

Call to Obedience #245
PO Box 299 Kokomo, IN 46903 USA
www.schultze.org

The Man Who Carried Jesus

By Reimar Schultze

“And when Jesus was entered into Capernaum, there came unto him a centurion, beseeching him, And saying, Lord, my servant lieth at home sick of the palsy, grievously tormented. And Jesus saith unto him, I will come and heal him. The centurion answered and said, Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldst come under my roof: but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed. 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. 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 8:5–10

There are two distinct places in the Gospels where Jesus marveled. The one is at Nazareth and the other is at Capernaum. What is it to marvel? Our English word “marvel” comes from the Greek word *thaumazo*, meaning to wonder, to admire or to be astounded. In Capernaum, it was more along the lines of admiration, while in Nazareth, Jesus’ *thaumazo* was more along the line of wonderment.

Jesus, having been raised in Nazareth, having displayed his divinity there day after day and year after year, “could there do no mighty work...And he marvelled because of their unbelief” (Mark 6:5–6). Jesus marveled. He was surprised at unbelief. He said there that “A prophet is not without honour, but in his own country, and among his own kin, and in his own house” (v. 4). Jesus’ own family downgraded him. His friends and acquaintances, those who saw him frequently, downgraded him. Most of the village downgraded him. How many pastors, evangelists, and prophets have been downgraded by their families, and by their congregations? Of how many of these dear servants, like Jesus, has it been said that they are just “carpenter’s sons,” while these same servants can go to foreign lands and by their prayers, the sick are healed, the lost are saved, and the saved are sanctified? Jesus marveled at the unbelief of his “own city.” Is Jesus still marveling at the unbelief of people toward the servants he has sent?

“He marveled” means that Jesus was surprised at the people of Nazareth. It means that Jesus was not expecting such behavior of unbelief. It means that Jesus was disappointed, that he was grieved, that his heart was broken. How does Jesus feel in his heart about your attitude toward the man of God he sent in his place because he cannot be with you physically? Does he also marvel at your unbelief or at your belittling of whom he has sent?

In Capernaum, Jesus also marveled, but here the marveling took a different direction. It was not a marvel unto disappointment but a marvel unto joy, unto encouragement, unto admiration of a centurion. Yes, Jesus admired the centurion. Does Jesus admire you? Has Jesus ever admired you? Has Jesus ever “looked up to you”? Has Jesus ever been blessed and lifted by you? Has Jesus ever been carried by you? The people in Nazareth saw Jesus almost every day. Yet, they downgraded him. This centurion had probably never seen Jesus before, and he upgraded him. Are you a downgrader or are you an upgrader?

So Jesus marveled in Nazareth at unbelief and in Capernaum at belief. In some way, all of us are between the unbelief of the people of Nazareth and the faith of the centurion. Where are you on the spectrum of faith? Are you in the middle, are you closer to unbelief or are you closer to the faith of the Roman officer? How do you rate? Are you an average churchgoer, or are you one who occasionally or frequently pleasantly surprises Jesus by your acts of faith?

Jesus offered to come to the centurion's house and to put his hand upon the sick servant. But the centurion outdid Jesus. He said, "Jesus, you can do better than that. You don't have to come to my house. You can just say the word." Yes, the centurion surprised Jesus. He outdid Jesus! He came up with an idea so noble, so grand that Jesus never even thought of it himself. He had more faith than anyone in all of Israel, meaning that he being a Gentile had more faith than any Jew.

Where Jesus expected to find faith, in his own country, he found practically none. Where he expected to find no faith, he had a bushel full and running over. Jesus said to them all, "I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel." What does it tell us that Jesus did not find such faith in Israel? It tells us that he was looking for it. Jesus was looking for such faith in every one of his disciples, but he could not find it. And Jesus looked for it in the Pharisees and the priests, but he could not find it there either.

