

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

Growing Faith John 4:43-54

We are now ready to begin our transition into the passage that we will begin this weekend. Let us read **John 4:43**. "**And after the two days He went forth from there into Galilee.**" In other words, after two days in Samaria, Jesus entered Galilee with His disciples, completing the trip He began in **John 4:3**. Everything seems to be going very well until we read the words of the Apostle John in **John 4:44**. Let me read this verse for you. "**For Jesus Himself testified that a prophet has no honor in his own country.**"

What a strange statement. It seems as if this statement simply comes out of the blue, but it really doesn't. In fact, this verse very nicely connects Jesus previous ministry in Samaria with His approaching ministry in Galilee. How does this verse do this?

In order to understand how John's reference to the words of Jesus, "**a prophet has no honor in his own country**" ties two geographically separated ministries together we need to understand what John is referring to when he refers to his own "country". The word "country" (PATRIS) can refer either, to one's 'homeland' or to one's "hometown". In this context it refers to the *homeland* of the Jews. Where is the homeland of the Jews? The homeland of the Jews would consist of Judea to the south and Galilee to the north separated by Samaria.

In Samaria, in the homeland of the Samaritans, Jesus had just enjoyed His first unqualified, unopposed, and open-hearted success, which was very much in contrast with the kind of reception He recently had in Judea which at best was rather ambiguous. Now having said this let us go on to read the next verse.

What does **John 4:45** say? "**So 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.**" Now isn't this interesting. Based on the statement of **John 4:44** you might think that the Jews in Galilee, which would be a part of His homeland, would not have received Him. But it says that the Jews in Galilee did receive Him. But how can this be in light of Christ's words recorded by John that "**a prophet has no honor in His own country**" clearly referring to the area of Galilee.

Just because John 4:45 tells us that that the Galileans received Jesus does not mean that they received Him with the *honor* that was due Him. Just because it says that they received Him does not mean that they extended to Him the honor that He deserved.

When the Galileans received Jesus they did not receive Him as their *Messiah* but only as a *miracle worker* (John 4:45). Why would I say this? This is exactly what **John 4:45** tells us. Let us read this verse once again. "**So when He came to Galilee, the Galileans received Him, having seen all the things (or in other words all the miracles) that He did in Jerusalem at the feast. For they themselves also went to the feast.**" The Galileans were not prepared to receive Jesus as their Messiah even though they had been given many reasons to believe. So in effect they were willing to give Him crumbs by treating Him as a miracle worker but they were not willing to give Him the whole loaf or in other words they were unwilling to embrace Him as the Christ the Son of the living God.

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But even though the vast majority of the Jews in Galilee received Him only as a miracle worker there was one certain official who came to see Him as much *more* than that (John 4:46-54).

Let me read this passage for you. **"He came therefore again to Cana of Galilee where he had made the water wine. And there was a certain royal official, whose son was sick at Capernaum. (47) When he heard that Jesus had come out of Judea into Galilee, he went to Him, and was requesting Him to come down and heal his son; for he was at the point of death. (48) Jesus therefore said to him, 'Unless you people see signs and wonders, you simply will not believe.' (49) The royal official said to Him, 'Sir, come down before my child dies.' (50) Jesus said to him, 'Go your way; your son lives.' The man believed the word that Jesus spoke to him, and he started off. (51) And as he was now going down, his slaves met him, saying that his son was living. (52) So he inquired of them the hour when he began to get better. They said therefore to him, 'Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him.' (53) 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. (54) This is again a second sign that Jesus performed, when he had come out of Judea in Galilee."**

This particular incident focuses our attention on the metamorphosis of a certain royal official's faith. This particular incident focuses our attention on how the very superficial faith of a Jewish royal official in Galilee was transformed into a true, genuine, saving faith.

The question that we will be seeking to answer this weekend as we examine **John 4:46-54** is this: What happened to transform the faith of a certain royal official? I would hope that as we answer this question that we, as professing believers, would be challenged to give the Lord the honor that is due Him. However, I would also hope that we might recognize how gracious the Lord can be to those who even choose to treat Him badly

What is the first thing that happened that help transform the faith of this certain royal official?

The transformation of this royal official's faith began with a mild *rebuke* from Christ (John 4:46-48). The mild rebuke from Christ was directed to all those who would seek to come to Him on their terms rather than on His terms. Treating Him a healer, a banker, a reconciler but not as the Christ the Son of the living God. Willing to take from Him but not willing to give to the Lord first place in their lives. We will see this in **John 4:46-48**.

