

## JESUS HEALS AN OFFICIAL'S SON

John 4:43-54, Key Verse: 4:50

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(The Second Sign—How Faith Grows)

“Jesus replied, ‘You may go. Your son will live.’ The man took Jesus at his word and departed.”

In the last passage we learned that Jesus Christ is the Savior of the world. Jesus led a Samaritan woman from the darkness of sin into the heavenly sunlight of forgiveness and new life. Through her, an entire village came to Jesus. After two days of Bible study they said, “This man really is the Savior of the world.” Jesus saves us from our sins, and sin is the real problem of all mankind. May God help us to believe and proclaim Jesus’ saving grace on each campus in the Chicago area.

In today’s passage Jesus heals a royal official’s son. John calls this the second miraculous sign in his gospel. In doing so, John passes over the miracles that Jesus did in Jerusalem. John saw the point of Jesus’ miraculous signs. He includes this event, unique in the gospels, to show us how to have saving faith. It is to believe Jesus’ word of promise until we experience the power of God. Today let’s learn from our Lord Jesus Christ how to have saving faith.

First, miracle-seeking faith does not please Jesus (43-45).

Verse 43 says, “After the two days he left for Galilee.” Jesus spent two days in Samaria at the urging of the native people. Jesus taught the word of God to them intensively. Jesus taught that God is the Creator of the heavens and the earth and he made man in his own image as the ruler of the world. Jesus taught that through one man Adam’s disobedience sin entered the world and enslaved all men, with the final consequence being death and eternal punishment. Jesus taught the promise of God to send a Savior and the world salvation plan of God. Jesus taught that God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. As the Samaritan people listened to Jesus’ words, their souls were released from all kinds of bondage and they were free. They had such a great joy that two days passed by without notice. They were not tired or hungry at all, but full of spiritual strength. When they believed the word of Jesus simply, they were saved. They loved Jesus. They wanted Jesus to stay with them forever. Probably Jesus wanted to stay with them, too. But after two days he resumed his journey and went to Galilee.

Look at verse 44. “(Now Jesus himself had pointed out that a prophet has no honor in his own country.)” Jesus knew that the spiritual atmosphere in Galilee, his home country, would be different from that in Samaria. He had to prepare his own mind and the mind of his disciples for the change. Look at verse 45. “When he arrived in Galilee, the Galileans welcomed him. They had seen all that he had done in Jerusalem at the Passover Feast, for they also had been there.” Jesus’ welcome in Galilee was enthusiastic. But it was based on the fact that he had performed miracles in Jerusalem. Galileans did not welcome Jesus as the Messiah, the Savior of the world. They welcomed Jesus as a miracle-worker. Maybe they prepared big signs that read, “Welcome, Jesus the Miracle Worker, Galilean Hero.” Probably local newspapers advertised what Jesus had done in Jerusalem. But this did not please Jesus. Jesus did not want to be welcomed as a miracle worker. Jesus wanted people to honor God’s word through him. But they wanted to see a miracle. After seeing a miracle, they would likely go away and talk about it as if they had been to the theater. This would not save their souls. This would not lead them to eternal life. Miracle-seeking people are usually proud of themselves, thinking they are a little better than atheists. However, miracle-seeking faith does not please Jesus.

In America today, under the influence of pragmatism, there are so many miracle-seeking people. They do not study the Bible or pray sincerely. They ignore the law of God. But when a problem comes, they demand a miracle from Jesus. If they don’t get it, they harden their hearts. They do not want a relationship with Jesus. They only want to get something. What did Jesus do with such people?

Second, “Unless you see miraculous signs and wonders...” (46-48).

Look at verse 46a. Jesus visited Cana in Galilee where he had turned the water into wine. It was Jesus’ first miraculous sign and, after seeing it, the disciples had put their faith in Jesus. The people of Cana were blessed. They should have accepted Jesus as the Messiah and honored his word as the word of God. They should have repented of their petty desires and had a vision of world salvation. They should have been praying to go as missionaries to spread the good news to all people. But they were unchanged. They went about their routines of life as though nothing had happened.

