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## THE REWARDS OF FAITH

**- JOHN 4:43-54. - FEBRUARY 16. -**

**Golden Text: – "The man believed the word that Jesus had spoken unto him, and he went his way." – John 4:50.**

AFTER spending two days with the Samaritans at Sychar, our Lord proceeded on his journey to Galilee. We have already noticed that this was contrary to his instructions to his disciples, and that the Samaritans, not being Jews, could not at that time receive special blessings – not until the seventy weeks of divine favor set apart for the Jews had been fulfilled, and the door opened to the Gentiles. We can imagine, however, that there was some special reason why the people of this little city were distinctly favored by our Lord, particularly when we remember that on another occasion he declined to go into a village of Samaria, and the people of that village refused to sell the disciples food, and thus incensed James and John to the extent of their suggestion to the Master that fire be called down from heaven to consume the village and its inhabitants. (Luke 9:54.) In Acts 8 and 9:31 we have clear indications that the work of grace flourished amongst the Samaritans very promptly after the door of opportunity swung open to them. No doubt that later fruitage developed from the words of grace and truth which our Lord dropped on the occasion of the visit here referred to.

Our Lord and his disciples went into Galilee, notwithstanding [R4132 : page 45] the fact that the Lord corroborated the proverb that a prophet has no honor in his own country; but while he would have less honor there in one sense, it was a better field for labor in another sense, because the people, while outwardly less religious than those of Judea, were really in a better attitude of heart to receive the Lord and his truth than

those of Judea, who were shackled with sectarianism and the burdens of the Law imposed by the teachings of the Pharisees.

Although our Lord's first miracle was performed in Galilee, his first reputation was gained in Judea and at Jerusalem, and now on his return to his home country, he had proportionately more honor than if he had remained, for many Galileans, attending the feasts at Jerusalem, had been witnesses of his teachings and miracles there. Thus he returned again to Cana, the scene of his first miracle, with added honors. We remember that on the occasion of his first miracle, the people said, Is not this Jesus, the carpenter, whose kinfolk we know? How, then, is he a prophet, a teacher? (Mark 6:2,3.) Now, however, his fame was spread abroad, so that a nobleman living at Capernaum, twenty-five miles distant, learned of his presence at Cana, and made the journey to present a special request for the healing of his son, who was at the point of death. The word rendered nobleman in this text might more literally be rendered king's officer, and the supposition of some is that this was Chuza, Herod's steward or chamberlain, whose wife, Joanna, was one of the women who subsequently ministered to Jesus. – Luke 8:3.

### **CHUZA'S MANIFESTATION OF FAITH**

The essence of this lesson is faith, and it well illustrates degrees and development of faith. Knowledge is necessary as a basis for faith, and this Chuza possessed. His faith was manifested in his coming to the Lord and publicly acknowledging his confidence in the Lord's ability to heal his son. We may well consider that this indicated a good measure of faith to begin with, but our Lord – with no lack of sympathy for a father's interest in his dying son, but with a desire to develop Chuza's faith – hesitated to go with him, and seemingly objected to so doing, saying, "Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe." (v. 48.) Had Chuza's faith been small, or had he been lacking of

humility, he might have had opportunity for a manifestation of [R4133 : page 45] incredulity and indignation.

He might have said, I did not believe in you anyway. It was merely a haphazard matter, because the physicians can do nothing further for my son, and I thought that your coming might possibly accomplish something. But now, sir, I see your hesitancy, and interpret it to mean that you occasionally pick out cases where you can effect a healing, where you can apparently effect a miraculous cure; but that in the general run of diseases, where death is at the door, you are as helpless as our physicians. I have at least demonstrated the fraudulency of your general claims. Adieu. But no; Chuza's attitude of heart was different. Our Lord's delay merely increased his urgency. He supplicated, and finally said, "Sir," Rabbi, "come down ere my child die." Don't, please don't wait to discuss a matter of faith if you realize my position as a father and my interest in the subject, but do come now, and render me the assistance, and discuss the philosophy of faith and tell me of my further needs subsequently.

