

## Grace to You :: *esp Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

### Contemplating Unbelief

Scripture: John 4:43-45

Code: 43-23

I want you to now turn in the Word of God to the fourth chapter of the gospel of John, John chapter 4. And as the subject in Grace Today indicates, we're going to be talking about believing, about unbelief and about faith. And this is a vital subject in the gospel of John.

Now keep in mind that we in John chapter 3 identified the fact that salvation is a work of God. You are born from above. In other words, our Lord said to Nicodemus, "You must be born again. You must be born from above." You made no contribution to your human birth and you can make no contribution to your spiritual birth, it is a divine work of God. That is the divine side of salvation.

But there is also a human side of salvation. That work of God is through the sinner's faith. And so while the gospel of John emphasizes the divine sovereign work of God in salvation, it also rightly emphasizes the necessity of the sinner's faith and believing. In fact, one could say that the gospel of John is primarily about believing. It is the gospel of belief. The word in the Greek, the word *pisteuo* which is a verb, it comes in a noun form as well, is used about 100 times in the gospel of John. So the idea of faith and believing is spread throughout this entire gospel.

That shouldn't surprise us because we are by now familiar with the purpose of the gospel of John as indicated in chapter 20 verse 31, "These—that is all that is written in this gospel—these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God and that believing you may have life in His name." The book is evangelistic in the sense that it wants you to believe and receive eternal life, to be saved, as we would refer to it.

So the gospel of John is the gospel of believing. There is here ample evidence for us to believe in Christ—by His works, by His words, His signs and wonders. All of that is collected by John very carefully under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and laid out for a convincing case that we should believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. It's more than that as well. In the gospel of John we are commanded to believe and we are also warned of the horrible results of unbelief.

This is not only the theme of the gospel of John, but this is the heart of the Christian faith. It is about believing in the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation. Briefly let me say this, all false religions whether they are non-Christian or quasi-Christian, all false religions offer salvation through some work, some human behavior, some religious ceremony, some moral accomplishments. In other words, Satan's plan is to propagate religion across the face of the earth through all human history and convince people that they can be made right with God, escape judgment, escape hell, live forever in heaven by something they do, ceremonially, religiously, morally, or socially, philanthropy, purity of life, religious commitment, devotion to certain rituals and ceremonies, all of those become the panoply of things that Satan offers as a way of salvation. True Christianity, the true gospel says that salvation comes to those who believe...who believe. It is by faith alone, not works, not any element of works, or else we have cancelled out the hope of salvation. That is the Christian gospel.

It is becoming clear to us that many who call themselves Christians are a long way from this basic truth. Just this week, the new Pope Francis, I think startled many people in the world by declaring that atheists will go to heaven if they do good...atheists will go to heaven if they do good.

Let me clarify, no one will go to heaven by doing good, absolutely no one...certainly not atheists who not only don't believe in the Lord Jesus, but they don't even believe in God. To show how corrupt even quasi-Christianity has become, it is now declaring things that are the very message of hell itself. "Be an atheist, do good, and you'll end up in heaven."

The message of Scripture has always been salvation comes to those who believe. "Abraham believed God and it was counted to him for righteousness." We go all the way back to the early chapters of Genesis and salvation even then was by faith in God. And then since Christ has come, it is by faith in God revealed in Christ. This is the Christian message. And the message is reiterated throughout the New Testament. "There is no salvation in any other name." "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life," Jesus said, John 14:6, "no man comes to the Father but by Me."

There's only one way to be forgiven sin, only one way to escape hell, only one way to get to heaven, and that is by believing in the Lord Jesus Christ. And Scripture directs the attention of the reader all the way through to this person of Christ who provides and who alone provides salvation.

So when we read through the gospel of John, we are going to be caught up over and over and over with the reality that salvation comes to those who believe and condemnation to those who do not believe. And the object of that faith is the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. This is the overwhelming emphasis of this entire book of John. As I said, the word "belief" in one way or another appears about 100 times.

Now just to remind you of that, go back with me to chapter 1 and I want to introduce this next section by digging down a little bit into this idea of believing because it is so very important. There is no more important message that can ever be given than this one, that salvation comes to those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. And apart from believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, there is no salvation for anyone. That is the most important message. And John reiterates it, chapter 1 verse 12, "As many as received Him," meaning the Lord Jesus Christ, "to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name." Those who believe in His name.

