

In Jesus' name. Amen.

*We read as follows in Jesus' name:*

So [Jesus] came again to Cana in Galilee, where He had made the water wine. And at Capernaum there was an official whose son was ill. When this man heard that Jesus had come from Judea to Galilee, he went to Him and asked Him to come down and heal his son, for he was at the point of death.

So Jesus said to him, "Unless you see signs and wonders you will not believe."

The official said to Him, "Sir, come down before my child dies."

Jesus said to him, "Go; your son will live." The man believed the word that Jesus spoke to him and went on his way. As he was going down, his servants met him and told him that his son was recovering. So he asked them the hour when he began to get better, and they said to him, "Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him."

The father knew that was the hour when Jesus had said to him, "Your son will live." And he himself believed, and all his household.

This was now the second sign that Jesus did when He had come from Judea to Galilee. (ESV)

*This is Your Word, heavenly Father; sanctify us in the truth, Your Word is Truth. Amen. (John 17:17)*

Dear Fellow Redeemed,

Can you hear the anxiety and desperation in the father's words?

He was afraid, wasn't he?

He was afraid he would lose his son who was at the **point of death**.

This account took place early on in Jesus' earthly ministry.

St. John notes that this is only Jesus' second sign (or miracle) performed in Galilee, which would indicate that Jesus hadn't begun simply healing whomever the crowds brought.

This official perhaps had heard or even seen the few miracles Jesus had performed in Jerusalem, and so he made the 10 mile trip to find Him, even leaving his deathly ill son.

Think of that! He might never have seen his son alive again, and yet he went to search for Jesus.

This would seem to be an act of desperation, a "hail Mary," if you will.

But it is indeed not that.

It was not a "Hail, Mary"! He had specifically come to find Jesus, to hail Him for His mercy.

And we cannot say that the man was desperate, at least not in its original meaning.

The word desperate comes from Latin meaning "without hope." [from *de* "without" + *sperare* "to hope"]

But this man was certainly not "without hope."

He came to Jesus with hope, not only in Jesus' ability, but also in His mercy.

We see this in his reaction to Jesus' challenging words,

**"Unless you see signs and wonders you will not believe."**

Notice, he doesn't get offended by this.

In fact, he doesn't even seem to worry about them.

Because that isn't his concern; he wasn't looking for a sign or wonder in order to believe Jesus.

He already believed Jesus could heal.

He already considered Him merciful and powerful.

We see that in his reaction to Jesus' words, "**Go; your son lives.**"

St. John further reports: **The man believed the word that Jesus spoke to him and went on his way.**

His actions show us what was in his heart — He believed Jesus' word.

He had hope... and Jesus did not disappoint him.

He found out from his servants the next day that the boy was healed from that very hour.

And so with only the word of Jesus, the man and **all his household believed** in Him.

...

But let's go back to Jesus' words: "**Unless you see signs and wonders you will not believe.**"

We can't tell it in English, but in the original Greek you can see that Jesus wasn't just talking to the official.

He was talking to the crowd with the official among them.

We know this because when He said, "**Unless you see signs...**",

the "you" is plural, as in "**Unless ya'll see signs, ya'll will not believe.**"

Notice what Jesus, by implication, is condemning here: belief that is based merely on wonders, as if the wonders were the important thing to focus on and believe in.

And while the official wasn't hoping simply to see a miracle for a miracle's sake,

you can tell he took Jesus' implication to heart, because he didn't even see the miracle.

At Jesus' word he started his long walk home and heard about it later.

He simply took Jesus' word for it.

What spiritual battle do you think that official might have been fighting as he walked from Capernaum to Cana?

How many questions do you think were centered around his own worthiness or unworthiness?

"Is the boy sick because of something I did?"

Would Jesus even give me a chance to speak to Him, after the things that I have done or neglected?"

The injustices he had allowed, to the detriment of the peace or reputation of a neighbor.

The wayward glances he had taken, that turned into fantasizing...

The neglect of attending to God's word, the neglect of prayers or gathering with God's people.

If he had neglected God, would God now neglect him?

This is not just a spiritual battle the official faced, is it?

When life gets serious, even deathly serious, isn't that when these thoughts seem to haunt us most?

Certain sins seem like such a trifle to us; so common among everyone, that we think little of them... at least until our conscience is struck.

Other sins seem much more serious. But even these in times of weakness, can seem okay.

They can be justified, not by the Commandments, but by our situations...or so we think.

The glance that becomes a touch, because you're lonely.

"I'm lonely, God doesn't want me to be alone."

The "extra" cash that was lying around. "No one will miss it, and I need it more."

The neglect of attention to God's Word, our prayers, or communing with God's people.

At the time, the Deceiver can make them seem so appealing... even innocent or justifiable.

But then once you've done it, the Devil will start throwing his accusing darts. —

“How can you ever pray to the Lord again after what you have just done?  
Why should He listen to you now, when you have neglected to listen to Him?  
How dare you step into the Church’s door!”

Such can be some of the temptations in our spiritual battle against the devil and even yourself.

But the devil is not interested in your comfort. In fact, the very opposite.

He hates you. He hates God. And he hates God’s love for you.

And so he wars against you and against God to try to bring you to despair, to be desperate, to try anything and everything on your own, except what actually works, and then finally come to the point of being without hope.

But know this, that there is a despair that is good and necessary:

a despair in your own goodness and ability to earn God’s favor.

1. It is the kind of desperation that leads you, not to hail Mary, but to “Hail Jesus” as the official did.
2. The kind of despair in your own efforts that leads you to cling to Jesus’ words and believe them regardless of whether you think you should feel different or see some sign.
3. The kind of despair that recognizes your guilt and shame and repents of it, of the glances, fantasizing, and touches, your dishonesty in financial matters, your neglect of God’s Word, prayers, and Christian fellowship.
4. The kind of despair that wars against the devil’s truthful accusations as well as his lies; and instead seeks out Jesus and His precious word and cherishes the truths He speaks to you, for He tells you,  
“**I have no pleasure in the death of anyone,** Ezekiel 18:32  
but **rather that he should turn from his way and live.** Ezekiel 18:23

The official was driven to Jesus in hope. In hope that Jesus would be merciful and give life.

And he was not disappointed.

At Jesus’ word, he was not afraid of death anymore,  
his anxiety was gone, replaced with peace and confidence,  
any despair had given way to full and certain hope.

...  
Dear Fellow Redeemed,

You are here in desperation, despairing in your own efforts.

You are here driven to Jesus in hope. In hope that He is merciful and will give you life.

And you are not disappointed. There is no need to fear death/illness. “**Oh, Death where is your sting.**”

Anxieties be gone, replaced with peace and confidence.

And in His grace, He gives you a sign, His own body and blood given and shed for you.

And while the natural eyes cannot see it,

the eyes of faith are fixated on it in complete hope and certainty because they are the words of Jesus.

For Jesus says to you, “Go, for you live. *Depart in peace, for your sins are forgiven.*”

And then in joy, sing and pray with your fellow communicants the Nunc Dimittis,

*Lord, now you let your servant depart in peace according to Your word,  
for my eyes have seen your salvation.*

In Jesus’ name. **Amen.**

*Soli Deo Gloria*