

John 4:46-54

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 26 July 2016

Preacher: Stan Adams

[0 : 00] Well, this afternoon, we're going to look at this passage, and before we do, I just want to put it into some sort of context quickly, because John, up to this point in his gospel has been emphasizing that salvation is a work of God.

When Jesus spoke to Nicodemus back in chapter 3, you may remember, he said, you must be born again. You must be born of the Spirit, and only God can do that.

It's a divine work. Salvation is a divine work to which man or a woman are not able to add anything to. It's solely God. And while it's right that John emphasizes salvation as the sovereign work of God, John also emphasizes the necessity of the sinner's faith, and the fact that the sinner must believe.

At the end of John, chapter 20, verse 31, John is very explicit as to why he actually wrote this gospel. He says, he's written these words so that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

In other words, John is writing with the hope that as we read his words, we will see Jesus for who he really is and believe in him. And I think it's interesting that John uses the word belief over 90 times in his book.

[1 : 22] And belief is not only the theme of John's gospel, but it is also the essence of the Christian faith. One must believe in the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation.

And whenever we look outside of Christian faith, we find that all the other religions have one thing in common that is not taught in the Bible. They teach that salvation does not belong solely to God, that people themselves are actually able to accomplish a righteous relationship with God and achieve salvation from judgment on their own.

In other words, false religions provide a platform for men and women to rule themselves, to sit on the young throne of their lives and decide for themselves what is right and what is wrong.

However, here in the Gospel of John, John is emphatic that there is only one way to have sin forgiven. There is only one way to get to heaven. And that is by believing in the work and the person of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And for those who do not, there is no salvation. There is only eternal damnation and torment. Now, in the opening verses of John chapter 1, John made the statement that when Jesus came from heaven, he came to his own people, but generally as a rule, they didn't receive him.

[2 : 38] And we see throughout the Gospel of John that there are people who refuse to believe Jesus. Some receive him while others reject him. And that is what we see here in the healing of the royal official's son.

As the story is meant to show us the contrast between a false faith and a true faith. In fact, in many ways, the story expands on the statement of John's at the end of chapter 2, where he said, Jesus did not need any testimony about men and women, because he already knew what was in each person.

Jesus knew what men and women were thinking and feeling, what was really and truly in their hearts. Now, in our passage here in verse 43, Jesus returns to Galilee from Samaria.

You'll remember that Jesus had stopped off at the well in Samaria, and he'd met the woman, and he'd been received by a large number of people who believed in him, and many, many people were saved before he left. However, Jesus knew that when he arrived in Galilee, his reception would be very different from Samaria.

Verse 44, John uses a proverb to make a very specific statement, that a prophet has no honor in his own country. And the fact that that proverb rings so true is a testimony to the utterly perverse state of mankind, that men and women hate things that are familiar to them.

[3 : 59] In fact, they breathe contempt in us. Their problem was this, though, his message. It was offensive to them. They loved the miracles of Jesus, but they hated the message that he brought.

And if we look at verse 45, a simple reading gives us the impression that Jesus' reputation was spreading like wildfire. They welcomed him. They had all seen what he had done at the Passover festival.

You see, Jesus had been performing miracles there, and we know that he used those miracles in order to show his credentials as the one who had actually been sent from heaven. But you know, as I read this, I wondered how seriously the Lord Jesus really accepted the enthusiasm of the Galileans as he arrived.

We've already been told that Jesus knew what was in the heart and mind of every man and woman. And the fact is, their welcome was superficial. To say they welcomed him has a sort of ironic feel to it.

And if we have any doubt about how Jesus felt about the welcome he received, we all have to read his response to the man who approached him there in verse 48. Unless you, and that's plural, unless you people see signs and wonders, you'll never believe.

[5 : 08] This man is described to us as a royal official. He was most likely a member of the court of Herod Antipas. And he had walked 25 miles to find Jesus in Cana because we're told his son was sick and close to death.

This is a situation that every parent can empathize with. A sick child. And not just sick, but dying. And I think we can assume that the official would have had access to all the known remedies of the day.

I mean, he had servants, so apparently he had money. He was a royal official in the court, so he would have had some access to the physicians in the court. And I'm quite sure that all the finest medical advice had been tried, and still the child woke up every morning in a worse state than the day before.

And we see there in verse 47 that the official had heard the news that Jesus had returned to Cana. So he left his home in search of Jesus and with a hope that Jesus would help his son.

And when he finds Jesus in verse 47, he implores Jesus to return home and heal his son. Many translations say that he begged, he begged Jesus to come. Again, in verse 48, notice how the reply of Jesus was short and sharp.

[6 : 24] It's almost like a rebuke. Notice, too, that he expands his audience from just the official alone to all the Galileans who were there. Unless you people, he's saying in the plural.

