

As Faith Matures

By David Harrell

Bible Text: John 4:43-54

Preached on: Sunday, March 16, 2014

Once again we have an amazing opportunity to contemplate the unsearchable riches of Christ, to know him more intimately, to marvel at his workings in our lives especially as they relate to salvation. This morning I want to speak to you about the topic of faith and I've entitled my discourse "As Faith Matures."

So, we come back to our study of the gospel of John. If you will, take your Bibles and turn to John 4 and I would like to read to you verses 43-54 which will be the text we will examine this morning.

"43 After the two days He went forth from there into Galilee. 44 For Jesus Himself testified that a prophet has no honor in his own country. 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.

"46 Therefore He came again to Cana of Galilee where He had made the water wine. And there was a certain royal official whose son was sick at Capernaum. 47 When he heard that Jesus had come out of Judea into Galilee, he went to Him and was requesting of Him to come down and heal his son; for he was at the point of death. 48 So Jesus said to him, 'Unless you people see signs and wonders, you simply will not believe.' 49 The royal official said to Him, 'Sir, come down before my child dies.' 50 Jesus said to him, 'Go your way; your son lives.' The man believed the word that Jesus spoke to him and started off. 51 As he was now going down, his slaves met him, saying that his son was living. 52 So he inquired of them the hour when he began to get better. Then they said to him, 'Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him.' 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. 54 This is again a second sign that Jesus performed when He had come out of Judea into Galilee."

Jesus has just completed his two day stay in Samaria where his pursuing grace saved the outcast woman of Sychar and many of her friends there in that region. While the good news of the kingdom was to first go to Israel, Jesus' short missionary effort to the Samaritans foreshadowed even greater opportunities for the Gentiles with respect to the gospel. Now, as we approach this historical narrative we do so with the assurance that this speaks to John's ultimate purpose in this gospel and we read of that, you will recall, in chapter 20:31, "These things have been written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing, you may have life in his name." It is this topic of belief or the term can be translated "faith" that I wish to address here this morning.

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But first, I would like to give you some introductory thoughts that will help frame the theology of faith as it is seen in the word of God. We must bear in mind that God demands a response to the good news of the gospel of grace. We must believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. This is how we accept salvation. While salvation is by grace, it is through faith and it is important for us to understand that it is the act of faith that saves a man, even when that faith is focused on the correct object, rather it is the object of faith that saves a man, God the Father who has sent his Son and ministered the gospel through his Spirit. He is the one who responds to the act of faith and, therefore, justifies the believer.

Charles Spurgeon put it this way, “ Faith occupies the position of a channel or conduit pipe. Grace is the fountain and the stream. Faith is only the aqueduct along which the flood of mercy flows down to refresh the thirsty sons of men. The Lord’s salvation can come to us though we have only faith as a grain of mustard seed.” But then Spurgeon went on to add something very important, “The power lies in the grace of God and not in our faith.” He went on to say, “Think more of him to whom you look than of the look itself. You must look away even from your own looking and see nothing but Jesus and the grace of God revealed in him.”

This is what happens here with this royal official from Capernaum and if we look at, I believe we can see three stages of this man’s faith, what I sometimes call the “ABCs of faith.” We’re going to see asking faith, believing faith and confident faith. As we look at this, this morning, I’m sure that you will be able to identify some of these same progressions in your life when you came to faith in Christ. Now, I want to offer you a caution: I’m not suggesting that faith requires three separate acts. That is not the point here, but rather what I’m saying is we tend to see faith mature in three general stages, but I would add that genuine saving faith does involve the whole of our being, the whole of man. It involves our intellect, our emotions and our will.

There is an intellectual component to faith. We must have knowledge of the gospel. There must be objective truth which becomes the conscious object of our faith. Faith does not operate in a vacuum. The word of God says, “How shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard?” We are told that “faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God.” But I would also add that it is possible for a person to intellectually acknowledge the historical facts of the gospel and yet remain lost in their sins because that person has not entrusted the eternal safe-keeping of their soul to the one who lies at the very heart of those historical facts. The word of God tells us that even the demons believe and shudder. So, there is more to it than just knowledge but certainly it must include that.

