

Saving Faith in a Herodian Household

Scripture: John 4:46-54

Code: 43-24

We come now to the Word of God and it is a privilege for us to hear the very voice of God through His Word. Let's open to the fourth chapter of John's gospel. We are wrapping up this fourth chapter, looking at the final segment, the final story in chapter 4 from verses 46 to 54. It is a miracle story about healing. It is designed as would be consistent with John's purpose, to demonstrate the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ through His supernatural power. But it is also a story about believing. It is a story particularly about believing and what it means to believe.

Let me remind you of the story by reading it, starting in verse 46. Speaking of our Lord Jesus, it says, "Therefore He came again to Cana of Galilee where He had made the water wine. And there was a royal official whose son was sick at Capernaum. When he heard that Jesus had come out of Judea into Galilee, he went to Him and was imploring Him to come down and heal his son, for he was at the point of death. So Jesus said to him, 'Unless you people see signs and wonders, you simply will not believe.' The royal official said to Him, 'Sir, come down before my child dies.' Jesus said to him, 'Go, your son lives.' The man believed the word that Jesus spoke to him and started off. As he was now going down, his slaves met him saying that his son was living. So he inquired of them the hour when he began to get better. Then they said to him, 'Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him.' So the father knew that it was at that hour in which Jesus said to him, 'Your son lives.' And he himself believed and his whole household. This is again a second sign that Jesus performed when He had come out of Judea into Galilee." The first sign: the wedding at Cana, the miracle of making water into wine. This is the second, the first recorded in John chapter 2.

This is a miracle story. Not unusual in the gospels. Matthew, Mark, Luke and John are full of miracle stories. Jesus' ministry began in the south, in Judea, the southern part of the nation Israel, and He did many miracles in Judea. In fact, verse 45 says that when He came to Galilee, the Galileans received Him, having seen all the things that He did in Jerusalem at the feast, for they themselves also went to the feast. So around the Passover, down in the area surrounding Jerusalem, Jesus had done many miracles. And, of course, at the Passover season and the subsequent festival after the Passover, the Galileans were there as they always were at this great event in the calendar year of Israel, and so they saw the miracles of Jesus. He did them in Judea in the beginning of His ministry. He did them in Judea at the end of His ministry. And in the middle of that three-year period of ministry, for about sixteen months or so, He was in Galilee and that's where we find Him in verse 46. He is in Galilee, verse 45 says, He came to Galilee, the Galileans received Him, they received Him in the same way that the people of Jerusalem received Him, as it says in chapter 2:23, they believed in Him as a

miracle worker. They received Him as a miracle worker but you remember in John 2:23 to 25 it said, "Jesus didn't commit Himself to them because He knew their hearts and He knew that that kind of faith was a superficial faith. They believed in Him as a miracle worker. And I want to establish that that was universal. There is nowhere in Matthew, Mark, Luke or John where the leadership who rejected Him as Savior and Messiah ever questioned His miracle power.

No one ever questioned that. It was impossible to question that. The miracles were too common, and too complete, and too unmistakably divine and there were far too many of them to deny. And so it was that kind of reception that we saw in chapter 2:23, the kind that Nicodemus gave Him. Nicodemus is an illustration of someone who saw in Him a miracle worker and Nicodemus said, "Nobody can do what you do unless God is with him." So that was the same kind of attitude, the same level of belief that you find in Galilee. They believed in Him as a miracle worker.

And I would just suggest to you that that's a rather common way to believe in Jesus, to believe that He is a miracle worker. And there's plenty of evidence, of course, for that. He came and essentially banished disease from Palestine for the duration of His ministry. The record is contained in the gospels, the four gospels, for anyone to read. There's never been a successful detraction from the testimony of the gospel writers. There has never been an effective assault on the miracles of Jesus that has somehow been able to debunk them in any way because it's just too obvious, too many eyewitnesses, too many places, too many times, too many unique and differing events.

