

THE FAITH OF THE CENTURION OF CAPERNAUM.

At the time when the Lord Jesus entered Capernaum, the servant of a centurion lay sick, whom he loved much. When he heard that Jesus was there, he had the consent of some of the elders of the Jews, and sent them with a request to Jesus, that he would come to him and restore his sick servant, and Jesus went with them. And not being far from the house of the centurion, he sent some of his friends to him, who said, Lord trouble not thyself; for I am not worthy that thou shouldst enter under my roof (here notice his humility), and I did not think myself worthy personally to call and see thee; but speak the word, and my child shall be healed. He acknowledged that all must bow to Christ and his word, and said, I also am a man under authority, having soldiers under me, 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. As if he would say to Christ, Behold, Lord, I am but a man, and have to serve the councils at Rome, nevertheless, I have so much power over my servants, that they must obey what I command them; but thou, Lord, art such a Lord that all the mighty have to bow to thee, all that is in heaven above and on earth beneath, must yield to thee. If thou but command sickness and death, they will have to obey thee, and leave my child. And again, if thou command health and life, they will have to return again. Therefore, it is not necessary that thou shouldst come into the house of thy unworthy servant; Lord, only speak the word, and my child will again be restored. When Jesus heard these words, he was quite astonished, and said to the people that followed, Verily, I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel, Matt. 8.

Behold, faithful reader, here you have the centurion as a living example, by which you

may learn how a true christian faith humbles itself before God, and doubts not his power, and how kindly and graciously *he* deals with *his* poor servants, be they male or female. The centurion was moved with compassion towards his poor servant, and had great concern for him, that he spared no pains to trouble the elders of the Jews to send to Christ and entreat him to come and heal his sick servant. This is to the disgrace and shame of all false christians, and especially to many rich, some of whom are more severe on the poor servants and hirelings, and have less feeling for them, than they (with your leave) have for their domestic animals; for as soon as the servants sicken, so that they cannot perform all manner of drudgery, they are unmercifully turned out of doors, and sent to this or that asylum, or to their parents and friends, who sometimes, scarcely have a mouthful of bread or a bed in their houses. Others again have to get a substitute in their place, while sick, and pay him out of their own earned pittance; and if they in health even do fulfil their engagements with hard and severe labor, still, some of these unmerciful, blood-thirsty, treat these innocent ones, who have to watch when they sleep, labor when they rest, run when they command, stand when they sit, in such a manner, as to take the greater portion of their earnings, or scandalize them; now, say they, a spoon is lost; anon a dish is broken; in short, they always speak evil of them and can never be pleased. Yea, some of them would feed them upon water or straw, and pay them with the whip and chaff, even as they do their laboring oxen and horses, if they were not afraid and ashamed of men, for they would not be ashamed before God, alas, whom they know not. O woe, unto such heathenish tyranny and unmerciful cruelty! The centurion calls his servant *his child*,

by which he manifests his paternal love and humility towards his poor servant. Though he was lord, and held in high honor, nevertheless, he did not exalt himself above his poor servant, for he well knew that one God created both of them, that they were born of one seed, and had one origin. But what conduct such heathen christians manifest towards their oppressed servants, their actions, alas, openly show!

How lamentably some of the poor children are despised by some of them. How many disgraceful words have some of them to hear, and how many sore stripes to endure. Their scolding and rash words, continue from morning till night; some of them make their girls prostitutes; yea, what shall I say more. These poor children are regarded by them, and especially by the rich, as the poor, despised donkey, by the magnificent, fat horse, and the filthy pebbles by the beautiful pearls. Ah! reader, it is all much worse than I can describe; it is indeed time that they would look into these things, and reflect more deeply upon love.

The centurion humbled himself before the Lord with all his heart, esteeming himself not worthy that Christ should come under his roof. But our haughty, proud heathens strut about with puffed up hearts and extended necks, high-minded, idle, and daring; one boasts of his family, another of his wealth, a third of his wisdom, a fourth of his skill and beauty, &c. But the innocent and meek Christ says, Learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart, and falsely boast that they have his name, word, death and blood, yet know it not.

The centurion believed, that Christ was mighty and able, by his word, to do all that he desired; but this miserably benighted people esteem it not more than they do Lucian and Æsopian fables. Hence it is, that they lead such an impenitent, carnal life, and use such idolatrous sacraments and false worship, and have departed so far from the true King's highway, still they would be the true, apostolic, and believing church of Christ; but even as Christ testified to the centurion, that he had not found such faith in Israel; so we might, on the other hand, testify and say of this people, that such a heedless, cruel, haughty,

proud, and unmerciful unbelief is unknown among the heathen, and is not to be found with them, who never heard of the word of Christ. Behold, thus does the righteous Lord let those err and fall into blindness of heart, who so little regard his most holy word, hate and thrust his fatherly grace, goodness, Spirit, knowledge and faith from them.

But it is not so with you, my most beloved. Take this sincere, pious centurion as an example; imitate him in his faith, love, humility and virtues, and be as solicitous for your servants, as he was for his servants; teach, admonish and reprove them with a paternal spirit, as often as they err: set them an unblamable example, in all righteousness and piety; have compassion with their severe labor; comfort them in their poverty; comfort them and grieve them not; supply them with their necessary wants, food and their earned hire, and do not curtail them; protect them in all honorable things; rebuke them not without cause, lest they become timid; do not drive them away from you, but let them unmolestedly serve out their time as agreed, lest the name of the Lord be blasphemed; be at all times friendly towards them, and if they are weak and sick, assist and minister unto them; get others to serve in their place, without detriment to them, till the Lord take them hence, or restore them to health: sympathize with them, and be merciful; assist them in all their need; lift not your hearts above them, nor despise them, for they are your brethren according to the flesh. In short, be you so minded in love towards them as Christ Jesus is towards us. At all times remember that we also have a Lord in heaven, before whose judgment-seat we must all appear and render on account of all our works.

But if they are wanton and obstinate, and will not hear your word and command, nor follow your admonition and counsel: would rule and not serve; waste their time and not labor industriously; are unfaithful, rebellious and troublesome; roguishly ruin your family and children, &c.; then agree with them and bring the matter, touching their wages, before two or three witnesses, so that the blame may not rest upon you, and the word of the Lord be not blasphemed. In

such case then, let them be dismissed, that your good conscience be not disturbed on their account, and your house and children be not depraved. Yea, my brethren, you	should do to your poor hirelings, even as you desire that it should be done to you, being called with them. This the law and the prophets teach.
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