

## Luke 7:1-10

### From Catena Aurea:

7:1–10

1. Now when he had ended all his sayings in the audience of the people, he entered into Capernaum.
2. And a certain centurion's servant, who was dear unto him, was sick, and ready to die.
3. And when he heard of Jesus, he sent unto him the elders of the Jews, beseeching him that he would come and heal his servant.
4. And when they came to Jesus, they besought him instantly, saying, That he was worthy for whom he should do this:
5. For he loveth our nation, and he hath built us a synagogue.
6. Then Jesus went with them. And when he was now not far from the house, the centurion sent friends to him, saying unto him, Lord, trouble not thyself: for I am not worthy that thou shouldst come under my roof:
7. Wherefore neither thought I myself worthy to come unto thee: but say in a word, and my servant shall be healed.
8. For I also am a man set under authority, having under me soldiers, and I say unto one, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it.
9. When Jesus heard these things, he marvelled at him, and turned him about, and said unto the people that followed him, I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel.
10. And they that were sent, returning to the house, found the servant whole that had been sick.

**TITUS BOSTRENSIS.** When He had strengthened His disciples by more perfect teaching, He goes to Capernaum to work miracles there; as it is said, When he had ended all his sayings, he entered into Capernaum.

**AUGUSTINE.** (de Con. Ev. l. ii. c. 20.) Here we must understand that He did not enter before He had ended these sayings, but it is not mentioned what space of time intervened between the termination of His

discourse, and His entering into Capernaum. For in that interval the leper was cleansed whom Matthew introduced in his proper place.

**AMBROSE.** But having finished His teaching, He rightly instructs them to follow the example of His precepts. For straightway the servant of a Gentile centurion is presented to the Lord to be healed. Now the Evangelist, when he said that the servant was about to die, did not err, because he would have died had he not been healed by Christ.

**AUGUSTINE.** (*ubi sup.*) How then will that be true which Matthew relates, A certain centurion came to him, seeing that he himself did not come? unless upon careful consideration we suppose that Matthew made use of a general mode of expression. For if the actual arrival is frequently said to be through the means of others, much more may the coming be by others. Not then without reason, (the centurion having gained access to our Lord through others,) did Matthew, wishing to speak briefly, say that this man himself came to Christ, rather than those by whom he sent his message, for the more he believed the nearer he came.

**CHRYSOSTOM.** (*Hom. 26. in Matt.*) How again does Matthew tell us that the centurion said, I am not worthy that thou shouldest enter under my roof, while Luke says here, that he beseeches Him that He would come. Now it seems to me that Luke sets before us the flatteries of the Jews. For we may believe that when the centurion wished to depart, the Jews drew him back, enticing him, saying, We will go and bring him. Hence also their prayers are full of flattery, for it follows, But when they came to Jesus, they besought him instantly, saying that he was worthy. Although it became them to have said, He himself was willing to come and supplicate Thee, but we detained him, seeing the affliction, and the body which was lying in the house, and so to have drawn out the greatness of his faith; but they would not for envy reveal the faith of the man, lest He should seem some great one to whom the prayers were addressed. But wherein Matthew represents the centurion to be not an Israelite, while Luke says, he has built us a synagogue, there is no contradiction, for he might not have been a Jew, and yet built a synagogue.

**AMBROSE.** Which certainly He did not do, because He was unable to heal when absent, but that He might set them an example of imitating His humility. He would not go to the son of the nobleman, lest He should seem thereby to have respected his riches; He went immediately here, that He might not seem to have despised the low estate of a centurion's servant. But the centurion laying aside his military pride puts on humility, being both willing to believe and eager to honour; as it follows, And when he was not far off, he sent unto him, saying, Trouble not, thyself: for I am not worthy, &c. For by the power not of man, but of

God, he supposed that health was given to man. The Jews indeed alleged his worthiness; but he confessed himself unworthy not only of the benefit, but even of receiving the Lord under his roof, For I am not worthy that thou shouldst enter under my roof.

**CHRYSOSTOM.** (ubi sup.) For as soon as he was freed from the annoyance of the Jews, he then sends, saying, Think not that it was from negligence I came not unto Thee, but I counted myself unworthy to receive Thee in my house.

**AMBROSE.** But Luke well says, that friends were sent by the centurion to meet our Lord, lest by his own coming he might seem both to embarrass our Lord, and to have called for a requital of good offices. Hence it follows, Wherefore neither thought I myself worthy to come unto thee, but say in a word, and my servant shall be healed.

**CHRYSOSTOM.** (ubi sup.) Here observe that the centurion held a right opinion concerning the Lord; he said not, pray, but, command; and in doubt lest He should from humility refuse him, he adds, For I also am a man set under authority, &c.

**CHRYSOSTOM.** (contra Anom. Hom. 17.) We must here remark, that this word, Fac, signifies a command given to a servant. So God when He wished to create man, said not to the Only-begotten, "Make man," but, Let us make man, that by the form of unity in the words he might make manifest the equality of the agents. Because then the centurion considered in Christ the greatness of His dominion, therefore saith He, say in a word. For I also say to my servant. But Christ blames him not, but confirmed his wishes, as it follows, When Jesus heard these things, he marvelled.