Again in chapter 3, very familiar words in verse 16, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life." Verse 18, "He who believes in Him is not judged. He who does not believe has been judged already because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God."

Just skipping along a little bit to chapter 6 and verse 28, they say to Jesus, the people do, "What shall we do so that we may work the works of God?" What does God want from us, how do we gain acceptance with God? How do we gain life from God? How do we enter the Kingdom of God? How do we please God? What does God want us to do? "Jesus answered and said to them, 'This is the work of God that you believe in Him whom He has sent.' So they said to Him, 'What then do You do for a sign so that we may see and believe You?'"

It was all about believing. What do we do to work the works of God? And Jesus says, "Believe." And

they say then, “Prove to us that we should believe in You.” Which, of course, He did again and again. Chapter 8 tells us in verse 30 that He spoke many things and many came to believe in Him...many came to believe in Him.”

In chapter 12, a few more samples of John’s emphasis on believing. In chapter 12 verse 44, Jesus cried out and said, “He who believes in Me does not only or merely believe in Me, but in Him who sent Me.” When you believe in Me, you believe in the one who sent Me, the true and living God. In chapter 14, those precious words that we all know, “Do not let your heart be troubled, believe in God, believe also in Me.” Believe in God, believe also in Me.

In the seventeenth chapter when our Lord was praying His High Priestly prayer, He prays on behalf of those who would believe in Him. Verse 20, John 17:20, “I do not ask in behalf of these alone—meaning His disciples—but for those also who believe in Me through their Word.” He’s praying for those who believe in Him.

Now that’s just a half a dozen or so illustrations of the nearly hundred times you’re going to see this idea of believing in the gospel of John. Now let me probe a little more deeply into this because it is such an urgent message. The gospel of John reveals that all the aspects of salvation are connected to believing...they’re all connected to believing. For example, I just read you in John 1:12 that by believing we become children of God...by believing, we become children of God, that is reiterated in John 12:36. Believe in the light, meaning Christ, so that you may become children of light, or sons of light. John tells us then that by believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, sinners become children of God.

Let me give you another very important reality. By believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, sinners obtain eternal life. “God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life.” That message is familiar to all of us in John chapter 3 and verse 16. Down in verse 36 it is reiterated again, “He who believes in the Son has eternal life. He who does not obey the Son will not see life but the wrath of God abides on him.” Believe in Him, have life. Do not believe in Him, and perish.

Sinners then by believing in the Lord Jesus Christ become children of God. They obtain eternal life. That is reiterated again, that promise of eternal life, in the majestic words of Jesus as He was teaching in the sixth chapter of John, verse 40, “This is the will of My Father that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life.” Again, it’s about believing in the Lord Jesus Christ. Verse 47, “Truly, truly I say to you, he who believes has eternal life.” I mean, it’s unmistakable that eternal life comes to those who believe not only in God but in God revealed in Christ. By believing in the Lord Jesus Christ then, sinners become children of God and sinners obtain eternal life. Also, and we’ve already reiterated, but let me separate it out as a unique point, by believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, sinners escape divine judgment...sinners escape divine judgment which is what sinners should want to escape since it is everlasting.

Listen to John 5:24, the words of our Lord, “Truly, truly I say to you, he who hears My Word and believes Him who sent Me has eternal life and doesn’t come into judgment but has passed out of death into life.” Let me give you another truth about salvation. By believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, sinners become the children of God, obtain eternal life, escape divine judgment, and partake in the resurrection...partake in the resurrection. When our Lord came to the grave of Lazarus, He made this incredible promise, John 11:25, “I am the resurrection and the life, he who believes in Me will live even if he dies.” That’s the promise of resurrection.

Sinners by believing in the Lord Jesus Christ also possess the Holy Spirit...they also become the residents of the third member of the Trinity. What an incredible promise. John 7:38, our Lord says, "He who believes in Me as the Scripture said, from his innermost being will flow rivers of living water. This He spoke of the Spirit whom those who believed in Him who were to receive." The Holy Spirit takes up residence for the purpose beginning with regeneration of sanctification and ultimately glorification in the one who believes in the Lord Jesus Christ.

