

The Miracles of Jesus – The Healing of the Nobleman's Son

What prevents you from enjoying God is unbelief. What enables you to know and see and enjoy God is faith. Therefore, a loving God is going to be continually working to stir up and strengthen your faith. He wants you to know and to love Him. He is grieved over your lack of faith. But He will work with you to author and to finish faith in Him so that you may come to a better, fuller love for Him.

The miracle of the healing of the nobleman's son is primarily a lesson about faith. Faith is what goes on between your soul and God. Like electricity is conducted across wires, so the interchange between a human and God is conducted through faith. Faith is humbly and submissively trusting God, yielding to Him and obeying what He says. And this miracle traces how Jesus takes a spark of faith and blows on it to make it a flame, until it is a blazing fire that ignites the faith of others. It's a lesson in how Jesus seeks to do the same thing with you today. Let's look at the passage in the gospel of John:

So Jesus came again into Cana of Galilee, where he made the water wine. And there was a certain nobleman, whose son was sick at Capernaum. When he heard that Jesus was come out of Judæa into Galilee, he went unto him, and besought him that he would come down, and heal his son: for he was at the point of death. Then said Jesus unto him, "Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe." The nobleman saith unto him, "Sir, come down ere my child die." Jesus saith unto him, "Go thy way; thy son liveth." And the man believed the word that Jesus had spoken unto him, and he went his way. And as he was now going down, his servants met him, and told him, saying, "Thy son liveth". Then enquired he of them the hour when he began to amend. And they said unto him, "Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him." So the father knew that it was at the same hour, in the which Jesus said unto him, "Thy son liveth:" and himself believed, and his whole house. This is again the second miracle that Jesus did, when he was come out of Judæa into Galilee.

John 4:46-54

For context, this miracle occurs a while after the miracle of turning the water into wine. Shortly after that, Jesus went down to Jerusalem, where he cast the money changers out of the temple, and performed various signs and miracles, the details of which we don't know. He then spent about eight months in that general area close to the Jordan, baptising people with His disciples. John the Baptist was then imprisoned, and Jesus heads north back up to Galilee. He passes through Samaria, and there converts the Samaritan women. He arrives in Galilee, and begins preaching there. It is at this time that this miracle occurs.

A nobleman, probably one of the king Herod's stewards, has a son sick with a fever who is close to dying. He is about 30 kilometres away in Capernaum. He makes the journey to Cana to find Jesus and beg him to come back and heal his son. Jesus seems to rebuke him and others, but still tells him that his son has been healed, and he can return home. When returning home his servants meet him and he finds out that his son was healed at the exact time Jesus spoke those words. He believes in Jesus as the Son of God, and so does his family.

1. Baby faith is when you trust in Jesus' reputation

This nobleman is an example of where all faith starts. He knows very little about Jesus. He doesn't know Jesus is God. He doesn't know Jesus is the Saviour from sin. He doesn't know his own need of salvation. But he was in crisis. His money could not help him, and he realised that only Jesus could do for Him what he needed.

All he knew of Jesus was what he had heard from others. But he left his son, risking all to find Him. He heard Jesus was in Galilee, and sought Him while he was near. He also humbled himself (by travelling personally) and implored Jesus (repeatedly) to come.

And are you in crisis of any kind – with your job, your spouse, finances, marriage, parenting, disease, an emergency, or crime? And what have you heard of Jesus from others? It is good to use the faith you have, and not neglect it. And while you should not throw even that little bit of faith away, you should not be content with it. Blow on that spark of faith, and head for Jesus. Open his Word. Come to church. Seek Him out. God is glad for what faith you have, but not satisfied with it.

This is why Jesus seems to rebuke the nobleman in this passage. Christ is actually speaking to the Jewish people in general here, which we can gather because He addresses the nobleman as ‘ye,’ which is plural. Jesus also uses a double negative – “no, you will not believe...” Question: what has ‘believing’ got to do with the healing of the nobleman’s son? The answer is this: we think the help Jesus provides is what we need, but believing is what Jesus knows we really need.

