

Mark 15:39: And when the centurion, which stood over against him [facing Jesus], saw that he so cried out, and gave up the ghost [died], he said, Truly this man was the Son of God.

1. Introduction

- a. Think about the sacrifice of Jesus & its meaning
- b. Centurion saw the drama of:
 - i. Jesus' trial and the crowd calling for His death,
 - ii. The unjust condemnation,
 - iii. Jesus' merciless beating and mocking,
 - iv. Jesus forced to carry His own cross to His place of execution, and
 - v. The 3 persons dying on the crosses
- c. Three gospels tell the story of the centurion [an officer in charge of 100 soldiers] in command of the executions

Matthew 27:54: Now when the centurion, and they that were with him [the soldiers under his authority], watching Jesus, saw the earthquake, and those things that were done, they feared greatly, saying, Truly this was the Son of God.

Luke 23:47: Now when the centurion saw what was done, he glorified God, saying, Certainly this was a righteous man.

2. Work of the Centurion

- a. Centurion of Capernaum (an example of what these men do)
 - i. Supervised soldiers
 - ii. Sometimes in charge of building canals, roads, buildings
 - iii. Served community by building synagogue *Luke 7:5*
 - iv. Jewish elders testified that he was a man who loved Israel *Luke 7:5*
 - v. He believed that Jesus was a person in authority to heal his servant *Luke 7:8*
- b. Commander
 - i. Man of authority
 - Centurion commanded a Roman Centuria (about 100 men; the basic unit of Roman army)
 - His orders were to be carried out immediately by his soldiers/subordinates
 - ii. Man of loyalty
 - Served under governors appointed by Caesar
 - Often supervised civil service projects in peace time, such as road builders

- iii. Man of faithfulness
 - He could be made a slave or executed for not obeying the orders of his superiors
 - Often served for 20 years
 - Could earn Roman citizenship for their service
3. Witness of the Centurion
- a. Saw the person of Jesus in the events of that day
 - i. Jesus' trial and the events of the crucifixion
 - ii. Above Jesus' head was Pilate's sign (John 19:19)
 - iii. Heard the two thieves conversation about Jesus' innocence (Luke 23:39-41)
 - iv. Saw the darkness for 3 hours at midday (Luke 23:44)
 - v. Felt the massive earthquake (Matt 27:51, 54)
 - vi. Heard Jesus' final cry before dying (Mark 15:34, 37)
 - b. Saw Jesus' heart of love
 - i. Saw Jesus' love for the soldiers in forgiving them (Luke 23:33-34)
 - ii. Saw Jesus' love for His mother (John 19: 26-27)
 - c. Saw Jesus' bloody journey
 - i. Jesus was beaten, whipped, ridiculed, & crucified
 - ii. John 19:33-34 – Roman soldiers pierced Jesus' side, then out poured blood & water, showing His death of a broken heart¹
 - d. Saw price Jesus paid
 - i. English word "excrutiating" from the Latin meaning pain from "from the cross"
 - ii. We have communion bread to remember Jesus' broken flesh
 - iii. We have communion grape juice to remember Jesus shed blood
4. Will of the Centurion
- a. His declaration
 - i. "Truly" – this man had seen many crucifixions, but Jesus' responses were innocent and accepting of His fate.
 - ii. "This man was the Son of God" – not simply a righteous man, but a man who could be concerned for others as he faced His own painful death
 - b. The decision
 - i. He chose to believe in the man on the cross (even before His resurrection)
 - ii. John 19:35-37 – John was witness to the soldiers' actions, and wrote it down that we also may believe it.

¹ The 'Blood and Water' remark by the Apostle John is proof of the death of Christ being due to the "rupture of the heart." The blood flowing through the rupture into the pericardium of the heart soon separates into the red clot (blood) and the limpid serum (water). This accumulation in the heart-sac was released by the spear-thrust of the soldier proving the real cause of death: a heart broken over the sin of the world which had been placed on Him.