In fact, the miracles of Jesus were so ubiquitous that at the end of the gospel of John, the very final statement, 21:25 says, "And there are also many other things which Jesus did which if they were written in detail, I suppose that even the world itself would not contain the books that would be written."

So what you have is a very extensive record of the miracles of Jesus in the gospels, but that's a drop in the bucket compared to with what could have been written and the details of which would have literally filled the world with books. So here is one of those accounts of one of those many, many miracles that Jesus did. But this one specifically suits John's purpose because this is a miracle about believing, about believing. In fact, that comes up in verse 48 where Jesus says, "Unless you people see signs and wonders, you simply will not believe." Comes up in verse 50, "The man believed the Word that Jesus spoke to him." It reappears in verse 53 at the end, "He himself believed and his whole household." It is a story of a miracle but it is more than that, it is about believing. And I simply remind you that the purpose for the writing of the gospel of John, according to chapter 20 verse 31, is that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God and that believing you might have life in His name. So John's gospel is the gospel of believing...the Greek word believe, *pisteuo* is used about a hundred times in the gospel, and almost all of those times it has to do with believing for salvation. John's message is against the background of Judaism which is a system of religion like every other system of religion in the world, that believes you gain heaven by something you do. Oh

faith is a part of it, but not all of it. These are work systems. They had to do with ceremonies and rituals and routines and forms of morality and obedience and kindness and good deeds. And the accumulated effect of the goodness of a person is what gains heaven. This is contrary to all of that, and that, by the way, is inimitable to every false religious system on the planet. There are only two kinds of religion that exist. One is the religion of human achievement, and the other is the religion of faith, and that's the true gospel. Everything else is some mixture of believing and doing and that kind of religion fills hell, populates hell. The only religion that populates heaven is that which is connected to faith and faith alone, for by grace are you saved through faith is Paul's summation of that in Ephesians 2.

And we've already learned this in the gospel of John, chapter 1 verse 12, "As many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God." How do you become a child of God? By receiving Christ. What does that mean? "Even to those who believe in His name." Believing is receiving, fully believing in His name. What do you mean His name? All that He is, everything that is true about Him. That's the idea of the use of name in the language of Scripture. When God says, "My name is I AM that I AM," He means My name is who I AM. And when you say you believe in the name of Jesus Christ, that means to say that you believe in everything that He is and does. You believe fully in all the gospel.

So, to become a child of God is simply a matter of believing in His name. In the third chapter we saw it again in that familiar sixteenth verse, "For God so loved the world He gave His only begotten Son that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life." It's not connected to works, rituals, ceremonies, accomplishment, morality, goodness...it's believing, believing. He who believes...verse 18...in Him is not judged. He who does not believe has been judged already because he has not believe in the name of the *monogenes*, the primary one, the supreme one who is the Son of God. John 3:36 ends the chapter, "He who believes in the Son has eternal life. He who does not obey the Son will not see life." You believe, you have life; you fail to believe which is an act of obedience because you're commanded to believe, and you perish.

We find this emphasis all through the gospel of John, just a couple of other illustrations. In the eighth chapter and verse 21, He said to them, Jesus did, "I go away and you will seek Me and you will die in your sin. Where I'm going you can't come." You're not going to get to heaven. You're going to die in your sin, you're going to perish.

Why is that the case? How is it that that will happen? That's the question. Verse 24, "Therefore I said to you, you will die in your sins for unless you believe that I AM." In other words, believe in who I AM, "You will die in your sins."

In the tenth chapter and the twenty-second verse, this is so very foundational to everything that is true about the Christian gospel. Chapter 10 verse 22, "The Feast of Dedication took place at Jerusalem in

the winter. Jesus is walking in the Temple in the portico of Solomon,” one of the porches inside the Temple. “The Jews gather around Him,” these would be the leaders of Israel, were saying, “How long will You keep us in suspense? If You’re the Christ, tell us plainly.”

