

Growing Faith  
John 4:43-54

March 6, 2016

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<sup>A</sup> Luke 4:24, 28-30

<sup>B</sup> Luke 8:3; Acts 13:1

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<sup>C</sup> Matthew 8:10; John 11:21-24

A. Introduction

1. A Nice, Short Story

- a. at times for relaxation, I, like a lot of you, enjoy reading
  - (A) preferably shorter stories, those that can be read in a few sittings
  - (B) better still if it is part of a collection of related, short stories, so that I do not have to become acquainted with a new set of characters
  - (C) at my age, I think this is a wise choice: it might be rather presumptuous of me to start reading “War & Peace”
- b. now here in this gospel of John we have this nice, satisfying short story
  - (A) it is a simple story: a child could read and understand it
  - (B) we can feel for this father
  - (C) and perhaps, initially, question how Jesus responded to him
  - (D) it records a simple little miracle – no elaborate anointing with mud; no laying on of hands; in fact, Jesus does not see His patient
  - (E) yet this constitutes one of the seven signs in the book of John that are recorded so that we should believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God
- c. for in these few verses we have illustrated ...

2. A Variety of Faiths

- a. many times you have heard, and you have no doubt disparaged, the common saying, “It doesn’t matter what you believe so long as you are sincere.”
  - (A) of course we all know that it is the Object of our faith that really matters: that Biblical faith has God as its Object of trust
  - (B) but we also know that not all varieties of faith are saving faith
    - (1) the devils believe God but they are eternally doomed
    - (2) a person can believe about God, without believing in God – they can know all the facts, but never the reality of trust
- b. of course this makes sense once we come to the realisation that saving faith involves the committing of our very being into God’s hands
  - (A) yet we parents, teachers, Awana leaders, teach children to believe about God as a necessary first step of

growth to believing in God

(B) this short story shows varieties as well as growth in faith

## B. Absent Faith

### 1. In Jesus' *Patridi*

a. verse 44: "For Jesus Himself testified that a prophet has no honour in his own country." – his own *patridi*

(A) *Patridi* is literally His fatherland; the land of His natural fathers

(B) this could apply to all the region of Galilee

(C) but especially to His home town of Nazareth

b. at the very beginning of his ministry, after reading from Isaiah to those in the synagogue, Luke gives us this account

(A) "24 And He said, "Truly I say to you, no prophet is welcome in his home town. ... 28 And all in the synagogue were filled with rage as they heard these things; 29 and they rose up and cast Him out of the city, and led Him to the brow of the hill on which their city had been built, in order to throw Him down the cliff. 30 But passing through their midst, He went His way." (Luke 4:24, 28-30)

(B) and it is notable that in this instance Jesus did not go to Nazareth but rather first to Cana and later to Capernaum which became the chief centre of His ministry those months in Galilee

### 2. In Jesus' Home Town

a. what kind of faith did the people of Nazareth have?

(A) even his own brothers?

(B) non-faith in Jesus as the Christ

b. this is the place where we all start our spiritual journey

## C. Misplaced Faith

### 1. In Galilee

a. verse 45: "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."

(A) having seen the miracles He had just performed at Jerusalem, they were ready to welcome him and did so

(B) they believed their eyes; the things they had seen

b. these people too are of Jesus' *patridi*, the land of His natural fathers

- c. and their honour is shallow, centred on self – what this miracle-worker could do for them
- d. and Jesus knew it

## 2. In Jesus' Works

- a. you can believe in a person's works and yet not believe in the person
  - (A) e.g., do you believe in Jose Bautista's ability to hit home runs? Yes.
  - (B) do you believe in him? No!
- b. the works that Jesus did were so that people would trust in Him, in who He is: the Christ, the Son of God
- c. many, as did the Jews, trust Him only looking for what He can do for them – self-focussed faith, not God-focussed

## D. Tested Faith

### 1. The Royal Official

- a. verses 46-47: "46b And there was a certain royal official, whose son was sick at Capernaum. 47a When he heard that Jesus had come out of Judea into Galilee, he went to Him, ..."
  - (A) the word for "royal official" is literally "one who is of or belongs to the king" – so it can cover a broad range of persons and offices
    - (1) there is no proof that it is either Chuza, Herod's steward in Luke 8:3, or Manaen, raised with Herod (Acts 13:1)
    - (2) but his later history certainly is on record
  - (B) he comes to Jesus with a deep concern, a great problem
- b. his act of faith
  - (A) on foot, it would take something like 5 to 7 hours to travel the 25 km., or so between Capernaum and Cana
    - (1) as soon as he hears of Jesus coming to Galilee he sets out
    - (2) in the seventh hour – possibly at dusk – he finds Jesus and makes his request
  - (B) his actions and his words both reveal his faith – we shall follow the growth of that faith in a moment – but Jesus startles us

### 2. Jesus' Response

- a. Verse 48: "Jesus therefore said to him, "Unless you people see signs and wonders, you simply will not believe."
  - (A) Jesus knew all men, and He certainly knew the man's great need
  - (B) Jesus' statement is in the plural: He is not specifically describing the royal official but the people of which he is part, the Galileans

- b. the test is not for Jesus' sake
  - (A) but for the royal official
  - (B) "Are you willing to set yourself apart from all these people who come to me to see wonders, and have faith in whom I am?"
  - (C) Christ asks, "Are you willing to commit your greatest hopes, your life and all it possesses, into my hands and leave them in my care?"
  - (D) and the royal official passed the test, although he had ...

