

Series: John

Title: Life by the Word

Text: John 4: 43-54

Date: March 18, 2021

Place: SGBC, NJ

John 4: 43: 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.

The Lord went to Cana in Galilee but not to Nazareth where he was brought up. They knew Joseph, Mary and knew our Lord from a child. Familiarity bred contempt. When he declared he is the Messiah, they said, "*Is this not Joseph's son?*" They tried to cast him off a cliff. Joseph's brethren hated him. David's brothers despised him (1 Samuel 17:28). Our Lord's near kinsmen said, "*He is beside himself.*" (John 7:5; Mark 3:21).

May the Lord keep us low, always needing our Prophet, Priest and King and his gospel so that we esteem other better than ourselves. May he never let us grow gospel hardened. Never let us hear the gospel with the attitude that we already know that.

1 Corinthians 8: 2: And if any man think that he knoweth any thing, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know.

So the Lord went to Cana of Galilee where they received him.

John 4: 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.

The Galileans received him because they saw all things he did at Jerusalem at the feast. That is not written as a commendation. Faith believes on Christ and then sees the glory of God in Christ's light. But these folks believed superficially because they saw an outward work. That is not faith. But Christ is about to save a nobleman giving him faith by the word.

Proposition: When Christ speaks effectually in the gospel he gives us faith in him and by faith we see all things that he did at Jerusalem on the cross—but we see by faith.

By Christ's power, we believe on Christ from the new heart. Christ gives us life by speaking his word. Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God—Christ is God who is about to speak and make this nobleman hear in true saving faith.

So we see in this nobleman the true sign and wonder—the miracle of God's grace—to give faith in Christ by the word of the gospel.

A NEED

John 4: 46...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,

God gives faith is given by first giving us a need for Christ.

This nobleman was one God's elect. God the Father chose this man by free grace from before the foundation of the world—"a certain nobleman." Those God chose in Christ he ordained to be sanctified by the Spirit and brought to belief of the truth, which he calls by his gospel.

In order to draw his elect to Christ, God gives us a need. The Lord gave this nobleman a need. He had a sick son, at the point of death. It was a desperate need. This need was so desperate because no one else could help. The nobleman could not help himself. No one else could help him.

The need was only physical as far as the nobleman knew. He thought the need was only to save his son from physical death. But the nobleman did not know that *he* was the one who sick spiritually. He thought the only one in his house sick was his son. But he did not know his whole house was in unbelief and were God's elect about to be called.

Often this is how the Lord draws his people to where his gospel is preached. Their reason for coming is not a spiritual need, only physical. Yet, the Lord uses some physical need to make them come. The Lord does this with you and I who already have been given faith in Christ. He sends a trial to give us a need to draw his child to Christ. When there is no need a sinner will not come to Christ. But not even a sparrow falls to the ground without God our Father's consent. Therefore, when even a sparrow falls or a child is sick or any other trial comes, God is working it all together for the good of his elect to give us a need to draw us to Christ. God is that sovereign.

Romans 8: 28: And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to *his* purpose. 29: For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate *to be* conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. 30: Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified. 31: What shall we then say to these things? If God *be* for us, who *can be* against us?

PERSONAL NEED

John 4: 47:..[the nobleman] 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.

God gives faith (and increases faith) by making the sinner know, personally, that he is the one with the need. And he makes us know the need is spiritual.

Christ declared to the nobleman that *he* it is that is sick. It was the nobleman that did not have faith—"except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe." Like all natural men the nobleman had his thoughts of how Christ would save his son. He thought Christ would *come down* to heal his son. He thought Christ *had* to come down to heal his son. If Christ went to his house and healed the son then the nobleman would have only believed because he saw Christ works. That is not true faith. Seeing is not believing. Believing is seeing.

So Christ declares it is the sinner who has to *come down*. Christ said to him, "Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe." With that word Christ revealed the true need for which he sent the sickness to the nobleman's son. It was for the nobleman himself.

It is us—the sinner—who has to *come down*. We have to come down from our thoughts to trust Christ's thoughts. The sinner has to be brought down from our ways to trust Christ the way. We need to be put down from how we think Christ saves to believe on Christ. Christ will make his child trust Christ to save in his time and trust Christ to save as he will.

Remember, Naaman the leper. Naaman was so proud. He thought he was a king who just happened to be a leper. Most think they are a king that just happens to be a sinner. But he was a sinner who God had raised up to bring down.

So Naaman came in his pride with his entourage of followers and yes men. He pictured in his mind how the prophet would come out to him and bow and honor him before his friends and say a few words and heal him. But the prophet greatly humiliated him. He did not even come out to him. The prophet sent a messenger and told the mighty king to *go down* and dip in the muddy Jordan River seven times. That greatly insulted the pride of the king. His servant said, "If the prophet gave you some great thing to do would you not have done it?" Salvation is believing on Christ to save!

Christ reveals the need is spiritual—"*Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe.*" The outward trial that God sends is never the true need. If a believer were brought to the point of death and Christ let you die then you will better than ever. If he heals us from a terminal illness, it is only temporary; we are going to die. The need is not a cure from the physical trial he sends.

Be sure to get this. The trial is always to teach us our spiritual need. When we focus on the physical problems, pray for the physical trial to end, we deal superficially. The need is not the trial. The need is not the physical. The need is spiritual and the cure is spiritual.

It is always to bring his elect down from our thoughts to grant repentance from our vain ways. Christ is bringing his child into submission to Christ through faith in him. He is making us trust Christ to save.

