Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

Christ's Response to Unbelief
Scripture: John 4:43-54
Code: 1508A

Turn to John chapter 4 and let's look at verse 43 through verse 54. Now in this passage primarily, as in all other passages in John's gospel, John's purpose is to present Christ as the Son of God. The story of the nobleman and his son here is rather incidental to John's purposes, it's not incidental to God at all, it's not incidental as far as truth is concerned, it's merely incidental as far as John's purpose is concerned because John's purpose is always to present Christ in His deity and he merely uses these incidents to do that. And so it never really say, "And the nobleman was saved, believed, was converted," to da to da...no more than it said it about the Samaritan woman or it said it about Nicodemus. It is merely implied, and implied extremely strong in this passage that this man comes to believing faith, total faith.

Now in response to such a presentation, Christ presenting Himself as Son of God faces the inevitable response of unbelief. It's not just as simple as Christ going around saying, "I'm the Son of God, here's why I'm the Son of God," and everybody automatically saying, "Okay, we believe." It's not that easy. The world has not believed and few who believe and many who do not.

And the reason is very obvious. The reason men do not believe is because they do not want to believe. And we talked about this some time past. They refused to believe and John has already told us in chapter 3 in the words of Christ Himself that the reason men do not believe is because they love...what?...darkness and sin rather than light and life. As Dr. Kyper(?) always says, "They eat it up." And because they love darkness rather than light, they wallow in their evil deeds and they do not wish to be exposed to the light, John 3:18 to 20. They don't want to come to the light lest their deeds shall be made manifest and reproved. And so, Christ consequently running smack into this dark unbelief finds that the response is unbelief.

Now unbelief takes different forms and each form of unbelief makes different demands. For example, one man may say, "I don't believe and if you're going to convince me you've got to do that..." Another man will say, "Well, I don't believe but if you think you're going to convince me, do this and maybe I'll believe." And we know there are different forms of belief because Jesus said to Thomas, "You saw and you believe, but blessed are they which have not seen and...what?...and yet believe." There's different kinds. Some belief doesn't need to see, other belief has to see. Some unbelief is this type, some this type...now I think there are basically three types of unbelief and we're going to see one of those types illustrated this morning and we've already seen the other two and we'll talk about that. But there are three methods with which Christ counteracts the three modes of unbelief.

Christ penetrates the unbelieving heart wherever it is. And that's why we've entitled the message, "When Jesus meets the demands of unbelief." Whatever your reason for not believing in Jesus Christ as the Son of God, whatever anybody's reason for not believing in Christ as the Son of God and the Savior of the world, Jesus Christ has already met that demand of that type of unbelief. And there's no reason in the world and there's excuse in the world for a man not believing in Jesus Christ because of a certain type of unbelief since Christ has met every kind of unbelief with the demand that that unbelief requires.

Now what do you mean by that? Well let me show you the three types of unbelief. First of all, there is that type of unbelief that is really the highest kind of unbelief, which may sound like a strange statement, probably is. But the highest kind of unbelief is the kind that only demands, here it comes, the beauty of Christ's person. This is the kind of unbelief that doesn't need miracles, that doesn't need to see. All this type of unbelief is needs is the beauty of the person of Christ to convince it and to turn it into faith.

You say, "What do you mean by that?" Well for some people they just see the glorious wonderful incomparable matchless person of Christ in all His beauty and that's what brings them, just the dominating fact that it brings them to salvation. And some people...and I'm not saying that each of these kind of unbelief is totally isolated, everyone is a mixture of this but one is dominant. Some people came to Christ, maybe some of you right here, I'm sure some of you, because of the matchless beauty of His person. And we've seen this already illustrated.

Go back to John 1 and we've seen this kind of belief, this kind of unbelief met by Christ. Verse 29 of John 1, "The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him and saith, `Behold the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world.'" Now there is John believing without even hearing a word that Christ said, without ever seeing the miracle, Jesus had never done a miracle at that time. Jesus never even opened His mouth. He walked up, John said there He is. The glow and the glory and the beauty of His person convinced John. That's all it took. Christ didn't say a word. For some people who can see the beauty of the person of Christ in all of His glory, that's enough...that's enough. And we talk like that too sometimes when we present Christ, don't we? We talk about the matchless Christ who shed His blood in undying love, we talk about all the beauty of His person and we ask people if they'd like to have that kind of a redeemer, that kind of a friend, that kind of one to carry them along in life, that kind of one to spend eternity with, the beauty of His person. Some unbelief needs that.

