



John 4:43-54

“Show Us Something New!”

43 Now after the two days He departed from there and went to Galilee.

44 For Jesus Himself testified that a prophet has no honor in his own country.

45 So when He came to Galilee, the Galileans received Him, having seen all the things He did in Jerusalem at the feast; for they also had gone to the feast.

46 So Jesus came again to Cana of Galilee where He had made the water wine. And there was a certain nobleman whose son was sick at Capernaum.

47 When he heard that Jesus had come out of Judea into Galilee, he went to Him and implored Him to come down and heal his son, for he was at the point of death.

48 Then Jesus said to him, "Unless you people see signs and wonders, you will by no means believe."

49 The nobleman said to Him, "Sir, come down before my child dies!"

50 Jesus said to him, "Go your way; your son lives." So the man believed the word that Jesus spoke to him, and he went his way.

51 And as he was now going down, his servants met him and told him, saying, "Your son lives!"

52 Then he inquired of them the hour when he got better. And they said to him, "Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him."

53 So the father knew that it was at the same hour in which Jesus said to him, "Your son lives." And he himself believed, and his whole household.

54 This again is the second sign Jesus did when He had come out of Judea into Galilee.

Two days before his return to Galilee, Jesus had been in Samaria, a country hostile to the Jews and vice versa, and yet there we read that many had come to believe that He was the Christ and the Savior of the World because of his preaching. Now Jesus has returned to His Homeland, His *Patris* in the Greek. Because although Jesus had been born in Bethlehem of Judea, Nazareth of Galilee was where he grew up. This was His country, and these were His people, you would expect that here Jesus would receive even greater honor than in a hostile country like Samaria. And yet exactly the opposite is true.

What a contrast, in Samaria two days of preaching brings about a revival and many conversions, in Galilee, belief is the exception rather than the norm. We go from entire towns coming to faith, to the conversion of one Household in Capernaum.

Why was that? Well we could say that God had foreordained that the people of this city in Samaria would be receptive to the gospel, and that the Galileans would remain hardened against it. But there are some human factors here as well. Jesus was a local boy, everyone knew Him as the son of Joseph a poor Carpenter. Most didn't know the circumstances of his birth, so when he speaks of having come from heaven, they answer "What are you talking about? We know who you are. You grew up in our town Jesus, how can *you be the Messiah?*" The Samaritans didn't have the problem of familiarity bringing contempt, so they were able to assess Jesus more objectively.

Also, for these were the covenant people, God's chosen. So unlike the Samaritan woman, the idea that they were sinners in need of salvation was absurd. Sure they were waiting for the Messiah, but *their* Messiah would come as conquering king and lead them into a new golden age of prosperity and health

and of course victory over their enemies the Gentiles. That was the Messiah, they wanted and were waiting for.

Things haven't changed that much, you can carry the gospel to a foreign nation who have never heard it, and they will receive it gladly, but the hardest people to witness to are people in the church. Where else would you get absurd responses like "*Why do I need Jesus? I'm a Christian!*" Evangelists often describe the condition as "inoculated against the Gospel" or simply bored with it. I mean think of it, how many times have you been in a church, hearing the greatest story ever told, the best news you will ever receive, and you are thinking "*when can I get out of here?*" To paraphrase C.S. Lewis, preaching the gospel in the church is too often like proclaiming the joys of marriage to a divorcee.

So unlike the Samaritans, they don't want to hear a message, they want to see something. Yeah, we've heard the scriptures, don't give us Deuteronomy and Isaiah again. Don't "proclaim liberty to the captives" or "the acceptable year of the LORD." Show us something new, prove you are who you say you are Jesus. Call down fire, raise someone from the dead, walk on water. Do something cool and exciting or we are out of here.

You and I live in a signs and wonders age, too. Don't just preach the gospel, do a miracle healing, slay us in the spirit, parade someone famous in front of us, or at least give us a concert with laser lights and jumbotrons. Even outside of churches that long ago rejected the gospel, you see signs proclaiming "exciting, contemporary worship services."