“Jesus answered them, ‘I told you and you do not believe. The works that I do in My Father’s name, these testify of Me.’” What else can I do? I’ve done all these works, eliminating disease, casting out demons, doing natural miracles, raising dead people. You will not believe, that’s the problem. Verse 26, “You do not believe because you are not of My sheep. My sheep hear My voice, I know them. They follow Me and I give eternal life to them and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of My hand.”

You don’t believe. My sheep hear Me and they believe. You refuse to believe. You will die in your sins, you will perish. This is repeatedly the message of the gospel of John, believe and die, and perish, forever in hell. Disbelieve and die and perish forever in hell. Believe in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and spend forever in the glory of heaven. Eternal salvation comes to those and only those who believe in the full true person and work of Christ, the true gospel, not a truncated gospel, not a superficial gospel, not a shallow gospel, not an inadequate gospel, not a false gospel, but the true gospel...the true gospel.

A very instructive text on this, just to look at for a moment, would be the eleventh chapter of Hebrews. Turn to that chapter because the eleventh chapter of Hebrews is the faith chapter in the Bible and we have here an important definition of what it means to believe. You know, it’s very popular to say today I’m a believer, I believe, I have strong beliefs, I’m a person of faith. Sometimes people say, “I’m very spiritual,” meaning they believe in certain things. And when we talk about believing in something, we can be talking in very nebulous sort of intuitive self-designed and devised kind of notions. But that is not how the Bible describes saving faith.

First of all, verse 38, the end of chapter 10, quotes that great Old Testament principle of Habakkuk 2:4, “The just shall live by faith. It’s always been that way. Salvation was always by faith, never by works in the Old Testament or the New...the just shall live by faith. And here it is repeated in verse 38 by the writer of Hebrews. “My righteous ones shall live by faith.” Verse 39, “We’re not of those who shrink back to destruction but of those who have faith to the persevering of the soul.” You come to the truth, you either have faith in it to the salvation of your soul, or you walk away from it and you literally shrink back to destruction.

What kind of faith are we talking about here? Well it’s defined for us in the next verse, chapter 11 verse 1. “Now faith is...now faith is,” here’s the definition, okay? “It is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.” So we know right away faith involves something we don’t have and faith involves something we can’t see. You remember when I read 1 Peter 1 it says that we love Christ but we’ve not seen Him. We don’t see Him now. “But having not seen Him, we love Him.” Faith

involves something not yet attained, something not seen. That's faith.

If you just took that, you could be misled because there are lots of things in life for which we exercise faith, things that we can't see, things that we hope for, things that we aren't sure about. I just went through a surgery on my hand, they put me to sleep. That's the last thing I know. I do know the doctor wrote a big happy face on my right hand and put "yes" so he didn't do something to my left hand. I trusted he could find the happy face in the OR. We all know the story about the people who had the wrong leg cut off. Human faith...look, human faith has two components. One is, it's based on experience...it's based on experience. In other words, you know that that usually goes right. It's like when you go to a restaurant, you look at the menu and you eat what they give you, you have no idea who's in the kitchen or what they're doing. You assume that this is what you ordered and it's safe.

Why? Because people do it all the time and it generally is. But it isn't always safe. We've all had food poisoning and we've all seen those terrible reports on the news about what people in the kitchen are doing to the food before they serve it. But experience tells us that it...you can trust this but sometimes it's wrong...sometimes it's wrong. And sometimes it's fatally wrong. Some people go into surgery and they never come out. Some people are taking in things to their body that they think would be okay for them and it kills them. We understand that.

We're not talking about that kind of faith. We're not kind of talking about a human kind of faith based upon a repeated experience. We're talking about something for which you have had no experience. You are putting your eternal destiny in the hands of the Lord Jesus Christ and you have never done that before. You don't have that experience to build on.