In chapter 12 of John's gospel and verse 46, we read this, "Everyone who believes in Me will not remain in darkness." So sinners who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ become children of God, obtain eternal life, escape divine judgment, partake in the resurrection, possess the Holy Spirit and are delivered from spiritual darkness and from eternal darkness. And in that fourteenth chapter in the Upper Room, Jesus added this, John 14:12, "Truly, truly I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also and greater works than these he will do." What is that saying? That we will be empowered for service. Not greater in kind, but greater in extent. Jesus never got outside His own nation.

What kind of a salvation is this? It is a salvation that makes us children of God, possessors of eternal life. We escape divine judgment, we partake in the resurrection. We possess the Holy Spirit. We escape spiritual and eternal darkness and we receive power for ministry and service. And this happens to those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. All the elements of salvation come by faith, not by works. Not of works, Paul says in Ephesians, lest any man should boast.

Now all of that is how salvation comes in all its fullness to the sinner, by believing. Consequently we are commanded to believe. It is not a suggestion. It is not some kind of whisper in our ears. It is a thundered command. John 6:28, again, "What shall we do so that we may work the works of God? Jesus answered and said to them, 'This is the work of God that you believe in Him.'" That's what God wants from you. You believe in Him. And if you believe in Him, you will not perish, you will receive everlasting life.

Now what is the evidence that causes us to believe in Him? Well John is prepared to lay out that evidence as is Matthew and Mark and Luke. The four gospels were written to gather up the evidence and demonstrate that Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah, the Son of God so that you might believe and have life in His name. There is ample evidence contained in the scriptures to point to the Lord Jesus. The gospel records prove to us that He is the one promised in the Old Testament. The gospel accounts of His words and His works demonstrate Him to be divine. His signs and miracles are ample proof. And so you have the record of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John to lay out His words, lay out His works and lay out His miracles to prove that He is who He claimed to be so that we will believe in Him.

Listen to John chapter 5 verse 36, "But the testimony which I have is greater than the testimony of John the Baptist, for the works which the Father has given Me to accomplish, the very works that I do testify about Me that the Father has sent Me. So look at My works. As the Father who sent Me, He has testified of Me, you have neither heard His voice at any time, nor seen His form. You do not have His word abiding in you for you do not believe Him whom He sent. You search the scriptures because you think in them you have eternal life. It is these that testify about Me but you are unwilling to come to Me so that you may have life.

If you don't come to Christ, you will not have life. If you don't believe in Him, you will perish and die in your sins. No atheist will go to heaven. No one who does not believe in God and Christ, the true Christ of Scripture, has any hope of going to heaven. All the evidence is in Scripture, he says to the Jews. Scripture is validated and fulfilled in Christ. Listen to His words, look at His works, see His miracles...ample evidence that He is who He claimed to be. He matches all the promises of the Old Testament. He demonstrates supernatural power over disease, over death, over demons, over nature. He is the promised Messiah. He is divine. He is God the Son. And yet He was in the world, the world was made by Him, the world knew Him not. He came unto His own and His own received Him not. That has consequences.

Listen to this, John 8:24, "Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins for unless you believe that I am He, you will die in your sins." So they were saying to Him, "Who are You?" And Jesus said, "What have I been saying to you from the beginning?"

If you do not believe in Jesus Christ, you will die in your sins. You may be religious. You may be...you may be super-religious. You may be involved in religion from the standpoint of leadership, and representation. Unless you are trusting Christ and Christ alone and not your works, you will die in your sins.

Now the gospel tells us that we then are given the responsibility to call on sinners to believe. That's what we do. That's what evangelism is...calling on sinners to believe. That's what we do.

Now what overpowers unbelief? The universal problem is unbelief. You'll die in your sins because you don't believe on Me. Okay, the universal problem is unbelief. And I just want to clarify that because as obvious as it is, apparently some people are missing it. Because the premise of evangelism is so often very to do with Jesus Christ. The premise of evangelism runs something like this...do you lack purpose in your life? Do you lack meaning in your life? Are you unfulfilled? Are you unsatisfied? Do you not seem to get the things that you desire? Are you melancholy? Are you lonely? Do you feel alienated?

And while those things may be true about people, they have nothing to do with who Jesus Christ is. The whole point of evangelism is not to do some kind of pathology on the desires of the sinner, but to reveal the reality of who Christ is. The question is not would you like somebody, whoever he is, to fix you? But that's the way so much contemporary evangelism goes. It's so much about you and what you want and what you feel and what you don't feel and what you don't have and what you would like...and oh, incidentally, Jesus and who cares who He is, will deliver all that for you if you say these words.