Our Lord's point had been gained. He had tested the nobleman's faith, and had led his mind upward from the mere healing operation to something higher, to the divine power behind it, and to the fact that our Lord's miracles were merely intended to introduce him as the Messiah. But the test of faith was not yet finished, for our Lord, instead of accompanying Chuza to his son's bedside and there performing a cure, merely told him, "Go thy way; thy son liveth" – he will not die at the present time, he will recover. (v. 50.) The word was believed, the importunity ceased, and instead, no doubt, gratitude, thankfulness, was expressed. It is noted that the miracle took place in the seventh hour – 1 p.m. It may be presumed that Chuza came the twenty-five miles on horseback that very morning in great haste. It is notable, however, that while he might have returned the same evening at the same speed, that he did not arrive at home until the

next day – evidently taking the journey leisurely. Meantime, his servants met him with the pleasing information that his son was out of danger. He inquired particularly for the time, and they promptly answered, "Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him;" so Chuza knew that the recovery was the result of our Lord's word and power.

## **ANOTHER KIND OF FAITH**

We read that Chuza "believed, and his whole house." But did he not believe before, when he started to see the Master, when he was speaking with him, when he accepted his reply and started home? Yes, all of those were steps of faith, of belief and obedience in harmony therewith, and attesting the same; but when he arrived home and realized the miracle, it led to a belief in the Lord of a still higher and of a still deeper kind. He now believed, not only that Jesus was able to work miracles, but that he was indeed the Redeemer, the Messiah. His faith at last had reached the heart. No doubt it was as a result of this that his wife, Joanna, in harmony with his wishes, became one of the active supporters of our Lord's ministry.

What lessons of faith can be learned today along the lines of this lesson? We answer that faith today has its various gradations or steps. First of all, we could have no faith except as some knowledge would serve as its foundation. It is written, "Without faith it is impossible to please him [God]" (Heb. 11:6), and only those who please God, who have his approval, will have eternal life. Hence, we know that the heathen, who have no faith in God because they have no knowledge of him, are not accepted, are not justified, are not in any sense of the word saved or approved of God as worthy of eternal life. This settles at once, to all who are guided by the Scriptures, the erroneous supposition that the heathen are going to heaven, because **[R4133 : page 46]** of their ignorance. As the Apostle points out, "How can they believe in

him of whom they have not heard?" and how could they hear without some proclamation, either oral or printed? and how can the proclamation reach them except as God be back of the matter and direct it to them, and grant the opening of the eyes of their understanding?

But an elementary knowledge and an elementary faith built upon it is not sufficient – faith must grow, and before it can grow it must lead to some kind of works. Chuza's primary faith led to his journey to our Lord, by which he attested his faith. But generally there must be a necessity, as in Chuza's case – his son's illness. Some might hear of Christ, though they might never approach did they not realize the necessity; but the same message that tells of Christ points him out as a Savior, and implies that all men are sinners. Only those who realize that they are sinners, only those that desire to escape from sin and death, will be led to investigate and approach the Lord, that they may find relief from their burden of soul.

### **FAITH COMETH BY HEARING – THE MESSAGE OF GOD**

In the first approach of a soul to the Lord it may be necessary that the feeling of need should be intensified; and hence, although the Lord is very merciful and compassionate and forgiving, he permits the penitent one to supplicate, and delays his assurances of forgiveness until matters seem vital to the one who is hungering and thirsting for the divine favor he seeks. Then, as in the case of Chuza, the Lord does not do something outwardly, miraculously proving to us that our prayer has been answered and that we are forgiven, but he merely tells us so, saying, "Thy sins be forgiven thee!"

