

From Common Sense to Faith
John 4:43-54

As we study these blessed scriptures each week, we talk a lot about "faith". And that's for good reason. It's because "Faith" is the one link, the one connection that you and I have to the Lord Jesus.

And unless and until you and I are fully convinced about who the Lord Jesus truly is and what He was sent to accomplish within the souls of men and women like you and me, we struggle in our efforts to believe in Him and to have faith in Him.

But dear friends, the simple truth is, when all of life is said and done on this earth, our belief and our faith in the Lord Jesus will have been all that matters, both for our time while here on this earth and for all of eternity that follows. And you and I need to come to that realization, to fully understand and to accept that truth, else we will be lost, truly lost, eternally lost.

Let me say this again! Our hearing and our believing and our accepting this truth about faith is our only avenue to salvation, "faith" in Christ alone, "Faith", that mysterious "innate conviction within our soul that transcends all reasoning" that Jesus Christ is the "Only Begotten Son of the Living God", and that through His death, His burial and His resurrection He has paid the full and complete penalty for our sins, and that by our personally receiving His blessed gift to us of the salvation His sacrifice provides, we are saved, eternally saved.

Now, with that truth as our starting point for our study today, here in John chapter 4, we find the Lord Jesus returning to Galilee, and is near the area of His hometown.

And here once again, Jesus is confronted with the reality that we have just spoken about, that simple belief, simple faith within the hearts of ordinary people can often be so very difficult for the human soul.

Let's read these words given here in the Book of John chapter 4, and we'll talk about them. John chapter 4, verse 43,

⁴³ After the two days (of ministering with the Samaritans) he (the Lord Jesus) departed for Galilee. ⁴⁴ (For Jesus himself had testified that a prophet has no honor in his own hometown.) ⁴⁵ So when he came to

Galilee, the Galileans welcomed him, having seen all that he had done in Jerusalem at the feast. For they too had gone to the feast.

⁴⁶ So he came again to Cana in Galilee, where he had made the water wine. And at Capernaum there was an official whose son was ill. ⁴⁷ When this man heard that Jesus had come from Judea to Galilee, he went to him and asked him to come down and heal his son, for he was at the point of death. ⁴⁸ So Jesus said to him, "Unless you see signs and wonders you will not believe." ⁴⁹ The official said to him, "Sir, come down before my child dies." ⁵⁰ Jesus said to him, "Go, your son will live." The man believed the word that Jesus spoke to him and went on his way. ⁵¹ As he was going down, his servants met him and told him that his son was recovering. ⁵² So he asked them the hour when he began to get better, and they said to him, "Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him." ⁵³ The father knew that was the hour when Jesus had said to him, "Your son will live." And he himself believed, and all his household. ⁵⁴ This was now the second sign that Jesus did when he had come from Judea to Galilee. (John 4:43-54)

A question . . . How easy is it for you to believe? Do you by nature readily take people and their circumstances at face value, or is it your nature to be cautious and on your guard? Belief and trust comes to each one of us very differently.

I'm reminded of a conversation that I had some years ago with a good friend that I spent time with. I was aware that he seemed always to be skeptical of other people. He and I compared notes on our personal approach to our belief and trust in others.

I told him that, as I meet people for the first time, most all of them usually start out at 100% with me. I most often instinctively take each of them at face value, believing them to be truthful and trustworthy, until they show themselves to be otherwise.

My friend told me that he did the exact opposite. With him it took time and experience to engender trust. He said that each person he met started out at 0% and worked their way up over time.

And yes, both of our approaches are probably valid, with each approach having its difficult side as well as its pleasant side.

And here, in verse 44, as Jesus spoke about a prophet being without honor in His own home country might well support either of those views.

Knowing someone well, even loving them deeply over a long period of time allows us opportunity to know their personalities and their habits. And that kind of knowledge can certainly influence whether or not we accept them as someone beyond the normal, especially as in Jesus' case, their being a prophet, or even being the Savior of the world.

And though I usually do have a very accepting nature, I still fear that I might have been one of those relatives and neighbors of Jesus who questioned the "emerging rumor" that He might be the Messiah spoken about in the scriptures.

It would be especially hard, having grown up in the family or in the neighborhood of a person for thirty years, to suddenly change all that we have thought and believed and to begin to accept our boyhood friend as being the Almighty God, the creator of heaven and earth, the Savior of all mankind?

A "good teacher" yes, Jesus was obviously well learned in the scriptures . . . and even perhaps a prophet. But the Messiah, the Savior of the world . . . now that would be a difficult, if not an impossible leap beyond common belief.