There is no such illustration of evangelism anywhere on the pages of Scripture. It's not about offering any Jesus and Jesus becomes incidental to that kind of approach, it really doesn't matter who He is, it really doesn't matter what He did. It just...it would be nice to have Him fix me and I can always give it a try and if it doesn't work then, you know, I've just eliminated one more option. That is so far from what the gospel is all about and that's so far from what evangelism is. The approach in evangelism is this. You're headed to eternal hell. Why? Because you're a sinner.

Do all sinners go to eternal hell? No, only the ones that aren't forgiven. How do I become forgiven?

By believing in the Lord Jesus Christ. When you put your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, you are forgiven your sin and given eternal life as a gift of God. You need to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. You need to confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord and believe in your heart the full story of Christ which is ultimately validated by the resurrection. And if you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, you will be saved forever, from your sin and all its consequences. That's how the gospel goes.

Now at that point the person might say, "I'm not interested in Jesus Christ." Then there's nothing more to say. It's not about, "Well wouldn't you like purpose? Wouldn't you like happiness? Wouldn't you like peace?" That's not going to help if they don't believe in Christ. So the goal of evangelism is to present Christ. That's why there are four gospels and not four books on psychology.

Now there are levels of unbelief. I want to talk about them a little bit. We're somewhere near John 4 but we haven't seen the landing lights yet. We're circling right now. There are several elements of unbelief and categories of unbelief. So let me just kind of unpack those for you if I can simply. There is that unbelief that only needs fulfillment. There is that kind of unbelief that is anticipatory, that is expectant, that is right on the edge and just needs fulfillment. That would be the kind of faith that Zacharias and Elizabeth had, waiting for the Messiah, waiting for the Messiah, waiting for the Messiah. And what happens? The angel appears, you're going to have a son, he's going to be the forerunner to the Messiah. They understand the message. Zachariah gives that tremendous benediction. They are...they're now getting the fuller revelation of who it is they're waiting for.

That would be Anna and Simeon. They're in the Temple. They're waiting for the Messiah and one day Joseph and Mary show up and the Messiah is there and all they need is to see who it is. That would be...that would be the early disciples. That would be Peter and Andrew, chapter 1 of John, right? They meet Jesus and what do they say? "We found the Messiah. We found the Messiah. Go tell the brothers, we found the Messiah." That's that kind of unbelief that has been brought all the way to the point where you say that's the Messiah. And John the Baptist, you remember, said to those two disciples of his, "Behold the Lamb of God, follow Him, go after Him." And they did. And they spent a day and a night with Him getting the full information of who He was. That's what we see in chapter 1.

Here's the point...no miracle occurred. Didn't need miracles. It's based on the Word of the Old Testament. They understood the Old Testament, they believed the Old Testament, they had a well-developed Christological doctrine. They understood who the Messiah was to be and what was to be fulfilled in the Messiah. They had accepted the Word of God. They had searched the scriptures which spoke of Him and they had embraced them and they only needed to be told who it is. That's wonderful. And there are people who have had that in their background. There are people who have had a full presentation of the reality of Christ, they just at some point needed to be pointed to Him and told "Believe in Him."

Then in chapter 4 we meet a second kind of unbelief, it's a little deeper unbelief. It's the unbelief that needs more than just the final fulfillment, it needs more information and that would be illustrated by the Samaritan woman and the people in the village of Sychar. Remember now, they are not true Jews, they have inter married with idolaters. Their religion is a hybrid kind of religion. They accepted the Pentateuch and they had some Messianic theology passed down from generation so they believed in the books of Moses, they believed in the coming of Messiah, and the woman at the well says, "We know that when Messiah comes, He will teach us everything." So they connected Messiah with knowledge, that the Messiah will come and He'll have full knowledge of everything. So they had

a kind of a truncated idea of the Messiah and the Savior based on the Pentateuch, which is what they accepted as Samaritans and on some other information about the Messiah. Jesus talks to the woman, how does He demonstrate to her that He's the Messiah? Because of His knowledge. They said...she said when Messiah comes He'll teach us everything. Knowledge is what marked their messianic idea.