The illustration here is of a kind of ‘Emergency Jesus’, where unless I see how Jesus helps me, I don’t want Him. People come to hear how Jesus may make their lives a little healthier, a little wealthier, a little less gloomy – they do not want to hear that He has come to rule them, to save them from sin from which they must turn. In this passage, Jesus recognised that the people wanted a healer, but Jesus was there as a Messiah. They wanted things *from* Jesus, but He Himself was what they needed. Even today, what God wants is our love for Him and trust in Him, when often what we want is just a better life.

The truth is, a ‘signs and wonders’ mentality is a double-edged sword. God sometimes gives signs to verify His Word. Sometimes, unless God helps in the physical realm, people will not see their need of His help in the spiritual realm. In such times, a miracle can stir up the right kind of faith.

But sometimes, it does the opposite. It creates in some a hankering after religious entertainment and amusement, a scepticism of God’s Word that says, ‘seeing is believing.’ Jesus is saying this kind of faith is immature and not what it should be – seeking God only in crisis, seeking Him for what He can do, but not for who He is, looking for God’s works before we seek Him out.

In the passage, Jesus is deliberately provoking and growing the nobleman’s faith. The man does not understand what faith is. He hardly understands who Jesus is. All he knows right now is his desperate need, and Christ the only one with the potential to meet the need. Jesus has rebuked the mentality that seeks to simply use Him without believing in Him.

The nobleman responds to the rebuke simply pleading, ‘Sir, my child will die’ – humbly communicating that he is helpless: ‘I do not understand faith or these issues, but please, come to my little one, before he dies.’ This is the urgency and love of a parent. More than once in the gospels we see parental compassion, how parents should cry out for the salvation of their children.

Consider that while the nobleman has this little bit of faith, his faith is still very small. He thought he knew how Jesus must perform the healing. He didn’t think it could be done any other way than the way he thought. He was about to be surprised by the wisdom and power of the Lord Jesus. He also did not understand Jesus’ sovereignty over life, death, time and circumstances. He thinks Jesus can heal a sick child, but not a dead child. Similarly, how we often are anxious thinking that God **must** act in a certain way **or else...**

This story could have gone the other way. The nobleman’s spark of faith could have been extinguished. Jesus is blowing on the ember of his faith, but the man could have chosen to harden his heart and say, ‘Well, if you

won't meet my need, I'll go elsewhere.' If you hear that Jesus is not just helper, He is Lord, and it offends you – you are extinguishing what little faith you have. When you hear that Jesus not only wants to do something for you, but that He wants something *from* you – do not harden your heart and walk away. Listen to Him.

2. Stronger faith is when you trust His promises

The man had faith, but it needed to be perfected. Jesus graciously chooses to heal the man's son, but not in the way he thought He would. He does not come down. Instead, He speaks a word. He gives him a promise. The man cannot verify the promise, he cannot check, or phone home. He is being challenged by Jesus to a new level of faith. By saying, "*Go thy way; thy son liveth,*" Jesus says, in effect, 'previously you trusted that I could meet your need. Now, trust My Word. Take me at my Word.' I'm reminded of this verse:

He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform.

Romans 4:20-21

If He speaks, it is enough. When God says it, it is.

For he spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast.

Psalms 33:9

Consider the power of Jesus to know where the son was, what the sickness was, what needed to be done, and His control over things even if He isn't present in body. The miracle of water into wine demonstrated Christ's power of time. This miracle demonstrates His power over space. The fact that He is not walking among us physically today is no barrier to His power.

As an aside: Consider also the humility of Jesus to heal a man's son, without going there to be cheered on as a hero. Jesus is always pointing people away from sign-seeking to a living personal relationship with Himself. And trusting His Word is the number one route to that kind of relationship. His Word is His self-revelation.