And then over in verse 35, two disciples, likely they were Peter and John, we know one of them was Peter. But anyway, John the Baptist tells them to follow Christ, in so many words, he says, "Behold the Lamb of God," and verse 37 says, "And the two disciples heard John say that and they followed Jesus." They saw Christ, he said, "There's the Lamb of God," and they followed Him. They said,

"Rabbi, where do You dwell, we want to see You some more, we want to sit with You." He said, "Come and see." The person of Christ was magnetic.

Now we know from the other gospels that when Peter was called and some of the other disciples who were fishermen, Christ walked along the shore and said, "Drop your nets and follow Me and I'll make you fishers of men." Now what was it that made those guys drop everything and follow Jesus Christ? What was it? Well it wasn't simply His words "Follow Me." Because somebody else could come along and say, "Follow me," and they wouldn't have followed. It wasn't His miracles cause He never did any miracles. He simply said follow Me. What was it? It was the magnetism of the dynamic of His person. And when He walked along that shore and saw men who were really men's men who were involved in a profession, who were involved with their families and friends who were living a life like anybody else lives, and He said drop everything, kiss it goodbye and follow Me, they did it because of the magnetism of His personality. The person of Christ commanded their respect. And they followed Him. But that kind of faith is only the first kind...that kind that needs just the person of Christ in all His beauty.

There's a second kind of demand that some kind of faith makes and that's the demand of the words of Christ. For some the person of Christ is not enough, they want to hear what He has to say. And this is illustrated for us in chapter 4 and we saw it last week. In verse 19 the woman says unto Him, "I perceive Thou art a prophet," that's the initial springing up of faith. What made her say that? What made her say that was that He told her everything she did. His words were convincing. And then over in verse 26 He says unto her, "I that speak unto thee am He, I'm the Messiah," and she believed Him. His words were convincing. Then over in verse 41 it says, "Many more Samaritans believed because of His own...what?...word." Verse 42, "They said unto the woman, `Now we believe not because of thy saying, for we have heard Him ourselves and know indeed that this is Christ the Savior of the world." His words convinced them. There is some kind of faith that demands the words of Christ, they want to hear what He has to say. And they examine the Scripture and the words of Christ penetrate their hearts. Maybe some of you came because of some Bible verse, some word of Christ that you heard or read.

Then there's a third and a deep state of unbelief and that third state of unbelief for which the person of Christ is not enough and the words of Christ are not enough is the stage of unbelief that demands the works of Christ, His miracles. Some people just can't believe it until they see God do a magic trick, in effect. They can't believe it without signs and wonders. You know, this is true of even Christians. There are a lot of Christians like this. There are a lot of people who are in Christian circles today where if they don't have one big divine thing after another, they don't have any faith. And their baby infantile faith is kept alive by seeming miracles. And believe me, if there aren't any, they'll make some.

Now that's our text today. We're coming to stage three type of unbelief, bottom rung on the ladder unbelief. This is the unbelief that says the person doesn't convince me, the words don't convince me but the miracles might. And this is what we're going to see in verses 43 to 54, Christ meeting the demands of the unbelief that says, "I need a miracle." And how does He meet that demand? He does a miracle. You say, "Why?" Cause that's the way He is, He's gracious. And whatever the measure of your unbelief, Christ meets the demand that your unbelief makes.

Now let me illustrate it just by summarizing. The first kind of unbelief characterized the disciples and John the Baptist. They only needed to see the beautiful person of Christ, they dropped everything and followed Him. And there are a lot of people who came to Christ that way. There are many people who have been just completely responsive to the beautiful person of Christ. And that's enough for them. And secondly, we see the Samaritans in John 4. It wasn't the person of Christ, the woman at the well didn't think He was anything, just a Jew. What is He doing talking to her? But it was His words that convinced her? But as we come to our passage today and we see the beginning of the Galilean ministry, we come to the third stage. The Galileans, the person of Christ didn't believe them...He had been raised there, right? He had grown up there. Even His words weren't the issue. What they wanted was signs and wonders, verse 48, "Except Ye...that's a plural...see signs and wonders, you won't believe," you're a third-stage bottom level type unbelief. I can't go on without a footnote here. There's another kind of unbelief and that's the unbelief that doesn't believe anything, any time, anyway. Now the disciples and John the Baptist, they had one kind of unbelief that demanded the person of Christ. The Samaritans had another kind that demanded the words of Christ. The Galileans had another kind of unbelief characteristically or illustratively that demanded the miracles.

