

JOHN 4:43-54
FAITH OR FAITHLESSNESS?

Please turn in your Bibles this morning to John chapter 4 as we continue our in-depth study of the Gospel of John.

As we have seen in our study here in John chapter 4, Jesus had a meeting with the woman at the well in Samaria. Now she did not know that this was going to happen, but Jesus did as we are told that He “**needed to go through Samaria.**” John 4:4.

The Jews would not go through Samaria, they would avoid Samaria at all costs because they considered the Samaritans as half-breeds. Half Jewish and half Gentile and they did not want anything to do with them. They did not even want the dust of Samaria to touch their feet, and thus, they went around this land to avoid it.

But not Jesus. He goes to meet with this woman in Samaria, and in doing so, this woman that was looking for physical water, ended up with the living water – ***JESUS CHRIST!***

And she heads back to Sychar, a city in Samaria, to tell the men of the city that she has found the Messiah and she invites them to come and see.

And they do believe, and Jesus spends two days with them and then He moves on.

But where is He going?

We don't have to guess because we are told in John 4:3, “**He left Judea and departed again to Galilee.**”

He was heading to Galilee after His stop in Samaria. And that is what we will be focusing on this morning, issues that arose as He goes to Galilee.

I have called this study – ***FAITH OR FAITHLESS?***

The reason for that is simple as we will see. There are many people today that are only interested in Jesus for what He can give them and when they don't get what they want, then they move on. That is not faith, not at all!

Let me share this with you and you will see what I mean. We are told,

I read these words on a flyer for a local conference themed "Prosperity Conference: Wealth Transfer."

Since it was on Facebook, I scrolled through the comments and saw that several people had written "Amen," along with comments such as "I connect myself to this program even though I will not be present in Jesus' name." The flyer had hundreds of likes and hearts.

I live in Cameroon, where the prosperity gospel cannot be escaped. I recently preached a sermon on God's sovereignty in salvation at a Baptist conference. Immediately after I stepped down from the pulpit, I heard the next speaker shout, "God's plan for you is success!" I'm hoping someone saw the inconsistency.

Recently, I visited a family to share the gospel. When I told them I had a fever and could not stay long, they all exclaimed, "A man of God, sick?"

A few weeks later, a woman asked me why I returned to Cameroon from the United States. I informed her that I came back to preach and teach the old and true gospel of Jesus because there were many false gospels being preached. She asked what gospels I had in mind. I immediately sensed that she was not comfortable, but carefully and clearly, I said that there are false gospels that promise riches, health, and well-being in this life and teach that Jesus is the means to those ends.

To this, she made what for her was a solid argument. “Jesus became poor so that we might become rich. We are not meant to suffer. God has not destined us for anything but riches and health. Suffering, pain, and poverty are not the portion of a true believer because Jesus died to purchase those things for us.”

I have many more stories like this. There are more than I can recount because there is nowhere to hide in West Africa from the American idols of health and wealth. They have infiltrated even orthodox churches. Preachers who are faithfully teaching the gospel cannot reach into their members’ homes and shut off the televisions that constantly broadcast healing and miracle crusades. . . .

Prosperity preachers use God’s word, but only for their own ends. Because of their lack of training or willful rejection of the truth, they distort God’s word to exploit others.

These preachers twist Scriptures in order to twist the arms of their followers for money. They distort to extort.

Why would anyone listen to preachers who exploit others, or why would anyone preach to exploit? *Covetousness*.

Prosperity preachers appeal to people’s lustful desires. They seduce before they swindle. They know that people have an insatiable desire for stuff, health, power. They themselves do. So that is what they offer, and that is what they amass for themselves, leaving their followers with wishful cravings for the same. . . .

- <https://bit.ly/37NNNIc>

Isn’t that interesting! Jesus became poor, died so that I can become rich, wealthy, healthy, powerful!

That is such a distortion of the truth, and the reality is, if your faith is based upon what you can get from God, then when you don't get it, your faith is going to dwindle, it is going to go away, if you really had any true faith in the first place.

Now some of you may not agree with that. You may even think that the health, wealth and prosperity Gospel is a good thing, but let me show you what the Scriptures have to say regarding this and not what man has to say!