**CHRYSOSTOM.** (Hom. 27. in Matt.) But that you might see plainly that the Lord said this for the instruction of others, the Evangelist wisely explains it, adding, Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel.

**AMBROSE.** And indeed if you read it thus, "In none in Israel have I found so great faith," the meaning is simple and easy. But if according to the Greek, "Not even in Israel have I found so great faith," faith of this kind is preferred even to that of the more elect, and those that see God.

**AMBROSE.** The faith of the master is proved, and the health of the servant established, as it follows, And they that were sent returning to the house, found the servant whole that had been sick. It is possible then that the good deed of a master may advantage his servants, not only through the merit of faith, but the practice of discipline.

**AMBROSE.** Mystically, by the centurion's servant is signified that the Gentile people who were enthralled by the chain of worldly bondage, and diseased with deadly passions, are to be healed by the mercy of the Lord.

**AMBROSE.** But the centurion wished not to trouble Jesus, for Whom the Jewish people crucified, the Gentiles desire to keep inviolate from injury, and (as touching a mystery) he saw that Christ was not yet able to pierce the hearts of the Gentiles.

**THEOPHYLACT.** Or in another way. The centurion must be understood as one who stood foremost among many in wickedness, as long as he possesses many things in this life, i. e. is occupied with many affairs or concerns. But he has a servant, the irrational part of the soul, that is, the irascible and concupiscent part. And he speaks to Jesus, the Jews acting as mediators, that is, the thoughts and words of confession, and immediately he received his servant whole.

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

#### **7:1–2 A Valued Slave**

##### **Jesus Demonstrates Love for Enemies.**

Ambrose: The servant of a Gentile centurion is immediately brought to the Lord for healing; this represented the people of the nations who were held in the bonds of worldly slavery, sick with deadly passions, to be cleansed by the Lord's blessing. The Evangelist did not err in saying that he was at the point of death, for he would have died if Christ would not have healed him. He fulfilled the rule with heavenly love, he who so loved his enemies that he snatched them from death and admitted them to the hope of eternal salvation. Exposition of the Gospel of Luke 5.83.2

#### **7:3–5 The Jewish Elders**

##### **The Centurion Built a Synagogue for God's Presence.**

Maximus of Turin: In order to praise the centurion more, the Jews said to the Lord, "It is right that you should help him, for he is a lover of our nation, and he himself has built us a synagogue." If one who has constructed a place where Christ is always denied is visited with heavenly mercy, how much more to be

visited is one who has built a tabernacle where Christ is daily preached! The Lord did not approve the work that the centurion had done but the spirit in which he accomplished it. If he eagerly built a synagogue at a time when there were as yet no Christians, it is understood that he would all the more eagerly have built a church had there been Christians. He still preaches Christ even though he builds a synagogue. Sermon 87.1.3

## **7:6–9 The Centurion**

### **An Example of a Faithful Soldier.**

Augustine: Do not imagine that someone cannot please God while he is engaged in military service. Take as an example holy David to whom the Lord gave such high testimony. Many just men of that time were soldiers. The centurion was the soldier who said to the Lord, “I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof, but only say the word and my servant shall be healed.” Letter 189.4

### **The First Gentile to Have Faith.**

Ephrem the Syrian: “I am not worthy that you should enter my house. I am not capable of receiving the Sun of Righteousness in its entirety; a little radiance from it is sufficient for me to remove sickness, as it does for the darkness.” When our Lord heard this, he marveled at him. God marveled at a human being. He said to those who were near him, “Truly, I say to you, not even in anyone among the house of Israel have I found this kind of faith.” ... The centurion had brought them, and he came so that they would be advocates on his behalf. He rebuked them because they did not possess his faith. To show that the centurion’s faith was the first of the faith of the Gentiles, he said, “Do not imagine that this faith can be limited to the centurion.” For he saw and believed.<sup>5</sup> “Many will believe who have not seen.”<sup>6</sup> “Many will come from the east and from the west and will sit at table with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, etc.”<sup>7</sup> Commentary on Tatian’s Diatessaron 6.22b.<sup>8</sup>

### **A Soldier of Peace for the Savior.**

Maximus of Turin: See how the devout centurion becomes worthier to receive health as he confesses that he is unworthy. In considering his dwelling unacceptable, he has made it the more honorable and acceptable.... The Lord does not go to his house, but the Lord’s healing goes. The Savior does not visit the sick man, but the Savior’s health visits him. Sermon 87.9

## **7:10 The Slave is Healed**

### **Healing the Centurion's Slave a Sign of Humility.**

Ambrose: How great is the sign of divine humility, that the Lord of heaven by no means disdained to visit the centurion's servant! Faith is revealed in deeds, but humanity is more active in compassion. Surely he did not act this way because he could not cure in his absence, but in order to give you a form of humility for imitation he taught the need to defer to the small and the great alike. In another place he says to the ruler, "Go, your son lives,"<sup>10</sup> that you may know both the power of Divinity and the grace of humility. In that case he refused to go to the ruler's son, lest he seem to have had regard for riches. In this case he went himself lest he seem to have despised the humble rank of the centurion's servant. All of us, slave and free, are one in Christ.<sup>11</sup> Exposition of the Gospel of Luke 5.84.<sup>12</sup>