Where the proper faith is, the results will be similar to those in the case of Chuza – the penitent one will believe, trust, and go his way, thankful and rejoicing. Whoever cannot trust has not yet

come to the place where it is proper for him to have the relief. He must first cultivate more faith in the Lord, and to this end he may need a larger knowledge of the Lord and his goodness. He may need to call to mind the Lord's character, that he is very merciful and of tender compassion; that while declaring that we are sinners, he declares also that he so loved us while we were yet sinners as to give our redemption price. (John 3:16.) He must consider how graciously the Lord has already dealt with many in the forgiveness of their sins, and in the granting to them of his holy Spirit, whereby has been wrought in them the glorious transformation of character, so that the things which they once loved they now hate, and the things they once hated they now love. With these lessons before the heart, and with confidence that the Lord changes not, that he is the same yesterday, today and forever, all sincere seekers of divine favor have an abundance of foundation for faith in their forgiveness and acceptance, and are authorized to have "strong consolation." – Heb. 16:18.

What should be the result of a true faith which after various difficulties has reached the degree of justification and come to realize the forgiveness of sins, reconciliation to the Father, and the merit of the precious blood, covering all blemishes, future as well as past? As in Chuza's case, his faith bringing him to a condition of discipleship – to a position of believing on a still higher plane than ever before – so it should be with us. A realization of the grace of God in the forgiveness of our sins should lead us to that faith in him, that confidence in his Word, that acceptance of him as the great Teacher, the Messiah, which would believe in him to the extent of accepting all of his gracious provisions and propositions. This would mean that we would turn from the world to become his disciples, to lay our little all on the altar of sacrifice, with full confidence that he who has begun a good work in us is both able and willing to complete it in the day of Christ, in the Millennial Age – early in the morning of which

the Church, the Bride, is to be helped, delivered, "changed."  
– Phil. 1:6; I Cor. 15:51,52.

We trust that the majority of our readers will be able to trace in this lesson their own experiences of justification and sanctification. And what further remains? We answer that next in order comes the testing – a testing of the degree of our consecration, of its genuineness, of the sincerity of our consecration. This is the Christian's life. The earlier steps of faith and justification were merely primary to our standing upon this plane of sanctification – begetting of the holy Spirit to a new nature. The Lord's special dealing during this Gospel Age is with these New Creatures, Spirit-begotten – not that they are many as compared with the world, or even as compared with those that take the first step of faith unto justification. They are a Little Flock, to whom it is the Father's good pleasure to give the Kingdom – to as many of them as prove faithful. (Luke 12:32.) The Apostle declares of them,

**"ALL THINGS ARE FOR YOUR SAKES"**

– 2 COR. 4:15 –

Everything in the realm of nature and of grace must for the time so operate as to be most favorable to this class, for the Lord has declared that all things shall work together for good for these – "the called according to his purpose." (Rom. 8:28.) Whatever cannot be overruled for their good must be hindered, must be stopped, cannot proceed. Little does the world realize the important place in its affairs and interests occupied by this Little Flock; indeed the world knoweth them not, even as it knew not their Lord (I John 3:1) – the world reckons them as a part of the filth and off-scourings of all things, knows them as fools for Christ's sake. But by and by the veil will be lifted, and the whole world shall understand the mysterious workings of divine providence, for, as the Apostle declares, God, in the ages to come,

will "shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus." – Eph. 2:7.

Whoever has a sufficiency of faith to be accepted of the Lord in this class and to be begotten of the holy Spirit, will still need to grow in grace, to grow in **[R4134 : page 47]** knowledge and to grow in faith, but he will find in the divine provision everything needful to these ends. Hence the Scriptures declare that God is faithful in the matter, and that if any of these Spirit-begotten ones shall fail to reach the glorious outcome of the call, it will be their own fault – because they have neglected or not properly used the divine grace in harmony with the divine injunction. Let our faith abound, dear brethren, and grow stronger and stronger, and to this end let us feed upon the heavenly manna provided us, and make use of the various opportunities for growth, and be not slothful, but fervent in spirit, serving the Lord.

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