

Title: **JUST FOR CERTAIN ONES**

Text: John 4:43-54

Subject: *The Healing of the Nobleman's Son*

Date: Sunday Morning — January 11, 2009

Tape: John #37

Reading: *Psalm 107:1-43*

Introduction:

The title of my message is — **JUST FOR CERTAIN ONES**. Grace is not for everybody, but just for certain ones. If you read the Bible with your eyes open, that fact cannot be missed. It is as plain as the nose on your face. Let me repeat it: — Grace is not for everybody, but just for certain ones.

- We read in Matthew 9:18) of “**a certain ruler**” by the name of **Jairus** to whom the Lord Jesus was merciful. He was in desperate need. His daughter was dead. No one could help him, but the Lord Jesus.
- As the Savior was going to Jairus’ house, he was detained by “**a certain woman**,” who had been plagued **with an issue of blood** for twelve years (Mark 5:25). How great her need! How desperate she was! She had spent all her living on physicians of no value, and only grew worse. The only hope she had was that the Lord Jesus would be gracious to her.
- Then, there was “**a certain man**” **whose son was a lunatic** (Matthew 17:14-21), who came kneeling before the Savior, crying for mercy on his son. Who would not pity this poor man? How desperately he needed mercy! His boy was grievously vexed of the Devil.
- Then there was “**a certain woman**” (Mark 7:25), a **Syrophenician**, a Gentile, whose young daughter was possessed of an unclean spirit. She had no right to expect anything from the King of Israel. She was a Gentile dog. But, because her need was desperate, because the only hope she had was the grace of Christ, she took her place at his feet, under his table, as his dog. — This desperately needy soul would be satisfied with any crumb of mercy that he might toss on the floor in her direction!
- There was “**a certain centurion's servant**” (Luke 7:2), who was at the point of death.
- “**A certain man**” (Luke 8:27) **dwelling among the tombs**, possessed by a legion of devils, a wild man. How desperate was his need!
- “**A certain man**” (Luke 14:2) had the **dropsy**.
- “**A certain beggar**” (Luke 16) named **Lazarus**.
- As the Lord Jesus came into Jericho there was “**a certain blind man**” (Luke 18:35) sitting by the roadside begging.

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In **The Parable of the Good Samaritan** (Luke 10) our Lord Jesus describes all those whom he came to save under the image of “*a certain man*” who, going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, fell among thieves, who stripped him, robbed him, wounded him, and left him half dead, — in desperate need.

Grace is not for everybody, but just for certain ones. Grace is for poor sinners in desperate need of grace. Is there anyone here in desperate need, anyone who must have the mercy of God, who must have grace? — Is there anybody here who must have Christ? If there is, my message is for you. It is a message **JUST FOR CERTAIN ONES.**

Leprous souls, unsound and filthy,
Come to Jesus as you are:
`Tis the sick man, not the healthy,
Needs the great Physician’s care.

O beware of faith ill-grounded
`Tis but fancied faith at most:
To be cured and not be wounded,
Is to be found before you’re lost.

Let’s read our text together — John 4:43-54.

(John 4:43-54) “Now after two days he departed thence, and went into Galilee.”

If you look back to the beginning of this chapter, you will see that our Savior was on his way Galilee, when he was detained for two days in Samaria. He was detained there because the time had come for the salvation of many of God’s elect among the Samariatain.

(John 4:1-3) “When therefore the Lord knew how the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John, (2) (Though Jesus himself baptized not, but his disciples,) (3) He left Judaea, and departed again into Galilee.”

The Lord Jesus spent two wonderful days in Samaria, raining mercy from heaven and gathering flowers of grace. Now, let’s pick up at verse 43.

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(John 4:43-54) “Now after two days he departed thence, and went into Galilee. (44) For Jesus himself testified, that a prophet hath no honour in his own country. (45) Then when he was come into Galilee, the Galilaeans received him, having seen all the things that he did at Jerusalem at the feast: for they also went unto the feast. (46) So Jesus came again into Cana of Galilee, where he made the water wine. And there was **a certain nobleman**, whose son was sick at Capernaum. (47) When he heard that Jesus was come out of Judaea into Galilee, he went unto him, and besought him that he would come down, and heal his son: for he was at the point of death. (48) Then said Jesus unto him, Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe. (49) The nobleman saith unto him, Sir, come down ere my child die. (50) Jesus saith unto him, Go thy way; thy son liveth. And the man believed the word that Jesus had spoken unto him, and he went his way. (51) And as he was now going down, his servants met him, and told *him*, saying, Thy son liveth. (52) Then inquired he of them the hour when he began to amend. And they said unto him, Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him. (53) So the father knew that *it was* at the same hour, in the which Jesus said unto him, Thy son liveth: and himself believed, and his whole house. (54) This *is* again the second miracle *that* Jesus did, when he was come out of Judaea into Galilee.”