Secondly, there must be an emotional component. There must be an emotional assent. In other words, an expression of heart-felt agreement. What the mind believes to be true must be embraced with a deeply held conviction, a whole-hearted assent that the truth has specific application to our soul, to the very core of who we are. My friends, we must fall in love with the truth so that we will repent of our sin in order to embrace the truth. In

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fact, Jesus said in Matthew 13:23 that the gospel seed falls on good soil at times and he says, “this is the man who hears the word and understands it.” He perceives it; he accepts it; he follows it because he knows that it addresses the all-consuming needs of his eternal soul. Unlike those who are very religious and may have some understanding of who Jesus is, even some understanding of the gospel, but they remain deceived and they will perish because as Paul said in 2 Thessalonians 2:10, “they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved.” You see, a true Christian will understand the gospel and he will love it with all of his heart.

Thirdly, there is a volitional component. A man must trust in Christ. This is an act of the will. When a man believes the truth of who Christ is and he falls in love with that truth and thereby whole-heartedly embraces that truth, he must then make a conscious decision to reject the lies that he has trusted in the past and depend solely upon that truth, depend solely upon the Lord Jesus Christ as the only hope of his salvation. You might say that a man then must step into the ark of salvation. That man will then be able to sing that great hymn,

“My hope is built on nothing less
Than Jesus’ blood and righteousness;
I dare not trust the sweetest frame,
But wholly lean on Jesus’ name.
On Christ, the solid Rock, I stand;
All other ground is sinking sand.”

So, a working definition of the biblical concept of genuine saving faith is the knowledge of, the assent to, and the unreserved reliance upon the finished redemptive work of Christ as revealed in the Scriptures. But at the core of saving faith is the object for that faith, the Son of God. Many times we hear people talk about people of faith. I hear this all the time, “People of faith. People of faith.” Faith in what? In whom? For what purpose? Whenever I have an opportunity to fly on an airplane, I always pray for an opportunity to witness to the person that sits beside me and I also pray that they will give me a little bit of time to get some rest. But very often, the topic will come up, “What line of work are you in?” and I will always be very careful to say not just, “I’m a pastor,” but rather I will say, “I am a minister of the gospel of Jesus Christ.” It’s interesting how quickly many people want to escape from that statement and very often, like not too long ago, a person said, “Oh, so you’re a person of faith,” and I said, “Well, yes but with one important distinction, the object of my faith is the person of the Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ.” Inevitably, this will evoke either abrupt silence which is usually the case, or further inquiry.

So, the politically correct, all inclusive designation “people of faith” is a very dangerous phrase because it assumes that all people of faith possess saving faith and that is not true. Having faith is meaningless and worthless unless that faith includes, as I said before, the knowledge of, the assent to and the unreserved reliance upon the finished redemptive

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work of Jesus Christ as revealed in Scripture. So, the pivotal question is not “do you have faith?” but “in whom” or “in what have you placed your faith?”

This is a biblical foundation. Let’s examine this fascinating historical narrative where we will witness the faith of this royal official develop and mature over a very short time as a result of the infinite and irresistible power of God’s saving grace. Let’s look at the text. In verse 43 we read, “After the two days He went forth from there into Galilee. For Jesus Himself testified that a prophet has no honor in his own country.” How sad. What a vivid contrast to what has just come before. Remember, Jesus was accepted by the despised Samaritans but not so by the vast majority of his own kinsmen, of his own people. And as we read in the ministry of Christ, they are either going to actively reject him, actively oppose him or they’re merely going to follow him looking for a hand-out and some miracle: free food, free entertainment, which is very often the theme of many churches today.

