

WE HAVE SEEN HIS GLORY

The Power of One Word

INTRODUCTION

Many of us parents know that unequalled, unparalleled panic that we feel when our child is missing. We felt that through the prayer chain when Rick and Leona's grandchild was missing. We feel that horror when a child has their first major fall or injury. But only those who have been there; only those who have sat with their child; only those who have looked at the deathly, dying anguish of their little one, can know the incomparable pain of seeing your child deathly ill. It's an occasion that none of us would wish on anyone.

Jesus met such a man. His nobility. His social standing. His governmental influence. His wealth and his power meant nothing to him except one thing as he spoke to Jesus: "Sir, come down before my child dies."¹

TEXT: John 4:46–54 (ESV)

CONTEXT

Jesus had left Judea and was *en route* back to Galilee. He went through Samaria and met the woman at the well. His journey now continued to Galilee. John records that Jesus is entering a unreceptive environment. "*(For Jesus himself had testified that a prophet has no honor in his own hometown.)*" (John 4:44, ESV). But after hearing what Jesus had done in Jerusalem² there was an air of expectation in the crowds.

It was in that context that "an official" (NIV: a "royal official") a man (We do not know whether a Jew or Gentile) was serving the ruler of Galilee on behalf of Rome, came out to meet Jesus "and asked him to come down and heal his son, for he was at the point of death."³ Jesus speaking to the crowd (for the "you" is plural in the Greek) chastens them because he knew their hearts and he knew that they only would believe based on viewing "signs and wonders". The use of miracles is an interesting topic in the New Testament. It seems that a concise understanding of miracles could be stated this way: Miracles cannot initiate or induce faith; but miracles can encourage faith. It is likely that Christ's criticism of the Galilean crowds is that they thought seeing the miracles would in themselves bring about faith. Not so!

¹ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Jn 4:49). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

² "*Now when he was in Jerusalem at the Passover Feast, many believed in his name when they saw the signs that he was doing.*" (John 2:23, ESV)

³ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Jn 4:47). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

The pleading of the father pushes our Savior to ignore the crowds and on the basis of His word alone, says, “Go; your son will live.”⁴ As the father is going home, he is greeted with the good news, “that his son was recovering.”⁵ Now the father asks an interesting question recorded in John 4:52 (ESV):

⁵² *So he asked them the hour when he began to get better, and they said to him, “Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him.”*

What was the importance of the seventh hour? *“The father knew that was the hour when Jesus had said to him, “Your son will live” . . . (John 4:53a, ESV). What was the result of this knowledge? “. . . And he himself believed, and all his household.” (John 4:53b, ESV).*

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

At this point we must always remember who John is writing his Gospel to. He is writing to 2nd generation Jews (and probably some Gentiles) who live in Asia Minor, some 40-50 years after Christ; some 20 years after the destruction of Jerusalem. They had no first-hand knowledge of Jesus and John is writing to them “so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.”⁶ Belief or faith is the key idea in this Gospel. And John is convinced that this belief comes through seeing the glory of God in the face of Jesus.

THREE IMPORTANT TRUTHS ABOUT FAITH

1. Faith is not a spiritual interest or fascinating enquiry. Faith is a commitment.

I asked myself the question, “Why did John include the attitude and the rebuke of Jesus to the Galilean crowd with this story of the nobleman?” I believe it is to show us a comparison. Spiritual phenomenon, unique spiritual fascinations, bizarre and mysterious happenings can inspire intrigue, interest, even a sort of awe-dropping enquiry – but they will not, cannot, do not produce faith in Jesus Christ. Faith is a commitment. Faith is acting upon what you know to be true. Faith is believing a promise and acting on it. We read: *“Jesus said to him, “Go; your son will live.” The man believed the word that Jesus spoke to him and went on his way.” (John 4:50, ESV). “Faith is leaving our problem with Christ, accepting His Word, and going on our way.”⁷ Let me say at this point that this man’s faith, like ours, needs to grow; it needs to develop and be encouraged. But this is raw, undiminished, honest, Christ-exalting, God believing faith. He believed the promise and he acted accordingly.*

There’s a parallel here with James chapter 2. My paraphrase: “You say you have faith? Show me.”

