

THE CALL TO A HIGHER WORK.

Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men. "Admire," exclaims Chrysostom, "the dispensation of the Lord, how He draws each by the art that is most familiar to him. Says Dr. Donne, 'The Holy Ghost speaks in such forms and such phrases as may most work in them to whom He speaks.' The magicians or star-gazers are drawn to Christ by a star. To the woman by the well of Samaria He speaks of the water of life. To those who followed Him to Capernaum for meat, He spoke of spiritual food. To the fishermen of catching men."

The word signifies to catch them alive. "This shall be thy future occupation, to catch men for life eternal, instead of catching fish for death."—*Wordsworth.*

FORSAKING ALL.

They forsook all. They had therefore, something to leave, *Matt. 19: 27; Mark 1: 20.* "It was their all; and therefore, though it might have been but a few poor boats and nets, it was much. And the forsaking consists, not in the more or less that is forsaken, but the spirit in which it is left. These apostles might have left little when they left their possessions; but they left much, when they left their desires."—*Trenk.* They were called—so are we. They obeyed, shall we? Christ is worthy, 2 Cor. 5: 14, 15. It is our highest wisdom, Heb. 11: 26. To choose anything else in preference to Christ is the greatest folly, Mark 8: 36.

Aug. 11.—The Centurion's Faith.—Luke 7: 1-10. A. D. 28.

GOLDEN TEXT.

According to your faith so be it unto you. *Matt. 9: 29*

IN THE STUDY.

The order of events. Between the last lesson and this, the following among other incidents, find a place: the healing of the leprosy, *Mark 1: 41-45; Luke 4: 31-37*; the healing of Peter's wife's mother, *Matt. 8: 14-17; Mark 1: 29-34*. The healing of a leper, *Matt. 8: 24; Mark 1: 40-45*; the healing of the paralytic at Capernaum, *Mark 2: 1-12; Luke 5: 17-26*; the healing of the withered hand, *Matt. 9: 1-13*; the choice of the twelve, and the sermon on the mount, *Mark 3: 13-19; Matt. 5: 1-7*; the chapters, and *Luke 6: 20-49*.

The Centurion. A centurion was an officer of the Roman army, who had command of a *centuria* or company, varying in number from 50 to 100, according to the size of the legion; sixty companies or *centurie* making the legion of from 3,000 to 6,000. Cornelius, the first fruits of the Gentile world to Christianity was a centurion, *Acts 10: 2*; and with others of the same rank has honorable mention in the scriptures, *Acts 27, 43*. Polybius tells us, that centurions were chosen by merit, and were men of decision and energy.

The Servant. The word "servant" in the scriptures sometimes signifies one who voluntarily gives himself to the service of another, as Joshua to Moses, and Elisha to Elijah; but it usually signifies one who has hired himself to another, or has become his property for a limited time, either from debt, or theft, or as the price of his ransom from captivity, *Ex. 21: 7; Kings 4: 1; Ex. 22: 3*.

Roman slavery was comparatively unknown to the Jews until Palestine became a subject country; it was far more rigorous and cruel than the Jewish. The Romans purchased slaves, and held in bondage captives taken from their enemies; it was perpetual, while the master had absolute control over his servants or slaves, even to their lives. The word here used signifies such a slave.

Synagogue. Synagogues came into use after the captivity, and eventually became very numerous. Tradition says that there were no

less than 480 in Jerusalem before its subjection by the Romans. To build a synagogue was esteemed a deed of piety, and was greatly commended. "Perhaps when the traveller is sitting among the scattered *debris* of white marble which covers the blue bluff on which Tell Hum stands, he may be in the ruins of the actual building, which by its splendour attested the Centurion's liberal and kindly feelings towards the Jews, and which once rang with the echoes of the voice of Christ."—*Farrar.*

Elders were originally the heads of the families and the representatives of the nation, *Ex. 3: 16; 4: 29*. The elders in our lesson were probably the officers of the Jewish congregation at Capernaum. The word means *elder men* because old men were generally chosen. The term has been transferred to the Christian Church, and in this connection signifies the pastor in the sense of presiding officer or ruler, and refers not so much to age as official position.

The delegation to Jesus. Matthew gives us an account of the same incident, *Matt. 8: 7-13*; but it varies somewhat from the record in our lesson. He represents the centurion as coming in person, while Luke in our lesson tells us he sent messengers. It is not unusual for us to speak of things done by an agent as done by the person himself. Says Augustine in referring to this difference between Matthew and Luke. "One narrator saying that a person did this, does not contradict another who states more particularly that he did it by the agency and intervention of another. Does not our human custom furnish abundance of such instances? Could we expect the scriptures would speak with us otherwise than in our own manner?" Solomon built the temple, yet not he but the workmen.