Is Jesus still looking for such faith in the power of his word as he found in this Roman officer? Some of you are 30 years old, some of you are 60, some 80; some of you have been Christians for 10, 20, 30 years or more. Are you going to go to the grave without ever having made Jesus marvel at you, without ever having surprised him, without his ever having had reason to admire you? Thaumazo! Oh, how Jesus is sick of ordinary, gray, Monday morning, limp professors of religion.

Perhaps the centurion is the only man who came up to Jesus' expectation of mustard seed faith that could move mountains (Matt. 17:20). This is perhaps one of the few men who could have made it from the boat to Jesus without sinking in the waves. Perhaps this is one of the few men who carried Jesus. This is one of the few men who did not let Jesus down, who did not put a drag on Jesus, who did not draw virtue from him, but rather, who gave him a lift. This is one of the few men who gave Jesus a good day. Practically all men tugged on Jesus. Practically all of them wearied and exhausted him, but not so with this centurion.

If you have a shepherd who is Jesus' physical representative, do you carry him or does he carry you? Most pastors have to carry most people in their congregations. They have to drag them, pull them, coerce them, plead with them because they are mostly following Jesus afar off or not at all. They do not pray; they do not witness; they do not obey; they are unfaithful and irregular in church attendance, or they are late. They are filled with excuses rather than filled with the Holy Spirit. Yet, when they are sick or a child is born into their family, they expect the pastor to be there on time, and they will not allow him any excuse, although his house may be full of company or the graduation of his son may be that night.

How wonderful to have people who are lifters rather than leaners. Are you a lifter or a leaner? How many of you are lifting and how many of you are leaning on your pastor? How many of you take virtue from him, and how many of you give virtue to him to expand his ministry?

Oh, how wonderful to find a people who are lifters and carriers. When you are with them, you are strengthened, you are revived, refreshed, and renewed in the Holy Spirit. Again, do you carry your pastor, or does he have to carry you? If you carry your pastor, you are actually carrying Jesus.

Yes, there are so many sentimental sayings about Jesus carrying us through hard places. We love these sayings; we love to be carried. And there are times when we need to be carried—all of us—but would it not be wonderful if we would love to carry Jesus and his servants more than being carried by them?

If you don't have your daily time of prayer, your pastor is carrying you. If you have marital conflict, your pastor is carrying you. If you don't discipline your children, your pastor is carrying you. If you waste time in front of a television set while millions die never having heard of Jesus,

your pastor is carrying you. Now, if you have troubles and need prayer, you are not a weight to your pastor. It is when you are not faithful in the basics that you become a weight.

Jesus planned to go and heal the centurion's servant! Jesus planned to take time and energy and effort to go to this centurion's house, but the centurion said, "Not so, Lord. Just say the word..." The centurion's faith lightened Jesus' load, making Jesus' strength available to others, strength that would have been spent on his journey to the centurion's house. Those who carry Jesus and others are those who unselfishly and sacrificially find ways to stretch the help as far as it can go.

The centurion had such faith in Jesus' word because he had been raised under authority. He understood that when a superior spoke once, what he said was to be believed and done. He understood authority—the word of authority. Understanding the authority of his father, of his mother, and of his officer, he understood the authority of the Son of God. "Speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed." The centurion had read Genesis 1, and he knew that when God spoke, things began to happen.

Parents, are you teaching your children the meaning and the power of the word of authority? Are your children raised to know that when you speak and what you speak will happen? Or has your word become cheap to them and are you nothing but a paper tiger who can be negotiated with to change the word? Parents, are you raising a centurion at whom Jesus will marvel, who will carry Jesus, or are you raising a Nazarene for whom Jesus could do nothing because of unbelief at his word?

Finally, after Jesus commended the centurion, he made this most astounding statement, "...many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven. But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matt. 8:11–12).

Friend, where are you today in your faith? Are you a child of the kingdom who will be cast into outer darkness where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth, or are you a child of the kingdom who will sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob? Don't be a Nazarene; be a centurion for Jesus.