

GRACE GAZETTE

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Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed.

Hebrews 12:12-13

CHRIST THE COMMANDER

And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine: For he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes. Matthew 7:28-29

In order to demonstrate the fact that the LORD will show mercy to whom HE will show mercy, we see HIM enabling a Roman Centurion to recognize the authority of CHRIST. This is an amazing display when you consider the fact that he was a part of a culture that despised the Jews and their religion. Yet the LORD had given him a love for them, even going so far as the building of a synagogue for them in Capernaum. Now while this, in itself, is just an outward act of religious effort, it actually indicates a deeper work by the LORD upon this man.

These Jews were for the most part set against the work of CHRIST, even here in Capernaum. We see this manifested as the LORD decried their lack of appreciation for the work of GOD and the absence of repentance in their midst. *"And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day."* (Mat 11:23) The healing of this Centurion's servant was just such a "mighty work" as HE spoke of.

But the LORD would make known the fact that HE has hid the TRUTH of GOD from the wise and prudent and revealed it unto babes. For here in Capernaum we see the LORD recognizing the gift of faith which HE bestowed upon this Roman, to be "greater" than any faith HE had given to Israel. *"When Jesus heard these things, he marvelled at him, and turned him about, and said unto the people that followed him, I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel."* (Luke 7:9) The occasion for HIS declaration came as the Centurion recognized HIS LORDSHIP over all things, even the sickness which laid his beloved servant low as he said, *"Wherefore neither thought I myself worthy to come unto thee: but say in a word, and my servant shall be healed. For I also am a man set under authority, having under me soldiers, 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."* (Luke 7:7-8) He demonstrated humility by understanding his own unworthiness to come into the presence of the LORD. He demonstrated faith in HIM who had the power to heal. He demonstrated an understanding of the "authority" and HEADSHIP of CHRIST. None of these things were demonstrated by the Jewish leaders.

The English word "authority" appears 35 times in the NT of the KJV and one Greek word, "exousia" is used 31 of those times. This same Greek word appears about 103 times and is translated as "power" in all but about 40 cases. There is another Greek word that is also translated as "power", which is "dunamis", from which we get our English words, "dynamo" and even "dynamite". This Greek word appears about 120 times and is often translated as "mighty works." "Exousia" relates to judicial power while "dunamis" relates to an ability to perform.

The people who are referenced in Matthew 7:28, were the common folk who had just heard the LORD preach HIS "sermon on the mount", and by the grace of GOD came to understand that HE was not just as the rank and file teacher of the scriptures which they had heard many times before,

but that HE spoke as “one having authority” (i.e.; *exousia*) or possessing “jurisdiction” (i.e. “*exousia*”, see Luke 23:7) over the WORD of GOD. They were not enamored of HIS “mighty works” (i.e.; “*dunamis*”) but of HIS sovereign rule as a COMMANDER of the TRUTH. We see that later on; that dynamic shifted, as many followed HIM merely for those “mighty works” (healings and the provision of loaves and fishes) and became offended at HIS WORD. “From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him.” (John 6:66)

Thus, we learn that HE has “power” not just as a demonstration which can be observed by the flesh but that HE speaks as one who rules in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the Earth. It is this “power or authority” which can only be gloried in by those who are caused by sovereign grace to fall at HIS feet, worshipping HIM in SPIRIT and TRUTH.

HE speaks of this “authority” when HE said, “And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd.” (John 10:16) “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.” (John 10:27-28) “All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.” (John 6:37)

We see HIM demonstrate this authority when HE said, “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” (Mat 11:28) Some would consider this to be an invitation to a broad spectrum of humanity who may or may not respond. Yet the reality is that this is a command from the lips of CHRIST to a particular people who will hear HIS voice and to whom HE will give ETERNAL LIFE. “And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed.” (Acts 13:48)

We see HIM demonstrate HIS authority when HE instructed Judas to do that which the LORD had appointed HIM to do. “Then said Jesus unto him, That thou doest, do quickly.” (John 13:27) This was a necessity since “Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain.” (Acts 2:23) These things must come to pass, thus HE commanded it to be so.

We see HIM demonstrate HIS authority over the natural elements of the world when HE commanded them to “be still”. We see HIM command death to release its grip when HE said, “Lazarus come forth” and then to see his deliverance complete as HE commanded men to “loose him and let him go”, from the grave clothes which bound him with the stench of death.

We see HIM demonstrate HIS authority to teach HIS children such things as they need to know when HE commanded HIS disciples to “Follow me”. Then we see HIM teach them their weakness when HE told them to give the people food to eat. They immediately confessed that they were unable to do so. Then HE fed the people. In the same vein HE taught Peter his weakness when HE commanded HIM to “Come” to HIM on the water as the waves crashed around. Peter learned that he could not walk on water. In like fashion Peter declared his willingness to die for the LORD, but the LORD made a commandment which caused Peter great humility. “Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, That this night, before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice.” (Mat 26:34) Some would say that the LORD merely predicted the future, but the truth is that the LORD designed this trial to teach Peter that he could not stand in his own power.

One of the grandest of displays of HIS authority over all flesh came as the company of men, led by Judas came to arrest HIM in the garden. They asked if HE was JESUS of Nazareth and HE said “I AM”. They immediately fell backwards as dogs cower before their MASTER. Then HE “commanded” them to let HIS disciples go. Some see this as a request, but it is clearly a command which they were powerless to disobey.

Yet the most glorious of all of HIS commands was spoken in the weakest of moments as that ONE who gave HIS life for HIS sheep. HE decreed, “It is finished” and then breathed HIS last breath exactly as HE determined. None can bring any of HIS sheep into condemnation, nor can any accuser ever stand to bear witness against them. “For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.” (2Cor 5:21) mam