**No, Not In Israel…**

**Not Even In the Church**

(by Rick Liggin)

In **Luke**, the seventh chapter, we are introduced to a Roman centurion – a non-Jew – whose highly regarded slave was sick and ready to die (**7:2-10**). Hearing about Jesus, but feeling too unworthy to even approach the Lord, the centurion solicited the help of his Jewish friends to ask Jesus to come and heal his beloved servant. Because he was such a good man, the Jewish elders were happy to go to Jesus on his behalf – and in doing so, they spoke very highly of him before the Lord.

As Jesus approached the centurion’s home, the soldier sent some of his friends with a message – a message that truly revealed the humble character of this good man. He said, ***“Lord, do not trouble Yourself further, for I am not worthy for You to come under my roof; for this reason I did not even consider myself worthy to come to You, but just say the word, and my servant will be healed. For I, too, am a man under authority, with soldiers under me; and I say to this one ‘Go!’ and he goes; and to another, ‘Come!’ and he comes; and to my slave, ‘Do this!’ and he does it”*** (**7:6-8**).

***Such Great Faith***

Here was a man who really understood authority! But more than that, here was a man who completely trusted Jesus! He had absolute faith in the authority of Christ. He knew that Jesus had the authority to do as He wished; that Jesus needed only to command, and his servant would be healed. Wow! Are you impressed? Well, I’ll tell you this: Jesus sure was! He was extremely impressed with this Gentile centurion! Not only was he a man of great humility and well thought of in his local Jewish community, but he was also a man of deep faith and confidence in Jesus! So impressed was Jesus with this man’s faith that He made this profound comment: ***“I say to you, not even in Israel have I found such great faith”*** (**7:9**).

Now, I don’t know about you, but I find this comment of Jesus to be quite interesting. Of all the places where Jesus felt He should have been able to find such great faith, it should have been in Israel. But here was a Gentile whose faith was greater than any Israelite’s! That’s impressive when we think of the Gentile centurion, but it’s not so impressive when we think of the Israelites! How sad that it was not an Israelite – one of the chosen people of God – who had such great faith!

***Application for Today***

When I think on this, I am made to wonder if a parallel exists for us. Where should we find such great faith today? Surely it ought to be among those who are truly members of the kingdom of God – those in the church of our Lord! We are the ones who are the saved! We are the ones who are the people of God! And so, we ought to be the ones who have such great faith! But to our shame, sometimes it’s not we who have such great faith, but rather it’s those in the denominations – those who, like the Roman soldier, are not truly the people of God!

Yes, indeed, brothers! Sometimes our denominational friends show greater evidence of faith in their lives than we do. Some of them pray more than we do, talk more about God than we do, and even walk better by faith than we do! These things just ought not to be so! We need to do better than this!

Let’s all determine to be more like the Roman centurion – people of faith really! God is most certainly worthy of our trust! He surely can be depended on! So, let’s do it! We say we are the people of God, so let’s act like it! Let me encourage you like this: Be sure that, at least in you, we can find another one with such great faith!

For the Purpose of Obedience

(by Gary Henry)

***“The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but those things which are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law”*** (**Deuteronomy 29:29**).

God’s Word is not given to us for the purpose of idle speculation, but for the purpose of obedience. We misappropriate the truth God has revealed when we make it merely the grist for intellectual debate. The greater design of the Scriptures – requiring more effort and promising a richer reward – is to provide the practical materials for building a better, more obedient life. When we study, we ought to be looking for this “obeyable” information. To study for any other reason is actually dangerous.

In the matter of obedience, one problem is that we delay obeying what we’ve learned from the Scriptures because we can’t see as far down the theoretical road ahead as we’d like. Perhaps we don’t fully understand why God would require such a thing as the Scriptures have indicated. Or it may not be clear to us what the consequences would be if we took God at His word. Or we may not see how this or that act of obedience fits into the overall scheme of God’s will. There is no shortage of obstacles, more or less theoretical in nature, that can stymie the serious student who wants not only to obey, but to understand what is being done. The irony of growth, however, is that understanding comes from moving ahead with our obedience, rather than holding back. In any case, *“understanding can wait, but obedience cannot.”*

But another problem related to obedience is that we often delay doing our duty until we feel that we can get it exactly right. We may think we need to make more progress in the realm of spiritual theory before we can do very well in the realm of spiritual practice. And so we linger in our many abstractions, seeking the strength we need for obedient living. Yet solid spiritual progress lies down the clear road of honest obedience to what we presently know is right, not the winding path of theoretical curiosities. We can’t seek God without using our minds to the best of our ability, it’s true. But neither can we find God without carrying out what our minds have learned already.

*“The really important thing in life is not the avoidance of mistakes, but the obedience of faith. By obedience, the man is led step by step to correct his errors, whereas nothing will ever happen to him if he doesn’t get going”* (Paul Tournier).

***“All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work.”*** (***2 Timothy 3:16-17****)*