Now the ironic thing is that a sign is meant to point to something else. The signs, for instance, that Jesus did, were intended to point out that he was the Christ the Messiah. So for instance, He heals a paralytic in Matthew 9 as a sign that He has the power to forgive sin, which was even more important. But here in Galilee, it is the signs themselves and not what they point to that people want.

Think of trying to sell your house, and getting everything ready, and putting out your "for sale/open house sign" and seeing a crowd of people in the front yard. But when you go out to speak to them they say "*Cool Sign! You got any others?*" "But I want to sell my house," House? We don't need a house, we like signs.

Now some are tempted to think, yeah but what we need to convert people are signs and wonders, if we do them, then they'll believe. Jesus says not, in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, the rich man in hell pleads that "if a ghost comes and tells my Brothers", THEN they will believe and they won't end up in hell like me. ***Luke 16:29 "Abraham said to him, 'They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.' 30 "And he said, 'No, father Abraham; but if one goes to them from the dead, they will repent.' 31 "But he said to him, 'If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rise from the dead.'***

The fact is that even an accumulation of miracles will not overcome unbelief, it may entertain, but it will not convert. We remember that the Kings of Israel saw the signs that Elijah and Elisha did, and even the stark contrast that the Prophets of Baal could do no such signs, *and yet they did not believe*. They may help to convince and point to the truth, but brothers and sisters faith comes by hearing. If someone will not believe the gospel preached, all the signs in the world won't convert them. And in these verses we learn that faith comes by hearing, not seeing signs.

The son of a nobleman, a *Basilikos*, an important member of Herod's court is dying in Capernaum one of the cities located on the sea of Galilee. For all of his father's earthly power there is nothing that he can do to save the life of his precious child. There are few torments greater than those of loving parent whose

child is mortally ill. Most parents in that situation would gladly change places with their child. This father hears reports from the Galileans who had been at the Passover feast that Jesus had performed miracles, and that he has just returned to Cana. So the nobleman decides if I can just bring this Jesus to my son, he will heal him. So he makes the 25 mile journey from Capernaum to Cana and begs him to come back with him and heal him.

Jesus however, answers his pleas with a hard saying, and we know it is not directed just to this father, because the you is plural. He's addressing the Galileans generally, "***Unless you people see signs and wonders, you will by no means believe.***" But notice that this father is not put off, and also notice this he doesn't plead his station. "*Who do you think you are to talk to me, a nobleman, like that? Don't you know I could throw you in jail just like that John the Baptist fellow? Now come with me and I'll do something for you in return.*"

Instead he does what you and I must do when we Go to God in prayer, **he pleads only His need, and God's ability to meet it.** "*come down before my child dies!*" I myself have prayed prayers exactly like that. For other people's children and most recently for my own when she took a header out of her high chair and passed out.

Now Jesus shows Him no sign, He says to Him, **Go your way, your son lives.** Now remember his son is 25 miles away in Capernaum. This man has no cell-phone. No way of checking. But he hears, the word of Jesus, he believes and he goes home. That is faith.

Hebrews 11:1 Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

He did not DEMAND evidence, he acted on Christ's word, and His faith proved to be well founded. His servants couldn't call him with the good news, so they hurried to tell him and met him as he was coming back. And he asks when he was healed and when he hears the answer was the same hour that Jesus told him he was healed, the father knew this was no *coincidence*.

Last week we saw that faith has three parts, Knowledge, assent, and trust. The nobleman starts with knowledge based on what people said to Him about Christ's miracles, He moves to assent by going to fetch Him, and ends up trusting and believing in Jesus through his personal experience with Christ.

