

John 4:43-54
A Prophet Hath No Honor in His Own Country

Overall Purpose: Arguably, John wrote this Gospel to evangelize unbelieving Jews who were not living in the Promised Land.

ESV **John 20:30-31** Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

Key Focus: The key focus of John's Gospel concerns the question, *Who is Jesus?*¹

Key Application: The key application of John's Gospel is for you to believe in Jesus, so that you too may have life.

Introduction: Did you hear about the preacher who was scheduled as guest speaker at a huge church? He was running late, and knew that if he had to park in a far-off, outer parking lot somewhere, he wouldn't be there on time. He prayed, "Oh Lord, help me to find a parking spot up close." Sure enough, when he got to the church, there was spot up close, right in front of the main doors. So the man prayed again, "Never mind, Lord. I found one!" Too often, we look to God when we are in trouble, but then forget all about Him when the problem is over. *Is that the kind of faith that will save you? Is that really how it is with a person who truly belongs to Jesus?*

Today we will profit from parsing the phases of a father's faulty faith.

****** Jesus had been in Judea, but left to return to Galilee. While on the way, he stopped in Samaria when a revival broke out. A great number of people truly believed in Him as the Messiah. In contrast, what type of reception did Jesus get when He arrived in Galilee (4:43-45)? See also 2:23.** They "welcomed" Him with open arms because they had seen all the things He had done in Jerusalem during the feast:

ESV **John 2:23** . . . when he was in Jerusalem at the Passover Feast, many believed in his name when they saw the signs that he was doing.

Remember, however, not all that glitters is gold!

How does 4:44 tie into 4:43² and 4:45? See back to 1:11, 2:23-24, 4:1-3, 4:48.

1) It is obvious that there was a clear contrast between the response of the Jews versus the Samaritans. The Samaritans saw no miracles, yet readily believed and "honored" Jesus as a prophet. The Jews, in both Judea and Galilee, saw miracles and yet were still either skeptical or had a faulty faith. They did not truly "honor" Jesus for Who He really was:

¹ Carson, *John*, 95.

² "Hometown" (4:44) is from *patris*, which can also more generally mean country or fatherland (basis for "expatriate").

ESV **John 1:11** He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him.

Flawed Faith: Although the Galilean Jews did “welcome” Jesus (4:45), their enthusiasm was based on the things they saw Jesus do at the feast in Jerusalem, a type of faith that Jesus Himself did not trust:

ESV **John 2:23-24** . . . when he was in Jerusalem at the Passover Feast, many believed in his name when they saw the signs that he was doing. But Jesus on his part did not entrust himself to them, because he knew all people.

ESV **John 4:48** So Jesus said to him, "Unless you³ see signs and wonders you will not believe."

Later, in John 6, we learn that Jesus' Galilean “disciples” left Him in droves (6:66).

2) The difficulties lie with the word “for” (4:44—which indicates a reason why), and with “so” (4:45—which flags a cause/effect relationship). Stated another way, Jesus left Samaria to go to Galilee “because” a prophet has no honor in his own home (5:44 give a motive). “So” (4:45) when He got home, He was *merely* “welcomed” because they had seen the signs, but not truly honored for who He really was. This is a less-than desirable response.

Motive: John informed his readers that Jesus left Judea when the Pharisees learned he had more disciples than John the Baptist (4:1-3). It has been suggested that He left Judea because it was not yet time to confront and clash with them. He went to Galilee because He knew that He would not be honored there and thus be able to continue to avoid a clash with the Pharisees.⁴

The last time He had been in Galilee, He was at a wedding where he quietly turned water into wine after the hapless couple ran out of wine. The water into wine miracle was the first of his signs:

ESV **John 2:11** This, the first of his signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested his glory. And his disciples believed in him.

******What second sign did Jesus do in Galilee (4:46-54)?** He healed an official's terminally ill child (4:50, 54).⁵

Where was Jesus and where was the sick child when the healing occurred (4:46, 49-50)?

This was a long-distance miracle. Jesus was in Cana, and the child was in Capernaum, a city about 16 miles away. It is a short ride in a car, but would take at least five hours to walk it.

³ “You” is plural. Jesus was speaking about all the Galatians, not just the official.

⁴ Hendriksen, *John*, 179-180.

⁵ The text nowhere states that this official was Roman (Carson, 238).

Based just on 4:47, how would you describe the official's faith? He had enough faith to walk the 16 miles to ask Jesus to heal his son. Every parent knows with a sick child knows what this father was feeling. It drove him to seek him, even if from unlikely sources. God will often use a need in our lives to cause us to seek Him:

ESV **Hebrews 11:6** . . . whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.

Based on 4:48, did the official believe in Jesus? Jesus "said to him" (4:48a) that unless he saw Jesus do signs and wonders, he would not believe. Evidently the official did not truly believe in Jesus in a saving sort of way.

ESV **James 2:19** You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder!