Let us begin with **verse 46**. **"He came therefore again to Cana of Galilee where he had made the water wine. And there was a certain royal official, whose son was sick at Capernaum."** We can immediately see the problem that was coming. In **John 4:43-45** we have seen how the Jews in Galilee viewed Jesus as a miracle worker but not the Messiah, and now we will see this view of Jesus being specifically worked out in the life of this royal official.

A royal official (BASILICOS) refers to someone officially attached to the service of a *king*. Who would this king have been? This official was undoubtedly attached to the service of Herod Antipas. Herod Antipas was the Tetrarch of Galilee from 4 BC to AD 39, and though he was not a king at all, he was popularly considered one by the people. Because this official was attached to the service of Herod Antipas he would have been a man of influence and most likely a wealthy man as well.

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Here was a man who by anyone's standards, living at that time, had everything he could possibly want, except for one thing – his young son was seriously ill and this official feared for his son's life.

Regardless of what our station may be in life, trouble, sorrow, and death come to all! What does **Job 5:7** tell us? **"For man is born for trouble, as sparks fly upward."**

Kent Hughes referring to this verse said the following: "... the two words that are used for "sparks" are literally "sons of flame." This phrase, I believe, very well captures the human condition.

Are you suffering? This should not surprise you. If you are not presently suffering in some form or fashion you can be assured that at some point in time you will no matter who you are.

This royal official had influence and this official had money but this did not *spare* him from the agony of having to helplessly watch as His son's life steadily slipped away.

We will suffer and sometimes we will suffer greatly. Sometimes during those times we will become so desperate that we will do anything to get some relief, even turn to Christ. Certainly this is not bad thing; this is a good thing. But let us not come to Him with crumbs only giving Him the opportunity to bless us but not the opportunity to rule over our lives as the Christ the Son of the living God. This brings us back to the story.

This royal official was desperate his son was dying and in the midst of his despair Jesus came into Galilee. What a great opportunity for this desperate father. How would he respond?

Let us read **John 4:47**. **"When he heard that Jesus had come out of Judea into Galilee, he went to Him, and was requesting Him to come down and heal his son; for he was at the point of death."** What is the first thing that we notice in this verse?

When he heard that Jesus had come out of Judea into Galilee it says that he *went* to Him (John 5:41). Why would he have done this? He wanted his son healed. What else do we notice in **verse 47**?

He was requesting Jesus to come down and heal his son and he was unrelenting. Though this man had an elevated status and though this man had wealth he was not too proud to *beg*. He was not too proud to beg because he was desperate. This royal official had nowhere else to turn and he was not about to leave until Jesus had given him an answer. Was he intense? Absolutely!

What is amazing about the intensity that this man demonstrated is the fact that his faith in Jesus as a miracle worker was *marginal* at best (Matthew 8:5-13). This official was not like the centurion in **Matthew 8:5-13**. The centurion believed that Christ could heal his servant at a long distance by just saying that it was so, but this certain royal official in John 4 felt that if his son was going to be healed Jesus would have to leave Cana and travel the 16 miles to Capernaum in order to heal him. This royal official not only had not chosen to believe in Jesus as the Messiah he had very little confidence in Christ's healing powers compared to the centurion. How will Jesus respond to this man's begging?

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Let us read **John 4:48**. "**Jesus therefore said to him, ‘Unless you people see signs and wonders, you simply will not believe.’**" This is a mild rebuke not directed at this man specifically but rather to the Jews in general. Jesus in effect contrasts the response of the so-called despised Samaritans with the response of God’s own people. The Samaritans with a simple testimony of one lone Samaritan woman and a rather brief discussion had embraced Jesus as their Messiah and treated Him as they should. But this was not true of the Jews, and it was not true of this royal official. This royal official was still looking for miracles but was unwilling to exercise the same faith as the Samaritans in the city of Sychar.

How sad? How tragic? The Jews had all the information they needed to embrace Christ as their Messiah but they only approached Him when they wanted to see Him work miracles or in other words when they wanted something from Him.

What about us? Do we treat Him in the same way? Do we treat Jesus as a sideshow? Do we only come to Him when we are desperate for a miracle? Or, do we treat Him as the Christ, the Son of the living God who deserves our obeisance and our unflinching devotion?

I am very concerned that many professing Christians unfortunately are treating Christ more like a sideshow. They come to Him in prayer when they need Him to deliver the goods but give no or little energy in seeking to consistently honor Him with their lives. They are willing to give Him crumbs by offering Him the opportunity to serve them, but they are unwilling to serve Him.

Now we are ready to come back to the text. What happens after His mild rebuke? Did it faze the official? It appears to not have fazed him in the least. What does **John 4:49** tell us? It says, "**The royal official said to Him, ‘Sir, come down before my child dies.’**" It is almost as if he never heard the words of Christ. He again repeated his request for Jesus to leave Cana to travel 16 miles back to Capernaum in order to heal his son, but there is no indication that this man changed his view of Christ at all.