Jesus quoted the adage about a prophet being without honor in his home country to emphasize that very thing, that familiarity and intimate knowledge could make it very hard to accept Him at the much higher level of "Savior and Lord". Some rejected Him so completely that they accused Him of being insane and possessed by a demon.

The defining line, the obstacle that we must be able to cross in order to believe and have faith is a line that is drawn within our own minds. It is the line of "common sense".

While our "common sense" is often helpful to us, it is also often a great hindrance, especially when considering anything outside of its boundaries. "Common sense" demands that people and circumstances be "sensible" and "understandable", and "comfortable" to us. And so, when our belief has to reach beyond our common sense into the unknown, the invisible, we very often falter and shrink back.

But folks listen, that is precisely the way that God designed “faith” to interpose itself into each of our souls. “Faith” is a natural antagonist to common sense. It collides with and violates every level of common sense thinking and actions.

But if allowed by us to thrive, faith has an amazing ability to move up and far beyond common sense. Faith can attach itself, with a passion, to someone or something outside our commonsense understanding and can be so strong that it will cause us to do things that we would never otherwise do.

Hebrews 11 tells us,

¹Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. (Hebrews 11:1)

Faith reaches past common sense reasoning and past common sense understanding, past this visible world into the invisible realm, and it empowers us to believe things, to do things and to say things that we would not otherwise be able to do or say.

In these earliest days of Jesus’ ministry, He was doing far more than just healing the sick and turning water into wine. He was establishing belief and faith as the foundational basis for all matters of life and all matters of eternity from His day forward.

And so, while these first words that Jesus spoke back to this desperate father may seem a bit out of place at that moment, they were very needful words, needful to transport this grieving father out of his commonsense reality into that invisible realm of belief and faith. He said,

⁴⁸“Unless you people see miraculous signs and wonders,” . . . “you will never believe.” (John 4:48)

This distraught father was obviously in a great hurry, concerned that his son might die. But Jesus was in no great hurry at all, not because He was insensitive or uncaring, but because Jesus knew that it would be as easy for Him to raise a dead boy to life as it would be to heal the boy’s illness.

Jesus, knowing the weakness of this man’s faith, wanted to help him out of the quagmire of his commonsense into the realm of faith.

And Jesus wants to do that with each one of us. He wants each of us to walk by faith and not by sight. At one point Jesus said to His disciple Thomas,

²⁹ . . . Thomas, because you have seen me, you have believed:

blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed. (John 20:29)

This father had come to Jesus with at least some small degree of faith to begin with. We know that simply because he was there at that moment begging Jesus to help.

Desperate situations and desperate needs can often times drive us to go on past our common sense, into "hope", and then on into that invisible world of "faith".

This father was a desperate man. You can hear the urgency in his voice even as Jesus chastised him. The man was going to appreciate Jesus' "words of wisdom" a lot more later on, but for that immediate moment, his desperation ruled his thoughts and so he cut right past the chastisement and moved the conversation back to the need at hand. Listen again! Jesus said,

⁴⁸"Unless you people see miraculous signs and wonders," . . . "you will never believe." ⁴⁹The royal official said, "Sir, come down before my child dies." (John 4:48-49)

Jesus, loving this man and his child and knowing that the man's belief needed time to mature before it could rise to the level of real faith, went ahead and healed the child.

Let's stop right here for a moment and look one level deeper into this event. To the casual observer, it might seem incidental that this man came to Jesus at this moment, driven by his love and concern for his desperately ill son. But folks, God's plans and God's purposes run far deeper than some illness and even far deeper even than our care and compassion for each other.

Recall for a moment, some of the other verses of scripture that speak of encounters with Jesus. Those encounters were never accidental or incidental. A truth given to us in these scriptures that I remind us often about is one where Jesus declared to us in John 6:44 that,

⁴⁴No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him. (John 6:44)

This desperate father's love for his dying son prompted him to come to Jesus for help, yes. But beyond that, high up in the heavenly realms, God the Father was drawing this man and his family to Jesus for something far more important than physical healing.

God wanted this man and his family to believe, to believe and be saved.

And so, just as He did with the woman at the well, Jesus held back from immediately handing out a quick cure. With the woman at the well, he wanted to bring conviction for her immoral lifestyle and to bring her to repentance. With this royal official, Jesus wanted to dispel weak belief and bring about salvation for an entire household.

This man's weak belief and his common sense told him that Jesus would need to come personally and to perhaps lay His hands on the boy in order to heal him . . . and that He would need to do it quickly, else the boy would die.

But God Almighty is not restricted by time and distance. This desperate man needed to have the faith that Jesus could heal the boy from where He stood. But also if perchance the boy should die, that Jesus could also just as easily raise him from the dead.

