

## WEDNESDAY BIBLE FELLOWSHIP

Christ Church, Crouch End Hill

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No: 81

### "The second of the signs" - Healing of the official's son.

Brief Talk on John 4: 43-54

**Read** John 4:43-54

#### **Introduction**

Jesus' words in verse 48 "Unless you see signs and wonders you will not believe" should serve to remind us that Jesus Christ's greatest gifts to us today are not in the restoring of physical health but in the bestowing of a strong faith in Himself as Lord of LIFE. Sometimes Jesus gives us the gift of physical healing, but not always. It is God's will that we believe in Jesus whether our bodies are healed or not. His greatest gift is not physical healing but a new birth and strong faith in him. The faith that requires Jesus Christ's physical presence, or the restoring of physical health before one really believes is hardly real faith in Jesus Christ at all. But such a faith is all too common. When we require such signs before we believe we are like swimmers who are brave so long as they are in shallow waters; we are like soldiers who are brave so long as they are on a display parade ground and not on a real battlefield. Our prayer could well be the words of the Hymn:

"O for a faith that will not shrink,  
Though pressed by every foe;  
That will not tremble on the brink of any earthly woe.  
That will not murmur or complain beneath the chastening rod,  
but in the hour of grief or pain will lean upon its God."

Jesus' miracles were not mere illusions, the product of wishful thinking. Although the official's son was 20 miles away, he was healed when Jesus spoke the word. Distance was no problem because Jesus Christ has mastery over space. We can never put so much space between ourselves and Christ that he can no longer reach us.

## Questions for discussion

1. When you were a child, what was the most serious illness or injury you ever had?  

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2. The distance from Capernaum to Galilee is about 20 miles. What motivates the royal official to travel so far? How would you have responded to what Jesus told him to do?  

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3. The royal official beckoned on Jesus to "come with him" and do something before his child dies. (a) What does Jesus' response say about God and answer to prayers and (b) what two things can you say about the royal official (vv 49-50)?  

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### Note:

Although Jesus speaks to the man, His answer is directed to the entire crowd. Like the people in general, this man is looking only to the miracles of Jesus. He is focusing on the miracles. He does not see the one behind the miracles. He only wants his immediate problem solved. He is an unbeliever. He is spiritually dead. His son is only sick. He does not realize it, but he has a much greater need than a sick son. Both he and his son are in need of spiritual life. Jesus is going to deal with the whole man. He will heal the son, but first, He teaches the man about faith.

4. (a) Why did the Royal official enquire of the time his son got better(vv52-53)? (b) What other conclusion could he have come to?  

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### Note:

There is a lot we do not know about just how God works in healing. We don't even know what to call it for sure. Sometimes we call it "faith healing," but that begs the question: Faith in whom or what? The doctor? A pill? All doctors know the value of "placebos,"

sugar pills which help a patient simply because the patient is convinced they will help. But there is nothing particularly miraculous or even religious about that. Faith may predispose a person to receive healing, but faith does not heal: God does. Some use the term "divine healing." But again, it begs the question. All healing is divine; that is, it comes from God. Whatever type of healing one receives, it ultimately comes from the same source: God. God may not send it along with the "union label" attached, or with a commercial: "This healing comes to you through the courtesy of Almighty God," but all healing is divine. Even when the healers and/or the patients don't believe in God! Such is the wonder of God's grace, which falls on the "righteous and unrighteous" alike. (Cf. Matt. 5:45)

In my limited experience, it is the prayer of others which seems to have the highest potency. Not that God is like any of our local MPs who needs to be deluged with mail before he votes in a certain way, but the prayers of large numbers of people, praying together, seem to unleash a power that is very potent. Intercessory prayer is not a form of lobbying for favours in the courts of the Almighty. It is, instead, releasing the power which God has made available to all of us.

5 What can you say about the progression of the Royal official's faith? What was the particular thing about Jesus which brought the Royal official to faith in Jesus Christ?

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6. To what does the "second sign" point?

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7. What aspect of the Lord Jesus' person led you to him?

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**Conclusion:** It will be instructive to compare the first two signs as recorded by John. The two miracles were performed in Galilee and they reveal Jesus as the Christ. There are also some contrasts but they still point to the same fact that Jesus is the Christ.

**A Contrasted Sign: *This is again a second sign that Jesus performed, when He had come out of Judea into Galilee.(4:54) We saw the first sign that Jesus did in Cana. It was the sign of turning water into wine. This is now the second sign given within the realm of Galilee. There is an interesting contrast between the two.***

<b><i>The First Miracle at Cana</i></b>	<b><i>The Second Miracle at Cana</i></b>
Performed in the midst of a wedding	Performed in the midst of sickness and death
The miracle was requested by the mother of Jesus	The miracle was requested by a royal official
Jesus changed water into wine	Jesus changed sickness into health
He demonstrated His power over the physical universe	He demonstrated that distance is no obstacle to the working of His power and that He is Lord of life
The result was that His disciples believe in Him	The result was that the royal official and his entire household believed in Him

There is a tremendous principle that we must not miss as we complete our examination of this miracle. It is the principle of affliction.

This royal official had never before come to Jesus. As much as an entire year of ministry that had taken place up to this point, yet never once did this man take it upon himself to travel to Judea and seek Jesus out. It took a tragedy to bring him to Christ. And he is not unique. This same principle is illustrated in the Psalms.

*Before I was afflicted I went astray, But now I keep Thy word. (Psalm 119:67).*

It is often in times of trouble that people will turn to God. When everything else fails, they try God. Prayer is viewed only as the final panic button that reads, "In case of emergency, press this." It is because of this that God, at times, brings affliction and trials. It is not to punish you. Rather, it is for your good. It is to bring you to a place of total dependence on God. This is the strengthening of faith. Faith begins to grow only when self-dependence has fallen. In our total dependence on God, He is glorified.

*But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weakness, so that Christ's power may rest on me.*

*(2 Cor. 12: 9)*