

Proximity Does Not Guarantee Inclusion

"Now when Jesus had entered Capernaum, a centurion came to Him, pleading with Him, saying, "Lord, my servant is lying at home paralyzed, dreadfully tormented." And Jesus said to him, "I will come and heal him." The centurion answered and said, "Lord, I am not worthy that You should come under my roof. But only speak a word, and my servant will be healed. "For I also am a man under authority, having soldiers under me. And I say to this [one], 'Go,' and he goes; and to another, 'Come,' and he comes; and to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does [it]." When Jesus heard [it], He marveled, and said to those who followed, "Assuredly, I say to you, I have not found such great faith, not even in Israel! "And I say to you that many will come from east and west, and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. "But the sons of the kingdom will be cast out into outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." Then Jesus said to the centurion, "Go your way; and as you have believed, [so] let it be done for you." And his servant was healed that same hour." (Matthew 8:5-13 NKJV)

This Gentile centurion had great faith as declared by our Lord. He did not need Jesus to come to his servant for he knew Jesus could heal from a distance. He did not have to touch the man to heal him.

This gave Jesus opportunity to teach a wonderful lesson, which is your proximity to the kingdom doesn't guarantee your entrance into the kingdom. Jesus said, "Many will come from east and west, and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. But the sons of the kingdom will be cast out into outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

There will be people from every tongue and every nation that inherit the kingdom. However, those who are sons of the kingdom, the Jews, will be cast out for their lack of faith. It is faith that allows one to sit at the King's table, faith alone.

This is true for you also. It matters not if you are a preacher, teacher, or layperson in the church. What matters is your faith in Jesus. Many make professions with their mouth. Some even preach and teach about the kingdom with great enthusiasm. However, they deny Christ with their actions.

A man may hate his neighbor, and pretend to love him. He might even convince himself that he cares for him by performing good deeds. Therefore, you need to ask yourself this question. If no one will ever know about the good deed, you are thinking of doing, would you still do it? Is your reward in heaven enough? Better yet, if there were no reward on earth or heaven, would you still do it just because it is right and loving?

The Pharisees loved to make a show of their religion. However, Jesus says they will be cast out into outer darkness, and the faithful centurion, who cared only about his servant, will sit with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven.

Father, peel away the false securities, and let each person see with great clarity their measure of faith. Have mercy on those who are near the kingdom, but not in the kingdom. Forgive us when we fail to pray for them. Renew our strength, and our resolve to teach truth whatever the cost knowing that we will be with you in eternity. Lord, sweep across this country with the purging fire of your Spirit melting the hearts of the indifferent, and setting the captives free, amen.