## E. Incomplete Faith

### 1. In His Supplication

- a. verse 47: "... and was requesting Him to come down and heal his son; for he was at the point of death."
- b. verse 49: "The royal official \*said to Him, "Sir, come down before my child dies.""
  - (A) that word, "requesting" is too weak – put yourself in the heart of this royal official
  - (B) He was beseeching, pleading, begging, urging, imploring
  - (C) there is no doubt about his reliance upon Jesus as the only One who can deal with his great problem
- c. but his faith was lacking

### 2. He Limited Christ

- a. by thinking that Christ had to be with his child in order to heal him
  - (A) remember the centurion who came to Jesus to ask healing for his servant – Jesus said he would come and heal him
  - (B) but the centurion told Jesus of his own authority and believed that Jesus only had to say a word; and Jesus said of the centurion
  - (C) "... Truly I say to you, I have not found such great faith with anyone in Israel." (Matthew 8:10)
- b. by thinking that Christ's power could only deal with a live child
  - (A) this is the same error that Martha made when Lazarus died
  - (B) "Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died. ... Even now I know that whatever You ask of God God will give you"
  - (C) but did she fully believe that? For she continues "I know that he will rise in the resurrection ..." (John 11:21-24)
- c. let not our faith be incomplete by limiting what God can do.

## F. Rewarded Faith

### 1. Jesus Spoke a Word

- a. verse 50: "Go your way; your son lives."
- b. just a simple word

### 2. The Official Responded

- a. verse 50: "The man believed the word that Jesus spoke to him, and he started off."
- b. the man ceased his begging for Jesus to come down to Capernaum
- c. the man ceased to fret that his son would die before Jesus could help: he had the answer
- d. the mark of faith is obedience
- e. he set out to return by himself to Capernaum, probably after staying over-night in Cana, looking forward to seeing his child well again

## G. Confirmed Faith

### 1. He Meets His Servants

- a. verses 51-52: "And as he was now going down, his slaves met him, saying that his son was living. 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.""
- b. we find here no trace of surprise at their news
- c. rather he asks what time it took place

### 2. A Faith to Share

- a. verse 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."
- b. his son had been healed ... really, Jesus had done all he needed, and the cynic might say, "you got what you wanted, now you can forget this Jesus"
- c. but the royal official now had an objective fact to confirm his faith
- d. his faith grew in steps by
  - (A) the word that Jesus Christ had said to him
  - (B) the fact of the healing of his son
  - (C) the independent confirmation by his servant
- e. so he was now able to bring his household into that same faith

## H. Conclusion

1. Let us seek to have a growing faith
  - a. as Paul saw in the Christians in Thessaly
  - b. "We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is fitting, because your faith grows exceedingly, ..." (2 Thessalonians 1:3 NKJV)
2. So our desire and prayer should be

O, for a faith that will not shrink,  
Though pressed by every foe,  
That will not tremble on the brink  
Of any earthly woe!

Lord, give me such a faith as this,  
And then, whate'er may come,  
I'll taste, e'en here, the hallowed bliss  
Of an eternal home. —{2}.

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ASV	American Standard Version of 1901
AV	Authorized (King James) Version of 1769
NAS	New American Standard version © 1960, 1995 The Lockman Foundation (usually the 1995 edition)
NIV	New International Version © 1984 by the International Bible Society
NLT	New Living Translation © 1996 Tyndale Charitable Trust
NKJV	New King James Version © 1979 Thomas Nelson Inc., Publishers
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version © 1989 National Council of Churches of Christ
RSV	Revised Standard Version © 1946, 1952 National Council of Churches of Christ; Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd
WEY	The New Testament in Modern Speech © 1902, 1912 R. F. Weymouth

Some of the commentaries and resources used in the preparation of this message are identified as follow:

BM	-	<i>Biblical Museum</i> , Editor James Comper Gray, ca 1870
EGT	-	<i>The Expositor's Greek Testament</i> , Hodder & Stoughton; 1903 <i>John</i> , by Marcus Dods
NICNT	-	<i>The New International Commentary on the New Testament</i> <i>The Gospel according to John</i> , by Leon Morris
NTC	-	<i>New Testament Commentary</i> , by William Hendriksen; Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, MI; 1954
TEC	--	<i>The Gospel according to John</i> , by George Allen Turner & Julius R. Mantey, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, MI; ca 1965

2. 'O, For a Faith that Will Not Shrink,' by William H. Bathurst, 1831