But there's one other group in this situation and they had every kind and they didn't believe any of it. And that was the Jews in Jerusalem and Judea. They had miracles, the person of Christ and the words of Christ and said no to everything. In fact, they concluded that what He did He did by the power of whom? Satan, Beelzebub, That's the kind of unbelief that stays unbelief. You might ask yourself, "How was your unbelief broken down? Was it the beautiful person of Christ that just shattered you? Did you just seeing Him dying there in undying love, shedding His blood for you and that was enough? Or was it His words? Did you have to hear Him speak and did you hear Him talk about heaven and hell and living water and bread that would satisfy forever? And did you hear Him talk about forgiveness and guilt? And did you read in the Bible and did you read about all of those promises and the abundant life and everything for the one who is a child of God? Is that what convinced you, the words of Christ?

I had more collection of Bibles, I had to fill one corner of the garage with quarterlies. I was in Sunday School constantly. I saw the person of Jesus Christ. I heard the words of Christ, I could rattle off Scripture. My kind of unbelief demanded something else, I was third-stage type and I needed a sign and God gave me one. One day when I was coming home from college, we were riding in a car

across the highway in Alabama going 75 miles an hour, it was time for God to give me a sign, and God exited me from the car. At 75 the car flipped and I flew out the top of the car, flew through the air and hit the highway at 75 miles an hour. Fortunately I hit in the best place you could possibly hit, I hit where I was constructed to hit and I slid about 110 yards down the highway. The state of Alabama made quite an impression on me, needless to say. But 64 square inches of my back was removed a half-an-inch deep and I had third degree burns from the friction all over my body. I slid down that highway totally conscious, my eyes open all the time, and beside me was a car spinning around with five kids in it. And I never lost consciousness. And finally I stopped sliding and rolled, tore up myself and stood up and walked off the highway, still totally conscious having gone through this. Not a broken bone in my body and I went 110 yards out of a car right down a highway, straight down the highway, even stayed in my own lane. But I got on the side of that highway and I just heard a voice in my heart and it said, "John MacArthur, I want your life, this is God." It was just that simple, I just kept hearing, "I know, God, You did it to me, You want my life." I said, "Okay, God, that's sign enough. I accept that. I can't fight it."

Some people God shows the beauty of Christ to and they believe. Other people He talks to and they believe. But some people He has to grab by the back of the neck and hit them on the pavement and then they'd look up and say, "Did You want me, God?" That was me. I had that deep kind of unbelief that demands a real sign, a real miracle. And God brought me through that without a broken bone in my body because He had things for me to do that I was going to need the full use of my body, and He knew that.

And some people, that's the way it is. That's the foxhole conversion, maybe. That's the conversion that comes about when God performs a miracle to someone you love who's dying, or something that's just devastating. And even more so, all the miracles of the Bible are great evidence of this. Daniel Webster made the statement and I'm quoting, "I believe Jesus Christ to be the Son of God, the miracles which He wrought established this in my mind," end quote. It was the miracles that convinced him. He was third-stage unbelief, needed signs. I don't know if you did, I did.

Now we're going to see a man today in this story and we're going to go through it briefly, who moved from third-stage deep unbelief that needs a sign, right to the top to the kind of belief where he finally just rested in the person of Jesus Christ. We're going to see Jesus Christ take this man, this typical Galilean who He uses as an illustration of the type of Galilean unbelief that needs a sign and we're going to see Jesus lift him right up the ladder to full faith. And it's a beautiful thing and you've got to see it, it's almost between the lines. I want you to see three things in this passage. We want you to see Jesus contemplating unbelief, then Jesus confronting unbelief and then Jesus conquering unbelief.