Look at verse 46b. About twenty miles to the west of Cana, in Capernaum, there was a royal official whose son was sick. He was a man of authority who had connections. He influenced hiring and firing, and how tax dollars were used. He had many servants who were ready to do whatever he commanded. He was also a wealthy man. He was accustomed to being treated with respect.

However, one day a problem arose that made him helpless. His son got sick, so sick that it seemed he would die. Like any normal father, he did everything he could to help his son get well. He must have brought the royal physicians one by one to examine and treat his son. When none of them could help, he tried herb medicine; next, acupuncture. But nothing worked. In a recent movie, “John Q,” a working man’s son suddenly became sick and needed a heart transplant. His poor father had no way to pay for it since he had lost his health insurance. The father applied for every kind of special funding and public aid, but was turned down again and again. In desperation, he sold his furniture, his truck, finally their wedding rings. Church members donated generously to him. Still he was far short in raising money. When the hospital was about to give up, he took over the hospital by force and coerced a specialist to do the transplant. He offered his own heart to his son. It expresses a father’s love for his sick son. However, the royal official’s son was getting worse. He became more pale; his breathing weakened to a whisper; he was close to death.

Look at verse 47. “When this man heard that Jesus had arrived in Galilee from Judea, he went to him and begged him to come and heal his son, who was close to death.” When he heard that Jesus had come back from Judea, his eyes brightened and new hope was kindled in his heart. He left Capernaum at once to visit Jesus. He did not send his servants to do this, but made the trip himself. When he came to Jesus, he begged him with all his heart to come and heal his son. He must have gotten down on his knees, folded his hands together, and pleaded with many tears for Jesus’ mercy to heal his dying son.

How did Jesus respond? Look at verse 48. “‘Unless you people see miraculous signs and wonders,’ Jesus told him, ‘you will never believe.’” Jesus’ answer is surprising. Jesus did not address this man as a unique individual. Jesus called him “you people.” Jesus saw him as a representative man of his times who had a miracle-seeking mentality. Jesus did not see this man as a father whose son was dying. To Jesus, he had a more urgent problem. It was a faith problem. To Jesus, the father’s spiritual condition was more important than his son’s illness. When we bring a problem to Jesus, we usually expect Jesus to deal with the problem according to our request. But Jesus is not like a vending machine that dispenses blessings according to the number of prayers we put in. Jesus is God. To Jesus, our relationship with him is more important than the problem at hand. We bring a problem, but Jesus wants us. Moreover, Jesus does not solve one person’s problem just for his own sake. Jesus wanted to help all the miracle-seeking Galilean people through this one man. So Jesus said, “Unless you people see miraculous signs and wonders, you will never believe.”

When Jesus said, “you will never believe,” it meant that the man did not believe in Jesus as he should. Those who come to Jesus only when they have a problem are virtually unbelieving. When we believe in God, we must believe in the living God and have a personal relationship with him. We must daily pray to him, listen to his word, and obey it. But this man came to Jesus only when he had a problem. Jesus rebuked him. This must have surprised everyone, including the father. Still, Jesus was not refusing to help. Jesus was willing to help this man.

Third, “Your son will live” (49-53).

Though he was rebuked by Jesus, this man did not close his heart to Jesus. He perceived that Jesus' word of rebuke also carried hope. He did not mind being rebuked by Jesus, if only his son could be healed. Look at verse 49. "The royal official said, 'Sir, come down before my child dies.'" He called Jesus, "Sir." Respect for Jesus grew in his heart. Until now, he had seen Jesus as the solution to his personal problem. But he is beginning to realize that Jesus is more than a man. However, his dying son still consumed his heart. He urged Jesus to come quickly.

How did Jesus answer? Look at verse 50a. "Jesus replied, 'You may go. Your son will live.'" Jesus did not agree to go with him. Jesus did not show him anything visible. Jesus simply said, "You may go. Your son will live." When Jesus said this, spiritual power went out from Jesus. It was the power of the word of God, the same power that created the heavens and the earth, and the same power that can give life to the dead. Jesus spoke to the royal official as a king speaks to his subject. The royal official was familiar with this language, for he heard it at court. He was overwhelmed by Jesus' spiritual authority.