Seven great lessons are stamped out in bold letters in these last twelve verses of John 4. May God the Holy Spirit speak through this dirty, broken, empty pipe to your hearts, by the gospel, for Christ’s sake. I pray that he will write these seven lessons upon our hearts and fix them in our memories, that we may use them continually as we journey through world of time and trouble.

PROPHETS AND HONOR

The first lesson taught here is about prophets and honor. God’s prophets do not seek or want the honor of the world; but none should be honored more by men than those men who faithfully minister to the needs of their immortal souls. Yet, our Lord Jesus testified repeatedly “*that a prophet hath no honour in his own country*” (v. 44).

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Our Savior went back to Galilee, but not to Nazareth, his home, where he was despised and rejected. Rather, he went back to Cana, where he performed his first miracle, where men and women, “*having seen all the things that he did,*” received him.

- Prophets, Gospel preachers ought to highly honored, because they are God’s servants.
- They should be honored because of the Gospel they preach.
- As the Holy Spirit puts it, they should be highly esteemed for their work’s sake (1 Thessalonians 5:12-13; 1 Timothy 5:17).

(1 Thessalonians 5:12-13) “And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; (13) And to esteem them very highly in love for their work’s sake. *And* be at peace among yourselves.”

(1 Timothy 5:17) “Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine.”

God’s prophets should be highly esteemed and honored; but they are more commonly held in contempt than honored, especially by those of their own country and kin (Luke 4:24; Matthew 13:57).

- Joseph, when he began to be a prophet, was hated by his brethren.
- David’s brothers looked upon him with utter disdain (1 Samuel 17:28).
- Jeremiah was maligned by the men of Anathoth (Jeremiah 11:21).
- Paul was despised by his countrymen the Jews.
- And our Lord’s near kinsmen spoke of him with contempt (John 7:5).
- His family friends said, “*He is beside himself*” (Mark 3:21).

Men do not like to receive instruction by their peers, let alone reproof, and they are insulted by the instruction and reproof of one they consider less than a peer. **Matthew Henry** rightly observed, “Desire of novelty and of that which is far fetched and dear bought, and seems to drop out of the sky to them, makes them despise those” they know well.

- Men love titles (“Rev.” — “Dr.”) and despise truth.
- Men love degrees (Phd. Thd. MDiv.) and despise dogmatism.
- Men love education and despise enlightenment.

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Look at what we are told about these Galileans, these country folk, these hillbillies, these redneck hicks from Galilee. In verse 45, the Spirit of God tells us that they received the Lord Jesus, welcomed him, believed him and cheerfully embraced his doctrine. The reason given is that the Galileans had seen all the things the Savior did at Jerusalem.

They went up to Jerusalem at the feast, the feast of the passover. The Galileans lived a long distance from Jerusalem. Their road to Jerusalem took them straight through Samaria; and no Jew wanted to walk through Samaria. Yet, in obedience to God's command, they went up to the feast, and there...

They became acquainted with Lord Jesus.

At Jerusalem they saw the Savior's miracles, his wondrous works.

THINGS MADE

Second, we are reminded in verse 46 that our Lord Jesus' first miracle was performed in Cana of Galilee, and that he "*made the water wine.*" There is a lesson here about things our God transforms, things he makes what they were not before, things entirely transformed. We are told here that our Savior "*made the water wine.*"

- He did not make the water look like wine. He "*made the water wine.*"
- He did not make the water taste like wine. He "*made the water wine.*"
- He did not make the water appear to be wine. He "*made the water wine.*"
- He did not treat the water as though it were wine. He "*made the water wine.*"
- He did not make the water bear the consequences of being wine. He "*made the water wine.*"

The word here translated "*made*" (ποιεω) refers to a single act and means "caused to be" or "caused to be come." It refers to a complete transformation of something. This word "*made*" (ποιεω) is exactly the same word used in the first part of 2 Corinthians 5:21. Where we are told that Christ was "*made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.*" I want you to see something here.