Jesus contemplating it, as He goes to Galilee here it's in His mind that He's going to face unbelief, notice verse 43, "After two days He departed from there," that is from Sychar in Samaria where He

had been for two days, look back at verse 40 and it says He abode there two days. "Now after those two days He departs from there and He goes to Galilee," and really, that's where He was going there to begin with. Go back to verse 3 of chapter 4, He left Judea, Jerusalem, Judea where He had been for almost a year, and He departed again into...what?...Galilee. He went there but in the meantime, verse 4 He must need go through some area. Samaria was a parenthesis in the ministry of Christ. It was, would you please, a prophetic interlude because Christ came initially and told His disciples to go only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Christ came to the Jew first. His ministry began with Israel. He came as Messiah to Israel. He came to reach the Jew to see who He was and then through Israel's belief to reach the world. He came to Israel.

But lest the Jew become thoughtful that perhaps he is isolated and only the one to receive God's blessing, right at the beginning of Christ's ministry He shows the true nature of His ministry by revealing Himself to Gentiles right at the very beginning of His ministry. And this little Samaritan interlude is a prophecy of the ultimate Saviorhood of Christ for the whole world, see. And you have that very statement right there in verse 42 at the end of the verse, "This is indeed Christ the Savior of...what?, not Israel but...the world." So here is a little prophetic interlude thrown right in the middle of His Jewish ministry at Judea and Galilee which were Jewish areas and slapped in the middle this ministry of Samaria to show the true character of the ministry of Christ was a worldwide ministry. That's exactly what Paul meant when he said, "I'm not ashamed of the gospel of Christ for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believes. Yes, to the Jew first, but also to the Greek, or Gentile."

And so, here you have a little prophetic vignette in Samaria to show those disciples that it really didn't matter where the white harvest was, boys, whether it's Jewish harvest or Gentile harvest, if it's a white harvest, go harvest it. And this is kind of strange doctrine for Israel at that point. And those disciples must have been a little bit thoughtful about what was going on, the Messiah of Israel caring about harvesting Gentile converts. But this is a picture of what His ministry was. He came not only to be the Messiah to Israel but through that Messiahship in Israel to be the Savior of the world, and that He revealed already. But now He's back to His Jewish ministry and moving into Galilee in verse 43. He's ready to establish Himself again in this northern Jewish community of Galilee from which He came, for Nazareth was a town in Galilee. And He was raised there.

Now as we come to verse 44 we come to the problem verse of the passage. And we could spend a lot of time, we could spend several lectures on everybody's opinion of verse 44. It reads this way, "For Jesus...that is He went to Galilee for this reason...For Jesus Himself testified that a prophet has no honor in his own country." Now the problem with that verse is this, if His home country was Galilee and He knew that a prophet has no honor in his own country, why did He go there because He knew He'd get no honor? It's a little confusing. It almost sounds like He went to Galilee because He knew He'd get no honor there, which is strange. Why would He do that?

Some commentators and I mean there must be 35 different opinions, I read at least twelve this week of what this is trying to say, it sounds like Jesus went there because He wouldn't get any honor, which is a rather strange use of the statement. And I'm not even going to go into all of the possible solutions. Let must summarize it by skipping through some of the other things and just saying this, the proverb itself is very simple. A prophet has no honor in his own country, that's very simple. That's like familiarity brings contempt. That's like, you know, the only experts are the ones who come from out of town. There's no such thing as a homegrown expert, you always import somebody to be an expert. This is the same thing. There's not going to be any honor for Christ where He grew up because people are going to say, "Ah, that's nobody, that's that Jesus, I remember Him when He was over there pounding stuff in His father's carpentry...what does He have to say to me?" See.

And so, Jesus is saying, "A prophet has no honor in his own country, that's why I'm going there." Well that's a little strange. Let me give you a thought here. I think and I say that because I do think that, I'm not sure anybody else does, but I think that He was saying this prophetically. I think He was saying, "I'm going there to fulfill the truth of that proverb." And also you'll remember back in Isaiah it says He was to be despised and rejected of men. And I think Jesus Christ went where He went knowing full well that He would be responded to by unbelief. He contemplated unbelief when He went to Galilee. He says I know I'm going there to face rejection.