Now, John has already portrayed in his gospel the deplorable spiritual condition of Israel. He has already described the utter failure of Judaism for this reason as indicated in chapter 1:11, “Jesus came to his own and those who were his own did not receive him.” Even in his own home town of Nazareth they tried to kill him in Luke 16. And ultimately, his own people, his own kinsmen would ask for his crucifixion but this was according to the predetermined plan of God because, after all, he sent forth his Son to be the Lamb of God who would take away the sins of the world.

So initially, there was some reception here with the people of Galilee but mostly for all the wrong reasons. Notice 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.” You will recall in John 2:22 we read that “many believed in his name.” This was after Jesus cleansed the temple and performed many miracles when he was at the Passover feast there in Jerusalem. But as we will see, the majority of them will only receive him as a blessing not as a Savior. Again, this is the twisted thrust of many evangelical churches around the world today. They will receive him as a miracle worker but not as the long promised, anticipated Messiah.

Verse 46, “Therefore He came again to Cana of Galilee where He had made the water wine.” I want you to notice “Cana of Galilee.” Obviously, the Holy Spirit wants us to see a comparison here and he goes on to say, “And there was a certain royal official whose son was sick at Capernaum.” It’s fascinating as I think of the two visits that the Lord made to Cana of Galilee, we see that Jesus was desperately needed the first time he appeared in Cana. Remember, he needed to rescue the embarrassed bridegroom; rescue him from permanent humiliation that could permanently tarnish the groom’s reputation and his family, bring reproach upon them. In that day, it could even precipitate a lawsuit from the bride’s family to the groom’s family so there was a severe need there and that severe need provided the perfect context for an even greater blessing to be revealed, one far more than the offering of wine and the protection from embarrassment. It served, as you will recall, as an opportunity for the Lord Jesus Christ to reveal himself as the true

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Messianic bridegroom who turned the ritual cleansing water which was associated with the burdens of the Old Covenant. He turned that into wine symbolizing his redeeming and cleansing blood and the blessings of the New Covenant.

Now he returns to Cana. The Spirit of God wants to make sure that we see this and yet another need arises, a matter of life and death. A royal official of Capernaum, which would have been about 18-22 miles away, has come to plead for his son's life. I might add that there are several other interesting comparisons that emerge from these two scenarios: in his first visit to Cana, Mary comes to Christ and passionately expresses the need for the wine and Jesus rebuked her, now here in the second scenario, the nobleman passionately comes to Christ with his need for his son to be healed and Jesus rebuked him. In both scenarios, both petitioners respond in humble obedience to the Lord's commands and in both scenarios, John mentions the servant's knowledge of the situation; they were spectators of Christ. And in both scenarios, those who witnessed the miracle believed. In the first we read, "And his disciples believed in him." In the second visit to Cana, we read, "And he himself believed and his whole household." Finally, there is the obvious similarity in how John concludes both narratives. In the first, he concludes by saying in chapter 2:11, "This beginning of his signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee." And in the second, he concludes by saying in chapter 4:54, "This again a second sign that Jesus performed when he had come out of Judea into Galilee." By the way as a footnote, this miracle of healing is the second of the eight major signs that John records which prove that Jesus is the Messiah of Israel.

Now, let's examine how this man's faith matures. Will you notice in verse 47, "When he," referring to the royal official from Capernaum, "heard that Jesus had come out of Judea into Galilee, he went to Him and was requesting Him to come down and heal his son; for he was at the point of death." Here, my friends, we witness the first stage of genuine saving faith. This is what I would call "asking faith." This man begins to consider Christ. I find it interesting, even as in this situation, that God often brings some great trial, some great crisis, some great tragedy into a person's life to get them to look to Christ. We have seen this over and over again to get a person to a place where they begged him for help and in this case, the situation was the dire need for the son to live.