In Revelation 2:8-11 we see Jesus write a letter to the church in Smyrna or modern-day Turkey, the western part. And this is what He wrote in Revelation 2:9-10 to this church, **“I know your works, tribulation, and poverty (but you are rich); and I know the blasphemy of those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan. Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.”**

The Greek word that Jesus uses for **“tribulation”** is THLIPSIS and it speaks of a ***“crushing beneath a weight.”***

This was not a group of people calling them ***“Bible thumpers!”*** Or maybe ***“Holy rollers!”*** Or whatever!

The persecution that came against them from the Romans was brutal. They would boil them in oil, feed them to the lions, burn them at the stake, behead them, and-so-on. It was a crushing weight upon this church.

Also, the Greek word that is used for **“poverty”** is PTOCHEIA, and it speaks of ***“abject poverty.”***

Let me explain it like this so that you understand this word.

Trench makes a comparison of two Greek words that are used for poverty. He said, ***“The penes has nothing superfluous, the ptochos nothing at all.”***

Jesus is saying that these persecuted believers had absolutely nothing at all. They were destitute!

Here was a church that would be looked down upon by the health, wealth and prosperity people. They must lack the faith to obtain all the things that God has for them, right? Wrong!

Jesus says that these believers who had absolutely nothing were rich in the things of God! Not physical wealth, but a deep spiritual relationship with God.

How do you think the health, wealth and prosperity gospel would play out in this church here in Smyrna? Not too well!

And yet, in America it plays right into our passions, to obtain more and more things, to be prosperous and like the letter that Jesus wrote to the church in Laodicea, they had all the material possessions you could imagine and yet Jesus saw them as spiritual empty. It was so bad Jesus is outside this church knocking to get in and He tells them that because they are lukewarm, that they don't need Him, He will spew them out of His mouth!

That is a huge contrast from what we see in the church today and yet, people ignore what God's Word has to say because they like to be healthy, wealthy and prosperous.

But let me ask you this. Have any of these teachers of this false gospel lived 100 or 150 years? Absolutely not. They get sick, they die and thus, the lie that they tell people I don't think they even believe!

Now as much as we see the wrong in that false gospel, I wonder if we ever get mad or frustrated that what we were praying for we did not get? I think the Lord has some lessons for us this morning that will help us stay focused on the Lord and not that He is some kind of Santa Clause who gives us everything that we want.

I have broken this study down into the following points.

GALILEAN FAITH – JOHN 4:43-45

A DESPERATE SITUATION – JOHN 4:46-47

DRAWING OUT A FATHER’S FAITH – JOHN 4:48

A HEART THAT IS OVERWHELMED – JOHN 4:49

THE MIRACLE – JOHN 4:50-51

SEEING IS BELIEVING – JOHN 4:52-54

So with that as our introduction, let’s begin reading in John chapter 4 beginning at verse 43 and let’s see what the Lord has for us as we look at this topic – ***FAITH OR FAITHLESS?***

JOHN 4

VERSES 43-45

John tells us that Jesus spent two days in Samaria with the people who came to Him. He was teaching them and encouraging them in this new faith.

Then, after those two days with them Jesus moved on to Galilee. It was about a 42-mile journey, and it probably took a few days to make that trip.

And then John tells us, “**For Jesus Himself testified that a prophet has no honor in his own country.**” John 4:44.

That is a very true point. Think about when you got saved and your family and friends looked at you as you shared the Gospel with them, and they could not figure it out. They knew what you did before with them and now this change and they had a hard time accepting it.

Now the Greek word for “**country**” can also mean “**home city.**”

So what is John saying here?

Some feel that John is speaking of Jerusalem since that would one day be the home city of the Messiah as He sits upon the throne of David. It is where He will rule and reign over the people of Israel as well as the world.

That is a possibility, but I think it is speaking of the here and now, during this period of time that Jesus walked this earth.

Again, in His hometown they knew Him, they watched Him grow up and now, the claims He was making, the things that He was doing was too much for them.

Let me show you what I mean.

Look at the story of David. He was this young kid who loved the Lord.

And there was a time when the Philistines were fighting against the children of Israel and King Saul was in charge.

And the Philistines were on one side, camped upon a mountain, and the children of Israel were on another mountain, and they too were camped there with a large valley in the middle.

Now there was not really a battle going on yet, just some trash talking from the Philistines that terrified the children of Israel.