2. Faith is not an emotional feeling but an informed fact.

⁴ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Jn 4:50). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

⁵ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Jn 4:51). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

⁶ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Jn 20:31). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

⁷ Hindson, E. E., & Kroll, W. M. (Eds.). (1994). [KJV Bible Commentary](#) (p. 2087). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

How many times we hear, “Faith is a blind leap into the unknown.” How far from the truth that is. Faith is based upon facts. The only fact that we may have is that a sovereign, un-lying, holy and true God has said it, but it’s still a fact. Paul was to write, “*So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ*” (Romans 10:17, ESV).

This nobleman heard the word of Christ. “Go; your son will live.” That all that faith needs. If God said it, it’s done. The older theologians in Latin would call it *dictum factum*. Even if you don’t know Latin you can get the sense. God said it (dictum) and it’s done (factum).

Faith is not based upon an emotional feeling. Faith is not produced by goose-bumps. Faith is not produced by a happy state of mind. Faith is produced by a promise. It’s not a leap into the dark. It’s a decision – a response – to a promise.

3. Faith is not stagnant, faith is a progression

This nobleman believed Christ and went home. On the way something else happened. He heard confirmation that his son was getting better, and he learned that the change occurred at the exact time that Jesus said, “Your son will live.” Then John records “And he himself believed.” This served to strengthen the nobleman’s faith and, as a result, the “whole household” believed. The late Dr. Grant Osborne helps us see the point:

“Note the progression of faith: the royal official originally had an inadequate faith based entirely on reports about the wondrous signs (4:48). After he encountered Jesus, he found a preliminary faith and obeyed him, heading for Capernaum (4:50). Finally, after the report that his son had been healed and his life spared, he and his entire family experienced a full-fledged faith in Jesus’ person as well as his powerful works.”⁸

The neat thing about this story is the impact of this father’s faith on his own family. This would make a great Father’s Day sermon!

APPLICATION

I want to suggest three points of application based upon this story.

#1. The powerful impact of a saved daddy. Here we have a story of a daddy that loved his child so much that he would do anything, risk anything in desperate love to get help for his sick child. Here was also a daddy that come face-to-face with the astonishing power of Christ. Here is a daddy that made a faith commitment that seemingly transformed his life and the life of his whole family. We see the power of a faith-trusting, faith-obeying, faith-driven, father.

⁸ Osborne, G. R. (2018). [John: Verse by Verse](#). (J. Reimer, E. Ritzema, D. Thevenaz, & R. Brant, Eds.) (p. 119). Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

#2. We see illustrated the reality of biblical faith in Jesus Christ. Let's think of faith in terms of marriage. One author wrote that someone asked him, "How do you know your married?" Of course, he could have produced a marriage certificate and maybe his friend will say, "But that was written years ago." Maybe he could have shown some pictures or even pointed to a wedding ring. But author wrote, "None of those things prove I'm married." His answer was insightful. He said, "The real way I know I'm married is because I go home each night to my wife. She gives me a kiss, we spend the evening wrangling kids together, collapse into bed, and wake up to start again the next day. I know I'm married because every day I live out my marriage."

I could ask the same question of you and I. How do you know you have faith in Jesus? I hope our answer is because I live out my faith every day.

#3. We mustn't miss the glory! "The healing of the nobleman's son is just one more glimpse of the person of Christ, the person who, by His command, by His very word, brings life out of death, safety out of danger, healing out of disease, salvation out of lostness."⁹ Think of the glory of God in Jesus. One word and it's done. Who has that power? Martin Luther wrote these words in his famous hymn:

*The Prince of Darkness grim,
We tremble not for him;
His rage we can endure,
For lo! His doom is sure.
One little word shall fell him.*

What one word healed the nobleman's son? The word "live". Christ did not have to be in the room with the little one. There was no bells or whistles. It was one word, "live". All creation heard from this God was "Let there be." All that restored Israel brought into the New Covenant needed to hear was, "Hear the word of the Lord." All dead Lazarus needed to hear was, "Come forth". What glory is there in One who has such power?

The Gospel.

⁹ R. C. Sproul. John (St. Andrew's Expository Commentary) (Kindle Locations 1047-1048). Kindle Edition.