And so I think there are two ways to look at this. I think from one standpoint He knew He would bring this to pass and so He's saying, "I'm going there just to show you that that proverb is true." And, boy, it happened. He went in to Nazareth and that's where this proverb was fulfilled. He went in there into Nazareth and you remember what happened, He could do no mighty works there because of their unbelief. Not only that, Luke 4 tells us that they took Him on a hill outside of Nazareth and they were going to pick Him up and throw Him off a cliff to kill Him. But miraculously He just passed through and they didn't know where He went. And so in Nazareth that proverb was true. He literally fulfilled it positively when He went to Nazareth cause He couldn't do anything, they totally rejected Him and gave Him no honor.

But I think there's also a negative thought here. Maybe one of these or maybe both of them are true. And that is this, He is saying I'm going into Galilee to show you that that prophecy is true. But on the other hand, He was going into Galilee to show you that He power over that prophecy or that proverb. In other words, though He was truly rejected and though He was truly spurned in Nazareth, in the rest of Galilee He had a fantastic ministry. So He both fulfilled it from the positive standpoint, He was indeed without honor in His own town. But He also showed that it had no power over Him and as in Galilee itself He was received with honor. In fact, He was initially received right there in verse 45 when He was come into Galilee, the Galileans received Him. It doesn't mean they believed in Him at all, they simply had seen the miracles He did at Jerusalem and they liked the miracle worker to be around and so they received Him.

And so, in a sense there's a positive thought that Jesus' work in Galilee would prove this statement. And there's also the negative thought that Jesus' work in Galilee would disprove this statement. And so it was prophetic in that sense. In Galilee He had a tremendous ministry. His ministry in Galilee lasted about 16 months. Now John only gives us two incidents out of it, this one of the nobleman and the five thousand feeding, that's the only two. But the other gospels give us the full 16-month ministry. But He had a great ministry there. It was there that He healed a demon-possessed man who believed in Him. It was there that He healed Peter's mother-in-law and many others who believed in Him. It was there that He healed a leper. It was there that He was received as Messiah. It was there that He healed a paralytic. It was there that He actually healed multitudes in Galilee, a centurion servant, Jairus' daughter, a widow's son, a dumb man, blind, the woman who touched Him. In fact He healed two blind men. He had a tremendous ministry in Galilee and many believed in Him. So in that sense He showed that that proverb wasn't true. But on the other hand, in His own hometown in Nazareth it was true. So His ministry in Galilee was a mixture of faith and unbelief. And so as He was moving into that He was contemplating this.

He did many other miracles incidently too in Galilee. The feeding of the 5,000, the feeding of the 4,000, stilling of the tempest, walking on the water, all of that was done in Galilee. Because, you see, the character of the Galileans' faith basically was this kind of faith that demands a miracle. That's exactly what He means in verse 48 when He says collectively of these Galileans..."You need signs and wonders." And He gave them to them in this Galilean ministry that lasted 16 months, one miracle right after another. Some believed but others who did not were made responsible because the demands of their unbelief had been met. And if they didn't accept those demands, they were without excuse.

So He had an initial reception into Galilee in verse 45. And this wasn't faith in Him as a person, this was just...Hey, we've got a miracle working coming to town, this will be great, so let's let Him come. They just received Him, that's all. But He was going to face unbelief and He knew it. Jesus confronting unbelief, verse 46 yo 49.

Now here's the introduction of an unbelieving man. And he's not totally unbelieving, he's got a little tiny smidgen of faith somewhere. This is really an illustration of typical Galilean unbelief that needs a miracle to convince it. Verse 46, "So Jesus came again into Cana of Galilee," that's the same place where He had made the water wine which was the first miracle in Galilee. "And there was a certain nobleman," basilikos, royal officer, courtier of the king from the root word which means king. "And his son was sick at Capernaum." Now Capernaum is somewhere around 16, 18, 20 miles from Cana.