He was still, out of desperation, willing to exercise his marginal faith in Jesus as a miracle worker, but he was unwilling to go any further in respect to his faith. He was unwilling to embrace Him as his Messiah giving to Him the obeisance and devotion that He deserved even though this clearly is what Jesus was wanting him to do. This official still wanted to see a miracle more than he wanted to believe that Jesus was the Messiah.

How will Jesus respond? Will Jesus refuse to heal his child simply because the official had chosen not to positively respond to His rebuke. No! This is not how He responds. This leads us to the next thing that happened to this official that transformed his faith, and what is that next thing?

The next thing that helped transform the faith of this royal official was the *statement* by Jesus that his son had been healed (John 4:50). Let us read **John 4:50**. "**Jesus said to him, ‘Go your way; your son lives.’**"

These are amazing words. Jesus granted the healing, but He refused to go down to Capernaum, and He gave the man no sign! The only thing He gave the man was His word.

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Jesus was seeking to stretch this royal official's faith in respect to His healing power. How would He respond? Remember that at the beginning of this incident this official had only a marginal faith in the healing powers of Jesus. Things now change. Look at **John 4:50. "The man believed the word that Jesus spoke to him, and he started off."** This official, at that moment in time, had chosen to believe that Jesus' healing powers were far greater than he originally had imagined them to be. His faith is obviously growing, but unfortunately there is still not indication that he had trusted in Jesus as his Messiah. There is still no indication that he had given to Jesus the honor that He deserved.

And yet in that official's life, at the moment in time, believing was seeing. Even though there was 16 miles between them, in his mind's eye he "saw" his son as well and healthy again.

This is what faith is able to do. Listen to **Hebrews 11:13. "All these (referring to Old Testament saints) died in faith, without receiving the promises, but having seen them and having welcomed them from a distance."**

The world says, "seeing is believing" but the scriptures tell us that "believing is seeing" This royal official by faith saw his son as healed (Hebrews 11:13).

On the basis of Christ's words, that royal official saw his son as healthy and well. He believed with such conviction that the Scripture records "**that the man believed the word that Jesus spoke to him, and he started off.**" He had transitioned from a marginal belief in the healing powers of Christ to a rock solid belief. But there was one more step that this official needed to take in respect to the transformation of his faith. Now we come to the final step in the transformation of this official's faith.

The final step in the transformation of the royal official's faith was not to see Jesus simply as a miracle worker but as the Messiah (John 4:51-54). Certainly this official had been stretched in respect to how he viewed the miraculous powers of Jesus. There has been no indication up to this point that he had by faith personally embraced Christ as his messiah, but this will now change.

Let us look at **John 4:51. "And as he was now going down, his slaves met him, saying that his son was living."** Obviously this is great news to the father. What does he ask them? Let us now read **John 4:52. "So he inquired of them the hour when he began to get better. They said therefore to him, 'Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him.'"**

The seventh hour would, according to the way Jews reckoned time, place the healing of the official's son at about 1 p.m. This was an amazing piece of information for the father to hear. Let us read **John 4:53, "So the Father knew that it was at that hour in which Jesus said to him, 'Your son lives.'"** His son was healed not two or three hours after Jesus had pronounced him well. His son was healed precisely at the time when Jesus pronounced him well. At that moment in time his faith took another incredible leap forward.

The official had learned who Christ was, and he trusted fully in Him. The more he reflected upon the circumstances, the more wonderful it all seemed. He became a convinced believer not only in Christ as a miracle worker but now as the Messiah. Let us continue to read **John 4:53. "So the**

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Father knew that it was at that hour in which Jesus said to him, ‘Your son lives;’ and he himself believed.” I know that it does not specifically say that he believed in Jesus as the Messiah. But it does seem consistent with what Jesus had said earlier about the Jews being unable to believe in Him as the Messiah unless they were able to personally witness a miracle. Well guess what? Jesus, as an expression of His loving kindness, extended to him a miracle and I would have to think that when it says that he believed it meant that he believed in Him as His Messiah. But it was not only the official that believed. There were others that were also personally touched by this miracle.

Let us finish reading **John 4:54**, "**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.**" Did this honor the Lord? Yes!

CONCLUSION

We know that in this world there is trouble. You may this weekend be one of those who are experiencing this trouble. And certainly if you are then it would be extremely wise for you to come to Christ with those troubles. But let us not come to Him only with crumbs giving Him the opportunity to serve us. Let us rather come to Him with the whole loaf. Let us come to Jesus not only to receive His help but most importantly to give Him the *honor* that He deserves as the Christ the Son of the living God.