So why do you do that? Why would you say no to your sin, no to your own ambition, no to your own will, no to everything that you cherish and everything you want to do? No to all the things that delight your fallen nature and embrace Christ fully? Why? Well, because that's the only way to get to heaven. You haven't seen heaven. You don't know anything about heaven other than what's revealed in the Scripture. You...contrary to what you read in silly books, people don't go to heaven and come back. You're...you're taking a step that is the most serious step you've ever taken in your life and it literally is your life now and forever and you have no experience. So you better be sure this is a move that you really want to make. You need to know that it's not going to go wrong. And that's what verse 1 is saying...faith is the assurance, faith is the conviction...I want to talk about those two words...faith is assurance, and faith is conviction.

What do you mean assurance? The Greek word *hupostasis* literally to stand under, foundation, it speaks of a foundation. You're sitting on a concrete foundation. It's not subject to whim. It's not subjective. It's objective. It's concrete, it's full of rebar. So we believe in something that is absolutely firmly established and concrete. What is that? The Word of God, right? The Word of God. We believe in the promises of God. We believe in the commands of God. We believe in the truth of God as

revealed in Holy Scripture. So when we talk here about the assurance of something hoped for, it's not assurance in a subjective sense. It's not some personal feeling or intuition. Faith is the foundation, the concrete certainty about truth which comes down then to the truth of the Word of God which then focuses on the reliability of the gospel...the reliability of the gospel, the truth of the gospel contained in Scripture. We're talking about a certainty.

And although we haven't been to heaven and back, the One who dwells in heaven has sent us full and complete and accurate information about it. Everything we need to know is revealed on the pages of the reliable Word of the living God. And so it is a firm, certain, concrete assurance in which we believe, and that then leads us to the second word, conviction...conviction. Conviction goes right alongside assurance, conviction. That means something that we hold to with absolute commitment.

So when we talk about believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, this is not pie in the sky, this is not some kind of esoteric feeling, this isn't some Jesus of our own imagination. This is to we believe in the absolute veracity and reliability of Holy Scripture and the gospel contained in that Scripture, to the point that we will bank our everlasting life on the truth of Holy Scripture and it becomes for us the dominating conviction that drives our living and informs our hope. That's the kind of faith we're talking about, a real faith in truth as revealed in Scripture that focuses on the person of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now we are all called to believe that gospel truth, based on that firm foundation producing that strong conviction. Not to do so is the ultimate human tragedy and it is an eternal tragedy at that because everyone will live forever in consciousness, conscious joy or conscious torment. John then takes up the issue of believing as the issue of all issues, believing in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and all that He is, building your life in time and eternity on the firm foundation, on the conviction that Holy Scripture containing the gospel is absolutely true...absolutely true.

Earlier in the book of Hebrews, and this might be instructive for us for just a moment, people are warned by the writer of Hebrews about the danger of coming to the edge of believing and walking back. Look at chapter 2 verse 2, we read, "If the Word is spoken through angels," that refers to the Law of Moses, "the Word spoken through angels proved unalterable and every transgression and disobedience received a just penalty," and that was the nature of the Mosaic Law, you break it and you're punished. If that, if violating the Law of Moses had that kind of consequence, how will we escape if we neglect so great a foundation. If they didn't escape who broke the Law of Moses, how will we escape if we ignore the gospel of salvation. It was first spoken through the Lord, and confirmed to us by those who heard. What does that mean? The Apostles. And how was it confirmed? God testified by signs and wonders and various miracles and gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His own will.

So the gospel came, Jesus spoke it, the Apostles spoke it, and it was attested and confirmed by miracles. Jesus wasn't the only one who did the miracles. Do you remember? He delegated the power to the Apostles who healed the sick and raised the dead as well. How will you escape the judgment of God if you neglect such a salvation which was confirmed to us through signs and miracles. That's why the gospel records are full of those signs. It just puts you on notice of the danger you live in if you reject what has been confirmed.

