

An Exception Concerning



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(John 4:43-54)

I read the story one time about church members who told the owner of a local bar they were praying that his building would be struck by lightning. The owner just shrugged off the comment, not giving it another thought. But a few weeks later, a thunderstorm did hit the community and the bar was struck with lightning and burned to the ground. Remembering the comment, the bar owner filed a lawsuit against the church. His argument was that the praying church members were to be blamed for the loss. The members of the church in turn hired a lawyer, who argued that they were not responsible for what happened. After a long review, the judge reported that the case was somewhat confusing, but he was convinced of one thing: The bar owner believed in prayer, whereas the Christians did not.

If there have ever been a people who are to believe in the power of God, it ought to be Christians. The exception that is before us today is one that deals with the subject of belief. A man in crisis

over his dying child comes to Jesus requesting a miraculous healing, and Jesus confronts him with a rebuke:

John 4:48 ...*Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe.*

There are some in religious circles teaching that we could evangelize the lost more effectively if we had “signs and wonders” to authenticate the gospel message. This leads to the teaching that there is no saving faith without the witness of some miracle, speaking in tongues or slaying in the Spirit.

But Jesus words in our text contradict such teaching. The question that Jesus poses to this man, to the by-standers around him and to us today, “Will we believe on Him without signs a wonders?” Don't get me wrong, I will not put God in a box and declare that he does not work miracles in our midst. But to insist upon them before belief is getting the cart before the horse. And what if you believe Christ for a miracle, for a healing, for a reversal, for a provision and that request, that presumption never materializes? What is to become of your faith, your belief?

I believe there are many in our church that may secretly be bitter at God because He didn't follow through with you plea the way you designed it. Then I want you to know that Jesus exception is for you today. This text also teaches us to believe Christ, His words, His Character, His ability, His compassion when there is no visible or material reason to do so at the moment. Every person in this room today, can believe on Christ without the aid of sign or wonder by recognizing three truths drawn from these verses.

I. The Trial that Compelled Him (Vs. 43-47)

It is important to us to key in on the word noblemen in verse 46. The word implies more than a man with high standing. The word literally means "king's man." Likely he was an officer of Herod Antipas, the tetrarch of Galilee. This was a man of some means and eminent rank, and yet this trial compelled him to seek out the miracle worker Jesus.

A. A Scene of Desperation (Vs. 43-46)

There can be no doubt that this man of regal position had exhausted all the help that money could buy. The best doctors and the latest treatments had been utilized all in vain. This child did not improve. This father, with all his standing and position was rendered absolutely powerless, helpless to do anything for his precious son. As much as we would like to believe we are in control of so much in our world, there are trials that come into our lives that we are helpless to face.

Yesterday I was watching a documentary on the tornado outbreak of 2011. They were interviewing survivors of the tornado who spoke of how powerless they were against the storm. One woman said all I could do was lay there as I felt the debris fall on top of me and hope that nothing big fell on me. I'm sure all of us have been in such a scene of desperation; powerless to do anything to change the situation.

B. A Search of Determination (Vs. 47)

It has been well said that, "Adversity is the Good Shepherds black dog." C.S. Lewis said that God speaks to us in our health, but, "shouts to us in our pain." The sickness of his son caused this nobleman to seek out Jesus. Jesus had returned to Galilee and was in Cana where his first miracle took place. No doubt word had spread quickly that the miracle worker was nearby. This man made a decision, a determination to seek out Jesus. His trial awakened him to his need of Jesus. Had there been no trial, he would have probably sat comfortably in his palatial home and gave no thought to the nearness of Jesus. But when crisis was upon him, the ability of Jesus, the power of Jesus was brought clearly into focus.

I have seen it many times through the years; sometimes it takes a jail cell or a rescue mission cot to get a man's attention. It may take a financial disaster, or a physical disease, but God knows how to get our attention. We are kind of like the deacons who were discussing a need in the church and after several heated moments, one said, "I guess we will just have to pray about it." Another spoke up and said, "My goodness, has it come to that?" It is only when we have exhausted all other possibilities that we desperately seek the ability of God. What is your trial today? Is it a sickness? Is it a disease? Is it a marriage that is dying? Is it a child's distressful situation? Is it a job or financial problem? Whatever the need, the best thing that you can do right now, is seek the face of God about the matter. Let this trial bring you to the feet of Jesus.

II. The Truth that Confronted Him (Vs. 48-50c)

The town of Cana was situated to the southwest of the sea of Galilee and not far from the town of Nazareth. Capernaum stood on the shores of the Sea of Galilee to the north and was about 20 miles away from Cana. As he arrived, imagine the hush that fell over the crowd, the whispers of his identity. Can you see the crowd part as this royal emissary makes his way hurriedly into the presence of Jesus? As he does so, he finds an unexpected truth awaiting him.

A. A Revealing Rebuke (Vs. 48)

This man came pleading for Jesus to come and heal his son and Jesus in return astounds the nobleman, the bystanders and you and me by giving him a stern rebuke. One summer, when I was a child, I remember my mother coming in a waking me up, and trying to get me out of bed. She came in once and then twice, and then a third time. She then said, If I have to come in here again, I'm coming in with a bucket of water. Well she did, and I was awake then! Jesus words startled this crowd, many of whom were simply drawn to see what miracle Jesus would perform next. They were like the chief priests and scribes that mocked Christ at the cross,

*If he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and **we will believe him.***

I am afraid that many of these fill our churches today. They come for an emotional charge; to enjoy the music, to revel in the so called “worship” and snore through the teaching of the word of God.