Fox-Hole Faith: Ever heard it said that there are no fox-hole atheists? The official obviously had heard rumors of Jesus' healing powers, and was open minded enough to seek out Jesus and at least ask Him for help. However, any faith he had in Jesus did not go beyond an act of desperation, in much the same way that terminal cancer patients sometimes turn to alternative medicine for cures, or that a soldier in a fox hole might have under fire.

Application: Jesus' reply to the man seems harsh, but it was for his own good. It is imperative to move beyond an emergency crisis fox-hole faith to the mature, saving faith which results in eternal life.⁶ *Do you only pray to God when you have a problem?*

"Y'all" (4:48): The word "you" is plural ("y'all"). Jesus meant his words not only for the official, but for all those Galileans who heard the request.

In 4:49, how did the official respond to Jesus statement about him not believing (4:48)? He simply asked a second time for Jesus to come to Capernaum and heal his child (see 4:47). It is interesting that the official thought it would be necessary for Jesus to travel to Capernaum to perform the healing.

How did Jesus respond the second time the man asked for the healing (4:50)? Jesus graciously responded to the officials' flawed foxhole faith (4:50).

What growth in the official's faith do we see in 4:50? It must be remembered that Jesus flatly stated that the man would not believe unless he saw a miracle. However, as soon as Jesus declared the boy to be healed, the official in some sense "believed" Him and acted on Jesus' word. It may not yet have been a saving faith, but it did seem to be a growing faith. In a way, Jesus was forcing him to believe without a sign. The official quit trying to get Jesus to travel to Capernaum, and went on his way back home without him.⁷ The man said, "Come" and Jesus said, "Go", so the man went!

⁶ Steven J. Cole, "Lesson 25: From Foxhole Faith to Saving Faith (John 4:43-54)", Bible.org. Accessed July 10, 2019.

⁷ The official did not meet those coming from his home until the next day (4:42). John recorded the time as the seventh hour, by Jewish time 1:00 p.m. One wonders why it was not until the next day that the report of the healing reached the official (4:51-52). If the healing happened at 1:00 p.m., the motivated father would have had time to return home the same day.

Application: John 3:16 is clear that we are saved by faith, but not every faith is saving. The faith that saves is a faith so strong, and in an object so true, that it changes your life:

ESV **James 2:17-26** . . . faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead . . . faith apart from works is useless . . . as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so also faith apart from works is dead.

Three Types of Faith: It could be said there are three types of faith. Only one of the three is a saving faith. There is a demonic faith (James 2:19), a dead faith (James 2:17, 26), and a dynamic saving faith that results in a changed life (James 2:22-23).

ESV **2 Corinthians 13:5** Examine yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Or do you not realize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless indeed you fail to meet the test!

Why did Jesus heal the son remotely, rather than traveling back with the official (4:47, 49)?

See 4:48. It may also be possible that Jesus wanted to keep the miracle fairly low key and private (as He did when turning water into wine—only the servants and His disciples knew about it) since the Galatians responded with a flawed faith when they saw miracles (4:48). Also, since the official erroneously thought that Jesus' healing powers required Him to be physically present, healing the son long distance made for an even greater miracle.

When the father got the report that his son was healed at the exact time Jesus said so, what impact did this sign have on the father (4:51-54)? The official really, truly, fully believed—along with his whole household (4:54). This time evidently it was a saving faith. The official had turned to Jesus in an emergency, out of desperation, and God graciously used his need to open his heart up to true, saving faith.

Household Application: There are many examples in Scripture of entire households coming to faith, especially after the father believes. Based on that, pray and ask God to save your entire family! Paul prayed this for his extended family:

ESV **Romans 10:1** Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for them [his countrymen] is that they may be saved.

How public was this second sign (4:54)? Since Jesus healed the boy remotely, it seems to have been fairly private—more a family affair—just as the first sign had been.

Sign Synthesis:

1) The impact of the first sign done in Galilee, turning water into wine, was that the disciples came to truly believe in Jesus:

ESV **John 2:11** This, the first of his signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested his glory. And his disciples believed in him.

2) The impact of the second sign was that the official and his household believed in Jesus (4:54).

Literary Analysis: 1) In John 4b, John explained to his readers why the bulk of their fellow Jews did not believe in Jesus (no honor). There were, however, exceptions: the official. 2) The account of this man's conversion is in keeping with John's purpose in writing:

ESV **John 20:30-31** . . . these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

So What?

Why did John record this healing of the official's son? What point did he want to make to the unbelieving Jews who originally read this? The Galileans, on the whole, rejected Jesus. This is the testimony of how one important Jewish official swam against the tide and came to believe in Jesus. The narrative offers encouragement for John's readers to do the same.

What secondary applications does the narrative of the healing of the official's son hold for those who already believe in Jesus?

- 1) Realize that there is a process that most people go through in coming to Christ. The official first had a desperate, fox-hole faith. He next believed in Jesus enough to trust him for a healing and act on his word (leaving Jesus for home). Finally, upon verifying the miracle, he came to believe in a saving way.
- 2) Based on this passage and other examples, pray for God to save your entire household!

**** = Ask this question before reading the text. This will engage people's minds and focus their attention.

You can hear this lesson being taught at SermonAudio.com/NTRF.

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