The noblemans faith

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[0:00] Now let's turn this evening to that portion of God's word we read, the gospel according to John in chapter 4, and the closing section of the chapter.

And I don't want to pick any particular verses or texts, but I want to just look with you at this story, the history of the man, the incident portrayed here.
It brings us what we might call the rise and progress of our living faith.
The rise and progress of faith in the soul. Now that should be something of interest to every one of us because the Bible says very explicitly that without faith it is impossible to please God.
And the other side of that truth is this, that by faith the greatest of sinners can know the salvation of God in Christ.
[1:17] The way of salvation in its very essence is a way of faith. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved.

So the rise and progress, the stirring into life and the blossoming out of our real faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is a topic that touches every one of us and touches us in a very important way.
The person in question is a noble man. And the Bible tells us that not many mighty and not many noble men are called.
But it doesn't say that not any at all. It says that there are few among the great who shall be saved.
And I would guess that in every age noble men have been scarce in the church of Christ in the sense in which we use noble men anyway.
[2:32] Great men. This man belonged, was part of our royal household. He may well have been, although we cannot be certain. He may have been a man called Chusa, who was a servant of Herod.

If he was, then his wife became a well-known Christian and follower of the Lord Jesus, a woman called Joanna. And if he was Chusa, then we see that even in the household of a man like Herod, a wicked man, God's grace found its trophies and its treasures.
For Christ will have his trophies of grace from all kinds of places. You remember that the last book in the New Testament tells us that in heaven there will be those from every nation, and those of every tribe, and every language, every tongue.
God will have his trophies of grace. Isn't that an encouraging thing for every believer here tonight? That God's purpose is to save man in every nation.
Isn't it a solemnizing thought? For those of you who are not converted yet, perhaps, that there are those who have never yet heard the gospel, perhaps contemporaries of your own, and yet God has a purpose of grace for them, and the gospel will come to them, and they will be brought to Christ, and they will be part of his blood-bought inheritance.
[4:25] And just as the Lord Jesus will have men from every nation, and from every tribe and every tongue, so the Lord Jesus will have men of every rank.

There will be the paupers and the beggars of the streets, perhaps in their multitudes, and there will be the wise men, and the foolish men.
There will be the unlearned and ignorant men, and we praise God, there will be the men who were well-educated and scholarly too.
Very often you hear me having, sadly, you hear me having to say something very biting about so-called biblical scholarship in our day, but we thank God that there will be some of the great biblical scholars, men who have done a great work for Christ, they'll be in heaven too.
And there will be noble men, there will even be kings and queens in heaven. And they'll all be there, the beggars and the paupers and the rich men and the wise men and the foolish men, and the kings and queens too, because they have been washed in the blood of the Lamb, because they have

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trusted in the Savior of sinners.
[5:50] Here is a noble man. Now, let me take your mind back over those Sabbath evenings in which we've been dwelling in the Gospel of John.

This great Gospel. I remind you that at the very outset, John tells us that he is concerned. He is concerned to set before men that which will persuade them and compel them to believe that Jesus is the Christ and that believing they should have life in his name.
That is the main purpose. In John's mind, as he sets out under God to write this great Gospel, let's remind ourselves of that.
This Gospel has an evangelistic purpose. It aims at reaching hearts that have not yet believed and bringing them to faith in the Lord Jesus.
And it aims at confirming the faith of God's people in the absolute deity of Christ. In the beginning, you remember, it opens like a thunder glass.
[7:10] In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. And here is the Word. Sin, at a level that you and I can look into, talking with people who are very like ourselves.

and through the chapters that we've read, we've seen varied lives already touched by and brought to a living faith in the Lord Jesus.
You remember the first chapter? He started gathering his men. He started attaching followers to himself. And I was going to say they were a poor crowd of fellows.
But were they really? They were just ordinary hardy fishermen. There's something very fine about fishermen. Whether they're on the west coast or the east coast. Or whether they're from the Sea of Galilee.
Jesus began with the fishermen. And out of them he chose his own disciples. Is that the kind of rank of society that you find yourself in there, my friend?
[8:25] That's the very first rank that the Lord Jesus touched. The ordinary working man. Then we went on to chapter 3. And you remember the kind of man he touched then?

And brought to himself big self-righteous Pharisee. The hardest kind of man of all. Every Christian that's witnessed to a self-righteous passion.
Every preacher that's had to try and expound the gospel to a self-righteous congregation. They tell you they're the worst kind of people of all to deal with.
Hard nut to crack is the man that says oh yes, yes. But then that's all for sinners. Me, I'm alright. I don't need the kind of gospel you're preaching.
I've never done anything very much wrong in my life. I was at a meeting speaking to a group of people in a home in Bear's Den last night.
[9:28] A group of people who do specific Christian work and they meet once every year. I was talking to them and they were asking some questions after after the talk.

