

**Introduction:**

I want to talk about an interesting miracle Jesus performed and it concerns a healing. Having spoken with a number of you, I know of your testimonies of having received healing from God. Perhaps some of you have prayed for another and they experienced God's miraculous healing touch. Of course what joy, what faith, what excitement there was at that news. Praise God! In fact, I wish I could say that every time I prayed for someone who was sick or diseased, they were healed instantly...but more often than not they weren't. Nevertheless, one thing I can say is that God knows what He is doing.

Another true statement is this: *distance is no obstacle for God*. Despite what many think, it is not necessary for a sick person to be brought to a man who has the spiritual gift of healing for God to administer the healing. You see, God is not limited to the human physical frame nor to any set plan or purpose. We read and understand in God's word that He will bless the faithful prayer of the saints just as effectually as He blessed the prayer of the Apostle Peter or Paul, who had the spiritual gift of healing and on numerous occasions seemed to be able to use it at will.

My heart breaks for people who have become disillusioned with the things of God because they have not experienced a physical healing. They were caught in the vortex of being hauled to a so-called miracle healing crusade so they could get close to someone who allegedly had the gift of healing – and yet, they experienced nothing. Let me tell you something: No man has ever healed anybody...it is God that heals! Amen.

Now, with that as a background, let's meet a father who had a dying son. He thought that Jesus had to be physically present to administer healing – but he learnt a great deal after this experience. When you're a parent and your child is suffering, we can feel so helpless when we can't relieve their pain. This father struggled with these feelings. This is a beautiful story of Christ's compassion and this father's faith.

**THE OCCASION (vv.43-46)**

Jesus was visiting Cana in Galilee – the place where He performed His first miracle, the turning of water into wine at the wedding feast. Now in this passage John records a second miracle – the healing of a government official's son who lay sick 30kms away at Capernaum.

The man who speaks with Jesus is called "a royal official" – which can also be rendered as "king's man". A personal of prestigious rank and is probably one of Herod's trusted officers. But at this time in his life, his rank means nothing to him now. His son's life is at stake. Consequently, He doesn't go to Herod for help, he goes to Jesus. Amazing, isn't it, how sickness can draw people to Christ faster than prosperity does. But sometimes that's what it takes. C.S. Lewis once said, "*How hard it is to turn our thoughts to God when everything is going well with us.*"

We are told that the man's sick son is at the point of death. Now, this man had a lot of money but as always, there are many things that money simply cannot buy. For example:

- *Money can buy you a King size bed – but it cannot buy you a good night's sleep*
- *Money can buy you a three-story mansion with a waterfront – but it cannot buy you a home*
- *Money can buy you companionship all around the world – but it cannot buy you one close friend*
- *Money can buy you books – but it cannot buy you brains*
- *Money can buy you a crucifix – but it cannot buy you a Saviour*
- *Money can buy you a church building – but it cannot buy you entry into heaven*
- *Money can buy you medicine – but it cannot buy you health*

And that's the situation this father was in. We see here a desperate man.

## THE CONVERSATION (vv.47-50)

As we draw closer to overhear the conversation between the royal official and Jesus, we can't help but empathise with this desperate father, "Come down before my little boy dies." The agony in the father's words as he pleads with Jesus. Now, obviously the man has a certain kind of faith, some type of belief that Jesus is a miracle worker; that he has some powers that ordinary people do not have; that perhaps he can touch his boy and all will be well. But this is a low level of faith. He feels that everything will be lost if Jesus does not come; that Jesus must come and touch the lad before anything can happen. Too many of Christ's followers think like this and I believe God wants to challenge you to grow in your faith today as He challenged this man.

*Jesus says, "Unless you people see miraculous signs and wonders, you will never believe."*

It seems like the Lord comes down awfully hard on this desperate father, doesn't it? (v.48) Before we think Christ's words are too harsh, we need to see that Jesus is not just addressing the father here, but a large number of people who are like this. He is rebuking people who really want to see miracles, exciting signs, supernatural wonders and events, before they are prepared to believe who Jesus is. We must understand that a circus-like atmosphere was fast developing around Christ. To many people, He was fast becoming a travelling sideshow spectacle: "Hurry, hurry, hurry! Come one, come all! See the Great Galilean Miracle Worker! You want healing? He's the One who can do it! You want food? He can fill your stomach! You want wine? All He needs is water!" But Jesus wasn't a miracle worker – He was the Messiah. He was God in the flesh offering eternal life to man.

And here comes another man wanting Jesus to travel 30kms to heal his son, and he pleads for the Lord to come, but Jesus did not go. Now, could Jesus have gone with him and have healed the boy? Of course he could. Would this have done much for the faith of this father? Maybe, but probably not to be honest. You know, standing by and watching as another brings healing requires very little faith. But to believe without being there, without seeing for yourself – now that takes faith!

It is at this point that Jesus says, "*Go. Your son will live.*" In the Greek, it actually says, 'Your son is living; he lives.' So, in a way, our Lord is both answering and denying this father at the same time. Can you see that? Jesus refused to go but granted him his request.

