

## Sabbath School Lessons.

*December 30th.*

### HEALING OF THE CENTURION'S SERVANT.—MATT. VIII. 5-13.

I. When Jesus was entered into Capernaum, he was met by a Centurion who respectfully laid before him the case of his servant, "Lord my servant lieth at home sick of the palsy, grievously tormented," v. 5, 6. The suppliant of our Lord was a centurion, that is, a subaltern officer in the Roman army, and himself a Roman. Being an officer in the army of the conquerors of Jerusalem, he was, doubtless, a person of great influence and importance there. He was probably commander-in-chief of the Roman garrison. Yet looking with the keen eye of faith through all the meanness and obscurity of our Lord's external circumstances, the centurion saw in Him a prophet, and more than a prophet.—He addressed Jesus as Lord, recognizing his universal sovereignty. It was not for himself, but on behalf of his servant, that he interceded with Christ. Others brought their friends and relations, this man brought before him the case of his servant. This Roman officer was not like some who, when their servants are unable from sickness to do their work, immediately dismiss them. The centurion was a kind and loving master. His was that faith which "worketh by love."—The servant could not have more earnestly pleaded for his master than the master for his servant.

II. The Lord Jesus prevented the centurion's request. No sooner was the case of the servant laid before him than he promptly replied, "I will come and heal him," v. 7.—This was far more than the centurion intended to ask. Thus the Lord answers the prayers of his believing people exceeding abundantly above all that they can ask, or even think, Eph. iii. 20. How condescending is the Lord! He would not visit the sick child of the nobleman when insisted upon to do so, John iv. 47-49; but at once proffers to go and heal the poor servant. His favours are not confined to the rich and the great, but are also extended to the poor.

III. This gracious condescension of the Lord, instead of exalting the pious centurion, only made him more deeply humble. "Lord," said he, "I am not worthy that thou shouldst come under my roof; but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed." Regarding Christ as the Almighty and Omniscient God, the centurion could see no necessity for such marvellous condescension as that the Lord should deign, personally, to enter his unworthy roof. He considered the laws of nature and

all diseases to be as much the servants of Jesus as the soldiers placed under his command were of himself. Let us learn from this ancient Roman worthy, the lesson that diseases are but the ministers of our gracious Saviour, sent upon his people to purify and sanctify them, and can only extend so far, and continue so long, as he permits.

IV. "When Jesus heard it he marvelled," v. 10; not as though he knew not his suppliant's faith till it was thus manifested, for wherever faith exists though it be but as a mustard seed it is known unto him, it is his own gracious gift, Eph. ii. 8; but to show the high estimation in which he holds the graces of his people. And were not the human taste naturally perverted, the works of nature, however stupendous, and the works of providence however remarkable, would not elicit our admiration so much as the graces of the humble follower of Jesus.

V. Upon the faith of the centurion the Lord was pleased to bestow the highest commendation, "I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel," v. 10. And as it was then, even so, is it to be feared, it is now. Not always they who enjoy the greatest privileges are the most eminent for gracious attainments. Though a Gentile by nature, yet was the centurion a true son of Abraham, having obtained like precious faith, Rom. iv. 11.

VI. Our Lord was pleased to answer the prayer of the centurion with an expression of his gracious purposes regarding the Gentiles generally, "Many shall come from the east and west," &c., v. 11. "Shall sit down," shall sit down as in a place of rest, Rev. xiv. 13, shall sit down as to a banquet, Isa. xxv. 6. Psal. xvi. 11. "But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness" in this world, on account of their sins, and cast into a state of still greater darkness afterwards in hell. There shall the wicked weep at lost opportunities, and gnash their teeth, being full of indignation against God and of hatred and malice towards them that are saved, v. 12.

VII. The petition of the centurion was granted. He found Christ as he had believed him to be, both able and willing, by a word, by a mere volition, to heal his servant, v. 13. Thus did our Lord show forth a truth which has been most abundantly evidenced since his resurrection, that in every nation he that feareth God and worketh righteousness is accepted of him, Acts x. 35.

Learn 1. That the Lord is omnipotent and omnipresent, Matt. xix. 26. Prov. xv. 3.

2. That the Lord hears and answers believing prayer, Isa. lxv. 24.

3. That the Lord is no respecter of persons, Rom. ii. 11. Eph. vi. 9. Col. iii. 25.