We must remember that the word of God says that no man on his own ever seeks after God, God must seek after him. Paul reminds us of this in Romans 3:11, "There is none who understands, there is none who seeks for God. All have turned aside, together they have become useless." So, God must do what man cannot and will not. He must look to Christ and often the first spark of the gift of faith is ignited by a divine appointment with some horrific situation. Beloved, never murmur against great afflictions because they are God's great battering-rams to break down a hard heart and cause a person to look to Christ. Suddenly, a man is confronted with the reality of sin, righteousness and judgment. That was the reason the Spirit of God came. Suddenly, a man can be confronted with one phone call with his own mortality when he finds out that his disease is terminal. Suddenly, a man can be confronted with his absolute helplessness and with the truth of who God is that he has suppressed in unrighteousness for years and years and years.

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His child is dying. As I think about this, I can't think of anything more horrific. Parents would gladly take the place of their child in cases like this. Ah, but this evidence of pursuing grace and yet this man doesn't know it yet. So, this royal officer, probably of Herod's court, makes this 18-22 mile long journey. We don't know if he went on foot. My thinking is, as a royal politician, he's probably pretty out of shape. I've been exactly where this took place; it's very, very hilly. I doubt if he walked; I would imagine he had a horse. I know that's what I would have been riding. So, it would have taken at least a half a day even by horseback but he makes this long trek to see this acclaimed miracle worker who some claim to be the Jewish Messiah. Maybe he has heard him speak before, we don't know but certainly he knows of him. Maybe he's even seen him. We just don't know. He doesn't have all the facts. He is ignorant of who Jesus really is but, my friends, faith begins as a miniscule mustard seed, not a full grown mature plant. No man is ever born again as a mature saint.

This is so obvious with our children, isn't it? They come to Christ with faith but it is ignorant faith, it is incomplete faith. Ah, but it can be saving faith. And even with the most theologically astute unsaved adult, they still come to Christ with a very incomplete ignorant faith but like the tiny mustard seed that has enormous power. It's an amazing plant. It has enormous power. When it germinates and it begins to grow, it can literally break through rock to produce its plant. So too, the power of saving faith when it is implanted in the soul of a man.

So, with his heart filled with fear, he is deeply, deeply distressed. He turns to Christ and the text says, "requesting," literally imploring. The grammar indicates that he was repeatedly begging Christ for mercy, for help. "Requesting Him to come down and heal his son; for he was at the point of death." My friends, as we look at this, may I remind you that genuine saving faith will always begin by God igniting a man with passion that will cause that person to pray. The Spirit will set ablaze within that man's heart an earnest longing to implore Christ, a longing that will cause him to seek after God and ask for help, that will cause that person to inquire of others, to search the word of God. There will be no distance too far to walk. There will be no obstacle too hard to overcome. I can remember times where people have called me in the middle of the night saying, "Pastor, please. I must talk with you. I must talk with you now because I am in desperate need of Christ."

Then ultimately, asking faith will cause that person to pray. Not the superficial dispassionate prayers that are often given before bedtime or before a meal but asking faith will cry out to God in agony of soul. It will cause a man to literally pound on mercy's gate until he is allowed entrance. What a blessed thing to behold. I've seen this in children; I've seen this in young adults and older adults; I've seen on old men's deathbeds, men who have rejected Christ all their life and suddenly they are in a puddle of tears and remorse over their sin, crying out for undeserved mercy.

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To be sure, Jesus declare in Matthew 11:12, “The kingdom of heaven suffers violence and violent men take it by force.” The idea there is that a sinner doesn’t just waltz into the kingdom. There is a narrow gate, Jesus says, that’s even going to be hard for them to find, much less enter. Then they must strive to enter into it with great agony. They must deny themselves to follow Christ. They must commit themselves to go against the flow. They must fight against Satan and his minions that stand guard right outside the gate to do everything they can to deceive and discourage and mock and ridicule. Then they have to deal with their own flesh. Beloved, make no mistake about it: no man ever waltzes into the kingdom. He will only enter by the power of sovereign grace through faith and he will exert every ounce of spiritual and physical strength to combat the enemy of his soul without and his flesh within.

