



The Bible Corner

Cindy Cottone

A Story of Faith

"Felix, you must get some sleep. We've done everything we can for the boy," Claudia said sadly.

"And still he isn't any better. I'll just stay a few more minutes," Felix answered without taking his eyes off Hermas. "Maybe his fever will break tonight."

Claudia turned away slowly. How could she tell her husband that it was no use? Deep in her heart she knew that Hermas was dying. If only she could have had a child, then Felix wouldn't be taking this so badly. To everyone else, Hermas was just a Greek servant in their household. But to her and Felix, he was as close to them as their own son. She had felt it ever since the day the little baby had been left on their doorstep in a basket.

"It's a miracle!" Felix had cried joyfully. "Claudia, the gods have smiled on us. We have a son at last!"

Perhaps the baby's poor mother had thought her son would have a better life in the household of a Roman army captain. From the very beginning, it had been clear that Hermas was special. He was a gifted child and had learned easily. Often when Felix had come home, Hermas would play the flute for him. No wonder Felix loved the boy so much.

Hermas worshipped the very ground that Felix walked on. All he talked about was being a soldier in the Roman army some day. Felix knew that this could never be, but still he loved Hermas more each day.

The next day, Hermas was no better. The pain was so bad that he was nearly unconscious.

"Claudia, I must go now. Maybe I can find a doctor who will be able to make Hermas well."

As she watched her husband leave, Claudia uttered a prayer. Surely the gods would look kindly on this man. He had worked hard as a soldier, and in a

short time, he had been promoted to captain of the Roman army in Capernaum. And he had always tried to be a fair man, too. There were those who thought the Jews should be forced out of the area. But Felix saw no reason why the Jews couldn't live in peace here under Roman rule. They paid their taxes to Caesar just like every other Roman subject.

Still, Claudia worried. Sometimes she thought her husband went too far with his sympathies. He'd even given money to these Jews to help build their synagogue. What would the officials in Rome think of his generosity if they knew?

Felix was nearly in town when he saw Linus, one of his soldiers, on the same road. Linus was a fine soldier with good military sense. He'd advance quickly in the Roman army. He reminded Felix of himself when he had been that age. Linus had been over to Felix and Claudia's house several times for dinner.

"Good morning, sir," Linus called. "Is something wrong? You look ill. May I do something for you?"

"I don't think there is anything that anyone can do," Felix sobbed. "Hermas is dying. I don't know which way to turn. I know it's probably hard for you to understand. But Claudia and I never had any children of our own. We raised Hermas like our own."

Linus looked at Felix. He had never seen him in such a state. Maybe Felix would listen to what he had to say.

"Have you heard of the man Jesus?" Linus asked. "The people talk of nothing else lately."

Felix thought for a moment and answered, "We've been told that this Jesus is a dangerous man who might try to overthrow the government. I think he's some kind of religious fanatic. He's a Jew, yet I hear that even his own people are suspicious of him."

"I've been to see Him!" Linus blurted out. "And I tell you, Felix, there is something to this Jesus. The blind see, the deaf hear! People from as far away as Syria are coming to hear Him speak."

"But just who is this man Jesus?" Felix asked.

"Some say He is a prophet. Others say He is the long-awaited Messiah — the Son of God himself!" Linus continued in excitement.

Felix watched as this young man spoke. Jesus really seemed to have some kind of hold on him.

"And Felix, there is even talk that Jesus has brought the dead back to life again!" Linus added.

Felix was stunned. Maybe this Jesus could help Hermas. If he could get Jesus to come and see the boy, there might still be a chance after all.

"Where can I find this Jesus?" Felix asked suddenly.

"I hear that He is preaching at Capernaum today," Linus answered.

As Felix continued toward Capernaum, he began to wonder just how he would know Jesus when he saw Him. What would a man with this strange power to heal look like? Probably like a Roman general who was able to lead his troops into fierce battle against the enemy. Surely this Jesus would be a tall, powerful-looking man.

Before Felix had even reached the center of town, he saw the huge crowd. They were listening very carefully to someone, and Felix went closer to catch a glimpse of the man who spoke.

"Why, this can't possibly be Jesus," Felix said half to himself.

This man was thin, and his voice was gentle — certainly not loud enough to command an army. He looked tired and overworked. Linus must have been mistaken. Felix turned to leave. At that moment, Jesus looked right at him as if he knew somehow.

"His eyes are so kind. They seem to penetrate my very soul," Felix thought. He knew then that he must speak to Jesus. Jesus would understand everything.

"Sir," he began, "I have heard of all the good you have done. My servant boy is very sick. But don't inconvenience yourself by coming to my house. Just say the word and I know he will be healed. I myself have authority over soldiers. I need only to give them the

order to go, and they go. If you will just say, 'Be healed,' I know that my servant will be well again."

Jesus turned to the crowd and said, "I haven't seen faith like this in all of Israel."

Then Jesus turned back to Felix and said, "Go home now. Because you have believed, this shall be done for you."

Felix felt a strange sense of peace as he walked along the road home. He had never met anyone in his whole life like Jesus. Surely this man was the Son of God! And Felix knew that his life would never again be the same. He was still pondering these things when he saw Claudia running to meet him.

"Felix, he's better! Hermas has been healed! He's asking for you," Claudia cried.

"I know," Felix said. "I know." Hermas had been healed at the exact hour that Jesus had said the words. And from that day forward, Felix and his whole household believed in Jesus.

For discussion:

- 1) What kinds of things were the people saying about Jesus throughout Capernaum?
- 2) Did the Roman army captain believe in the one true God before he met Jesus?
- 3) What did Felix expect Jesus to look like? What did Jesus really look like?
- 4) Why did Jesus heal the captain's servant? What did the army captain then know about Jesus?
- 5) Where in the Mass do we hear part of the statement made by the captain to Jesus? (Hint: "Lord, I am not worthy to receive You, but only say the word and my soul will be healed.")

For Lent:

Linus told Felix all about Jesus. Today we call this being a witness to others about our faith in Jesus. How can our words and actions tell others about our faith in Jesus?

For further reading:

- 1) The story of the cure of the Roman captain's servant is found in the gospel of Matthew, Chapter 8:5-13, and in the gospel of Luke, Chapter 7:1-10.
- 2) Some of the other healing miracles of Jesus are found in the gospel of Matthew in Chapter 9.
- 3) Read also in the gospel of Matthew, Chapter 17:14-20, why Jesus told his apostles they were not able to cure the man's son.

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