So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

Romans 10:17

Picture the puzzlement and silence Jesus' words must have caused in the nobleman at that moment. He had already calculated how long it would take to get Jesus back, how much it would cost to put him up as they travelled back, the time factor involved, perhaps even what he would repay Jesus in the house.

Now he is left facing a promise – go home, your son is healed. Now what should he do? Tell Jesus, 'No, it would be better if you came down.' That's wouldn't make sense – surely the healer knows how best to heal. But how could He... And then perhaps it dawns on the nobleman: 'If this Jesus has the kind of power they say He has, the best thing I can do is take Him at His Word.'

Say we come to Jesus with a problem, and He gives us a promise or more than one promise from His Word. Often, we hear a promise and think, "How does that help me? How will that work? That's not practical. Or it's not practical enough.' But we must trust God's Word. His commands are also His promises – this is the sufficiency of Scripture.

Say you come seeking help with your feelings of depression, and Jesus says, repent and trust me as Your Saviour. Or you come seeking help for your marriage and Jesus says, you need forgiveness of sins – claim my death on the cross as your forgiveness. We can walk away, or obey the promise.

Note how the passage says, *“And the man believed the word that Jesus had spoken unto him, and he went his way.”* The nobleman obeyed as evidence of his faith. He started walking back. And when you trust His promise, you carry on with life, doing the next right thing that pleases God.

We can argue how little sense it makes to us to obey what He has shown us – how little relevance it has to our problem. But this nobleman trusted Jesus. He basically made up his mind that Jesus must know better. And that’s what you have to do.

Before he reached home, his servants meet him. They are like messengers of grace that God sent. And often, before we even complete our obedience, God meets us to confirm and strengthen our faith. The nobleman asks his servants when his son ‘began’ to get better. They inform him he was instantaneously healed at the seventh hour. The man then ties the circumstances to the promise.

We too need to consider our own lives and see how God’s promises have come to pass. Take the time to consider God’s deliverances on your behalf.

I will meditate on Your precepts, And contemplate Your ways.

Psalm 119:15

3. Mature faith is when you trust His Person

When you connect the dots, you believe in Him. When we see how He has been calling us from general faith to a specific obedience or a promise, it leads us to Him, His nature, His ways, His character. When you see how God fulfils His promises, it shows who He is. And that is where you want to be. You come to believe in Him. He is gracious, He is strong. He is wise. He is good. God can bring salvation out of suffering.

When you obey God’s promises and He works, it will cause others to come to faith as well: *“and himself believed, and his whole house.”* That likely includes the nobleman’s wife, son and servants.

Remember, God is always at work. He will draw you to Himself with a circumstance. Don’t run, but come. When you come, He will usually do things in a way you did not expect. He will give you a promise from His Word and ask you to obey Him. Continue to trust Him, and you will see how that promise not just meets your needs, but more importantly, how it leads you to a greater knowledge of Himself.

Consider the wisdom of how Jesus did more than heal the man’s son, but orchestrated things so that He could heal the man’s soul, and that of his family. Jesus could have gone to his house, performed the miracle, and everyone may have been caught up in the moment. But His way was to send the man off, and work a miracle from afar. When everyone saw His power over space – they believed in Him. The miracle became secondary, He was primary. He always does the wisest thing to draw you to Himself.

Jesus is the Author and Finisher of our faith. He initiates it. He helps it along. He completes it. He is continually working to draw you into a closer relationship with Himself. The question is, what are you doing with the spark of faith you have?

When He creates a need, it should drive you to Him. When you arrive and instead of immediately meeting your need, He directs you to His Word – don't storm off and say, "I don't need promises and Scripture verses – I need action!" If you do that, you are extinguishing the faith He is seeking to build in you.

Believe the promise and obey it. Continue in a place of humble, trusting obedience, and you will be met by messengers of grace. God will meet your need in unexpected ways, ways that will do more than meet your need, it will lead you to Him, to a closer walk with Him. He wants you in a love relationship with Himself. Cooperate with His wisdom and His means, and you will come to love and believe in the Lord Jesus all the more.