

“GOD AT A DISTANCE”

John 4:43-54

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INTRODUCTION

There are times when it seems to us that God is so far away. He is in heaven; we are on earth. Here in this sin-cursed world we face such tremendous challenges. Being so far away, can the Lord **see** what we are going through? Can he **hear** our cries of anguish? Can He **feel** our heartaches? Can He be **touched** with the pressure of our sufferings? Can He **smell** the sweet savor of our heart-felt prayers as they ascend up from the scenes of our burdens?

We are here, surrounded by our enemies, oppressed by our sins, heavy laden with our sicknesses and weaknesses, pressed down by the trials of life. He is in His glorious Heaven, surrounded by His heavenly hosts, praised by His Seraphs, protected by His Cherubs, adored by all of His redeemed. What could possibly move Him to be concerned about us?

If we want to see His true attitude toward His afflicted children and those who are to become His children, we need to observe how His Son reacted to those at a distance while he was here on earth. After all, the Son came to reveal His Father.

In this passage, John 4:43-54, we see Jesus making *A Trip of a Distance, and we see Him Healing the Nobleman's Son at a Distance.*

YOU NEED TO KNOW THAT A DISTANCE IS NO OBSTACLE AT ALL FOR OUR LORD!

I. A TRIP OF A DISTANCE (43-45)

A. The Time of the Trip—After the two days (Where He had been evangelizing in Samaria, v. 43)

B. The Destination of the Trip—Galilee

C. The Purpose of the Trip—To avoid the unwelcome attention and resulting conflict mentioned in 4:1-3 (44)

1. Galilee was His “own country.”—See Mt. 13:57 & parallels.

2. His home country would not give Him true honor—they would revel in His signs, but would not for the most part give Him true heart-devotion.

“Home country” here was not Judea—John doesn't say that Jesus was from Judea (cf. 2:1; 7:3 etc.); reason for leaving Judea was not failure (4:1f); He was not leaving here from Judea, but from Samaria; Jesus was not disappointed in the Judean reception and thus went to Galilee to get a better reception. This was **never** Jesus' motivation. Such an idea is “abhorrent to the ideals of the Fourth Gospel” (Morris). He knew men's hearts (2:24-25) and was not seeking glory from men (5:41-44).

D. The Outcome of the Trip (45)

1. The Superficial Welcome
2. The Sensational basis—having seen miracles at Passover, having been there.
3. Not acknowledging His Savior-hood or His true Messianic status.

Yet, on this trip Jesus **trains His disciples**, and **saves His elect ones**.

The distance was no hindrance to Him; He had a job to do and no obstacles—even distance would stop Him.

II. A HEALING AT A DISTANCE (46-54)

Is this simply a retelling of the story of the healing of the Centurion's servant in the Synoptic Gospels? (Mt. 8:5-13 etc.)

No. Notice the differences:

- 1) Here a royal official, likely of Herod Antipas--not a centurion.
- 2) This man was likely a Jew, not a Roman.
- 3) This man's son was sick; the centurion's slave was sick.
- 4) Here Jesus was in Cana—there in Capernaum.
- 5) Here faith was weak; there faith is strong and praised.
- 6) Here the father begs Jesus to come; there he asks Jesus not to come.
- 7) Here the illness is a fever; there it is paralysis.
- 8) Here the father pleads in person; there the elders plead for the man.
- 9) Here the scene occurs immediately after arriving in Galilee; there much later.
- 10) Here Christ doesn't go; there apparently He does.

A. The Scene of the Miracle—Cana of Galilee (See 2:1)

About 18 miles distant from Capernaum.

“Went to Him” implies that he “went away from” his precious son. He left his son to get help from Jesus.

B. The Request for a Miracle--persistent

1. Come Down (Cana higher than Capernaum)

Note his error here—Christ must come down in order to heal.

2. Heal his son—who was on the verge of death.

Not yet a believer in Jesus as the Messiah—but he was interested and needy.

C. The Apparently Harsh Answer of Jesus (48)

1. Longing for the sensational—“signs and wonders”
2. Lacking true saving faith—You will **NEVER** believe!

D. The Persistence of the Father (49)

He doesn't defend himself; he is desperate! “Do something before my child dies.

*Note his error here—Christ must act **before** the child dies!*

Notice the word for child here—“my little one”—a term of affection.

E. The Compassion of the Savior (50)

Here Jesus further tests the man's faith—He gives him no sign, just His bare

word!

1. Command to go—the son **lives**. Sickness has no further hold, life does. Immediate healing.
2. Belief in His word—not yet in His person.

F. The Report of the Servants (51-52)

1. They met him half way!
2. They confirmed that the son “lives”. (The use a word that means “boy.”)
3. They verified the exact time—7th hour (7:00 PM—not 1:00 PM)
4. They reported instantaneous healing—“The fever left him.”
Note another error of the father, who assumed progressive recovery—“began to get better.” [Literally, “getting on nicely”]

G. Saving Faith of the Father and of his **Entire Family** (53)

Household salvation involves all those old enough to believe!
Note the **third** emphasis upon the expression: “Your son lives”!

H. The Sovereign Plan of the Savior (54)

The text actually reads: “**JESUS MADE THIS A SECOND SIGN.**”
The time was when he came out of Judea into Galilee.
Jesus had done other signs beside this one!

CONCLUSION

Note the progression of the ruler’s “faith”: *In Jesus’ miracle working power (47-48), In His word (50), In His Person (53).*

Notice how Jesus bring along the different persons we see in this gospel: Nicodemus, the Samaritan woman, the ruler, the blind man (ch. 9), and Martha (ch. 11).

You see, **DISTANCE IS NO PROBLEM FOR JESUS.**

In fact, Jesus is always with His people—He lives in us!

Also, He always hears the heartfelt cry of the unbeliever to Him—“Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.”

OUR GOD IS A GOD WHO EASILY SPANS THE DISTANCE FROM HEAVEN TO EARTH, FOR HIS SON HAS COME TO EARTH IN ORDER TO SAVE US!

Call upon Him! He will help you!