You see, the Philistines had a weapon named Goliath, who stood almost ten feet tall, his armor weighed some 125 pounds, and he taunted the children of Israel for forty days to come out and fight with him. But they refused.

We are told in I Samuel 17:8-10, **“Then he stood and cried out to the armies of Israel, and said to them, ‘Why have you come out to line up for battle? Am I not a Philistine, and you the servants of Saul? Choose a man for yourselves, and let him come down to me. If he is able to fight with me and kill me, then we will be your servants. But if I prevail against him and kill him, then you shall be our servants and serve us.’ And the Philistine said, ‘I defy the armies of Israel this day; give me a man, that we may fight together.’”**

And this is the response of the King and the children of Israel, **“When Saul and all Israel heard these words of the Philistine, they were dismayed and greatly afraid.”**

Now the brothers of David were involved in this battle or really a standoff at this point. And Jesse, their father said to his son David, that he should go and bring some food to their captain and see how his brothers are doing.

And that is exactly what David does. But when he arrives on the scene he sees this giant, Goliath, who is mocking the God he loved.

And he rebukes these soldiers for being afraid and his oldest brother, Eliab hears what David is saying and he tells David, basically, ***“What are you doing here? You are going to get yourself killed. Go and take care of the sheep and stay out of the way of this battle, this is for men and not little boys!”***

I find that kind of funny because Eliab as well as the rest of the soldiers were hiding in fear, they did not want to get involved in this battle.

What was the problem here?

His brother knew David and he could not believe that David would be the one to defeat this giant, never, at least in Eliab's mind.

Next we see David go before King Saul and Saul is also having a hard time believing David could defeat this giant named Goliath.

King Saul looked at the appearance of David and compared to Goliath, David maybe weighed some 100 or 125 pounds and Goliath, he could have been well over 500 pounds! How in the world could this little kid defeat this huge soldier?

And yet, as we know, David defeated Goliath, not in his strength but in the power of God.

And that is what we see here with Jesus. Because the people knew Him, watched Him grow-up, they had a hard time believing that He is the Messiah.

From here we read, **“So when He came to Galilee, the Galileans received Him, having seen all the things He did in Jerusalem at the feast; for they also had gone to the feast.”**

John 4:45.

Now you read that, and it sounds great, they came to receive Him! But did you notice that it does not say that they believed in Him, they did not believe who He was!

You may not see this as a big deal, but I think it is – ***GALILEAN FAITH!***

Let me show you what I mean.

Why did this Galileans receive Jesus?

It is simple. These Galileans received Jesus for what He did!

What do I mean by that?

There were a number of Galileans that had gone to Jerusalem for the Feast of Passover, and they witnessed the Lord cleansing the Temple, they saw the miracles that He did! Thus, they received Him for what He did not who He was!

Maybe they even saw the miracle of changing the water into wine at the wedding feast in Cana and that too caused them to receive Him but not for who He is, God Incarnate, the Savior of the world, the Messiah, but because of the things that He did.

Remember what we were told in John 2:23-25, **“Now when He was in Jerusalem at the Passover, during the feast, many believed in His name when they saw the signs which He did. But Jesus did not commit Himself to them, because He knew all men, and had no need that anyone should testify of man, for He knew what was in man.”**

God is looking for true faith not empty faith that is just focused on what a person can get.

I like the way that Morris sums this up for us, this empty faith of the Galileans. He wrote, *“The enthusiasm of the Galileans was not soundly based. It was dependent on the wonders arising from their sight of the signs, not on a realization that Jesus was indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world. Their very acceptance of Him was thus in its way a rejection. They gave Him honor of a sort, but it was not the honor that was due to Him.”*

And make no mistake about it, the same can happen today when people know so much about Jesus and yet they don't know Him.

I can read a story of George Washington and learn a lot about him, but I truly don't know him personally.

The same is true with the Lord, you can read a lot about Him, but He wants a deeper relationship than that, He wants your heart. Don't become so familiar with Him that you truly don't know Him!

Now, in saying that please understand that God is not saying that we can't cry out to Him as we are going through difficult situations in our lives. Not at all as we will see.

But the key here is that no matter what happens, are we going to love the Lord or is our faith going to wax and wane depending on what we get or don't get?

