:43.) The Jews beheld, yet crucified Him; the world heard, and believed.

### **From Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture:**

#### **8:5 A Centurion Beseeches Jesus**

##### **The Centurion Expected the Healing.**

Chrysostom: Some argue that the centurion, by his description, implied the reason why he had not brought his servant to Jesus, saying, "Lord, my servant is lying paralyzed at home, in terrible distress," as though he was at his last gasp, or even, as Luke said, he was "at the point of death." In my opinion, however, the reason he had not brought him in was itself a sign of his great faith, even much greater than those who let the patient down through the roof. Because the centurion knew for certain that even a mere command was enough for raising the servant up, he thought it unnecessary to bring him. The Gospel of Matthew, Homily 26.1.

#### **8:6 In Distress**

#### **8:7 I Will Come to Your House**

##### **Jesus' Offer.**

Chrysostom: What did Jesus do? Something he had never done before. While on previous occasions he had responded to the wish of his supplicants, in this case he rather springs actively toward it. He offers not only to heal him but also to come to his house. By this we learn of the centurion's excellent faith. For if he had not made this offer but rather had said, "Go your way, let your servant be healed," we would not have known these things. The Gospel of Matthew, Homily 26.1.

#### **8:8 The Centurion Pleads Unworthiness**

##### **Lord, I Am Not Worthy.**

Augustine: When the Lord promised to go to the centurion's house to heal his servant, the centurion answered, "Lord, I am not worthy to have you come under my roof; but only say the word, and my servant

will be healed.” By viewing himself as unworthy, he showed himself worthy for Christ to come not merely into his house but also into his heart. He would not have said this with such great faith and humility if he had not already welcomed in his heart the One who came into his house. It would have been no great joy for the Lord Jesus to enter into his house and not to enter his heart. For the Master of humility both by word and example sat down also in the house of a certain proud Pharisee, Simon, and though he sat down in his house, there was no place in his heart. For in his heart the Son of Man could not lay his head. Sermon 62.1.

### **My Servant Will Be Healed.**

Chrysostom: It is curious that when Martha, who was very dear to Jesus, said, “I know that whatever you ask from God, God will give it to you,” far from being praised, she was rebuked and corrected by the Lord as not having spoken quite fittingly.... For Jesus was teaching her that he himself is the fountain of all good things, the resurrection and the life, as if to say, “I do not wait to receive active power but have it already in myself.” The Gospel of Matthew, Homily 26.2.

### **8:9 One Under Authority**

### **8:10 Such Faith Not Found in Israel**

#### **The Effect of High Expectations.**

Chrysostom: Jesus is found marveling at the centurion. He turns his attention to him and honors him with the gift of the kingdom. He calls others to the same zeal. The Gospel of Matthew, Homily 26.2.

### **Not Even in Israel.**

Augustine: Now this man was a Gentile—he was, after all, a centurion. The Jewish nation already had troops of the Roman Empire among them. This man was in command of troops there, to the extent that a centurion could be in command. He was under authority, and he had authority. As a subordinate, he was obedient; as having subordinates, commanding.... Even if the Lord did not enter bodily into this man’s house, yet he was already so present in majesty that he healed his faith and his servant. Yet the same Lord had appeared in bodily presence among his own covenant people. He was not born in some other country. He did not suffer or walk or endure his human sufferings or do wonders in some other nation. None of all

this took place in other nations. Yet through the centurion the prophecy was fulfilled that was spoken of him: "A people whom I have not known has served me." And how did the centurion know him? By "obeying me with the hearing of the ear." Sermon 62.2.

### **8:11–12 Sitting at Table with the Patriarchs**

#### **Many Will Sit at Table with Abraham.**

Augustine: Note how what you have heard in the Gospel as something to come has by now already happened. Jesus commends the centurion's faith, whose flesh was alien but whose spirit was of the household of faith. It was to him that he said, "Many will come from east and west and sit at table with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, while the sons of the kingdom will be thrown into the outer darkness." What sons of what kingdom? He is speaking of the people of the covenant, who received the law. To them the prophets were sent. To them was given the temple and the priesthood. They had celebrated the anticipations of things to come. Yet those things of which they would celebrate in figures they did not acknowledge in actual presence. This is why they shall "be thrown into the outer darkness; there men will weep and gnash their teeth." Odd, isn't it? That they would be sent away, while the Christians would be called from the east and the west to the heavenly banquet to sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, whose bread is righteousness and whose cup is wisdom. Sermon 62.6.

### **8:13 The Servant Healed**

#### **As You Believed.**

Irenaeus: There is no coercion with God. He has a good will toward us continually. He gives reliable counsel to humans and angels (who also are rational beings), to whom he has given the power of choice. Those who yield obedience therefore possess what is good freely and justly. It is given by God but preserved by themselves.... The human spirit is possessed of free will from the beginning, and God is possessed of free will, in whose likeness humanity was created. Humanity is advised to hold fast to the good and thereby be responsive to God. This refers not only to works but faith as well. God preserved the human will free and under his own self-control ... as is shown in Jesus' word to the centurion: "Go. Be it done for you as you have believed." Against Heresies 3.37.1, 4–5.