

Jesus And The Nobleman

Introduction. In John 4:46-54, we have a beautiful narrative of the rise and progress of faith in the soul. This miracle is the second of seven signs the evangelist records, by which he seeks to lead his readers to faith in Jesus (cp. 20:30-31). While I speak of it, I pray that we will follow the same path, desiring that such faith may rise in our hearts, make progress in our spirits, and may become even stronger in us than it was in this nobleman.

The word “nobleman” or “royal official” literally means “king’s man” or “little king.” Josephus used the word to designate a soldier, courtier, or officer of the king. He was doubtless an officer of Herod Antipas, tetrarch of Galilee. Whoever the officer actually was, he apparently had a regular home at Capernaum.

Capernaum was a day’s journey from Cana, a distance of about seventeen miles. The nobleman wanted Jesus to heal his son. The phrase, “he went to Him” delicately suggests that the father was reluctant to leave his son, even to seek aid. The idiom “point of death” was used of Jesus several times (John 11:51; 12:33; 18:32). There is an important point here to remember: Had this man been without problem, he might have never come to believe in Jesus; but sorrow entered his house and he was blessed forever because of it (Ecclesiastes 7:2).

I. The Nobleman’s Faith Was Challenged

- A. He was a desperate man (vv. 47-49). But Jesus tested him by making the statement regarding signs and wonders. Jesus spoke these words to condemn the Galileans for their unbelief (Matthew 11:20-24). Jesus wanted men to believe in Him because of His character and words (John 10:38; 14:11; 15:22-24; 20:29). He wanted a belief characterized by dedication rather than amazement.
- B. In this man we see the spark of faith. Jesus never said that he had no faith, but that he didn’t have enough. His faith rested on the report of others. God’s people are not born giants. They’re babes at first.
 1. If the man would’ve had no faith, he wouldn’t have made the trip from Capernaum to Cana.
 2. If he would’ve had enough faith, he would’ve been content with suggesting his son to the Lord without asking Him to go to Capernaum to heal him, indicating that he didn’t believe Jesus could do this at a distance.
- C. The nobleman didn’t know that he needed healing in his heart; he didn’t perceive his own ignorance and blindness of the Lord’s power.
 1. This man’s faith differed from the centurion in that he felt that the presence of Jesus was required to perform the miracle (Matthew 8:5-10).
 2. In this respect, he was the New Testament equivalent of Naaman (2 Kings 5:11). He also regarded the powers of Jesus as limited to the living.
 3. In both of these aspects, his faith mimicked that of Mary and Martha (John 11:21-22, 32, 39).

II. The Nobleman's Faith Was Confronted

- A. He was a dependent man (v. 50). He was told to go home because his son lived. Jesus' words were too good and gracious to be true. But he was dependent on what God had told him. Had the Lord gone with him, as he wished, his unbelief could've never been fully removed; as he would've still thought that the Lord's power couldn't reach from Cana to Capernaum. In order to remove his disbelief, and bring him to full assurance of the Lord's power, Jesus speaks the word and heals his son.
 - 1. Modern faith healers can't do this today. When they do claim to heal someone, it's only a temporary placebo that makes them marginally better.
 - 2. With the death toll from Covid-19 now over five million worldwide, one group has the unique advantage of stepping forward into the spotlight and proving their validity once and for all: faith healers.
 - 3. If faith healers were legitimately still around, they wouldn't confine themselves to packed stadiums with highly orchestrated demonstrations. They would visit hospital wings with critically sick patients and raise them up out of their hospital beds.
- B. In this man we now see the flame of faith. The original language indicates that the man's faith in Christ's words was instantaneous. In fact, he goes on his way back home without another word. If he hadn't believed, he would've lingered and kept on pleading for a sign. He reflects the attitude, "Christ says it, I believe it, that settles it!"
 - 1. He says that sin has its origin in the heart (Matthew 15:18-20).
 - 2. He says that if people have pure hearts they'll see God (Matthew 5:8).
 - 3. He says that we should believe and be baptized to be saved (Mark 16:16).
 - 4. He says that we should repent or else perish (Luke 13:3, 5).
 - 5. He says that we should forgive to receive forgiveness (Matthew 6:14-15).
 - 6. He says that we should continue in prayer (Matthew 7:7-11).
 - 7. He says that we should worship God in spirit and truth (John 4:24).
 - 8. He says that we should be faithful until death (Revelation 2:10).
 - 9. He says that we will be resurrected at the end (John 5:28-29).
- C. With the same full assurance of faith, the Christian can rest on the promises of God (Hebrews 10:23; 12:26-29; Titus 1:1-2). As the nobleman had full assurance of faith, so did Abraham (Romans 4:19-25). Abraham received his justification by faith and so will the faithful Christian.

III. The Nobleman's Faith Was Confirmed

- A. He was a delighted man (vv. 51-54). The servants, overjoyed to find their master's son suddenly restored, set off to meet their master, to tell him the glad tidings of his son's recovery. He, intent on having his faith confirmed, began immediately inquiring what time it was when the fever left him.
- B. In this man we finally see the fire of faith. The nobleman first believed in the power of Jesus' presence, then in the power of Jesus' word, and finally the fullest measure of proof was found in his son's fever leaving him at the same moment that Jesus addressed him.

1. The word used here indicates complete faith in Jesus as the Messiah. All of his doubts had been removed and now faith was at its highest state.
 2. We can reach that point too if we are willing to look into the word and accept it as God's inspired communication (John 20:29; 2 Timothy 3:16).
- C. Miracles like the nobleman's son being healed are not manifested, despite what some say (1 Corinthians 13:8-10). But we can still observe the power of God. God invites us to cast our cares on Him (1 Peter 5:7). If we make our requests known to God, then His peace will fill us (Philippians 4:6-7).
- D. What follows at the end of the account is so natural and joyous. Ironically, the sickness of the child became the means of salvation for the entire household (1 Peter 1:6-8). This is the first instance of an entire household that believed on Jesus (cp. Acts 16:14-15, 34; 18:8). By providence, even in the most adverse circumstances, God may be pointing us toward eternal salvation.

Conclusion. If your salvation is based on feelings, dreams, visions, voices, or any other fleshly evidence, then you're on dangerous ground. The nobleman, although brought to faith by a miracle of Jesus, demonstrates that faith is the assurance (1 John 5:9-12). By faith, the nobleman received what he asked and blessed his own household. He also discovered that faith was essential to please God (Hebrews 11:6).