

LESSON 5
July 5, 2026

Unit II: Faithful Witnesses Say “Yes” to Jesus Christ

Authority and Compassion

DEVOTIONAL READING: Acts 10:19-22, 30-35

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Matthew 8:5-13

PRINT PASSAGE: Matthew 8:5-13

KEY VERSE

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. (Matthew 8:10, KJV)

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When Jesus heard this, he was amazed and said to those following him, “Truly I tell you, I have not found anyone in Israel with such great faith.” (Matthew 8:10, NIV)

Lesson Aims

As a result of experiencing this lesson, you should be able to do the following:

- Analyze the assertion that God’s peaceable wisdom is revealed through Jesus Christ.
- Practice open-hearted listening in dialogue with others.
- Develop a peace plan for a specific context where unresolved conflict exists (e.g., home, workplace, school, or community).

*Key Terms

Authority (verse 9)—Greek: *exousia* (ex-oo-see’- ah): power to act; weight.

Heal (verse 7)—Greek: *therapeuó* (ther-ap-yoo’- o): to serve; cure; attend.

Beseeching (verse 5)—Greek: *parakaleo* (par-ak-aleh’-o): to call to one’s side, summon; “asking” (NIV).

Tormented (verse 6)—Greek: *basanizó* (bas-anid’-zo): to torture; to vex with grievous pains; to distress; “suffering terribly” (NIV).

Worthy (verse 8)—Greek: *hikanos* (hik-an-os’): sufficient in ability; fit; suitable; “do... deserve” (NIV).

*(Word Study Supplement—Refer to page 2)

Introduction

Biblically, intercessory prayer is a sincere and insightful conversation with the Lord, where believers stand in the gap for others and present their needs as heartfelt petitions, expressing



The Biblical Context

Matthew, also known as Levi, was a former tax collector and a disciple of Jesus Christ, recognized as the author of the book that bears his name. His gospel is well-organized and concise, reflecting his skill as an accountant. This ability to accurately record people's words suggests that his account captures some of the actual words of Christ, especially in His sermons like the Sermon on the Mount. Historically, Matthew wrote the gospel of Matthew during the early church period, between AD 55 and 65, when most Christians were Jewish converts. This timing explains his focus on showing that Jesus was their long-awaited Messiah. Structurally, Matthew begins by discussing Jesus' lineage, birth, and early life (chapters 1–2), then shifts to His ministry. He describes Jesus' teachings through five discourses, with the most well-known and profound being the Sermon on the Mount, found in chapters 5–7. To persuade the Jews that Jesus was their Messiah and King, Matthew emphasizes several theological themes, including Jesus as the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy, the kingdom of heaven as both a present and future reality, the importance of discipleship and righteous living, the significance of Jesus' death and resurrection as the fulfillment of Messianic prophecy, and themes of judgment and eschatology. The immediate context of Matthew 8:5-13 features miracle stories that demonstrate Jesus' authority, which He discusses in Matthew 7:28-29. Following Jesus' healing of the leper (Matthew 8:1-4), this story is part of Matthew's broader effort to show that Jesus is the Jewish people's Messianic King, with authority over disease, nature, demons, and sin.

unconditional, sacrificial love. Contrary to some beliefs, intercessory prayer is not limited to a special group of "spiritually elite" or the "specially anointed." Instead, every Christian is called to intercede as a fundamental act of faith in God. The Bible offers several examples of intercessory prayer where individuals "stood in the gap" for others. Abraham interceded for Sodom and Gomorrah, asking for God's merciful justice (Genesis 18:22-33). Moses pleaded with God not to destroy rebellious Israel during their wilderness wandering (Exodus 32:9-14). Daniel identified himself with Israel's sins and begged for God's mercy and restoration on their behalf (Daniel 9:3-19). However, the most profound example of intercessory prayer is Jesus' prayer while on earth, especially His high priestly prayer in John 17, which was an intercession for Himself, His disciples, and all future believers. Therefore, when we practice intercessory prayer, we follow His example, one that continues now for us in God's presence (Hebrews 7:25; Romans 8:34). Believers are also instructed to practice inclusivity when interceding for others: authority figures, friends, the sick, enemies, those who persecute or forsake us, and all humanity selflessly. A unique example of a selfless intercessory prayer rooted in humility and extraordinary faith is the Roman centurion's prayer for his paralyzed and suffering servant (Matthew 8:5-13).

ANALYSIS OF THE BIBLICAL TEXT

A Stellar Commendation (Matthew 8:5-10)

KJV

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.

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.

NIV

5 When Jesus had entered Capernaum, a centurion came to him, asking for help.

6 “Lord,” he said, “my servant lies at home paralyzed, suffering terribly.”

7 Jesus said to him, “Shall I come and heal him?”

8 The centurion replied, “Lord, I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. But just say the word, and my servant will be healed.

9 “For I myself am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. I tell this one, ‘Go,’ and he goes; and that one, ‘Come,’ and he comes. I say to my servant, ‘Do this,’ and he does it.”

10 When Jesus heard this, he was amazed and said to those following him, “Truly I tell you, I have not found anyone in Israel with such great faith.”