Chapter 4 and verse 1 and 2 warns about failing to enter in to that salvation rest, coming short of salvation rest. And then verse 2 describes why, "For indeed we have had good news preached to us, just as they also. But the Word they heard did not profit them because it was not united by faith in those who heard, for we who have believed enter that rest...enter that rest." It's a matter of believing and so they are warned. You have heard the Old Testament, he's telling these Hebrews, you have heard concerning Christ the fulfillment of the Old Testament. You have heard of all the miracles proclaimed by those who were there. You know the apostolic testimony. If you walk away from this, you enter into the severest judgment. Chapter 6 repeats it again in verse 4. If you've been enlightened, tasted the heavenly gift, made a partaker of the Holy Spirit, tasted the good Word of God, the powers of the age to come, all of that describes the ministry of Jesus and the Apostles. If you've been exposed to all of that and then fallen away, turned your back and walked away, it's impossible to renew you again to repentance because if you rejected with that full revelation, you're now guilty of crucifying the Son of God and putting Him to open shame. Don't walk away, don't come all the way to the full revelation in Christ, turn your back and walk away. That is deadly dangerous.

One more, chapter 10 verse 26, "If you go on, or if we go on sinning willfully, that's unbelief, the ultimate and damning sin, if we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins." All that remains is an expectation, a terrifying expectation of judgment and the fury of a fire which will consume the adversaries. And then he goes back to the comparison with the Law. "Anyone who set aside the Law of Moses, dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. How much severer punishment do you think he will deserve who has trampled underfoot the Son of God and has regarded as unclean the blood of the Covenant by which He was sanctified and has insulted the Spirit of grace. For we know Him who said, 'Vengeance is Mine, I will repay.'" And verse 31, "It's a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of a living God." You don't want to know the truth, be brought all the way to the truth, turn your back and walk away. You will receive the most severe punishment.

Now let's take that concept, go back to John 4 and think about it in connection to the nation Israel: Judah, Judea and Galilee. They had the Old Testament so they had the revelation of God speaking of the coming Messiah. They not only had the revelation, what the prophets wrote, what I read you from Peter what the prophets wrote and searched to see about the sufferings and glories of the Messiah to come, they had that revelation. They also had the fulfillment of that revelation. John said, "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world." The Messiah comes. There's a...there's a

completion of all the Old Testament prophecies in Christ. So they have the Old Testament and they have the completion in the New Testament concerning Christ. In addition, they have all the miracles, all the miracles attesting to His deity. That is the complete revelation.

Let me give you a way to look at that that takes you back through John. In chapter 1, Jesus met some of the disciples of John the Baptist. John had said, "There's the Lamb of God, go follow Him," so they did. He never did a miracle for them, and they believed in Him as their Messiah. Why? They had the Old Testament knowledge. They had a complete Old Testament knowledge. All they were waiting for was the fulfillment. And when the Messiah came, they believed in Him. No miracles...no miracles.

Then you come to the woman at the well and the village of Sychar, all of those Samaritans. No miracles, they had some knowledge of the Old Testament, the Pentateuch. They had some idea of Messiah. Jesus gave them more. He spent two days with them explaining more about the Old Testament, more about it and they believed...again no miracles. Yes He demonstrated divine knowledge, but there were no miracles. It was enough for the first disciples to see that Jesus was the fulfillment of the Old Testament. It was enough for the Samaritans to have the full understanding of the Old Testament filled out and then see that Jesus was the fulfillment of the Old Testament and they were redeemed, they were believers. They believed.

