

The Authority of God's Word

Fresh emphasis on Bible Study this Fall

Some of the Reasons People Toss Out the Bible...

"It is full of ***mistakes*** and contradictions"

"It is 100% ***man-made***"

"It's too ***old***"

You think like this. Let me show you: Besides the Bible, how many of us in the last year have read a book older than 100 years? Raise your hands.

"It's too ***true***"

Often I think this is our real objection. In the Bible we find the declaration of God's love for us. It is a love that **asserts a claim** above every other claim on our lives..

No book has been **more influential** in the history of the world than the bible. Its wisdom underlies the **legal structures** of Europe, America, and every country that has ventured to offer the rule of law to its people. It's **analysis of human nature** underlies our **constitutional structure**. In the **Senate** chambers on Capitol hill the upper walls are filled with reliefs of the statesmen and philosophers of the world. All of their faces are turned toward the back where they gaze at one face above the rear door, the only face that is looking straight ahead. It is **the face of Moses**.

The impact of the Bible that I love the best is its **power to change people's lives**. That's what we are all about here. God's power to change our lives.

Paul wrote...

*What we told you **produced a powerful effect upon you**, for the Holy Spirit gave you great and full assurance that*

*what we said **was true**. And you know how **our very lives were further proof to you of the truth of our message**.*

1 Thessalonians 1:5

To help us think about the authority of the Bible we are looking today at **Luke 7.1-10**. The story of the **healing of the Centurion's slave**. Jesus is ministering out of his northern base in a city in Galilee called Capernaum.

The city housed a contingent of **Roman soldiers**. Remember they are **gentiles**, not Jews. And they are **an occupying military force**. The leadership structure of the Roman army was anchored in the *centurions* - Roman army officers in charge of one hundred men.

Polybius, the **historian**, describes their qualifications.

'They must be not so much "seekers after danger as men who can command, steady in action, and reliable; ready to hold their ground and die at their posts.'"

The Bible always speaks highly of these men, for good reason. Look at him...

He Had Compassion For His Slave

There a centurion's servant, whom his master valued highly, was sick and about to die. Lk 7:2 (NIV)

He Had Reverence For The Jewish People

When they came to Jesus, they pleaded earnestly with him, "This man deserves to have you do this, because he loves our nation and has built our synagogue." Lk 7:4-5 (NIV)

So Jesus went with them

Jesus said to him, "I will go and heal him." Mt 8:7 (NIV)

He Had Humility Towards Himself

He was not far from the house when the centurion sent friends to say to him: "Lord, don't trouble yourself, for I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. That is why I

did not even consider myself worthy to come to you... Lk 7:6-7 (NIV)

He Had Faith In Jesus

...But say the word, and my servant will be healed.

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."

When Jesus heard this, he was amazed at him, and turning to the crowd following him, he said, "I tell you, I have not found such great faith even in Israel."

Lk 7:7-9 (NIV)

Really? Greater faith than...? Why would Jesus say that? Let's go back...

The Bible tells us God creates and redeems and rules through his Word

'God said, Let there be light, and there was light.' Gen 1.2

Sky, land, stars and moon, creatures to fill the land and sea and sky. *"God said... And it was so."*

'He spoke and they were made.... He commanded and they were created' Psalm 148:5

The Bible says the word of God is the **invisible reality by which God creates and sustains** everything you see and know.

You and I don't believe that because of our own experience. Because **our words don't do any such thing. Our words are constrained by our finiteness.** Our limitations. Our restrictions. Our words are 'boundaried'. They **have power**

and authority only within a certain narrow sphere of capability and influence.

I could say, "Let there be chocolate ice cream...!" And we could quickly observe the limits of my capability and authority. **But I** could say some other things and you would see results...

"I will lift my arm..."

"I will sit on this chair..."

"I will preach tonight..."

Things happen, because I am **operating within my capabilities and authority.**

But if I exceed my authority or capabilities, I find my words are empty...

"The Browns will win the Super Bowl this year..."

"My children shall never have to make the mistakes I did..."

But **God is different. His words are not boundaried, limited or restricted.** His capabilities and authority are endless. So He can create and rule and redeem by his word.

Let's go **back to this Centurion.** What was it about his faith that amazed Jesus? Well, he was a man who **knew how words work powerfully within your sphere of capability and authority.**

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."

That was his life in the military. He knew that he carried Caesar's authority with his men, and all he had to do was command and it would be done. But he also **knew that his authority was limited,** constrained and boundaried, and that it **did not extend** to the healing of his sick servant.

But then this compassionate, reverent, humble man **heard about Jesus**. He heard about his power over demons and illness and death and disease and sins and sinners. And he understood.

He quickly recognized that **Jesus' capability and authority** was far larger than his own, and that it extended to the suffering of his sick servant, and that all it would take would be **a word, a command**.

Jesus wouldn't even have to come into his house, wouldn't have to spit on his servant or lay hands on his servant or anoint him with oil – this **wasn't a magical rite** – he knew it – this was a matter of Jesus' capabilities and authority, which he knew would **only take his word**.

But say the word, and my servant will be healed.

And that is what happened.

When you **pick up the bible**, you are **dealing with someone in high authority**. His authority and power is **not constrained** or bounded or limited. He can deal with every sphere of your life. His word is good. Rock solid. True. Dependable.

“repent... the Kingdom is at hand” Believe in me, Come to me, learn from me... Follow me

Lord, I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. Only say the word and your servant will be healed ...

Does no one condemn you? Neither do I. Go and sin no more.

Lord, I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. Only say the word and your servant will be healed ...

Forgive one another. Love one another. The greatest among you will be the servant of all.

Lord, I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. Only say the word and your servant will be healed ...

I know my sheep... No one can snatch them out of my hands... He who believes in me has eternal life
Lord, I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. Only say the word and your servant will be healed ...

When you **pick up the bible**, you are **dealing with someone in high authority**. His authority and power is **not constrained** or boundaried or limited. He can deal with every sphere of your life. His word is good. Rock solid. True. Dependable.

Prayer:

For some of you, this may be your first time in church for a long time. You wonder about God. You wonder about truth. But you know that you need and want something solid to build your life on. Maybe today you could venture a prayer... "God show me what is true. I will spend some time reading the Bible. I just ask you to show me, because I need truth in my life. Lord Jesus, help me to take some steps in following you, and show me what truth really is."

Some of you have been coming to church for a long, long time but you haven't been reading His word very much. There is a gap between what you believe about the Bible and your habit of reading it – today would be a good day to close that gap. "I want to make Your word a part of the foundation for my life." "God, I want to make a commitment to reading Your word. I want to make a commitment to spending time with You. I need more of your truth in my life too... not just to think about it, but to live it. I will read the Bible, study the Bible, trust its promises, walk by its light, and yield my life to its main character"