Even more wonderful, His faith, leads to the conversion of His whole Household. He believed, he bore witness to what had happened to Him, He preached the good news that the Messiah had come and that He believed in Him, and He was saved and they believed Him and they were saved too. Brothers and Sisters, study after study has shown that the faith of a father is critical, to the salvation of your household. If a child believes, others may come to faith, if mom believes, it is even more common, but if Dad believes, it is uncommon that the other members of the family don't. God wants husbands to be the spiritual leaders of their households, and he uses them more than any other member to shape the faith of that household. Train up a child in the way he should go, And when he is old he will not depart from it, works both ways dads. ***Train them by example to be unbelieving, and that sadly is the way they will go and know that you will be called to account for that by God.***

John closes his account by saying this was the second sign that Jesus did in Galilee, the first was of course the changing of water into wine at the wedding, the interesting thing is that *both* signs were only known by a few people. Jesus is not interested in pleasing crowds with miracles. The guests at the wedding did not know that Jesus had turned the water into wine, and the people here only saw a few words exchanged between Jesus and the nobleman. Jesus is interested in giving people what they need, rather than what they want.

Now I've already made some Applications of this, but I want to give you 2 others and they are related:

First regarding Affliction: Spurgeon wrote of this nobleman, that "sorrow came to his house, and it was God's angel in disguise" People don't tend to ever think of affliction as a good thing, and certainly not the life-threatening illness of a child, O but how many times does God use affliction to wake us up to our real need of Him and send us to Christ, when in prosperity we never would have. Read these words of JC Ryle in your folders and think about them: *"We read, that anxiety about a son led the nobleman to Christ, in order to obtain help in time of need. Once brought into Christ's company, he learned a lesson of priceless value. In the end, "he believed, and his whole house." All this, be it remembered, hinged upon the son's sickness. If the nobleman's son had never been ill, his father might have lived and died in his sins!*

Affliction is one of God's medicines. By it He often teaches lessons which would be learned in no other way. By it He often draws souls away from sin and the world, which would otherwise have perished everlastingly. Health is a great blessing, but sanctified disease is a greater. Prosperity and worldly comfort, are what all naturally desire; but losses and crosses are far better for us, if they lead us to Christ. Thousands at the last day, will testify with David, and the nobleman before us, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted." (Psalm. 119:71.)

I will be one of those people, I can tell you.

Second in Regards to Affliction bringing you to Christ, I want you to ask yourself, which of these categories you fall into. Are you a Good Steed, A Stubborn Mule, or A Dead Horse?

The Good Steed only needs to feel the merest prick of his riders spurs urging him forward and he is off. If you are this kind of person, it won't take a hundred terrible afflictions to get you to go to Christ. Rather the first crisis will send you to Him. You see your need, and you see He is the only one who can meet it, so you go to Him. You see for instance, your sinfulness, and you know that there is a judgment coming, and you know that only Christ can pay for your sins, and save you from Hell and so the first crisis that brings you face to face with mortality is the one that also spurs you to Christ for salvation.

Then there's the stubborn mule. He doesn't move with a little nudge. To get him to move you are going to have to get off and pull and use the whip and finally break him down to where he finally moves. The Apostle Paul was that sort of person, he had to finally be knocked down and struck blind by the Lord before His will was made malleable: Acts 9:5 And he said, "Who are You, Lord?" Then the Lord said, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. It is hard for you to kick against the goads."

God had been goading him with many spurs and yet he wouldn't move he kicked and resisted to the bitter end. Are you someone who has gone through affliction after affliction, and crisis after crisis and keeps trusting in themselves, even though it never works, Will you or did you need to finally reach rock bottom and get to your breaking point?

Or are you the dead horse, you can flog the dead horse all day, and they will never move. They are dead. This is the spiritually dead reprobate, no amount of affliction will ever open their eyes and cause them to flee to Christ. The world is full of them. In fact, the more they are afflicted the angrier they get at God. The things that would work to the salvation of others, simply harden them. They do plead their status. How dare God do this to me? Or I don't need to go to Jesus, I'm a Christian, my family built this church! I pray that isn't you.

I pray that when God lays you flat on your back that you will look up to heaven. If you will then remember that affliction has done you an infinite mercy in the end. Remember that as Thomas Watson said, *there is more evil in a drop of sin than in a sea of affliction.*