Matthew highlights several instances where Jesus demonstrates His access to God's power in Matthew 8. Earlier, Matthew described how Jesus heals a man with leprosy (verses 1-4), and now he recounts a unique encounter with a Roman centurion on His return to Capernaum (verse 5). This Gentile officer has a servant who is paralyzed and suffering greatly (verse 6). Notably, the centurion addresses Jesus as “Lord,” which suggests he either recognized Jesus as the Messiah or used a respectful term like “sir.” In either case, this important Gentile officer was confident that Jesus could heal his servant. Jesus' immediate response has been interpreted as a statement, “I will come,” and as a question, “Shall I come?” (verse 7). However, whichever interpretation is accepted, the centurion objects to Jesus coming to his home, declaring his unworthiness to have Jesus in his house, and expressing faith that Jesus can heal his servant from a distance simply by speaking the word (verse 8). Furthermore, he compares Jesus' authoritative power over life and health with his military authority to issue commands to soldiers and servants (verse 9). The centurion's statement of unquestioning faith in Jesus' power over the natural world, and in this case, over sickness, amazed Jesus (verse 10). Jesus' amazement was not that He was caught by surprise, but rather that He was emotionally moved by this man's statement of faith in Him, contrasting with Israel's lack of faith in Him as their promised Messiah. This stellar commendation's foundation was the centurion's compassionate intercession and concern for his ailing servant—a rare occurrence in a Gentile culture that devalued slaves—and his unprecedented faith in Jesus' power. Consequently, believers are challenged to recognize that the key to answered prayer is faith—absolute practical reliance on Jesus' power—expressed with genuine concern for another's well-being.

? WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Why did Jesus find the centurion's faith commendable, and how can we cultivate similar faith?

A Dire Condemnation (*Matthew 8:11-13*)

KJV

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.

NIV

11 “I say to you that many will come from the east and the west, and will take their places at the feast with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven.

12 “But the subjects of the kingdom will be thrown outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

13 Then Jesus said to the centurion, “Go! Let it be done just as you believed it would.” And his servant was healed at that moment.

Following His praise of the Roman centurion’s exceptional faith in His divine authority and power, Jesus reveals that the kingdom of heaven is not reserved for Jews only (verse 11). The imagery here is that of the Messianic banquet, a well-known theme in Jewish eschatological views. Jesus emphasizes that Israel’s revered patriarchs will be there, but so will Gentiles from all directions. He highlights that faith in Him, like the centurion’s, will determine who enters the kingdom, not nationality, status, or positions of importance. Moreover, Jesus adds that some among the nation of Israel will be excluded and face condemnation and suffering reserved for those who fail to place their faith in Him (verse 12). Jesus then fulfilled the centurion’s request and healed his servant, assuring him that what he believed He could do was done (verse 13). Jesus’ interaction with this Roman centurion was more than just an act of divine healing; it also revealed the nature of the kingdom and provided a model for intercessory prayer and faith. The faith community is reminded that God’s kingdom is inclusive and centered on faith in Christ, challenging reliance on religious heritage and ethnic identity. Additionally, believers are taught that prayers offered for others must be grounded in unwavering confidence in God’s Word alone.

🔍 WHAT DO YOU THINK?

What does Jesus’ comparison of the centurion’s and Israel’s faith reveal about relying on spiritual or religious heritage?

A Closing Thought

Matthew 8:5-13 describes Jesus’ response to a Roman centurion’s plea to heal his paralyzed and suffering servant, who is near death. Although the centurion’s request is not phrased as a prayer of intercession, his approach and attitude serve as a model for believers engaged in the ministry of intercessory prayer—praying on behalf of others. The centurion’s concern for his servant, a person of lower status in his culture, shows that intercession must come

from a compassionate heart rather than self-interest. Additionally, his reverent approach to Christ reveals that effective intercession begins with humility before God and confessing our unworthiness to be in His presence. Finally, the centurion's intercessory request illustrates that effective intercession is rooted in unwavering faith in Christ's power and the Word, trusting that He is willing and able to grant our requests.

Your Life

The primary motivation for believers to engage in intercessory prayer is Christ's ongoing ministry of intercession on our behalf, even now in God's presence (Hebrews 7:25). Consequently, as a faithful witness and the recipient of the continuing results of Christ interceding for you, commit to identifying someone you can intercede for this week and in the future.

Your World!

Many people in communities, nations, and around the world are "paralyzed" by sin and challenging circumstances, needing someone to step in on their behalf. As God's faithful witnesses, the entire faith community, one of the Bible's "one anothers," commands us to pray for one another, especially during times of physical and spiritual weakness (James 5:16). Therefore, consider starting or strengthening an intercessory prayer ministry in your congregation focused on praying for others through prayer vigils, prayer chains, or "seasons of prayer."

Closing Prayer

Dear God, we thank You that our Savior, Jesus Christ, intercedes for us daily in Your presence. As an act of gratitude for His intercessory work on our behalf, we commit to being consistent intercessors for others regardless of their ethnicity or social status. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Conclusion

(Preparing for Next Week's Lesson)

Despite our best efforts to be faithful witnesses for Christ, when we say "Yes" to His plans for us, we will sometimes fail. Next week's lesson explores how failure is not an end but an opportunity to grow in Christ as revealed through Peter's "up-and-down" life (Mark 8:27-29; Luke 22:31-34; John 18:25-27; 21:15-17).

Home Daily Bible Readings		
MONDAY, July 6	"Filled with the Spirit's Boldness"	(Acts 2:14-21)
TUESDAY, July 7	"God Delivers from All Fear"	(Psalm 34:1-9)
WEDNESDAY, July 8	"God Is Near the Brokenhearted"	(Psalm 34:10-22)
THURSDAY, July 9	"Imperfect Understanding"	(Mark 8:27-33)
FRIDAY, July 10	"Fear Not; God Is with You"	(Isaiah 41:8-13)
SATURDAY, July 11	"Crumbling under Pressure"	(Mark 14:55-72)
SUNDAY, July 12	"Called to Feed Christ's Flock"	(John 21:15-19)