As we read on, we are going to see – ***A DESPERATE SITUATION!***

VERSES 46-47

Keep in mind that Capernaum was the base camp you might say for Jesus' earthly ministry, and it was located on the northwestern shores of the Sea of Galilee.

And Capernaum was a very wealthy city, it had a thriving fishing industry, and it was the economic center of that region.

Also, Jesus did not go back to Capernaum yet, He went to Cana of Galilee, close to where He grew up, Nazareth.

We also see this "**nobleman**" come to Jesus because his son is very sick, near death.

The way that this is written it seems that this man could have been an official in the King's court, for the Greek word to describe this man, "**nobleman**" is BASILIKOS and it speaks of someone who is officially attached to the service of the King.

So, he was rich, he was powerful, influential and yet he could do nothing for his dying son except come to Jesus and ask for help!

That is what a crisis does!

And isn't that true in our own lives. We can have all the money, all the possessions in the world, but when a crisis happens, like someone in the family is sick or you are sick, all those material things mean nothing compared to our health!

You might say that a crisis or tragedy is the common denominator for all people, and, as we can see here, all the money in the world was not going to save his son because, **“he was at the point of death.”** John 4:47.

With nothing else that this man could do, this was a last-ditch effort you might say so he made this 20-mile or so journey to Cana in Galilee to see Jesus!

You can just imagine the pain, the hopelessness that this man had. That word **“implored”** is in the imperfect tense in the Greek and the idea here is that he was repeatedly begging Jesus to come to the aid of his son and cure his disease, don’t let him die.

Make no mistake about it, this was – ***A DESPERATE SITUATION!***

And let’s face it, we all deal with difficult situations, be they health, be they money, be they relationships and-so-on. And I know that some people, as you talk with them, they never have a problem in life, everything is perfect. Not true.

Life is hard and I can’t imagine trying to navigate through it apart from the Lord, He is my Rock, and He brings stability to those tough situations.

I like what someone wrote, ***“Trouble is not a gate-crasher in the arena of life, it has a reserved seat there. Heartache has a passkey to every home.”***

Again, there are those who may like to challenge me on that, but I will give you one verse to show you what I mean, that life is tough. And it is only one verse. In Job 5:7 we are told, **“Yet man is born to trouble, As the sparks fly upward.”**

Life, like I have said is not easy, as one person said, ***“There’s nothing like a life-threatening illness, either in your own life or in the life of someone you love, to show you how little money, prestige, and materialism really means.”***

A few weeks back I was just talking with my mom and how concerned she is for her brother, my uncle. He is not doing well, and she said that she thanks God every morning for her health. How true that is!

The most important things in life are the things money can't buy!

As we read on, we are going to see the response of Jesus to this man and his plea for Jesus to come to Capernaum and heal his son who is on death's doorstep. And the response of Jesus seems cold, insensitive, but it is not!

What we will see is Jesus – ***DRAWING OUT A FATHER'S FAITH!***

Let's read on and you will see what I mean.

VERSE 48

Here this man travels all this way for help, and Jesus says, “. . . ‘Unless you people see signs and wonders, you will by no means believe.’”

That seems harsh, doesn't it? I mean this man is in need and Jesus rebukes him.

Now I am not sure that this response by Jesus was just for this man. I believe that it was also for the many in Galilee who were only interested in the miracles that He did.

You see, a belief that comes through signs and wonders is shallow, it won't last during difficult times.

Our faith must be built upon Jesus and His Word because His Word is sure, it is a solid foundation, and it is truth!

Don't build your faith upon experiences but on the Word of God!

And it is not that we don't experience God, we do. But those experiences we have with God are in accordance with the Word of God and not apart from it!

One writer put it like this,

With unerring accuracy our Lord put his finger on the weakness of the people's faith. They were following Jesus as if he were a religious sideshow. "Hurry, hurry, don't miss the latest miracle! Get your popcorn here. Crowd in close, folks, so you can see the new added-appendage miracle."

There was such an extreme focus on signs and wonders that the people were missing his real identity.

It seems that the poor, confused nobleman had this same idea because of his repeated emphasis on Jesus to "*come down*" to Capernaum to heal his son. He thought that if Jesus would work his magic, his son would be healed.

