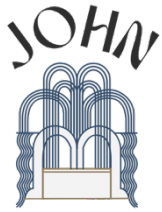


An Exposition of the
GOSPEL OF JOHN



“THE POWER OF THE WORD”

John 4:43-54

Theme: Saving faith is generated by the Word of God, not by supernatural signs.

Introduction: We live in a world that thrives on spectacle. From viral videos to breaking news, people are drawn to what is sensational, visible, and immediate. Unfortunately, this mindset can creep into our spiritual lives—causing us to rely on feelings, experiences, or visible signs rather than resting in the sufficiency of Christ’s word.

In John 4:43–54, we encounter a desperate father—a royal official—whose son is dying. He comes to Jesus not for theology, but for a miracle. Yet in this moment of crisis, Jesus exposes a deeper issue: the people’s shallow faith that depends on seeing signs to believe. He declares in verse 48, “Unless you people see signs and wonders, you simply will not believe.” But then something remarkable happens. This man believes Jesus’ word, before seeing the result. And his faith—rooted in the authority of Christ’s spoken promise—is rewarded with healing and the transformation of his entire household.

This passage invites us to move beyond a sign-seeking faith to a steadfast trust in Christ’s word. It challenges us to ask: Is Jesus’ word enough for me? Will I believe Him even before I see the outcome? As we walk through this text, we’ll see how the distractions of the world can hinder our hearing, how disbelief hardens our hearts, and how the powerful declaration of Jesus cuts through all resistance and produces saving faith.

[Read the text] The theme of this section is: ***“Sharing our faith enables us to rejoice as co-laborers with God in the harvest of souls.”*** Again, there are three emphases we will note:

- 1) **Hearing Is Obstructed by Distractions – 4:43-45**
- 2) **Hearts Are Obstinate Due to Disbelief – 4:46-48**
- 3) **Hardness Is Overwhelmed by Declaration - 4:49-54**

I. Hearing Is Obstructed by Distractions – 4:43-45

A. The Problem of Familiarity – vv. 43-44

1. This section essentially resumes the narrative that was interrupted by the diversion into Samaria – vv. 4-42.
2. These verses could follow v. 3 very naturally – *“He left Judea and went away again into Galilee . . . for Jesus Himself testified that a prophet has not honor in his own country.”*

3. The reason for this statement is that He left Judea because of the incredible popularity that He was gaining – a popularity that would prematurely produce a confrontation with the authority of the Pharisees – cp. [v. 1](#).
4. However, Jesus' going into Galilee would ultimately result in a minimized popularity, despite his initial immense popularity.
5. Such initial popularity would not bother the Pharisees because of their attitude toward the Galileans – cp. [John 7:52](#).
6. He also returned to Galilee in order to fulfill the prophecy of where the Messiah would minister – cp. [Matthew 4:12-16](#) (a quote primarily from Isaiah 9:1-2).
7. Thus, we find Jesus beginning what became about an 18-month period of public ministry in the remote area of Galilee, where the people would fail to grant him the honor due Him –
 - a) *They were initially happy to receive Him as a “miracle-worker”* – cp. [4:45](#).
 - b) *They did not honor Him for Who He is – only for what He could do* – cp. [4:48](#).
 - c) *They soon began to grumble about Him* – cp. [6:41](#).
 - d) *They finally began to abandon Him in droves* – cp. [6:66](#).

B. The Preoccupation with Fascination – [v. 45](#)

1. However, initially they received him – *“So when He came to Galilee, the Galileans received Him.”* – His initial arrival was one of great popularity.
2. Notice what they were really interested in: *“... having seen all the things that He did in Jerusalem at the feast; for they themselves also went to the feast”*
3. They were interested in seeing His power displayed – they were preoccupied with His supernatural powers, but showed little interest in the Word of God.
4. How this must have hurt the heart of God – having just come from Samaria where there were no miraculous signs – only the declaration of the Word that brought faith.
5. Here the people received Him – not because He would *“declare all things to us”* – cp. verse 25, as was the case in the attraction of the Gospel to the Samaritans, but because He could do miracles.
6. They were distracted by the supernatural, and the miracles performed by Jesus were in part designed to reveal who He was to a wicked and hard-

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hearted people – *Luke 11:29; 1 Corinthians 1:21-23.*

7. “Since unbelief is at heart a moral, rather than an intellectual, problem, no amount of evidence will ever turn unbelief to faith. But the revealed Word of God has inherent power to do so (cf. John 6:63; Heb. 4:12; James 1:18; 1 Pet. 1:23).”¹
8. Again, we see how it is possible to “receive” Christ without possessing “saving faith” – especially when the “reception” of Christ is independent of the absolute and final revealed truth of God’s Word.