Now Jesus arrives in Cana and there's a certain nobleman who has a sick son at Capernaum. And this nobleman is concerned about this son, obviously. Now the fact that he was a nobleman is interesting. Whose nobleman was he? Well as a king's officer which is what basilikosbasically

means, likely he was one of Herod's courtiers. Now by Herod I mean Herod the tetrarch, Herod Antipas, not Herod the Great, just a little history, very brief. When Christ was born Herod the Great, the Idumaean king was reigning. But he died right after Christ's birth, remember it was after he died that Christ could come back out of hiding. After Herod died he divided up everything among his four sons, Philip, Archelaus, and Herod and somebody else, who escapes me. But Herod Antipas, the son of Herod the Great, just had one portion and his portion was Galilee and Peraea, the northern portion. And he's the Herod, you know, who finally got John's head and he's the Herod whom you read about all through the gospel accounts and who is around when Christ dies and all these things, this is the Herod that it's talking about there, not Herod the Great who has already died. This is his son.

Now Herod his son was not a king really. He was simply a tetrarch or a ruler. And as such he didn't deserve the title of king but the people gave it to him cause of his father and because he had the same name and they chose to call him King Herod. So this nobleman perhaps was one of King Herod's courtiers, Herod Antipas. And he came to this carpenter to ask help, this carpenter Jesus Christ. He had a son who was very ill and so he traveled this almost 20 miles to get to Christ.

Verse 47 says, "And when he had heard that Jesus was come out of Judea into Galilee, he went unto Him." He comes down this almost 20 mile trip, "And he besought Him that He could come down...where?...to Capernaum from Cana, take the journey back again, and heal his son for he was at the point of death." The son is dying, the nobleman says, "Come down where my son is and heal him." Now he had a little tiny bit of faith. He had this bottom-level faith that needs a miracle. Now watch it, he had perhaps heard of the miracles of Christ in Jerusalem, undoubtedly he had. Maybe he had seen some, maybe he had been there for Passover. But he had that kind of...that kind of unbelief that will except the miracle thing. And he was just bordering on tiny little baby faith and he thought, "It's kind of desperation thing but I'm going to go down there," and he swallowed his pride because he was a desperate man and he a great nobleman of the king's court went to seek help from a carpenter. He swallowed all of his pride and self-esteem. And the reason he did was because he had a dying boy that he loved with all his heart like any normal father would and he saw in Jesus Christ perhaps the desperation hope for life for that little child and he went after Him.

And there's a tremendous truth here and I hope you see it. If it weren't for a dying son, he would never have bothered with Jesus. He didn't have any great spiritual longings to know the Messiah. He wasn't all excited about spiritual truth. He wasn't all blessed about getting his sins forgiven and his guilt released. He had no thoughts of that. He had a dying child and he wanted Jesus to take care of that child if He could. He had a need and that's the only reason he came to Jesus Christ and at that it was strictly an emotional physical need. But that's a tremendous thing because nobody ever came to Christ, get it now, nobody ever came to Christ who didn't come because they were driven by a need. Jesus said that in Matthew 9:12 when He looked at those Pharisees and says, "Listen, I didn't come to take care of the well people because they that are well have no need of a physician." Until a man

knows he's sick, until a man has a crying need that eats his heart out, he had no reason to go to Jesus Christ. Here's a man who had a need. And I imagine there have been many people who have come to Jesus Christ because of a dying son, don't you? A dying daughter, the death of a mother, the death of a father, physical need. Jesus uses a lot of things. Here's a good statement, you might remember it, "Affliction...listen...affliction is often God's medicine." And many times affliction is used to bring somebody to Christ.

And so, here comes this man and he's kind of a conglomeration, he's just kind of a...I'd like to get together with him when I get to heaven, he's just kind of an interesting guy. He's kind of a mixture of little tiny baby faith and unbelief. He's coming with desperate thoughts. And he illustrates certain types of faith and I just want to mention them briefly. He's a good illustration of what I call fearing faith. It's a kind of faith that says, "Oh, I don't know if He can do it but I hope He can," see. It's the kind of faith that says, "God, I'm in trouble, if You're up there do something." It's the kind of faith that isn't but sounds like it is. It's that fearing faith, it's more hope than faith, you know? And it's faith but it's a start, at least it's 20-mile faith, right? It got his feet moving whether or not it did anything for his head, it got his feet moving, desperate kind of faith...if You're there I'm going to try it...see. It doesn't take much faith to get a start...feeble kind of faith, fearing faith.