Now, I want you to notice what happens in verse 48. “Jesus said to him, ‘Unless you people see signs and wonders, you simply will not believe.’” I find this fascinating. Jesus’ forthright response to this noblemen must have been shocking to those who heard it. Nobody would dare address a high-ranking official in such a tone. Ah, but Jesus was no sycophant. He was no flatterer. He never courted human approval or popularity. He came to do his Father’s will. But here we also see our Lord’s omniscience at work. You see, he peers into the heart of this man and the rest of those who were around him, the term says “people” indicating that there were a number of people there from Galilee. He knows that ultimately this man is coming to him for a miracle that would benefit him and his son. He’s not coming to seek Christ for the salvation of his soul. Again, I would submit to you that nothing much has changed these days. Most people today want a personal miracle not a personal Savior.

But also notice how presumptuous he is to tell God how to accomplish this miraculous feat. Think about it: who is this man to tell the living God to “come down and heal my son.” You see, he doesn’t realize that all Jesus has to do is think it and it’s done. And what foolishness to assume that the Son of God even needed information that his son was at the point of death. Ah, but once again remember, this is merely asking faith at this point. It’s very small; it’s very weak; it’s very ignorant. But it is very earnest.

So, undaunted and perhaps humbled by his face-to-face encounter with the living God, verse 49 says, “The royal official said to Him, ‘Sir, come down before my child dies.’” The text doesn’t tell us this but I would imagine by this time and I’m sure there’s more conversation that’s not recorded, by this time, he’s probably on his knees and with tears streaming down his cheeks, with total disregard of how humiliating that might be for him as a high ranking official in front of all of these people, he’s begging God to do something that he cannot.

But rather than traveling with him to Capernaum, notice verse 50, “Jesus merely said to him, ‘Go your way; your son lives.’” Isn’t it interesting how often the Holy Spirit brings a man to a place where he is absolutely at his wit’s end. I have seen this so many times where, with every tear, God drains away all self-sufficiency, all self-will until a person

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just casts himself in utter helplessness upon the mercy and grace of God. And God does a mighty work, “Go your way; your son lives.”

Now, isn't it interesting, there is no visible sign. There is no visible miracle. The miracle worker didn't need to be present to accomplish his supernatural wonder, all he had to do was speak. Now dear friends, don't miss this, this is very important: here John is linking eternal life with believing in the word of God. Not a sign, not a miracle, which by the way, many saw these miracles and yet did not believe. In fact, all the way through the New Testament we see that the Jewish leaders did not refute his miracles. What they did was attribute them to Satan. Make no mistake: no man has ever been saved because he believed some miracle nor do miraculous signs compel or in any way induce genuine saving faith. Faith is a gift from a sovereign God that results in a man asking and then believing the word of God that reveals the God of the word. And that's what we see here.

This brings us to the second stage of faith that we see in this man and that is believing faith. This is when a man or a woman takes God at his word. It's as simple as that. The Spirit of God has now nourished that mustard seed and caused it to mature. Notice in verse 50, “Jesus said to him, ‘Go your way; your son lives.’” We don't know the amount of time that intervenes here. I believe that it could have been much of the rest of the day, perhaps all night, but we read that “The man believed the word that Jesus spoke to him and he started off.” Think about it: his tears of fear and sorrow have turned to tears of relief and joy. He offers no argument. There is no need for any proof, for any compelling evidence. Why? Because Christ has spoken and the result is instant obedience.