(2 Corinthians 5:17-21) "Therefore if any man *be* in Christ, *he is* a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. (18) And all things *are* of God, who hath reconciled us

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to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; (19) To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. (20) Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech *you* by us: we pray *you* in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. (21) For he hath made him *to be* sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."

The Lord Jesus was made (caused to be, caused to become) sin for us. When he was made sin, our sin was imputed to him and he bore all the guilt of our sins, as our Substitute. Otherwise, the Lord God could never have punished him for our sins (Proverbs 17:15).

(Proverbs 17:15) "He that justifieth the wicked, and he that condemneth the just, even they both *are* abomination to the LORD."

But the word translated "made" in the second part of 2 Corinthians 5:21 is another word altogether. This word "*made*" is not (ποιεω) the word that means "caused to become." When the Holy Spirit speaks of God making us righteous as the result of Christ being "*made sin*," the word translated "*made*" (γινομαι) means "to generate," "cause to come into being," "to finish," and "to fulfil." Thus, like the water in Cana of Galilee...

- Our Lord Jesus was made sin that he might be made a curse for us and die in our place.
- As the result of that, all for whom he died are generated to righteousness by grace, born again as righteous ones, made new creatures in Christ.

FAITH AND THE WORD

Third, we have before us a very important lesson about true faith and the Word of God. Saving faith involves hearing, seeing and believing; and that faith is God's work and God's gift.

The Galileans believed because they saw all the things Christ did at Jerusalem. If ever you come to trust the Lord Jesus, it will be because God the Holy Spirit has caused you to see all the things Christ did at Jerusalem, when he laid down his life for his sheep.

- Satisfied Justice

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- Put Away our Sins
- Brought in Everlasting Righteousness
- Saved His People from their Sins
- Redeemed His Elect
- Glorified God

This certain nobleman came to the Savior for mercy because he “heard that Jesus was come.” — *“Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God”* (Romans 10:17).

(Romans 10:13-17) “For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. (14) How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? (15) And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things! (16) But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report? (17) So then faith *cometh* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”

(1 Peter 1:23-25) “Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever. (24) For all flesh *is* as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: (25) But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you.”

This faith in Christ is created in the hearts of chosen, redeemed sinners by God the Holy Spirit. Did you notice that our Savior said to this nobleman, “*Except ye see sign and wonders, ye will not believe*” (v. 48). He could not believe because he would not believe; and he would not believe because he could not believe. Yet, when the Lord Jesus said to him, “*Go thy way; thy son liveth...The man believed the Word that Jesus had spoke*” (v. 50). The Word spoken came home to his heart with Divine, irresistible power, causing him to believe.

There is something else taught in this passage by the Spirit of God that is commonly overlooked. I want you to see it. It is a sweet, blessed thing to learn. — **Our Savior’s word is as good as his presence.** The Lord Jesus

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did not go down to Capernaum to see the nobleman's sick son, but only spoke the word, "*Thy son liveth.*" Omnipotent power went with that short sentence. That very hour the boy began to get better. Christ spoke, and the cure was done. Christ commanded, and the deadly disease was halted.

That fact is full of comfort. It gives enormous value to every promise of mercy, grace, and peace, which ever fell from Christ's lips. If we build our hope upon the Savior's Word, we are built upon a Rock that he has exalted above his very name (Psalm 138:2).

(Psalms 138:1-3) "I will praise thee with my whole heart: before the gods will I sing praise unto thee. (2) I will worship toward thy holy temple, and praise thy name for thy lovingkindness and for thy truth: for thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name. (3) In the day when I cried thou answeredst me, *and* strengthenedst me *with* strength in my soul."

What Christ has said, he is able to do. What he has undertaken, he will perform. What he has promised, he will make good. The sinner who rests his soul upon the Word of the Lord Jesus, is safe to all eternity. He could not be safer, if he saw his name written in the book of life with his own eyes. The Lord Jesus Christ has said, "*Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out.*" I have come, and he will never cast me out! In all earthly things seeing is believing; but in Gospel matters believing is seeing!