Well Jesus told her her history and she concluded this is the knowledge that only the Messiah could have. So she goes to the village and she says, "Look, I just met a man who told me everything, everything He could never have known. Is this the Messiah?" And the whole village comes and are converted...all of them. The harvest that Jesus talks about. And His soul is so satisfied. This is His delight. He says, "I just want to do the will of the Father and finish the work He gave Me to do, the work of salvation." It's a great moment. It's the only time in all four gospels when a whole village repents and comes to faith in Christ and they aren't even Jews. Again, no miracle...no miracle. Why? Because they were looking for the fulfillment of Scripture. They needed only more revelation...only more truth.

But there's a third kind of unbelief and it's the deepest kind of unbelief. It isn't ready for the final fulfillment. It doesn't have enough information. In fact, it's such a deep kind of unbelief that it has no real confidence at all in the Messiah, or even the idea of Messiah. This is what our Lord faces in the text of John 4. So turn to John 4 and I want to show you why I say this. Look at verse 48, John 4:48. Jesus runs into this *basilikos*, that's from the word *basileia* king, kingdom. This is a royal official he's called, a royal official identified in this text, verse 49. But I want you to back up to verse 48 and listen to what Jesus said. "Unless you people see signs and wonders, you simply will not believe." These are the people for whom Scripture is not enough. These are the people for whom divine revelation is not enough. This is the deepest kind of unbelief. It needs proof.

And, you know, the amazing thing is, Jesus graciously met those people where they were. He met them where they were. Chapter 5 verse 36, I read a little earlier, He says, "For the works which the Father has given Me to accomplish, the very works that I do testify about Me that the Father sent Me." Look at the works that I do. That's why He did them. They were held responsible for making the right conclusion based on what they saw. John 10:37, "If I do not do the works of My Father, do not believe Me. But if I do them, though you do not believe Me, believe the works so that you may know and understand that the Father is in Me and I in the Father, that I'm one with God." He did the works.

Why did Jesus heal? Why did He cast out demons? Why did He raise dead people? Why did He do these incredible miracles? He was reaching to that lowest level of obstinate unbelief. They want signs. This is like kind of a starter point to move people who are nowhere to the first step of entertaining the possibility that Jesus could be the one He claims to be.

Go back to chapter 2 verse 23. In chapter 2 and verse 23 Jesus was in Jerusalem at the Passover during the feast and many believed in His name. Why did they believe in His name? Because they observed His signs which He was doing. It wasn't just Galilee, but Judea was full of people who in spite of the Old Testament, in spite of the Scripture they had had for centuries, had really no hope of coming to Christ, they needed to see signs and wonders. They needed to see miracles. These people have a superficial belief in His name. He doesn't entrust Himself to them, you remember, because He knew what was in them. And then when introduced to one of them named Nicodemus who had come to this belief. What was his belief? What did they believe? Verse 2, "Rabbi, we know You've come from God, we—meaning those of us who believe—we know You've come from God as

a teacher for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with Him.”

So what did they believe? They believed He was a teacher from God. Not more, but not less. We know You're a teacher from God because of the miracles, we know that. That's a start. That's a beginning. And now when we come to chapter 4 we see that this kind of very deep unbelief is characteristic also of Galilee, verse 48, “Unless you people see signs and wonders, you simply will not believe.” Now remember, the disciples of John the Baptist, chapter 1, all they needed to hear from John was, “Behold the Lamb of God.” Jesus said, “Follow Me,” and they were off. They just needed the fulfillment. The woman at the well and the people in Sychar, they didn't need miracles. They had believed enough of the Old Testament and had enough belief in Messiah that when Messiah demonstrated to be the one who had supernatural knowledge, they followed Him. There are no miracles in Samaria. But the unbelief is profound in Galilee and in Judea much deeper and it demands signs and wonders. And Jesus gave them.

Did they have any affect? Well some affect. There were some who believed. There were some who came to faith in Christ. Did they convince the entire nation that saw those miracles? No...no. He demonstrated His miracle power and they attributed His miracles to...whom?...Satan. They said, “He does what He does by the power of Satan.” They wanted to silence His words and they wanted to execute Him and they pulled it off.

Now when Jesus comes into Galilee, we'll pick up the story here in chapter 4 and just look at the first few verses starting in verse 43, we have to contemplate at this point this matter of unbelief. So we can call this “Contemplating on Belief.”

“After the two days,” what two days? If you go back to verse 40, He had spent two days with the villagers from Sychar cause they asked Him to stay and teach them. It must have been two wonderful days, two days of intense instruction from their blessed Savior whom they had just come to know. He stayed there two days and even many more believed because of His teaching in those days.