Beloved, once again, genuine saving faith will always result in instant joyful obedience. Not that we're going to be obedient all the time but that will be the new disposition of a person's life even in the most trying circumstances. Oh friends, what soul-satisfying relief and heart-felt joy when we take Christ at his word. But think about it, how sad: people will hear that Jesus said, “Come to me all who are weary and heavy-laden and I will give you rest,” and people respond, “No, no! I cannot rest. I must conform to many rules in order to be holy, in order to maintain my salvation. I must work hard at my Christian life to make sure I do not forfeit grace!” Jesus says, “All that the Father gives me shall come to me and the one who comes to me, I will certainly not cast out.” Yet, man will say, “I cannot come to you because my sins are too great!” Jesus says, “You must be born again,” and yet we will say, “But there must be something that I have to contribute.” Jesus said, “It is the Spirit who gives life. The flesh profits nothing. The words that I have spoken to you are Spirit and are life,” and yet we will say, “But I need evidence. I need confirmation. I need to feel something. I need to see something. I need to hear something. I cannot merely take Jesus at his word.”

My friend, if this is you, you know nothing of genuine saving faith and your religion is a sham. And when a man truly trusts the finished redemptive work of Jesus Christ as revealed in Scripture, there is absolutely nothing that can shake that faith: no amount of ridicule, no amount of persecution. Why? Because he is born of God, 1 John 3:9. Because his seed abides in him. You see, God is the author of salvation, not man. Jesus said in

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John 6:39, “This is the will of him who sent me, that of all that he has given me, I lose nothing but raise it up on the last day for this is the will of my Father that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in him may have eternal life and I myself will raise him up on the last day.” My friend, I ask you: do you take Christ at his word? Or do you look for evidence? Think about it: if Christ could heal this boy from such a distance do you not believe that the omnipresent Christ cannot heal you and save your soul through his eternal word?

Well, this nobleman believed. He took Christ at his word, therefore, it appears that he began to relax in God’s sovereign might. In verse 50 at the end, we see, “The man believed the word that Jesus spoke to him and he started off. As he was now going down, his slaves met him, saying that his son was living.” The original language indicates that they were saying, “Your son has fully recovered.” By the way, when it says “and he was now going down” you must understand that Capernaum is right there on the shores of the Sea of Galilee which is 700 feet below sea level and Cana is way up 18-22 miles back up on the plane. So, they would have seen him going down to Capernaum.

Verse 52, “So he inquired of them the hour when he began to get better. Then they said to him, ‘Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him.’ So the father knew that it was at that hour in which Jesus said to him, ‘Your son lives.’” As I was thinking about this, the healing would have occurred at 1 pm roughly according to Jewish reckoning of time. Or if you use the Roman calculation, it would have been at about sundown. Either way, he probably would have spent the night. 18-22 miles is a very long trip even by horseback in hilly country. You can usually average 26 maybe 30 miles a day on horseback. And it would have been a very long hike to walk back home and I doubt that he would have gone back in the middle of the night. I doubt if the servants would have come out to greet him in the middle of the night but I know, having been in Capernaum and looking up upon the hills, it would be easy in the daytime to see a traveler descending the slopes coming down to the sea.

So, I think it’s safe to say that he probably spent the night; he probably had more conversations with Jesus and with others but what is certain and of much more importance especially to John’s point is simply this: what was first asking faith became believing faith and now it matures into the third stage which is confident faith. “Your son is living.” The writer of Hebrews tells us in Hebrews 11:1, “Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the confidence of things not seen.” But here, by God’s grace, the father sees and the evidence is overwhelming. His son lives. He took Jesus at his word and now that word has been confirmed. At some level, his faith had become sight. Again, how different from so many people who want proof first before they will believe. “Show me a sign. Give me a feeling. Grant me an experience. Then I will believe.”

Not so this father. First he had faith that Christ could heal his son but now he has faith that Christ can save his soul. Not only did Jesus grant healing to this father’s son but also to the father himself, a spiritual healing that made him a new creature in Christ. So again, notice the progression: first he had a weak and imperfect faith in Christ and Christ’s

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ability to perform a miracle. This resulted in asking faith which was, frankly, little more than sign seeking unbelief. But then, by God's grace, he took Jesus at his word resulting in believing faith. Finally, his faith becomes sight with the evidence and timing of his son's healing resulting in the confident faith that he now possesses in the person and the work of Christ. This is genuine saving faith, my friends. You say, "Well, we don't always see some confirming sign." No, maybe not as dramatic as this but when a man is truly born again, it's going to be evident. You're going to see a new creature in Christ and if you don't, the new birth has not occurred.

