



July 17, 2022

“The Faith of Letting Go(d)”

Luke 7:1-17

Observing a Faith that Jesus Admires

Faith is banking on God over a risk space

Faith capacity on a scale: from **Great** [Matt 15:28, Luke 7:9] to **Little** [Matt 8:26, Matt 17:20]

Jesus “marvels” twice in the NT: at full faith (Luke 7:9) and at lack of it (Mark 6:6)

Toward an imitation of the Centurion

The Centurion’s Humility

He loved the Jews and built them a synagogue: v.4-5

“Not worthy to come under my roof”: v. 6-7

“I am a man under authority”: v. 8

God gives grace to the humble: Proverbs 3:34; James 4:6-7; 1 Peter 5:5-6

A strong faith will have shifted weight of confidence away from self onto God

Recognition of Jesus’ Real and Legitimate Authority

The fortunate beneficence of the Centurion’s administration in comparison

The tenuousness of the recognition of a legitimate rival authority in occupied Judea

Power is mere strength; authority is the right to exercise power

He sees beyond common prejudice; he risks his standing by what he recognizes

A strong faith will affirm both God’s real power and His rightful authority to wield it

Letting Go and Letting God (Do Things His Way)

Releasing the need to manage or control

Trusting God to do what He does, how He does it, when He will do it

Observing how our prayers can be subtle attempts at God micromanagement

Observing how our actions in the gap can be attempts at God replacement

The idea of controlling matters is an illusion anyway

A strong faith lets go of control and lets God be God: 1 Chronicles 16:24

The famous serenity prayer

A Snapshot to Aid our Faith in Letting Go(d)

Jesus’ compassion is sparked by what He Himself sees

He initiates this dramatic healing without invitation

As there were no formal police at the time, this duty largely fell to soldiers, who were often given special legal authority in the hinterlands— a way of slowly integrating obscure regions into the Empire’s legal, social, and cultural norms. On the other hand, Fuhrmann demonstrates quite well that this system was incredibly ineffective for predictable reasons: unsupervised soldiers in frontier regions could easily extort locals without fear of recompense, soldiers as men of violence were apt to show capricious cruelty, and so on.

at least a few rabbis praised the military’s infrastructural efforts (e.g., b.Šabb. 33b), and a few inscriptions praise the honour of specific soldiers (e.g., §9, §148). However, rabbinic literature indicates deep suspicion of soldiers in early Roman Palestine: women left alone with soldiers were assumed to have been raped and Torah abrogation was deemed acceptable to prevent soldiers’ hostility at times (Isaac 1992: 85-86, citing t.Ketub. 4.5; b.Ketub. 51b; y.Ketub. 2.26d). Benjamin Isaac points to a story from a second-century source: A patrol of gentiles came into town and [the townspeople] were afraid that [the soldiers] might harm them and therefore we prepared them a calf and we fed them and gave them drink and rubbed them with oil so that they would not harm the townspeople. (t.Besah 2.6, translation from Isaac 1991: 458) Here the rabbis describe an exception to the rule that no food should be prepared for Gentiles on festival days; the mere presence of soldiers was potentially dangerous enough that typical norms did not apply. Patrolling soldiers’ hostility is also apparent in Josephus’s works: one auxiliary soldier destroyed a village’s Torah scroll (A.J. 20.115; J.W. 2.229) and another ‘flushed’ temple attendees

Extortion is a common theme in military papyri from Egypt and Lk. 3.14 tells an incident where John the Baptist admonished soldiers to be content with their wages and stop extorting Galileans.

A centurion at Capernaum (so Mt. 8.5-13; Lk. 7.1-10) might help protect administrators and tax collectors stationed in a combination border-town/portvillage.