Even today those who are constantly seeking for signs and wonders and miracles to confirm their faith may be missing the intent of such things - to know Jesus himself! If we focus on sensationalism - miracles and signs - our focus is not on Christ himself who alone is sufficient.

At the same time, our Lord was not deprecating signs and miracles because he was in fact going to heal the man's son. But that sign would lead the man to faith in him.

The thrust of what Jesus was saying was, "Oh, that you would think less about the wonders and more about me!"

He wanted them to go beyond signs and miracles to trust in him and believe in his Word.

- R. Kent Hughes, John – That You May Believe, 139-140

But what about this man's son who is dying?

Make no mistake about it, Jesus will heal this man's son.

Then why this statement?

Because Jesus is more concerned about real faith, the stretching of our faith, building our character and not in our comfort.

“Then He is not concerned about my comfort?”

No, He is concerned but if you have to be uncomfortable to grow, He will do that because He is more concerned about preparing us for eternity than our present situation.

“Then He is not concerned about my present situation?”

No, He is concerned but there are times that we will go through tough situations and God is helping us to grow. If we don't, then we are going to get tripped up every time something difficult comes our way.

Many Christians have a picture of God that He is some benevolent grandfather that is just going to pour all blessings upon our life and nothing bad will happen to us. And when something does, we lose faith!

One writer put it like this,

One of the greatest blessings any parent (including God the Father) can bestow on their children is a godly character - honesty, integrity, kindness, love, a strong work ethic etc.

These qualities take time and effort to build into our children and sometimes it's unpleasant or painful for them - but in the end the effort will be rewarded as they grow up to be responsible, hard-working, virtuous adults.

We constantly cry out - “Lord, heal, provide, fix, help” - and well we should, but if He doesn't answer immediately let's understand that patience and faith build Christian character.

Jesus, as the Great Physician, is constantly performing “heart-surgery” on us, the end result being a healthier walk with Him and greater work for Him.

- Pastor Phil Ballmaier

May our faith grow as we trust God, that no matter what happens, He is still God, and He loves us more than we will ever know. He knows what is best and we need to rest in that, even though we might not understand it.

Just as Jesus was – ***DRAWING OUT A FATHER’S FAITH*** here, He continues to draw out our faith and help us to grow.

Now, upon hearing these words from Jesus, we see this man have – ***A HEART THAT IS OVERWHELMED!***

And you can imagine how he felt. Let’s read on and see his response to Jesus.

VERSE 49

As you read this I think you can just feel this man’s pain, his agony as his son is dying and he wants Jesus to travel to Capernaum to heal him.

But that is not what Jesus is going to do. But why?

Because Jesus is going to continue to stretch this man’s faith!

And I think there is another lesson here and that is our persistence in prayer. Now when I say that I am not saying that we are going to bring God to the point where He is so sick and tired of hearing from us that He just gives in.

I am sure we have all been through that with our kids as they are very persistent in what they want and sometimes, just to have them stop asking us, we give in. That is not our God, but He does want us to be persistent in our prayers to Him!

One writer put it like this. He wrote, *“This is not the taunt of an indifferent God playing hard to get, treating us like puppies, trying to teach us to beg - and if we stand up on our hind legs and yap loud enough, He’ll drop a biscuit in our mouth. No this is the heart of a loving Father exhorting us, even pleading with us to stay in constant communion with Him because He loves us so much.”*

And we also need to remember that it is not my will, but His will that we want to be done in our lives.

As I have said before, I may not always understand why God heals this person and then another dies. But what I have to fall back on is what I do know about God.

I have to remember that God is all loving, that He loves me more than I will ever know!

I have to remember that God has what is best for my life and that no matter what I am going through, even though I may not understand it, I will have to trust in Him!

I know I have shared this verse many times with you before and sometimes we can get so accustomed to or hear some Bible teaching so much that it does not impact us like it should.

Please, don’t allow that to happen.

In Romans 8:28 Paul wrote, **“And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.”**

The Amplified Bible puts that verse like this, **“We are assured and know that [God being a partner in their labor] all things work together and are [fitting into a plan] for good to and for those who love God and are called according to [His] design and purpose.”**

I understand that it is not always easy, as I have said. But can we trust what God is saying to us, especially when things don't go the way we want them to go? We need to.

Let me ask you this.

How many things are working together for good?