This is the ultimate purpose of John's gospel, once again. The whole purpose for recording this scenario, "These have been written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing, you may have life in his name." I find it so fascinating. Isn't it amazing how God in his mercy, brings a child to the point of death so that the whole family could have eternal life.

This leads us to one final thought, one final blessing. The end of verse 53 we read, "And he himself believed and his whole household." Which literally means all those who dwelled in his house: mother probably, if she was alive and there; other children; other servants. My friends, here's the point: never underestimate the powerful influence of genuine saving faith in a family. You remember Peter told the Philippian jailer, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved, you and your household." So often we leave out that last phrase when we quote that text but it's a powerful phrase. By the way, this is not some guarantee that when you come to Christ your whole family will be saved but it certainly is a general principle. It raises the probability that a father's faith in Christ will have such a profound impact on his family that they too will be saved. Someone had it right when he said, "When a man becomes a Christian his dog and his cat ought to be the better for it." Well, that may not be true, that may not occur, but I think we get the point. You see, my friends, genuine saving faith is going to have an impact and if it doesn't, it's not genuine. You're going to be a better father, a better husband, a better wife, a better mother, a better child, a better employee, a better employer. If it doesn't manifest itself in that way, your faith is phony and it cannot save.

I must add that a father's faith is by no mean the substitute for the faith of his household; every person must believe personally, individually. Again, think of the spiritual influence that, for example, a godly father or a godly mother can have on that family and what believing father would not rest until his wife and children are saved. Men, please hear me: we do not believe just for ourselves but for our families. I would encourage you even though your faith cannot save them, only Christ can do that, but you need to show them the transforming power of the gospel. You need to preach it to them. They are your mission field. Even as this royal nobleman begged Christ to heal his son, we must beg Christ to save our children, to save our wives, our husbands. Sometimes I shudder when I see parents that are more committed to their child's music lessons and their athletic achievements than seeing their child come to faith in Christ. Too many will spend hundreds, sometimes thousands of dollars to see their child kick or hit or pass or dribble a ball but they will not spend a fraction of that amount of money to send them to summer

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As Faith Matures

By David Harrell

Bible Text: John 4:43-54

Preached on: Sunday, March 16, 2014

camp or a mission field or take them to the Creation Museum or whatever. Parents will spend hundreds of hours taking their children to games, watching them do their thing and yet they have no time to bring them to Awana. They have no time to spend with them during the course of the week, to explain to them the gospel, to read them a Bible story. But oh, how blessed is the family that is dedicated to their children's salvation and sanctification.

My friends, think of the multiple generations that have been affected by a godly father or a mother. Without fail, you can look at your family tree, if you know Christ, then somewhere you're going to find that person, that godly father, that godly grandfather, mother, grandmother, aunt, someone. So I would challenge all of you fathers and mothers to re-examine your priorities today. Will you not beg Christ for our families? Will you not take advantage of every opportunity to proclaim and protect and live out the gospel? And for those of you that know nothing of what it means to truly have faith in the finished redemptive work of Christ as he is revealed in Scripture, I plead with you to humble yourself this day and ask God to save you by his grace before it is too late.

Let's pray together.

Father, thank you for the clarity and the power of your word. But, Lord, I fear that too often pulpits will pour forth great amounts of truth into buckets that have holes and very little of it ever reaches the homes of those that hear the word. Lord, may that not be the case here. Spirit of God, I pray that you will take the living water of the gospel that has been presented here today and cause those who have been appointed unto salvation to drink it fully. For your glory, for your grace, Lord, we commit it to you in Christ's name. Amen.

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