Verse 50b says, "The man took Jesus at his word and departed." The man realized that Jesus' word had great power. He could not say anything in Jesus' presence. He could not open his mouth at all. He simply took Jesus at his word and departed. His son's life was at stake. Yet this man responded to Jesus' word with faith and obedience. This is what God really wants us to do. When we take Jesus at his word, we acknowledge him as God. We begin a personal relationship with him. We begin to live by faith and not by sight. We begin to live by the word of God and not by our own human ideas.

Still, after leaving Jesus, the man must have struggled. Another voice began to whisper in his ear. "He doesn't care about you or your son. He didn't even spend five minutes with you. How can you just walk away like that?" As this conflict arose, it was not easy to take one step in the direction of Capernaum. But the power of Jesus' word was working in him, "Your son will live." He held on to Jesus' word and took one step. Then he took another step. Step by step he made his way, holding Jesus' word, "Your son will live." He struggled like this through one afternoon and evening, and then throughout the night and into the following day. What happened?

Look at verse 51. "While he was still on the way, his servants met him with the news that his boy was living." The next day he saw his servants on the road. They were smiling and joyful. They gave him the good news that his boy was living. Perhaps the man felt like jumping for joy. But he did not allow his emotions, even his joy, to carry him away. First, he inquired as to the time when his son got better. This is a striking fact. He wanted to verify that Jesus' word had healed his son. Sometimes people ask God for something and then forget that they asked. When God answers, they do not recognize answered prayer. They think it is a coincidence. One young man felt God never answered his prayer. Then, by chance, he reviewed his weekly Bible testimonies over a one-year period. He found again and again that the prayer he offered one week was often answered the next week. Yet he was not aware of it until he reviewed a year of testimonies in one sitting. This father was different. He struggled with God's word moment by moment. He was thinking more about Jesus' word than about his son's healing. He was learning how to live according to Jesus' word as his lifestyle. When we have this kind of attitude toward Jesus' word, we can grow in faith.

The servants answered, "The fever left him yesterday at the seventh hour." "Then the father realized that this was the exact time at which Jesus had said to him, 'Your son will live.' So he and all his household believed" (53). His son was healed at the exact time Jesus said, "Your son will live." The father understood that Jesus' word had healed his son. He learned that Jesus is the Son of God who has the power to give life. Those who do not experience God's work through his word remain relativistic and spiritually blind. They feel the world is chaotic and life is insignificant. But the one who experiences the power of Jesus' word knows that God rules the world for his good purpose. He can see the kingdom of God and the value of his own life.

When the father believed, he gained eternal life as a gift from Jesus. He also led all of his household to Christ, including his son. Now, his son was not only healed physically, but he believed the word of Jesus and had eternal life. Jesus wants us to have faith that gives eternal life and the kingdom of God. To have this kind of faith we must receive Jesus' training. We must accept Jesus' rebuking of our miracle-seeking mentality. We must take Jesus at his word in daily struggle, even when the stakes are high.

Some must take Jesus at his word for the healing of their sheep or children. Though our loved one looks sick and almost dead, we must hold Jesus' word, "Your son will live." Missionary Daniel Sohn has prayed for his son Danny for the last eight years. Many times it seemed that Danny was not getting better. He seemed like a dead man. But his father held the word of God and prayed. God worked in various ways, through various people to bring him back to life. Now he has a new life in Christ and is preparing to go to China as a short-term missionary.

Some must take Jesus at his word for their future security. Matthew 6:33 says, "But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well." Even though future security is at stake, we must seek Jesus' kingdom and righteousness first. Missionary Joshua Jung made a small decision of faith to serve the 2004 MSU Conference full-time, even though he urgently needed a job to support his family. He sacrificed his time and worked very hard to serve the conference. Then God provided for his family and also granted him a job after the conference. The most wonderful thing is that Missionary Joshua grew in faith by taking Jesus at his word.

Most of all, we must take Jesus at his word that he gives us the forgiveness of sins and eternal life. John 3:16 says, "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." We have eternal life in Jesus. Therefore, we can invest our lives fully in Jesus' world mission task to establish a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. Let's take Jesus at his word until we experience the power of God in our daily lives.