Paul tells us, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, that **ALL THINGS** are working together for good.

Even though I may not see that happening.

Even though I may not feel that what is taking place is working out for good.

I can **KNOW** that they are not because of my feelings but because of my faith in what God has said in His Word!

Listen again to what is taking place here as this father pleads with Jesus. Ray Stedman put it like this,

He uses a very plaintive word for child, "my little boy" - "Come down before my little boy dies."

We can sense the agony in the father's words as he pleads with Jesus. He has a certain kind of faith, a belief that Jesus is some type of a miracle worker; that he is in touch with powers that ordinary people do not have; that perhaps he can come down, and in a last, desperate measure, do something for his little lad whose suffering image is so clearly engraved on his mind's eye as he makes his plea.

But it is a low level of faith. Obviously he feels that everything is going to be lost if Jesus will not come; that he has to come and touch the boy before anything can happen.

- <https://bit.ly/3k5g3eU>

And listen to what Jesus says to this desperate father whose son is dying – ***THE MIRACLE!***

VERSES 50-51

Jesus just tells this man, **“Go your way; your son lives.”**

And we see this desperate man say to Jesus, ***“Are you kidding me? I need you to come and touch my son and heal him. What do you mean go my way? He is dying!”***

No, he did not say that, but I wonder how often Jesus speaks to us and we just can’t believe it or we refuse to believe it.

Look at verse 50 again, because it is key to this man’s faith. It says, **“... So the man believed the word that Jesus spoke to him, and he went his way.”**

That is faith. Jesus says to go home, go to your son, he is healed, and this man believes Jesus and that belief is seen in his walk, in his actions!

Now some may wonder why did Jesus tell this man to go, and Jesus did not go with him?

Clarke had these comments on this. He wrote, ***“Had our Lord gone with him, as he wished, his unbelief could not have been fully removed; as he would have still thought that our Lord’s power could not reach from Cana to Capernaum: in order to destroy his unbelief at once, and bring him into the fulness of the faith of his supreme power, he cures him, being apparently absent, by that energy through which he fills both the heavens and the earth.”***

Make no mistake about it, Jesus was stretching this man’s faith and it worked.

Let’s face it, real faith is seen in action.

If there was a bridge that was a mess for years, holes in it, things falling apart, and then one day there was a sign that the bridge was now safe to drive on, would you do it?

What if 50 people died when that bridge was in disrepair? And as true as that is, now it is safe, that is what they are saying.

Passive faith would see that sign and say, *“Yes, I believe that the bridge is safe to drive on, but there is no way I am driving on it!”*

But active faith would see that sign and say, *“Yes, I believe the bridge is safe to drive on”* and they would drive across that bridge showing that what they believe they are willing to act upon.

Now let me ask you this. What did this man believe in, signs and wonders?

Not at all, at least not anymore!

He believed in the Words of God and so must we! This man saw no miracle; he just left believing the Words of Jesus.

What a difference that would make in our own lives if we take God at His Word, believe that He is able to accomplish that which He has promised!

It is as Paul said in Hebrews 11:1-3 about faith, **“Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. For by it the elders obtained a good testimony. By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible.”**

This is what A. W. Pink wrote about the power of the Word of God in this man’s life, *“This is very blessed. It shows us the power of the spoken word not only on the boy that was healed, but on his father, too – ‘Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God’ (Rom. 10:17).”*

You see, trusting in the promises of God found in the Word of God! And it is easy to do until you are in the middle of a trial that is testing your faith.

And that is when you need to trust God with all of your heart, with all of your understanding. Just as this man did!

And I know I have touched on this, but it is so important. Can we love God in good times and in bad, when things work out and when they don't, when a crisis is averted or a crisis hits?

We need too!

Listen to this true story and you will see what I mean regarding a faith that is built upon the person of Jesus Christ and not upon signs and wonders.

We are told,

The bitter news of Dawson Trotman's drowning swept like cold wind across Schroon Lake to the shoreline. Eyewitnesses tell of the profound anxiety, the tears, the helpless disbelief in the faces of those who now looked out across the deep blue water. Everyone's face except one – Lila Trotman, Dawson's widow.

As she suddenly walked upon the scene a close friend shouted, "Oh, Lila. . . He's gone. Dawson's gone!" To that she replied in calm assurance the words of Psalm 115:3: "But our God is in the heavens; He does whatever He pleases."