But when it came to the rest of Israel...Judah and Galilee...they fit in to verse 48. "Unless you people see signs and wonders, you simply will not believe." You're so stubborn that even though it is clear that I am the fulfillment of the Old Testament, that I am the only one who could fulfill the Old Testament detail by detail, and He manifested that all the way through to His resurrection, you demand more and more signs and wonders. That is the deepest kind of unbelief. And by the way, when unbelief rejects the light, the darkness deepens. Now every heart, Romans 1, every heart, every human being has the light of the knowledge of God. His Law is written in the heart, Romans 2. Conscience activates that knowledge of the Law and convicts the sinner, the Law of God written in the heart, Romans 2. Romans 1, "That which may be known of God is manifest in them, God has placed it in them. That's the light of the knowledge of God that every pagan in every corner of the planet has. But when you reject the light, the darkness deepens and deepens and deepens and deepens and deepens. When you come all the way to the full light and turn around and walk away, you cannot be renewed to repentance because you rejected with full revelation. That's where Israel was.

So here in this little passage that I read you in John, we have an illustration of what was very unusual. Someone actually being saved. Look at the end of the ministry of Jesus in Judea, there were 120 gathered in the Upper Room. At the end of the ministry of Jesus in Galilee, according to 1 Corinthians 15:6, there were five hundred. That's all out of the multiple tens of thousands, hundreds of thousands that lived in the land of Israel and Jesus crisscrossed every aspect of that land. They had the Old Testament. They had the fulfillment. They had the signs and He said, "You still will not believe. It

comes down to believing. But here is an illustration of belief and how one man believed and the process involved in that faith.

Let's look at him and meet him in verse 46. This will take just a few minutes to buzz through. "He came again to Cana of Galilee where He had made the water wine," back in chapter 2. "There was a royal official whose son was sick at Capernaum." Royal official *Basilikos*, that's a connection to the word *basileus* which is king. This was somebody who was an official of the king. There was only one king in that part of the world and that was the king of Galilee and Perea, an Idumaeen Herod Antipas who was the son of Herod the Great, who was the Idumaeen non-Jewish ruler of that part of the world. The Jews didn't like him. He was a vassal king that served the purposes of Rome and ruled as a petty tyrant. He was a very evil bad man. You remember John the Baptist denounced him for marrying his brother's wife and getting involved in incest. And then you remember in a drunken orgy one night this daughter of his wife did a dance and he said, "I'll give you anything you want." And she wanted the head of John the Baptist on a platter. He's a bad man...Herod. He's afraid of Jesus. He was afraid of John the Baptist. In fact, when Jesus started ministering, he thought John the Baptist that he beheaded came back from the dead to get him. And by the way, in the entire ministry of Jesus, there was one town in Galilee Jesus never went to, Tiberius...never...one time, the home of Herod. Herod wanted Him dead. Herod was afraid of Him. Bad man.

Here's a royal official connected to Herod...Herod Antipas, the ruler of Galilee and Perea. He has a son who is sick at Capernaum. Capernaum is the lake town at the north end of the lake, the Sea of Galilee as it's called. He has a son. He believes this. He believes Jesus is a miracle worker. He believes what the rest of the people in Galilee believe. And what do they believe? Verse 45, "He came to Galilee, the Galileans received Him, having seen all the things that He did in Jerusalem at the feast for they themselves also went to the feast." When He was at the feast, He did miracles. John 2:23, "Now when He was in Jerusalem at the Passover during the feast, many believed in His name, observing His signs which He was doing." They believed but superficially. Remember that? He didn't trust Himself to them for He knew all men. And because He didn't need anyone to testify concerning man, for He Himself knew what was in man.

In other words, they had a superficial faith. What did they believe? They believed He could do miracles, period, paragraph. Nicodemus was one of them. Nicodemus said, "Nobody can do what You do unless God is with him." Nobody can do these signs that You do unless God is with Him. That's what they believed. So that was the popular idea. They believed Jesus was a miracle worker. That's true and that's a starting place, but that better not be the ending place. And here's a man who like Nicodemus believed Jesus was a miracle worker. Here is a man who caught the wind and look, Capernaum was the headquarters of Jesus' miracle ministry in Galilee. You read Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, you're only going to find a couple of miracles in John done in Galilee, but myriads of them are recorded by the other writers. Massive miracles going on in Galilee and centered at Capernaum.