After the two days then, He went forth from there to Galilee. That was the purpose when He left originally. If you go back to chapter 4 verse 3, He left Judea and went away again into Galilee and had to pass through Samaria to get there. So He reconnects with His purpose and heads toward Galilee. The little incident in Samaria,--do you remember?--proves the point of verse 42, that He's the Savior of the world. He's the Savior of the world, not just the lost sheep of the house of Israel, but He's the Savior of the world. So He now having demonstrated that He is the Savior of the world will still take His message and His power demonstrations to the northern part of Israel, the land around the Sea of Galilee.

Now on the way there's a very interesting comment made by John in verse 44. He goes into Galilee for Jesus Himself testified that a prophet has no honor in his own country. It...why does John put that in there? It's a very interesting thing. It just kind of gets in the middle of verses 43 and 45 and you have to ask why is it there? It could have said there He went forth into Galilee and when He came to Galilee...so what's verse 44 doing in there? “For Jesus Himself testified that a prophet has no honor in His own country.” Did He go in to prove that? Didn't He have a purpose of proving a proverb? You know that proverb, “Familiarity breeds contempt.” Or as some have said, “This is the proof of man's corruption that he never values what he's familiar with.” We would say that, “Ah, a prophet has no honor in his own country. All experts come from out of town.” Did Jesus go to Galilee to prove that?



Is this prophetic? Is John telling us that He's not going to have any more success there then he had in Judea? Jesus' work in Galilee would prove that true.

But even more specifically, see the word "country" there, His own country? That's a very interesting word and a very important word. It is a word with the *patri* in it which is father in Greek or Latin, his fatherland, the place his ancestors came from. It's used six times in the gospels and it always refers to Nazareth. And you know the story, what happened to Him when He went to Nazareth? He preached one sermon, what did they try to do? Stone Him to death, execute Him. So is that explaining the fact that He's going in there to prove that point or is John giving us a prophecy that He will receive no honor in His own town? That's true...that's true.

And if we expand that word and it could be expanded in other contexts and say it could refer to the region around, it would still be true. Now it doesn't mean that no one was converted in Galilee because there were some converted. In fact, in 1 Corinthians 15:6 after His resurrection, when He went to Galilee there were five hundred brethren gathered there. Five hundred out of the tens and twenties of thousands of people in Galilee, it's a meager representation. So we could take the statement as a positive prophecy. He went there and gave testimony that a prophet has no honor in His own country, or we could take it in a negative way in which we would read it this way, that Jesus gave evidence of the fact that He had the power to overcome that human attitude, that proverbial human attitude. In any case, maybe the best way to understand it is simply to say it's prophetic...it's prophetic. He was not welcomed into His own town and while there were some who believed, the vast majority rejected Him. And this was in the face of many miracles.

Now John only gives two miracles in sixteen months in Galilee...two. He only records two. He was there for 16 months and did them daily. John gives us this one about the nobleman and the feeding of the five thousand men plus men and children in chapter 6. John's very selective. But there were many other miracles that we read in Matthew, Mark and Luke who also record His Galilean ministry. He healed a demon-possessed man. He healed Peter's mother-in-law and He healed many others who believed on Him. He healed a leper who received Him as Messiah, healed a paralytic, healed more and more. The word multitudes appears. He healed a Centurion's servant, raised a widow's son, healed Jairus' daughter, the woman who touched Him, two blind men, a dumb man and on and on and on it goes. Fed five thousand, fed four thousand, walked on water, calmed a storm...all kinds of miracles. John only gives us just a couple. But there were relentless miracles day after day after day and basically was met with unbelief...it was met with unbelief. That is why we read in Matthew chapter 11, familiar words, "He began to denounce the cities in which most of His miracles were done because they didn't repent. Woe to you Chorazin, woe to you Bethsaida, for if the miracles had occurred in Tyre and Sidon which occurred in you, they would have repented long ago in sack cloth and ashes. Nevertheless I say to you, it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for you. And you, Capernaum, the main town in which He did His miracles in Galilee, "You, Capernaum, will not be exalted to heaven, will you? You will descend to Hades for if the miracles had occurred in Sodom which occurred in you, it would have remained to this day. Nevertheless I say to you, it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment than for you." You're better off to be in hell because you were killed in the fiery destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah than you are to be in hell having looked at and seen and experienced the miracles of Jesus in Capernaum. Which is to say another way, you're better off to be a condemned homosexual than you are to be a condemned religious Jew.