The second kind of faith, and I just mentioned it, is feeble faith. And this is interesting because he said, "Jesus, You've got to come down there to Capernaum to heal my son." In other words, "Jesus, I realize that You might be able to do miracles but You can't do them at a distance. You've got to be where he is." You know, Jairus, remember Jairus in Mark 5, he had the same problem, he said, "Oh," he says, "come down and lay Your hands on my daughter." Jesus incidently didn't go down to Capernaum with this man because if He had of He would have exceeded to his feeble faith and He wanted to transmit him to a higher level, so He never went. We'll see what He did in a minute.

And you can contrast...there's a beautiful contrast to this kind of feeble faith. Matthew 8:5, here's another very...almost parallel incident with a different kind of faith, this is fantastic faith. Contrast this with the feeble faith of this nobleman. Matthew 8:5, "When Jesus was entered into Capernaum there came unto Him a centurion," this is a Roman soldier, he said, "Lord, my servant lies at home sick of the palsy, grievously tormented." Here's another centurion and he wants Jesus to do something. "And Jesus said unto him, `I will come and heal him.'" I'll come down to your house and heal him, Jesus says. Jesus...fantastic reality. Listen to this, "The Centurion answered and said, `Lord, I'm not worthy You should come under my roof, but speak the word only and my servant shall be healed.'" You see, Jesus in both cases did the very opposite of what they wanted. This man didn't need Jesus to come to his house and Jesus says, "I'll come to your house." The other man wanted Jesus to come to his house, and I'm not coming to your house.

And notice what happened here. Later on down Jesus said in verse 10, "When Jesus heard this He marveled and said to him, `Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no not in israel.'"

That's the kind of faith that says, "Lord, You don't have to come down to my house, just say the word and my servant will be all right." And you contrast that kind of faith with this feeble faith where the man says You've got to come down there. And Jairus whose faith..."You've got to put Your hands..." Remember somebody else that has that kind of faith and that's Martha and we'll see her in a minute.

It was fearing faith, feeble faith, he illustrates a third kind of faith that I call fractional faith. This is the kind of faith that says, "God, You can do some things but some things are a little tough." You know, it's like the difficult we do immediately, the impossible takes a little longer. God can do some things but they can't believe Him for the great things. You know what this man is saying in effect? He's saying, "Come down and heal my son for he's at the point of death." You know what that's saying? That's saying, "I can believe that maybe You could help him when he's sick, but if he dies, that's hopeless." Remember Martha, "O Lord," John 11, "if You'd been here my brother wouldn't have died," see. She could believe He'd heal the sickness, not raise him from the dead...that's too much. So he had a fractional faith, it was strictly isolated to certain things that God could do and couldn't do, see.

You say, "Isn't that strange?" That's very, very...it's very normal for most Christians. We really believe...we say, "O God does wonderful miracles," and then the little practical things of life, we never believe Him for things.

So here is this man and he's a very interesting combination of fearing, feeble, fractional faith. And Jesus Christ takes him where he is and step by step just lifts him up to full faith. Verse 48, "Jesus says unto him," and the "ye" in the statement to come is collective, it's a plural and it's including all the Galileans standing around there, "except ye see signs and wonders ye will not believe." He read their hearts. He says, "Your kind of unbelief demands miracles, your stage-three deep type unbelief." So He's going to do a miracle cause that's what He's got to do to meet their unbelief. And Jesus always meets the demands of unbelief. Listen, if you don't come to Jesus Christ it's not because Christ has not sufficiently met the demands of your unbelief, it's because you willingly, wantingly have said no to such meeting of such demands. And Jesus doesn't run down to Capernaum because that would have left that man in that same kind of faith for the time being, Jesus meets him right there and moves him up one step by doing this. And this is just thrilling.

Verse 49, "The nobleman saith unto Him, `Sir, come down before my child dies.'" This is his fractional faith, You've got to get there when he's sick that You can do something about his sickness, not about his death. And then we see unbelief conquered. We've seen unbelief contemplated, confronted, now look at verse 50 and to the end of 54 and we'll see unbelief conquered. This is exciting. Watch how Jesus conquers his unbelief. "Jesus saith unto him, `Go thy way, thy son liveth.' And while Jesus was talking right there, the omniscient, omnipresent power that Christ had was 20 miles away touching the body of that child. And He never had to take a step.