So here's where the royal official was. In fact, Capernaum had so many miracles that in Matthew 11:24, Jesus said about that city that if Sodom had seen what Capernaum seen, it would still be around...it would still be around. It will be worse for Capernaum in the time of judgment than for the wretched homosexual city of Sodom. Hell will be hotter for the Capernaum people than the Sodomites because of what they saw of the miracles of Jesus. So this is His town. So He knows there's a miracle worker named Jesus. When he heard that Jesus had come out of Judea into Galilee and He had a sixteen-month or so ministry in Galilee, he sent to Him...we don't know exactly when this happened during His Galilean ministry, but after He had done enough miracles at Capernaum for him to know He was a miracle worker, he comes to Him. Okay, that's going from Galilee up to Cana of Galilee from Capernaum, the Sea of Galilee in the low country and lake side, all the way on the back side of Nazareth, that's got to be sixteen-seventeen-eighteen miles uphill walking. He comes a long distance and when he arrives at Jesus, he is imploring, steadfastly pleading with Him to come down...down the hill all the way back to Capernaum and heal his son because his son is at the point of death.

Now this is very often what moves someone from this rather philosophical view of Jesus that says, "Look, I'm not denying He's a miracle worker, I'm not denying His power, His supernatural power, everybody saw it, nobody denied it, nobody tried to deny it. But what moves a man from having a sort of detached view of Jesus as a miracle worker, to moving a much more closely to the reality of who He is is desperation. And that's still true...that's still true. You know, Jesus put it this way in Matthew 9 when He said, "The people who aren't sick aren't looking for a doctor. It's desperation that drives people and it drove this man...it drove this man, this royal official under hated Herod to come to Jesus and to beg Him to give life to his son. The royal official said to Him...again in verse 49...'Sir, come down before my child dies.'" So he believed that He could heal people. He didn't necessarily believe He could raise dead people. He has a belief in Jesus as a miracle worker. We could call it a sort of fearing faith, a kind of faint faith. He's like the man, you remember, who said in Mark 9, "Lord I believe, help my unbelief." It's a partial faith. He believes that He's a miracle worker because there's plenty of evidence of that. And it was Jesus, you know, who said, "Unless you people see signs and wonders, you simply will not believe." So this is what that is. You...you believe, you believe I'm a miracle worker. That's fine, that's true. That's not enough.

But Jesus accepted that faith because He did miracles to bring people to that initial step. That's a place to start. Somebody might suggest, "Well why would Jesus accommodate that kind of superficial faith?" Because all faith has to start somewhere, doesn't it? Why do you think He did the miracles? So the people would draw this conclusion that He was a miracle worker and make the necessary connection that this is supernatural which they also made and then go from there to the next steps.

Jesus then responded to the man's plea. Said to him, "Go, your son lives." At that very moment that son's body was instantaneously, miraculously healed. And something also happened to the father.

Verse 50, "The man believed the Word that Jesus spoke to him and started off." At first he believed Jesus was a miracle worker, he believed in His works. Now he believes in His words.

Many times in the gospel of John you're going to hear that, "Believe Me for the works, believe Me for the words." Jesus was not only a miracle worker, He was truth teller. Everything He said pointed to His deity. "Never a man spoke like this man," they said about Him. So this man is moved from believing in the power of Jesus to believing in the truth of Jesus, in the words of Jesus, the trustworthiness of what He said. This is essential. It's wonderful to read the gospel account and see Jesus as a miracle worker. But you've got to get beyond the works to the words, right? Because the works have no saving power, the words have the saving power and the man believed the word that Jesus spoke to him. And he started off.

As he was now going down, his slaves met him saying that his son was living. I mean, full of life. So he inquired of them the hour when he began to get better. And they said to him, "Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him, the seventh hour." There's a big discussion about whether that's Jewish time which starts at 6 A.M. and makes it one o'clock, or whether it's Roman time at noon and makes it seven o'clock.