All of the anguish, the sudden loneliness that normally consumes and cripples those who survive did not invade that woman's heart. Instead, she leaned hard upon her sovereign Lord, who had once again done what He pleased.

- Charles R. Swindoll, *Starting Over*, 1977, p. 67

Now you read that and maybe you are thinking God is cold, that He has no feelings. Not true but understand that Dawson Trotman was home with the Lord. He did not lose out, not at all!

Also, as you read this it may seem like his wife, this woman had no feelings. But understand she was not a stoic, I'm sure she felt the pain, but she also recognized that God was in control and her faith remained strong in that.

Another important point. God does not just do things to do them, He has a plan, a purpose and I may not always understand the how's and why's of God, but I do know His love.

Remember when the World Trade Center Towers in New York City came crashing to the ground as terrorists crashed planes into them, as well as the Pentagon struck with more tragedy.

And people all over America were turning to God, asking for help in this time of crisis. There was the Congressional prayer meeting that was televised and one of the Congressmen prayed, ***“At a time like this, where else can we go, God we have to come to you.”***

And for the most part, it was very superficial and after a time, most people just went back to their way of life.

“Help us now God. We are in trouble!” That is what was going on.

Now, ***“God, I don't believe in God!”***

With all that is going on today in the world, in our lives, I think we need the encouragement of some men who had the heat turned up in their lives and how they handled it.

Because some of you may be feeling, ***“If God doesn't do something soon, then I'm done with Him!”***

Here is the story of three Jewish men, Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego; Jewish captives who were taken to Babylon.

The King of Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar was a brilliant military man and a tyrant who became King after his father died.

And in Daniel chapter 2 he has this dream of a multi-metallic image that he did not know what it meant. So he asked his wise men to not only tell him what the dream meant, but what he dreamed, just to make sure that they were not making this up.

Now a little incentive for them was that if they could not, they would be put to death.

Daniel, a Jewish captive, was part of this group now and he too would be put to death if these men could not come through.

So he brings this before God and God reveals to him what this dream is all about and he goes before the King and tells him. This multi-metallic image represented world Gentile Empires.

The head of gold represented the Babylonian empire, Nebuchadnezzar was that head of gold!

After his kingdom would come the chest and arms of silver which represented the Medo-Persian empire!

After that kingdom came the belly and thighs of bronze which represented the Grecian empire!

And after that kingdom came the legs of iron which represented the Roman empire!

Lastly, we see the ten toes of iron and clay which is the last Gentile Empire and is seen in the revived Roman empire!

It is during this last empire that the stone cut without hands, Jesus Christ, will return and crush these empires and set up His kingdom!

As this King hears all this, he is blown away but that attitude of praise unto God changed quickly.

The King had a gold statue made and placed it in the plains of Dura so all could see it and at the appropriate time the people were to bow down and worship this image.

What the King was saying is that his kingdom would last forever, totally negating what God had shown him in this dream. And all were to bow down before this image to worship it when the music began playing.

Also, keep in mind that Daniel is away on the King's business during this event, but his friends, Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego were around, and they were not going to bow before any statue!

When the King got word of what these men were doing or not doing, refusing to bow before this image, he is furious, but he is going to give them a chance to comply with his words and bow before this statue he made.

And in Daniel chapter 3, beginning in verse 14 we read **“Nebuchadnezzar spoke, saying to them, Is it true, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, that you do not serve my gods or worship the gold image which I have set up? Now if you are ready at the time you hear the sound of the horn, flute, harp, lyre, and psaltery, in symphony with all kinds of music, and you fall down and worship the image which I have made, good! But if you do not worship, you shall be cast immediately into the midst of a burning fiery furnace. And who is the god who will deliver you from my hands?”** Daniel 3:14-15.

Pretty harsh words by the King to these young men, a turn or burn statement!

What did they do?

Let's read on starting in verse 16 as the king challenges the faith of these young men, who will deliver them out of the King's hands, in fact the King is basically saying ***“No one is going to be able to deliver you from my hand!”***

But listen to what transpires, **“Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego answered and said to the king, ‘O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. If that is the case, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us from your hand, O king. But if not, let it be known to you, O king, that we do not serve your gods, nor will we worship the gold image which you have set up.’”** Daniel 3:16-18.