So He goes into Galilee and He's going to receive no honor or just a minor amount of respect and

faith, small group. But the initial reception was welcoming, verse 45. "So when He came to Galilee, the Galileans received Him." And again, this is the receiving that's like the believing in chapter 2. They received Him because of His miracles, having seen all the things that He did in Jerusalem at the feast for they themselves also went to the feast. They were down there for the Passover before and after the Passover is followed by the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Everybody went to Jerusalem for that and that's ...that's where they saw these miracles. So here again, this is respect, this is some degree of interest, this is the Nicodemus attitude, we know You must be a teacher come from God because nobody can do what You do if God's not with him. It turns out to be terribly superficial as the rest of the story indicates...superficial faith.

But occasionally...occasionally though He is without honor in His own town and largely without honor in His own region, occasionally there is a story like the healing of the royal official's son. That story's in verses 46 to 54. And what marks that story is verse 50, the man believed the Word that Jesus spoke. Verse 53, "He himself believed and his whole household."

Here we have in the middle of the unbelief and the rejection, the story of a man who believed and a family and a household who believed. This is John's point. You can have an entire region, cities exposed to Jesus' ministry, teaching, words, works, miracles, signs, they can receive Him to a certain degree, identify Him as a teacher from God. The only way that they will ever be forgiven and receive salvation is by believing in Him...believing in Him.

I want to close, and we'll go to that story next time, but I want to close by having you turn to Acts 16 because I want to reiterate this truth in another context, that salvation is all about believing, nothing more and certainly nothing less. You cannot be saved if you do not believe and you cannot be saved if you think that believing and working are necessary.

The jailor in Philippi comes and he says to Paul and Silas, verse 30, who had been his prisoners, singing hymns, praising God. An earthquake came, the jailor awoke, you know the story. He's about to kill himself because he's lost his prisoners and he could pay with his own life. Paul tells him, "Don't harm yourself, we're all here." He calls for lights, rushes in, trembling with fear, falls down before Paul and Silas and he asked the right questions, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" Okay? What must I do to be saved? That is the question.

Listen to this answer. They said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved, you and your household." How is one saved? By what? Believing in the Lord Jesus, that's how you're saved, believing in the Lord Jesus, in His person, in His work, His death, His resurrection, all that the gospel record affirms to be true about Him. And they spoke the word concerning the Lord to the jailor together with all those who were in his house.

You have to believe. You have to believe in the Lord Jesus. Well they didn't have enough information to believe in the Lord Jesus yet, so they told them all about the Lord Jesus. They took them that very hour of the night, washed their wounds, the jailor did, the wounds of the prisoners Paul and Silas, and immediately he was baptized, he and all his household and he brought them into his house and set food before them, rejoiced greatly having believed in God with his whole household. In one moment, one evening, those people in that family and that household were saved. They went from death to life, darkness to light, hell to heaven by hearing the word concerning Christ, Romans 10, believing it they were immediately baptized to proclaim that union with Christ in His death and resurrection. They were full of joy. Conversion had come to a household of a jailor.

Did they have to go on some religious pilgrimage? Did they have to do some penance? Did they have to achieve some moral stature? Did they have to clean up their act? No. What must I do to be saved? Believe in the Lord Jesus. Believe in the Lord Jesus. If you don't, you will die in your sins.

Now next time we're going to come to the story of how the royal official with the sick son came to believe. Let's bow in prayer.

Again, Lord, we always feel like we have feasted on Your truth, on Your Word, as inadequate as our words might be, Your word is life to us and joy and peace and power. Thank You for the experience that we've had even today with the Savior in these very few verses. What a thrill it is for us to know the truth, to know the true One, the true and living God through the living Lord Jesus Christ. I pray for those who don't believe, who fight that, who are unwilling to turn from their sin and put their trust in You as Savior, I pray, Lord, that they might feel so heavy upon them the weight of the reality that they will die in their sins and perish forever in conscious torment in hell, that that burden will be so heavy they can't rest, they can't sleep until they have come to trust in You, to put their faith in Christ.

Father, do Your work in every heart, we pray. May Christ be exalted in us and through us, refresh us in the joyous opportunity we have to tell others that they must believe, they must believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. Give us zeal and faithfulness to declare that message, we pray in His wonderful name.

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