But that's not the point. The point is now what time was it. The point was what time was it when the healing happened so he could connect that with the words of Jesus. And they said the seventh hour, so the father knew that it was at that hour in which Jesus said to him, "Your son lives."

Now it says, "He himself believed." Well wait a minute. He already believed, what do you mean he himself believed? Well this is a very emphatic statement that it's got an emphatic pronoun in there, so his faith has gone to another level. And not only that, he himself believed and his whole household. Well you've heard that biblical language before, haven't you? Remember the Philippian jailor, he believed and his whole household. Now we're talking about not believing Jesus is a miracle worker, and not believing in His works and then believing in His words, but believing in His person...believing in the name of Christ. I think somewhere in the encounter with this man, Jesus filled in the blanks of who He was, of His person. It simply says, "He himself believed." But he already believed? Yeah, he believed He was a miracle worker. That's not enough. Yeah he believed His words were true, that that's not enough. Now he believed in His person...in His name, in the fullness of who He is along with His whole household. So you had a village saved in chapter 4, in the beginning of the chapter. Now you have a household saved. That could mean kids, wife, in-laws and even servants. Salvation comes to the house of a Herodian. Remember the Herodian court, one of those called Herodians in Matthew 22:16, hated by the Jews. So Samaritan village and a Herodian house. And this is to remind us of verse 42 that He is the Savior of the world. He's the Savior of the world. Not just different nations, like Jews and Gentiles, Samaritans illustrating the Gentiles. Not just different races but different ranks. He saved some fishermen in chapter 1. He saved an immoral woman who was a half-breed in chapter 4. Eventually he saved a high level erudite Jewish Pharisee, Nicodemus, and here

He saves the household of some Herodians. This again reminds us that the gospel is to the world. Whoever believes will not perish but have everlasting life.

What are we talking about when we say, "Put your faith in Christ. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you'll be saved?" Believe in Him as a miracle worker. Believe His works to be the very works of God. No one can do what He did except God is with him. Believe His words to be the very words of God. When He spoke, God spoke. More than that, believe in His full person as the Son of God. And that's the purpose of John, "These things are written that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God and that believing you might have life in His name. That day, that little family and household had life in His name. And not long after this, of course, months...He carried the full weight of their punishment on the cross and died for all their sins, providing a full atonement.

Where are you on that line? Pretty hard to deny Jesus was a miracle worker, really impossible, really contrary to history. Impossible to deny that His words were divine, supernaturally. No one ever heard anyone speak like He spoke. That's one of the things you find when you study the gospels and you study the words of Jesus. They're just obviously transcendent and divine.

But that's not enough either. You can call Him the greatest worker that ever lived. You can say He's the greatest teacher that ever lived. That's not enough. You have to believe in His person as a Son of God and the Savior of the world, believing in Him in that full sense of who He is and what He came to do is the only way to have eternal life. It's a gift God gives to those who believe in His Son.

Father, we again come before You at the end of this wonderful time together in service, ministry, worship, fellowship. Thankful for the simple straightforward message of the gospel that we don't have to achieve something to have eternal life. It is a gift, it comes to those who simply believe. But we also have been warned again of the tremendous horrific danger of knowing the truth and not believing. How will we escape who neglects so great a salvation? How much severer punishment shall he be thought worthy who tramples underfoot the blood of the covenant, does despite to the Spirit of grace? It's a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

So, Lord, I just pray that there would be those who have been brought to understand the truth concerning Christ and the fullness of who He is, and that they would come to believe that You would grant them the gift of faith. We know it is a divine gift and yet we know the sinner is commanded to believe. So, Lord, awaken the dead sinner, scatter and shatter the darkness and bring faith, saving faith, for Your praise and Your glory we pray. Amen.

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