What was Jesus doing here? He was giving this father an opportunity to believe at a higher level of faith – this is important and don't miss this: *no longer to believe only on what Jesus could do, but to believe on who He was.* In a way, Jesus was saying in effect to this man, "Are you one of those 'seeing is believing' kind of people? There are many people like that today." And the father in effect was saying, "Sir, I'm just a desperate father. All I know is that my little boy is dying and I need your help." Then Jesus in effect says, "Then believe and you will see."

Jesus was challenging him to a higher level of faith. And this is the basis of all true faith – not in what Jesus can do or what He has done, but who He is. Is He the kind of man who keeps His word? And that is what this father had to face.

## THE REACTION (vv50-54)

### A. Of the official: belief

Then we come to what I think is one of the most faith-filled verses in all the NT and I want you to underline it. Verse 50, *“The man took Jesus at His word and departed.”* That is faith. That is belief. Now I don’t think for one moment this man received some kind of superhuman level of faith and walked away with a jump in his step and whistling with his lips. Of course he would have walked away still troubled with doubts. I’m sure he would have walked away still asking, “Why did I just leave Jesus? Why didn’t I press him a little more to come with me? Why?” But the man still went...**AND THAT IS THE POINT!** Though he was uncertain, nevertheless he went; he obeyed the word of Jesus, though his mind was still troubled with doubt. Here’s the lesson: **FAITH IS NOT WHAT YOU FEEL, IT IS WHAT YOU DO!**

If only we all would take Jesus at His word more often than not! What an example this man sets for us all to follow. And I’m not saying any of this is easy, but it is something we can and must do. This father demonstrates a confidence in Jesus’ word and off he went.

He had confidence in Jesus’ promise and off He went. In fact, we later read in verse 52 that when he got home, he was told that his son got better at 1pm the previous day. This shows us that the man did not rush back home after speaking with Jesus, but rather spent an extra night there in Cana when he could have returned back to Capernaum the previous night. And why could he do this? He believed Christ’s word. He rested in the promise.

### B. Of the servants: excitement

And what about the servants of the official? They apparently were excited and jumping with joy with the news that their master’s son is living – “Your son is alive, he’s living, he’s well!”

### C. Of the household: revival

The healing not only caused enthusiasm on the road, it created a revival at home. You see, at first the official believed the promise, now he believes the Saviour. They all rejoiced in the fact that the boy’s healing took place from a distance. But is that all? Let me show you something that fills in the picture a bit more.

**Luke 8:1-3** – Here we read of Joanna, the wife of a man called Cuza, who was King Herod’s household manager. The household manager was in charge of the King’s staff and household affairs – a close, trusted official. It is highly probably that the man Cuza mentioned here, is the official we have read about today in John 4. Cuza and his wife Joanna most likely supported Jesus as a token of their appreciation for what He did for them.

## THE APPLICATION (vv50-54)

So let's begin to wrap this up. John recorded this important story so that the reader might "believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God" (20:31). It was included so that it could create faith in the reader's heart. This moving account of Christ's compassion dramatically illustrates His lordship, not only over the physical realm with regard to sickness, but over the spatial realm also, as His power to heal spanned a distance of 30kms. Distance is nothing for God when it comes to His power.

We are told that this was the second sign that Jesus did when coming from Judea to Galilee. Just to clarify, this doesn't necessarily mean it was the actual second miracle of Jesus ever, but rather his second miracle in this geographical region. In fact, John 21:25 tells us that Jesus did so many other things that there would not be enough room for books to be written about them. But rather, what is the point of seeing or reading about any miraculous sign? It is to bring something about Jesus that we would not otherwise have known, and this is to both bring faith and make it to grow.

Read **Hebrews 12:1-2** – The author and finisher of faith (pioneer and perfecter). This is what Jesus does within us – He originates our faith and He completes our faith. And isn't this often the way God works? He does not just answer all your requests like a magical genie. He will put you into a position where you are challenged to trust Him as never before.

## Conclusion

This story today tells us that we are in the hands of One who does not always answer our prayers the way we expect, but in doing so He lifts us to a higher of who He is, of His authority and power in the world and in life. As a result, our faith becomes stronger, cleaner and truer. He enables us to exercise it at a far higher level. Jesus is still the Author and Perfecter of my faith, your faith.

**James 1:2-4** <sup>2</sup> Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, <sup>3</sup> because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. <sup>4</sup> Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.

**Illustration:** I listened to a conversation once about coaches of sport teams, and I'll never forget this statement. "*The job of a coach is to make men do what they don't want to do, in order to achieve what they really want.*" And that is what Jesus does for us: He puts us through circumstances we do not want to go through; He makes us face things we do not like to face, in order to achieve what we have wanted with all our hearts all along. To do so requires the strengthening of faith.

I pray that you have been strengthened in faith today, that you are ready to trust the Lord for the circumstances in which you find yourselves today; knowing that He is responsive, but not always in the way you ask Him to be because He sees what you do not see.

Let's pray.