You see, Jesus is saying to the official and to the crowd, you are nothing but curiosity seekers. You have no interest in the message that I bring. You see, it was like going to the circus for many of them.

They thought of him as a sort of super magician. But Jesus knew that the miracles on their own had no lasting, eternal effect. The people were pleased to see the miracles.

In fact, they yearned to see the miracles. But they had no desire to recognize Jesus as Lord and Savior. And John makes it clear throughout the gospel that the human heart is so blinded by sin that not even miracles can produce a true and living faith.

You remember Judas. He saw countless miracles. In fact, he performed miracles himself in the name of Jesus. But he didn't have a true and living faith.

[7 : 30] So Jesus knew that these miracles alone would not produce a sincere saving faith in the people. And John is showing us here that their faith is simply a manifestation of their enthusiasm.

A faith produced by their enthusiasm over the miracles. And the problem is not an issue of having faith or not having faith. I mean, we all have faith as something to some degree or another.

There are many people who call themselves Christians, but they still do and have a sincere faith.

And we see this problem throughout the Bible, even in the Old Testament. It was one of the primary themes in the prophets.

They spoke to a congregation who had the outward sign of circumcision, but they were lacking the inner reality that the circumcision was supposed to represent. These people looked forward to the day of the Lord.

They were always talking about when the day the Lord would come and He would draw near to them and rescue them. But it was Amos and the other prophets who warned them of their folly. The prophets told them, You talk about the day of the Lord, but the day of the Lord is not going to be

good for you.

[8 : 36] In fact, it is going to be a terrible day for you because your faith in the Lord is not real. You talk about your faith in the Lord, but look around. You are unfaithful to the Lord.

And that was the problem in the Old Testament. And it remained the problem even during the time of Jesus. His ministry began with the same warning over and over and over again throughout His teaching. He warns the people.

You remember Jesus said, Many of you will say to me on that day, Lord, did we not drive out demons in your name? And I will say to you, depart from me.

I never knew you. It was always a part of His public teaching. He spoke again and again about the hypocrisy of the Jews. And their faith was all posture and not a true and sincere trust in the grace and the mercy of God.

And the distinction between true and false faith is a large, large part of the teaching of Jesus. I just think about all the parables and the illustrations that He used throughout the Gospels to illustrate false faith.

[9 : 41] the Pharisee, the tax collector, the prodigal son, the rich man and Lazarus, the narrow door, the wise and foolish virgins, and so on and so on. And just look at His teaching.

In every case, without exception, the one who has the Lord's approval and is set before us as the true believer is the person in the lowly, humble position who simply acknowledges his need and cries out for mercy.

And of course, in the end, we saw the manifestation of all the warnings. We actually saw the reality of false faith in action. It was the religious element, the upright, the respectable, who finally, in a frenzy of what they thought was religious zeal, murdered Jesus.

Because of false faith, they murdered their own Messiah. And Jesus was always concerned about false faith because He did recognize that it's the easiest thing in the world to think of oneself as a Christian when one is not.

Or to think of oneself as being at peace with God when one is not. Examine yourself to see whether you are in the faith, Paul writes. Again, he writes, let the one who thinks he is standing take heed lest he fall.

[10 : 56] Now, with regard to the official, at this point, he's not really interested in any of these issues. He simply wanted a healing for his son. He believed that Jesus had the power to grant his request.

However, instead of tending the bedside or offering an obvious miracle, verse 50 says, Jesus simply said, Go, your son will live. The man took Jesus at his word and departed.

The man took Jesus at his word and left for home. I mean, imagine that. A 25-mile walk, 16 words with Jesus, and he turns around and starts walking back home.

But as he left for home, we are seeing a man take steps of belief. And we know he believed because he left. There's no more pleading. There's no more desperation.

He did what Jesus said to do. He just, he went home. It says he believed the words of Jesus. I mean, this man took Jesus at his word, which showed that he was not like the rest of the crowd who were only interested in seeing the signs of the wonders.

[12 : 02] And his trust, the faith that he put in the words of Jesus, led to the healing of his son at that exact hour some 25 miles away. See, the official was asked to believe without saying, to accept the words of Jesus without the visual assistance of a miracle.

It may have been hard, but the man did it. And that's what made the difference. He believed, and then he received a miracle. You see, that phrase in verse 50, the man took Jesus at his word and departed, is an important phrase because as he accepted the words of Jesus and believed him, the omniscient, omnipresent power of the Lord Jesus was 25 miles away touching the body of that boy. And Jesus never left the spot that he was standing on. And as the official believed the words of Jesus, he moved from a detached, philosophical view of Jesus to a view that was focused on who Jesus really is.