You say, "That's hard to believe." Not so hard, look at this man, what does it say in the middle of verse 50, "And the man...what?...believed...what?...the word, the word, the word. He believed the word that Jesus spoke unto him." And how do you know he believed? "Because he went his way." Now do you notice this, now catch it here. Christ has taken him from third-stage faith and moved him up to the second rung. See, he came and he needed a miracle to believe but now all of a sudden he doesn't need a miracle anymore, he believes the words of Christ, doesn't he? Do you see it? Christ says he's alive. And he says, "Oh, goodbye," and takes off. He hasn't even seen a miracle. Christ didn't leave him in that kind of faith, He moved him up.

You say, "Well what made him believe?" I suppose the tremendous presence of Christ and what He said. He just believed Him. And, of course, God fostered that faith in his heart. But he was taken from that bottom level that needs miracles and he was put on that second level, see. And he believed the word, didn't he? He believed the words of Christ. And he took off. That's all he needed. You see, he's moving up the ladder. Christ starts at that bottom level of deep unbelief that needs a miracle and He's going to take care of that, the miracle is there. It's happened. The man hasn't seen it yet but the man's taking one stage up and he believes the words of Christ that it really happened.

Verse 51 tells us that the miracle is verified. "And as he was now going down his servants met him and told him, saying, `Thy son liveth.'" He's alive. He's doing fine. The miracle was verified. But better than verifying the miracle, get this one, was verifying the miracle worker in verse 52. "So the nobleman inquired of them the hour when he began to improve." "When did the boy start getting better?" "And they said unto him, `Yesterday at the seventh hour...Roman time, seven o'clock in the evening...yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him.'" Now some people have had all kinds of problems with "yesterday" they think...well what kind of a deal is this, the father just lay around loafing, why didn't he hurry home? Well don't forget, at seven o'clock in the evening he had begun an eight-hour journey, it was about an eight-hour journey if he had slept for a couple of hours he wouldn't get there till the next morning early. So here he is arriving in the morning early, his servants meet him and say he's alive. And he says what time did he start getting better? And they said seven o'clock. Aha, verse 53, "So the father knew that it was at the same hour in which Jesus said unto him, `Thy son liveth,' and he himself believed."

Now wait a minute, we just saw that he already believed in verse 50. How come he believed again? Isn't a belief a continuing thing? Right. You say, "What's going on here?" Well I believe this. I think you've got a different kind of believing in verse 53 than you've got in verse 50. I think in verse 50 he believed the words of Christ, and I think in verse 53 he came full scope right to the tip top of faith and he believed in the person and revelation of who Christ was. He believed. And he shared it with his whole house and they believed, too. He turned in to an evangelist just like that.

So here's Jesus, He takes somebody from bottom level unbelief, moves him up to believe His words and then finally in full face he believes. That's got to imply more than believing His words cause that's already been stated, right? I believe he accepted Jesus Christ for who He was in all of His revelation as Messiah and Son of God and his whole house.

The final step...the final step. He already had believed the miracles, feebly, but he believed them enough to walk away 20 miles back to Capernaum. He had already accepted the miracle end of it. He believed the words of Christ. There was nothing left to believe except the person of Christ. And here we have full faith in the person of Christ.

Then verse 54, footnote, "This is again the second miracle, the first one was the wedding and the wine that Jesus did when He was come out of Judea into Galilee."

This morning as we close, let me ask you this: where is your faith? Better than that, let me ask you this: where is your unbelief? What does your unbelief demand? Does your unbelief demand miracles? You just saw one, what else do you need? Does your unbelief demand the words of Christ? You just head them. And you can read them every time you open the pages of the New Testament. Does your unbelief demand just the beauty of the person of Christ, read about Him right here. Whatever your unbelief demands, it's here...it's here. Jesus meets it.

If your unbelief demands the person of Christ, meet Him...His matchless person. If your unbelief demands the words of Christ, hear them, His matchless words. If your unbelief demands miracles, see them they are matchless also. Jesus always meets the demands of unbelief and how you respond to His meeting your demands determines your destiny. You have no excuse. Whatever your unbelief demands Jesus has met it.

Our Father, we thank You this morning for this truth.

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