Jesus knew that this desperate and distraught man needed to stop at that very moment and take a step of faith, the step of taking Jesus at His word.

A caution for you and me as we observe this distraught father is that our prayers and our petitions to God must not be hindered by our demands that God do His healing work in the manner and in the timing that we would want.

We know that He will not come and be personally present and able to lay His hands on us or on our loved ones. So we must be willing to allow Him the latitude to work in the way that He sees fit, to hear our prayers from heaven and answer them in whatever manner He knows to be best, whether it is to convict of sin or to provide healing for a sickness or disease.

Oh dear Christian, God, right at this moment, knows your and my personal needs. And He knows the needs of each of our sons and daughters.

And though we might prefer that He instantly bring healing to us, sometimes, perhaps often, God knows that it is necessary to first chastise us or to chastise our sons and our daughters. And please know that chastisement is one of God's deepest expressions of love. Listen to these words given in Hebrews chapter 12,

⁵ . . . "My son do not make light of the Lord's discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you, ⁶ because the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son." ⁷Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his father? (Hebrews 12:5-7)

. . . God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness. And true, as He tells us here, no discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. But later on however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.

You and I must not reject God's chastisement or try to avoid it. There is a deep love interlaced within its sufferings.

Again, as it was with the woman at the well, Jesus' first desire is to bring each of us to repentance, to salvation and to a holy lifestyle. And to do that He must chastise us.

Oftentimes, we are like this father here in scripture, too caught up in the emotion of the moment to want to stop and listen. But folks, we must listen, or else we will miss out on the most important provision that God intends for us.

"No discipline" our Lord tells us, "seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it."

This desperate father was surely caught up in the emotion of the moment, but note very carefully, he did the thing that Jesus desired of him and he was rewarded in the grandest of ways. Listen to the man's response. Verse 50,

"And the man believed the word that Jesus had spoken unto him, and he went his way." (John 4:50)

Folks, this is the word of admonishment for you and me today. We must do exactly as this man did. "The man believed the word that Jesus had spoken unto him, and he went his way."

If we will do as this man did and take Jesus at His Word, then we too will be rewarded in the grandest of ways. Hebrews 11:6,

⁶without faith *it is impossible to please Him*, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and *that* He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him. (Hebrews 11:6)

God rewards those who earnestly seek Him and His kingdom. And His rewards go far and beyond anything we can think or imagine. God's reward for this man's belief and faith went on past the healing of his son into the salvation of this man's entire family.

Listen!

⁵⁰Jesus replied, "You may go. Your son will live." The man took Jesus at his word and departed. ⁵¹While he was still on the way, his servants met him with the news that his boy was living. ⁵²When he inquired as to the time when his son got better, they said to him, "The fever left him yesterday at the seventh hour."

⁵³Then the father realized that this was the exact time at which Jesus had said to him, "Your son will live." So he and all his household believed. (John 4:50-53)

This passage of scripture that we are studying here today is so very rich in meaning, with many more precious treasures hidden within it. But there is just one more of its secrets that I'd like for us to consider further before we close for today. It's these last few words of this last verse, "So he and all his household believed". "So he and all his household believed"!

As I have studied many of the family relationships that God has revealed to us throughout these scriptures, it seems that He so often includes all the family members as He draws and saves and guides them into and through their salvation experience, a "covenantal" kind of relationship. That "covenantal" kind of relationship can be seen in some of the Old Testament families like that of Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob and Moses. Also, in the New Testament families of Cornelius and then this man in today's passage.

This is "Grace" folks, "Grace". None of these people were "seeking" to have a relationship with God on their own. Romans chapter 3 tells us clearly that "no one seeks after God", not even one person in all of time!

For reasons of His own that we might never know, God has chosen to draw some of us into salvation. And that is “Grace”. “Grace”. God’s free gift to us!

And these words given here in verse 54, “So he and all his household believed”, reveal a precious promise to us about God’s loving grace. None of these family members had to walk down an isle and pray the “sinner’s prayer” nor any other of the requirements that we today seem to insist on. Jesus simply, by “Grace” saved their souls.

Oh my dear friends, it is my earnest hope that God might show some of that same “Grace” to me and my family and save us all! And I know, dear friends that such is your hope also!

May I say this all again and then we’ll close . . . thanks be to God. His loving grace was able to spread throughout the hearts of everyone in this family and save them all. And I do so much want our loving Lord to pour out His grace into my family and your family and to save us all.

Listen carefully to this precious truth given in Ephesians chapter 2,

⁸ For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God. (Ephesians 2:8)

Pray with me.