For believers who already have faith it is the same. The physical trial is to purge our dross by the firey trial. It is to grant repentance from our unbelief and sinful ways and thoughts. The trial is making us submit to Christ through faith in the heart in spirit and in truth. Christ is curing our spiritual need to trust Christ to save. Faith is that is found "unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ" is faith that trust Christ alone for all. To keep us believing only Christ the trial is a need be.

1 Peter 1:6: 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.

THE PHYSICIAN

John 4: 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.

Christ alone is the Physician. He alone cures. Christ alone heals. Only the Lord Jesus brings his child into the submission of faith. He does it by speaking the word into our hearts. "Faith

cometh by hearing and hearing by the Word of God.” Christ is the Word. He speaks the gospel word effectually into our hearts. The result is we hear and believe on Christ.

At first the nobleman did what any natural man would do, he insisted more earnestly that Christ come down to his house, “*Sir, come down ere my child die.*”

This is important, Christ did not ask what made his son sick. He knew. Christ is God. God did it. But what did Christ do instead? Christ “*saith unto him!*” The sovereign Prophet gave effectual command—“*Go thy way! Thy son liveth!*” Christ declared to the nobleman the good news! Christ declared to him what Christ had done for his son—“*Thy son liveth!*”

The saving message is Christ and his mighty works! We declare all thy mighty works! We do not have to know the details of a sinner’s sin. We know. The problem is sin. The answer is to declare how God trusted his people to Christ in the covenant of grace and Christ became our Surety. The cure is the word of the gospel of how Christ justified his people and made us righteous by laying down his life in place of his people. God will bless one message to a lost sinner and to a believer in trial who needs more faith, it is the message of how Christ is Head of his church who sends the Spirit and fills all in all his people. He gives spiritual life and faith in him. Christ declared to the man what Christ had done in giving life to the sick child who could do nothing to save himself—that is the gospel we preach. Christ must save his depraved, helpless people, not we ourselves!

By that good news, Christ’s word, by his power made the man believe, “*The man believed the word that Jesus had spoken unto him and he went his way.*” Christ, by his word, granted repentance so that the nobleman’s mind was entirely changed. He ceased insisting and urging the Lord to do things his way. Christ’s word gave him faith. In his heart he bowed in submission to Christ believing Christ. So he obeyed the Lord and started home. Christ does not have to be present in body—his word is his presence—his word comes with power and magnifies his name in our hearts.

Psalms 138:1: 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.

PEACE IN BELIEVING

John 4: 51: And as he was now going down, his servants met him, and told *him*, saying, Thy son liveth. 52: Then enquired 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:...*

When Christ gives us faith to believe on him, we not only have peace with God from knowing that we are justified from all our sin by Christ’s blood, but we also have peace in this life believing Christ is ruling every trial and all is well.

The nobleman came to Christ desperate, frantic, pleading with him to hurry to his home. But now that he believed the Lord Jesus, it appears the nobleman was not so hasty to get home. The nobleman met his servants who said the son was healed. The fever left him in the seventh hour the day before. The seventh hour was about one o’clock in the afternoon—“*yesterday at 1pm the fever left him.*” It was the same hour that Christ said, “Thy son liveth.”

So at 1 pm the nobleman turned and headed home believing the Lord Jesus that his son was healed. It was about 25-30 miles from Cana to the nobleman's home in Capernaum. That would be about 12 hours by camel. The servants started for Cana to tell the nobleman the fever broke at 1pm the day before. It is most likely the servants were travelling fast. But if the nobleman started home at 1pm and the servants headed for Cana at 1pm, even if the nobleman went more than halfway, the nobleman was not traveling with the same anxious care as before. He could have been home by 1am. It appears this is the next morning. Here is my point—we know this is so—when Christ gives faith the believer does not make anxious haste concerning his soul's condition nor concerning the present trial.

Isaiah 28:16: thus saith the Lord GOD, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner *stone*, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste. [Targum: shall not be moved by trouble]

Through faith Christ had made the nobleman know he was justified. He had peace with God. Therefore, knowing all was well with his soul by Christ's word, by the same word he knew all was well with his son.

Isaiah 12:2: Behold, God *is* my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid: for the LORD JEHOVAH *is* my strength and *my* song; he also is become my salvation.

Romans 8:32: He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things

Ps 37: 5: Commit thy way unto the LORD; trust also in him; and he shall bring *it* to pass....7: Rest in the LORD, and wait patiently for him:...

When the nobleman heard his son's fever broke at the same hour, his faith was strengthened even more—"*and himself believed and his whole house.*" As he bore witness of all Christ had done, the Spirit blessed the word so that his whole house believed.

John 4: 54: This is again the second miracle *that* Jesus did, when he was come out of Judaea into Galilee.

Christ alone is the Physician! The message is what Christ has done for dead and dying sinners chosen of God in Christ. Like as Christ made the water wine at Cana—so he works the miracle of grace in our hearts. He fills his earthen vessels with an entirely new spirit. Christ makes us drink the very best wine, the wine of his precious blood by faith. That is the good news Christ blesses to give spiritual life and faith.

Every trial is of God. It is not the physical that we need. It is to give faith to the faithfulness and to strengthen faith in them that already believe. The need is spiritual. The need is Christ.

He does not give faith by outward signs and wonders but by the gospel. If we would help one another then remind each other that Christ alone is the power of God unto salvation. He blesses the word that declares all his mighty works in saving his people from our sins. It pleased God to save this one way from the first minute to the last—the gospel of Christ crucified! We never cease needing the word as newborn babies need their mother's milk.

1 Peter 2: 1: Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings, 2: As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby: 3 If so be ye have tasted that the Lord *is* gracious.

Amen!