PARENTS AND CHILDREN

Read John 4:23-54 again, see a fourth lesson. It is a lesson parents and children, a lesson about parenting. Let all who are parents do as this nobleman did. Flee away to the Lord Jesus in earnest, importunate prayer, carrying your little ones, dead in trespasses and in sins to the Savior for mercy.

There is something that stands out here and throughout the New Testament, that ought to be encouraging to every mother and father. — Never once did a mother or father bring the needs of a child to the Savior who did not obtain for his child the mercy he sought.

O believing parents of soul-sick children, bring your sick darlings to the Lord Jesus. Cast them at his feet, and beg his mercy for them!

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PROVIDENCE AND GRACE

Fifth, there is a lesson here about providence and grace.

- As the Word of Christ was proved to the nobleman by the witness of his servants, so God's providence often proves his Word. — O that we had eyes to see!
- As the sickness of the nobleman's son brought him to the Savior, so God's afflictive providences are often the means by which he hedges about his elect and sweetly forces them into the Savior's arms.

We recognize that judgment never produces repentance. Yet, the Scriptures do teach, and teach clearly, that our God graciously arranges all the affairs of providence to graciously compel chosen sinners to seek his mercy. That is exactly what we read in Psalm 107.

What benefits affliction often bring on our souls! Anxiety about his son brought this nobleman to Christ, in order to obtain help in time of need. Once in the Savior's company, he learned a lesson of priceless value. In the end, "*he believed, and his whole house.*" All this, remember, was brought about as a result of the son's sickness.

Affliction is one of God's medicines. By adversity the Lord often teaches us things that cannot be learned any other way. He will not hesitate to burn your barley fields to get you; and if he does, you will thank him for burning your fields!

- Thousands have ruined themselves, only to be healed by Christ.
- Untold multitudes have learned grace by the things they have suffered, and obedience by the rod of sorrow.

Let us beware of murmuring in times of trouble. May God settle it firmly in our hearts, that there is a needs-be for every tear and a message from God, in every sorrow that falls upon us. **J. C. Ryle** rightly observed, "There are no lessons so useful as those learned in the school of affliction. There is no commentary that opens up the Bible so much as sickness and sorrow." — **The resurrection morning will prove that all our losses were, in reality, eternal gains!**

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(Hebrews 12:11) “Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.”

(1 Peter 1:3-7) “Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, (4) To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, (5) Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. (6) Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: (7) That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ.”

RICHES AND SORROW

Sixth, we see in this passage that rich nobleman have the same sorrows as the poor nobodies. This rich nobleman was in great pain. His darling son was dying! His money did not help. His noble standing in society gave him no comfort. He was born into nobility and rich beyond imagination; but his son lay dying; and he couldn't do anything to help his dying son!

Wealth does not bring happiness! Someone once said, “Silks and satins often cover very heavy hearts.” Those who live high often sleep little. Gold and silver cannot prevent pain, trouble and sorrow; and cannot make them more bearable.

- The higher the tree, the more it is shaken in the storm.
- The broader its branches, the bigger target it is for the strike of the lightning bolt.
- David was a happier man when he kept his father's sheep at Bethlehem, than when he dwelt as a king at Jerusalem and ruled the twelve tribes of Israel.

Be wise, my friends, and learn that wealth and distinction are not things to be sought. If God puts these things in your hands, you have a very great responsibility to use them for good; but do not seek them.

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- Seek grace.
- Seek mercy.
- Seek Christ.
- Seek usefulness.
- But do not seek wealth.
- Do not seek honor.

(Colossians 3:1-3) “If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. (2) Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. (3) For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.”

DEATH AND AGE

Seventh, we have before us a very sobering lesson about death and age. Here’s the lesson, — Death does not wait for old age. Sickness and death come to the young as well as to the old. Here is a son sick unto death and a helpless, healthy father watching. The boy is going to the grave. The father is about to bury the son.

The lesson is one which we are slow to learn. We all shut our eyes to plain facts, and to speak and act as if young people do not die. Yet, the grave-markers in every cemetery tell a different story.

- The first grave that ever was dug on this earth was that of a young man.
- The first person who ever died was not a father but a son.
- Aaron lost two sons at once.
- David, the man after God’s own heart, lived long enough to see three children buried.
- Job was deprived of all his children in one day.

These things were carefully recorded for our learning. They stand as blazing beacons, saying to all, “*Prepare to meet thy God! — Tomorrow thou shalt die!*”

Amen.