Still Under Orders

We are at the start of another year and much of the Muslim World continues to experience war and growing disorder. We have a deep concern about the many grave injustices and wrongs being perpetrated – so many gross inequalities, so many basic human rights denied. Now is not the place to discuss these, but I want to remind you of an insightful event described by Luke (7:1-10). The Lord Jesus healed the centurion's servant (slave?).

Look at what Luke tells us about the servant. He was a 'nobody', useful perhaps as a slave, but now sick and apparently dying. Matthew tells us he was paralysed and in terrible distress – hopeless and helpless. But someone was concerned enough to go to the Lord Jesus. **When that happens the miracles begin!**

The Lord Jesus was entering the little town of Capernaum. His concern and compassion for anyone in need was one of His outstanding characteristics. ***"I will come and heal him"*** was His immediate response. It didn't matter that the man was only a slave or that he was probably of a different race. Distinctions of class or privilege or race meant nothing to the Lord Jesus who loves all people equally. There is no-one who is beyond the reach of His love or the scope of His power.

But it is to the centurion that I want to draw your attention. He appears to be a very unusual Roman soldier – unusually tolerant. The Jewish leaders pleaded with the Lord Jesus to go to the centurion's house. ***"He is worthy to have you do this for him, for he loves our nation and he is the one who built our synagogue"***. But perhaps most surprisingly of all, a message came from this centurion, ***"Lord, do not trouble yourself, for I am not worthy to have you under my roof…. But say the word and let my servant be healed; for I too am a man under authority. I say to one, 'Go' and he goes and to my slave, 'Do this' and he does it".***

He said he believed that the Lord Jesus could heal from a distance just as easily as if He was near. That was remarkable enough, but what was far more remarkable was his understanding of the person and the authority of the Lord Jesus. One translation says, ***"Do this and he does it."*** As an army officer, he <u>had</u> authority because he was <u>under</u> authority and he recognised that the Lord Jesus lived by the same principle. I think the Lord Jesus must have smiled, for He said of Himself, ***"I came not to do My will, but the will of Him that sent Me."*** So like the centurion, He too was under orders.

Under whose orders are you? To be a believer means to be under the orders – the authority – of the Lord Jesus. This is what we acknowledge when we call Him "Lord" – His right to rule and reign in our hearts and in our minds. For us this comes as a crucial experience, a deliberate yielding of ourselves completely to the Lord Jesus, asking for His cleansing, giving Him the first place in our love and loyalty and then every day seeking to live in a way that pleases Him. And paradoxically, but truly, this way of obedience to the Lord Jesus is the way of freedom and joy. You know that He is controlling and directing your life and your heart is filled with God's peace.

But over the years, perhaps because of fear of other people among whom you work or perhaps because of the insidious pressures of where you live and the temptations that come so strongly, you no longer give God His rightful place in your heart, in your home, in your ministry or in your plans. This can happen so easily and when it does, life loses its song, worship becomes embarrassing, ministry is a burden and fellowship with other believers is merely a pretence. But when the Lord Jesus has His rightful place then everything else falls into line. When He is ruling in your heart all your relationships begin to sort themselves out. The Bible takes on a new relevance. God's power is released and you can face life and the future again.

Many people are praying for each of you, by name and for the work of God in the land where He has placed you. There is an old hymn that we rarely sing anymore. Could it perhaps become a prayer that you could make your own?

In full and glad surrender
I give myself to thee,
Thine utterly and only
And evermore to be.

O Son of God who lovest me,
I will be thine alone,
And all I have and am Lord,
Shall henceforth be thine own.

Reign over me, Lord Jesus,
O make my heart thy throne.
It shall be thine, dear Saviour.
It shall be thine alone.

O come and reign, Lord Jesus.
Rule over everything!
And keep me always loyal
And true to thee, My King.