Notice that their faith was not built upon signs and wonders, God snapping His fingers and delivering them, but in the Words of God.

You see, it was not a matter of God having to deliver them but if it is God’s will then He would deliver them and if not, then He won’t. But no matter what, their faith is strong in the Lord, they were not going to let this situation destroy their faith.

And God did deliver them from this fiery trial but again, the point is this. Their faith was based in the truths of God, who He is and not what is happening in their lives, happening around them. God is in control, and they believed it for their actions reflected that!

Paul, in Romans 10:17 said, **“So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”**

Notice what Paul is saying. Faith does not come by signs and wonders but by hearing the Words of God!

Why?

Because you have to trust that what God has said in His Word, He is also able to perform, He is able to bring it to pass, He is able to do!

Yes, it is not always easy, in fact at times it can be overwhelming. But if it was easy where would faith come in? You wouldn't need it, but God will use those times to draw us close to Him, to help us to learn to trust in Him and lean upon Him even more.

Think about this for a minute, for at times we do struggle with trusting God.

When you came in here this morning you sat down on that chair without even giving it a second thought, why?

Because you had faith that this chair would support your weight, it would hold you up; it would not let you fall.

God is saying the same thing, to sit down and rest in Him, He will support your weight, the things you are going through, the things that have you burdened, and He will give you rest!

“How can I know that God will do that?” you may ask!

Because God has said it in His Word!

Oswald Chambers put it this way,

Faith for my deliverance is not faith in God. Faith means, whether I am visibly delivered or not, I will stick to my belief that God is love. There are some things only learned in a fiery furnace.

- Oswald Chambers in Run Today's Race

George Muller put it this way,

Faith does not operate in the realm of the possible. There is no glory for God in that which is humanly possible. Faith begins where man's power ends.

- George Muller

And lastly,

To live by faith is to live joyfully, to live with assurance, untroubled by doubts and with complete confidence in all we have to do and suffer at each moment by the will of God. We must realize that it is in order to stimulate and sustain this faith that God allows the soul to be buffeted and swept away by the raging torrent of so much distress, so many troubles, so much embarrassment and weakness, and so many setbacks. For it is essential to have faith to find God behind all this.

- Jean-Peirre de Caussade, 1675-1751, in Discipleship Journal, issue 40

So we have seen – ***THE MIRACLE!***

And what happened next?

Let's read on and see for – ***SEEING IS BELIEVING!***

VERSES 52-54

I hope you can see that this man believed the Words of God and the miracle of healing only confirmed what he believed! And through this all this man's faith grew and it touched his family; they got saved through his testimony of Jesus!

Now I have called these verses – ***SEEING IS BELIEVING*** but the reality is, the seeing only confirmed what he already believed to be true. He trusted in the Words of Jesus, and he walked by faith!

Also, I want you to understand that this man did not travel home right away, he took his time and got home the next day. If he was unsure, he would have ran as fast as he could, but he didn't because he trusted what the Lord had told him, his son was healed!

Spurgeon wrote regarding this, *“The nobleman was so sure that his child was alive and well, that he was in no violent hurry to return. He did not go home immediately, as though he must be in time to get another doctor, if Christ had not succeeded; but he went his way leisurely and calmly, confident in the truth of what Jesus had said to him.”*

That is faith!

Now in verse 54 we are told that this is the second sign that Jesus did in Galilee. And the point is that John’s whole point of writing these things down is so that you might believe in Jesus; receive Him as your Lord and Savior.

We are told in John 20:30-31, **“And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.”**

God wants to stretch our faith, to get us to depend more upon Him if we would only allow Him to work in us, not by signs and wonders, but through His Word!

Let me close with these words. We are told,

The way to increase faith is to exercise faith. And the true parent of perfect faith is the experience of the blessings that come from the crudest, rudest, narrowest, blindest, feeblest faith that a man can exercise. Trust him as you can, do not be afraid of inadequate conceptions, or of a feeble grasp. Trust him as you can, and he will give you so much more than you expected that you will trust him more.

- Maclaren of Manchester, Expositions of Holy Scripture, pp. 234-235

So where are you at this morning – ***FAITH OR FAITHLESS?***