II. The Heart Is Obstinate due to Disbelief – 4:46-48

A. The Conduct of a Secularist – vv. 46-47

1. Jesus *“came again to Cana of Galilee where He had made the water wine.”* – a detail to provide vitality to the account.
2. Approximately 15 miles away from Cana was a town named Capernaum in which *“there was a royal official whose son was sick.”*
3. This royal official had heard of Jesus’ remarkable works in Jerusalem from those who had returned from the Passover celebration there.
4. Having attempted every other possible remedy, this *“royal official . . . heard that Jesus had come down out of Judea into Galilee, [and] he went to Him and was imploring Him to come down and heal his son; for he was at the point of death.”*
5. His appeal was flawed in several ways, evidencing a very limited and minute faith:
 - a) *He thought that Jesus had to be somehow with the boy – his faith was not strong enough to believe Him to be the sovereign Lord – cp. Luke 7:6-10.*
 - b) *He did not yet grasp the power Jesus possessed even over death, but was absolutely desperate for his son’s life.*
6. Thus, this was not an act of confidence and faith in Christ Jesus; it was a secularist practicing pragmatism – “I’ll do whatever will work.”

B. The Confrontation of Sensuality – v. 48

1. Such a lack of faith brings a rebuke from the Lord: *“Unless you people see signs and wonders, you simply will not believe.”*
2. Essentially, Christ declares here that they were all unbelievers who were

¹John F. MacArthur, Jr., *The MacArthur Study Bible*, (Dallas: Word Publishing) 1997.

oriented merely to their physical senses.

3. Whatever faith existed was not based on His person or His word, like in Samaria, but based on the miracles that He could do for them.
4. This “royal official” does not believe in Jesus as the Christ, that is, in the divine person of Christ nor even in his word if it is not accompanied by a miracle.
5. *“Signs and wonders”* refer to God’s intention for the miracles – to serve as a sign of Christ’s identity and its impact on the people, “wonderment,” or amazement.
6. However, these people failed to see God’s intent because they were so obstinate in their unbelief – they refused to believe.

III. Hardness Is Overwhelmed by a Declaration – 4:49-54

A. The Crisis of Faith – vv. 49-50

1. However, this *“royal officer said to Him, ‘Sir, come down before my child dies’.”*
2. In the face of Christ’s rebuke, this man persists, perhaps knowing a small upward turn in possessing a singular hope in the Person of Christ.
3. Jesus’ response is immediate – He heals the boy 20 miles away and then, in loving care of the man’s soul, before Him declares: *“Go; your son lives.”*
4. At this moment, the man’s faith turns from what others were saying about Christ and even from what He thought Christ was capable of and he *“believed the word that Jesus spoke to Him.”*
5. Thus, his faith now rests upon Jesus and His Word, without a sign to verify the matter.
6. It was at this point that the man was reconciled to God and demonstrated his confidence in the Person of Christ that He no longer demanded that Christ come with him, but instead he *“started off”* believing the Word of Christ.

B. The Consequence of Faith – vv. 51-54

1. The blessing known by this man is both physical and spiritual – *“as he was now going down, his slaves met him, saying that his son was living.”*
2. The glorious Word of Christ had proven true and in great excitement the man asked a question he probably already had concluded was true: *“So*

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he inquired of them the hour when he began to get better.”

3. The slaves then confirmed that his recovery corresponded exactly to the moment when Christ issued His promise to the man: *“Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him.”*
 - a) Since the Jewish days went from 6 pm to 6 pm (not midnight to midnight), the response *“yesterday”* means that this man got home after 6 pm.
 - b) *“The seventh hour”* would refer to about 1:00 pm, indicating that the man made the 16-mile trip from Cana to Capernaum in about 6 hours.
4. John relates the spiritual impact of seeing the Word of God fulfilled – *“so the father knew that it was the hour in which Jesus said to him ‘Your son lives’; and he himself believed and his whole household.”*
5. Again, Scripture here does not credit the miracle to the faith of these people, but to the power of the Word of God!
6. The “sign” pointed people to the Person and Word of Christ, because God’s Word remains the bastion of faith - *Romans 10:17*.
7. John reminds us that *“this is again a second sign that Jesus performed when He had come out of Judea into Galilee,”* – indicating that these people had no excuse for their incredibly hardened hearts.
8. His miracles now begin to serve as increasingly damning indictments against the faithlessness of the people of Galilee:
 - a) *The hearts of the people of Galilee were so hard that, because of the signs performed among them, they were all the more accountable for the rejection of Christ – Matthew 11:21-24.*
 - b) *The issue is how a person responds to God’s Word – cp. Luke 16:27-31.*

So What?

1. In what ways have the distractions of daily life (e.g., entertainment, ambition, routine) dulled my hunger to hear from Christ?
2. What steps can I take to cultivate a quiet, undistracted heart to listen to Christ this week?
3. How has the Word of Christ softened or changed my heart in recent days?
4. How might a fascination with signs, success, or spectacle hinder a genuine response to Jesus’ words?

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