IN THE CLASS.

Our lesson sets before us: 1st. Affection, vs. 1-3. 2nd. Friendship, vs. 4-5. 3rd. Humility, vs. 6-7. 4th. Faith, vs. 8-9. 5th. Salvation, vs. 10.

AFFECTION.

A certain centurion's servant who was dear unto him. This is the first remarkable thing about the centurion. The relations between master and servant were not such as to produce under ordinary circumstances very much love. Slaves were frequently treated with the greatest cruelty, beaten, maimed, and even put to death for trivial offences; but here was a man who loved his slave, and who was doubtless loved in return. There must therefore have been between these, so far apart in social condition, not contempt on the one hand, and hatred and fear on the other; but kindly care for the happiness and welfare of his slave on the part of the centurion, and faithful service and regard for his master's interests by the slave. Such will ever produce affection; and such ought ever to be our relations as masters and servants. *Col. 3: 22-24; 4: 1; Eph. 6: 5-9*. Very much of the unhappiness between masters and servants and slaves and maids may be traced to selfishness and unchristian tempers.

FRIENDSHIP.

They besought him instantly—that is with importunity. He was worthy, such was their opinion of him, not his of himself. For he loveth our nation—an unusual thing, for the Romans despised and hated the Jews, *Acts 18: 14-16*. "This noble Roman pitied the fallen fortunes of a great people." Here we have two most remarkable things: 1st. That this centurion should regard so highly a despised and subject people; and 2nd. That this people who so hated their conquerors, should love the very one who was there in command of a portion of the army of occupation for the purpose of keeping them in subjection. A signal instance of how kindness may overcome prejudice, and how shadowy personal enmities may be blotted out by friendship did

not spend itself in words, or even courtesies, but manifested itself in substantial deeds. In the beneficence of and honors bestowed on a Peabody, we have an instance of how a nation can appreciate the good will and munificence of a foreigner. "It matters not where our lot may be cast, by love we can win love, enemies we can make friends."

HUMILITY.

I am not worthy that thou shouldst enter under my roof. The greatest man in Capernaum was no high estimate of Jesus, the prophet of the Lord, and so lowly an estimate of himself. And so it is with everyone who has been enlightened as to his state by nature, and the character and nature of Jesus. Compare *Luke 18: 10-14; Prov. 25: 33 and 16: 18*. "Counting himself unworthy that Christ should enter into his doors, he was counted worthy that Christ should enter his heart."—*Augustine.*

FAITH.

Say in a word and my servant shall be healed. A recognition of the omnipotence and omniscience of Jesus—not the presence, nor the touch, nor even the glance of the Lord—His word alone was sufficient. For I also—the argument of faith; having believed that Jesus had all power, it was but natural that he should reason thus. His own submission to the authority above him, and his absolute authority over those beneath him, gave him an illustration of the command Jesus had over the invisible armies of heaven, and the forces of nature. If he by his word could have anything within his sphere performed, could not Jesus, the Son of God by a word raise this servant? So believed the centurion. "By the help of an analogy drawn from the circle of things with which he himself is most familiar, he makes easier to himself his sphere of faith."—*Trenk.* Faith is a reasonable thing. The moment we receive the truth of the divine power of the Lord Jesus, and the completeness of his atonement, all things are possible.

When Jesus heard these things he marvelled. Twice do we read of Jesus marveling: Once at the unbelief of the Jews, *Mark 6: 6*; and once at the faith of the centurion; at their unbelief who had so much reason to believe, and at his belief from whom it would be least expected, a Gentile—one outside of the covenant of privilege, a heathen, and until lately most probably an idolater. The more we know, the less we marvel: how great the unbelief, how great the faith, that could surprise Jesus! How much more reason have we to believe in Jesus than this man! Is our faith as great, or less?

SALVATION.

And they * * * found the servant whole. As he believed Christ was able to perform and as he besought him to do, so it was: salvation from death to the servant, spiritual life to himself. *Ph. 107: 20. Matt. 8: 10-12*. Unbelief will shut us out from all spiritual blessings; but believing faith, faith in Jesus, will admit us to all on earth and all in heaven—spiritual health, life eternal, the great feast with Abraham Isaac and Jacob in heaven. Pardon, peace, holiness and heaven are ours when we come to Jesus in simple faith, in his all embracing love and his supreme authority.—*John 6: 37.*

Aug. 18.—The Widow of Nain.—Luke 7: 11-17. A. D. 28.

GOLDEN TEXT.

And when the Lord saw her He had compassion on her, and said unto her, weep not, v. 13.

IN THE STUDY.

The time. The event that we are to study in our lesson to-day, occurred the day after the