But this was also directed at the nobleman, who mistakenly believed that Jesus had to physically be there in order to heal and that if Jesus didn't hurry, it would be too late. He was demanding a signs and wonders before he put the care of the boy into the hands of Jesus. He wanted a miracle on his own terms. Is that you? You are unwilling to release your desperate trial to the Lord, until he cares for it under your terms. Our Lord sends this rebuke to you today...

Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe.

B. A Powerful Promise (Vs. 49-50)

This man would not be put off by the rebuke of Jesus, or his teaching concerning His miracle working power. This was a very teachable man. I find that the moments I am most teachable are in my moments of desperation. This man would not be denied, he persists. In his first plea he used the word son to inform Jesus. But in the second he uses the word translated child. It means “my little child”, my dear one. Can you hear this man pleading from the depths of his heart? Come to my house before my baby son dies! Again he was errant in his thinking, but desperate in his heart.

Psalms 34:18 *The LORD is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit.*

Jesus basically says, “Ok. I will grant your request, I will heal your son. But I will not go to your house. You must believe me without seeing.” This man could have asked for proof. He could have questioned Jesus, “How do I know he's healed?” But he

didn't. The man believed the word of Jesus. It was enough. Jesus said to Martha in

John 11:40 *...if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?*

Maybe you just need to believe this morning. To put your trial in the nail scared hands of Jesus and go your way.

III. The Trust that Comforted Him (Vs. 50d-54)

Louisa Stead, who trusted the Lord as her Saviour at 9, sensed God's call to be a missionary. Her plans to go to China were dashed as she was too frail for the climate. Several years later her husband drowned in a tragic accident. Not long after this woman besieged with tragedy, set out as a missionary to Africa with little daughter Lilly in hand. What was her comfort in the uncertainty that lay ahead? The song that she wrote makes it clear:

*'Tis so sweet to trust in Jesus,
Just to take Him at His word,
Just to rest upon His promise,
Just to know, thus saith the Lord!*

This nobleman experienced the same comfort.

A. His Peace found in the Words of Christ (Vs. 50d-53c)

This man, not knowing what had become of his son, believed the words of Christ. The word translated believed is a word that means to credit, to entrust, to commit. This man placed the life of his ailing son in the capable hands of Jesus. He found peace in the

promise of God. Now this specific promise was made to this specific man, at this specific time in history. We can not necessarily hijack this promise for ourselves; trusting that if we go on our way that healing will come. But we can trust that whatever our desperate trial may be we can trust the word of God! My good friend Dr. Terry Trivette said, "Faith must rest itself upon the Word of God. He may be pleased to give us signs and confirmations along the way, but in the end it is His word that we must cling to. I was not there to see the Jesus nailed to the cross. But I have the Word of God to tell me that it happened. I have not peered into that vacant garden tomb, but I believe it is empty because God has recorded it in His Word! My feet have never stood on golden streets, and my eyes have never seen any pearly gates. Yet, I live each day believing they will because God cannot lie, and He has given me His word! Faith may have its questions, and doubts may come to all of us from time to time, but our confidence must ultimately rest upon what God has said in His Word!"

Whatever your trial may be today, know this child of God, that He hath said He will never leave us or forsake us. That he does work out all things to the good of them that love Him! That He cannot lie! That all the promises of God in Christ Jesus are Yea and Amen! God is too kind to do anything cruel; too wise to make a mistake, and too deep to explain himself!

B. His Profession based on the Work of Christ (53d-54)

I heard the story of a famed tight rope walker who walked across Niagara Falls with a balance bar in his mouth and a wheel barrel in his hands. As he finished, he asked a cheering young boy nearby if he believe he could go back to the other side. He said, "Yes, sir." Then he asked, "Do you believe that I could take you to the other side?" He said, "Yes, sir." He then said, "Good jump in and I will take you!" He said, "No, sir." He had faith but no trust. This nobleman came to Christ having faith in His power. He left trusting in Jesus' promise. But verse 53, this man believe in His person! Ultimately when God answers our prayer or calms our raging trial it is not that we might be wide-eyed with amazement, but it is that we might know and love Him more.

In his book, "Seven Convincing Miracles" Dr. Erwin Lutzer tells of a missionary couple he knew who served in China before the Communist takeover in 1949. They had lived high in the hills and their only means of transportation was using a boat on a nearby river. At a particular time of year the river was dried up. One day their child was ill with a high fever. They knew that if they were to get medical help, they would have to travel by boat, but the river was only a muddy stream. They prayed that it would rain so that the river would swell and their boat would travel. But their prayers were not answered. Days later their child died.

Shortly after his death they walked outside and rain was splashing against their faces. By the next day, the river had swelled

and boats were able to travel. What would you have said to God, if that had been your child? Was God mocking them? Why should they believe when God seemed so heartless and even cruel?

This missionary couple went on believing. They learned that faith is not merely receiving from God what we ask, but it is the ability to accept whatever God gives. Is that the kind of belief that you have? Thomas would not believe in a resurrected Christ unless he saw in Jesus hands the print of the nails, and put his finger into the nail prints, and put his hand into his side. When Jesus finally revealed himself to Thomas, Jesus said in

John 20:29 *Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.*

Blessed, happy, joyous are those that believe and have not seen. Are you willing to believe the promise of God, when everything around you is contrary to that promise? For you here today that are without the Lord Jesus, he says to your unbelieving heart,

An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas: For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.

The only miracle of convincing that will be given you is the miracle of the resurrection. Trust His word today!