

Luke 7:4

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And when they came to Jesus, they besought him instantly, saying, That he was worthy for whom he should do this:

Analysis

And when they came to Jesus, they besought him instantly, saying, That he was worthy for whom he should do this. The elders' *axios estin* (ἄξιός ἐστιν, he is worthy) presents human merit-theology—they argue the centurion deserves healing because of his good works. This stands in stark contrast to the centurion's own confession (verse 6-7) that he is unworthy. The Greek *parakalein* (παρακαλεῖν, earnestly begged) shows their intense advocacy.

Ironically, the elders misunderstand grace—they present works-based worthiness while the centurion exhibits faith-based humility. Jesus responds not to the centurion's supposed merit but to his remarkable faith. This previews Paul's doctrine: salvation is 'not of works, lest any man should boast' (Ephesians 2:9), but through faith alone.

Historical Context

Jewish leaders advocating for a Roman military officer reveals the centurion's extraordinary impact on Capernaum. His benefaction to the synagogue and fair treatment of Jews had earned genuine respect, despite representing occupying forces.

Related Passages

1 John 4:8 — God is love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. How do you approach God—based on your worthiness and works, or on His grace and mercy?
2. Why is it significant that Jesus responded to faith rather than to the arguments about the centurion's worthiness?
3. In what ways might you be tempted to base your access to God on your performance rather than Christ's finished work?

Interlinear Text

οἱ	δὲ	παραγενόμενοι	πρὸς	τὸν	Ἰησοῦν	παρεκάλουν
G3588	And	when they came	to	G3588	Jesus	they besought
	G1161	G3854	G4314		G2424	G3870
αὐτὸν	σπουδαίως	λέγοντες	ὅτι	Ἄξιός	ἐστιν	ὃν
him	instantly	saying	That	worthy	he was	for whom
G846	G4709	G3004	G3754	G514	G2076	G3739
παρέξει	τοῦτο·					
he should do	this					
G3930	G5124					

Additional Cross-References

Revelation 3:4 (Parallel theme): Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy.

Matthew 10:13 (Parallel theme): And if the house be worthy, let your peace come upon it: but if it be not worthy, let your peace return to you.