I mean, if you think about the crowd, the popular view was, look, we're not denying that Jesus is a miracle worker. We've all seen it. Everybody knows it's supernatural and no one denies it.

But what is it that moves a man or a woman from having that detached view of an observer, a person who sees Jesus as a showman or a miracle worker to a view that sees the reality of who he is.

[13 : 33] And that catalyst for the transformation we see here is need. It's recognizing that one has a desperate need. In Matthew 9, Jesus said, the people who aren't sick aren't out looking for a doctor, are they?

It's that moment when we recognize that we are in a desperate situation and that under our own power we have no remedy. It's when we recognize that left to our own devices and our own schemes, there is only failure on the horizon.

We must admit our need for help. And you see, this sort of desperation will drive people. And it drove this man to Jesus. And when he found him, he begged Jesus to give life to his son. Now the difference between the Galileans and their superficial interest and this father who begged for the life of his son was desperation. Here was a man who loved his son.

He was terrified that he would die. So he came to the Lord Jesus. He implored. He begged Jesus to come with him. Imagine that. A royal official walking 25 miles to beg a Nazarene carpenter for his help.

[14 : 45] What would you think his friends and colleagues would have said about that? But in his need, he has found a true friend. He's realized that this man, Jesus, could obviously do much, much more for him and his family than that.

C.S. Lewis once wrote, You never know how much you really believe anything until its truth or its falsehood becomes a matter of life and death to you. And that was the problem for the Galileans. There was never an admission of terrible need. There was never a cry for help. I mean, they were in danger to be sure, but they never recognized it. They simply couldn't see it through their self-satisfied hearts and minds.

They were happy with the status quo. While on the other hand, the royal official had come to realize that he needed Jesus desperately. And some of the Galatians were fascinated, as the people will be, with someone who can work miracles.

But otherwise, the message, the meaning, the significance of Jesus Christ completely escaped them. It just passed them by. He was offering forgiveness and righteousness with God, but they were sure that they already had that.

[16 : 04] As we have said, the story throughout the ministry of Jesus was the same. Those who came to realize their great needs suddenly saw in Jesus the one who could help them when no one else was able to.

But those who refused to admit their need, well, first they found Jesus interesting. Then they found him entertaining. Then he became irritating and finally he became infuriating.

His message offended them. He required them to admit the darkness in their hearts, but they resented even the very suggestion that there was anything to admit. And what we see in this father is a man who learned as a result of his son being at death's door, that he had needs that only Jesus could deal with.

You know, the Lord often brings men and women to faith in this way. Instead of a person immediately seeing themselves as a sinner in need of salvation, very often men and women are shown first to realize how weak and needy they truly are through some trouble or failure or through some extreme disappointment in life.

But once that is acknowledged, the dam is broken and their need for other things, especially peace with God, could actually be acknowledged. And that seems to be what happened with this man.

[17 : 27] Verse 51 tells us that he was going home when his servants came out to meet him with the news that the boy was recovering. The miracle had happened. His faith had been rewarded.

The boy was alive and well. And the official asked at what time the boy was revived and he found it was at the exact moment that Jesus spoke. Verse 53 there confirms that the official was a believer as he shared his faith with his whole house and they believed too.

He turned into an evangelist just like that. He began by looking to Christ for the earthly life of his son. And he's ended up looking to Christ for his own eternal life and that of his family as well. And there is the distinction that the Lord Jesus makes between true and false faith. False faith looks to Jesus for what will interest and entertain. True faith on the other hand looks to Jesus in desperation and realizes that he and he alone is the only one who can give you what you must have for life now and forever.

and with that recognition a person finds in Jesus a savior and a friend with every worth every ounce of loyalty and love that one can muster.

[18 : 44] Now at the start of the story the father had a sort of faith. He was a religious man. He believed that Jesus was a miracle worker and he sought out Jesus in the hope of receiving a miracle. But at that point he had no living trust in Jesus Christ because his heart had not yet been engaged by the Lord.

And it was not until he believed the words of Jesus that his blindness cleared and he could see Jesus for who he really was. The son of God and the savior of the world.

Now both the Galileans and the father had faith. I mean both states of mind are in the Bible and they are both called faith. But the difference between them is the difference between light and darkness, life and death, heaven and hell.

I mean you can call Jesus the greatest miracle worker that ever lived. You can call him the greatest teacher that ever lived and you would be right. But you see John teaches us that that is not enough. John wants us to learn from his words that Jesus is the Christ, the son of the living God, the savior of the world and you must believe that who he is and what he came to do is the only way to receive eternal life.

[20 : 01] And that is the gift that God gives to those of us who believe in his son. Let me pray for us. Thank you.