One of the things they were talking about and asking about was how you speak to the person you know is unconverted and yet may be very ill.
Do you tell that person who may be approaching death that in fact according to the Bible they're in a very bad state. one of the people there said do you not think Mr. McMillan that that's a time you know for a softly softly approach.
Do you not think that you should begin by assuming that in fact they are believers. So I said well one would want to be Christian and gentle and tender as possible of course.
and yet one would also have to face the fact that they must know the truth and they must know their loss before they'll ever look for a savior.
[10:54] And we went on to talk about how difficult it is. I spoke from my own experience. When you talk to someone like that who is him? And you you say to them perhaps say are you a Christian are you really trusting the Lord Jesus?

And they'll tell him to you and say of course I'm a Christian I've never done anything any wrong in my life. I've never done anything any harm. If I was a sinner I'd be afraid.
You see you have to start sometimes with abysmal ignorance the person who thinks they have no sin or the passion of a self-righteous. Well the Lord Jesus touched that kind of passion too Nicodemus self-righteous man and then at the very beginning of this chapter there was the woman of Samaria not a very salubrious woman the Lord Jesus touched her life too and she became a missionary of the cross and many others were brought and then the chapter closes and you see

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where he is now fisherman Pharisees poor kind of woman and now here's a noble man all kinds doesn't matter what kind of person you are it should not shut you out from the Lord Jesus praise God for that now let's see how faith wrought or how
God wrought faith in this nobleman we see in him I think first of all this faith turning to Christ out of affliction faith turning to Christ out of affliction and as yet it's just I think faith is a grain of mustard seed but you know mustard's powerful stuff it brought this noble man a long way at least 25 miles to seek for Jesus but he didn't have a very good faith yet as we'll see in a moment but he was driven to Jesus by need by affliction and you notice this it wasn't any sense of personal need it was an awareness of the need of the little boy that he loved one of the commentators I was looking at through the week made this remark
I had never thought of it before he said many many times in the gospels we see a parent a father or a mother come to the Lord Jesus for a child for the sake of a child how true it is he said that a little child shall lead them a need not in their own lives but in the lives of their helpless children and then he went on to say this I had never thought of this either he said not once in the gospels do we read of a child or a son seeking the savior for a parent strange but true the love of a father afflicted this man's heart his little boy was at the point of death and he didn't send any of his servants he could have he would have plenty of servants at his command but there was something in his heart that was bruising him and he had to go himself so he said to seek
[14:31] Jesus and you know none of us like affliction whether it's in our selves or in our loved ones we regard affliction very often as an enemy of the soul and as an enemy of all good and sometimes we hear those who are extremists about faith healing saying that there should be no such thing as illness or affliction in the world but let me say this from the gospels and from the old testament as well I believe that that there are things that perhaps only affliction can do for us health is a great blessing but there are times when sickness and illness and affliction is a far greater benefit and blessing still says wise old bishop ryle in his commentary he says this affliction is one of god's great medicine for the soul that is sick just stop and think of that affliction is one of god's great medicine for the soul that is sick why did bishop ryle say that because he knew that sometimes affliction will do what nothing else will do it will do what the blessings and the benefits of health and strength will not do it will break a man down and show him how weak he really is for he's just a worm of the dust and it will make him think of eternity and of the grave and maybe of death and it will make him go seeking god in reality what a wonderful gospel preacher affliction can be it can convict a man of sin and of righteousness and of justice to come what a preacher affliction was to king monosah do you remember the story from chronicles

I've preached on it before not once but twice I think from this group what a preacher affliction was when he was afflicted down there in Babylon do you remember what we read and when he was in affliction he humbled himself greatly and he sought the lord god of his fathers and often god has to use this gospel preacher this angel of mercy affliction to bring a man or a woman or a boy or a girl to the seventh and make them seek himself and I believe there will be thousands in heaven who will say with David the psalmist as he said there in psalm 119 and verse 71 it was good for me that I was afflicted affliction drove this man to
Jesus and do you see what his faith rested on when he went to Jesus it rested on the reports of others he had heard the gossip mongers they were doing a good job down in Capernaum they were talking about the man who had changed water into wine there at a wedding in Cana along the way and the noble man heard and then the time came the moment came in his life when he suddenly remembered the man who had changed water into wine and worked a miracle and he had heard rumors about him healing people in Jerusalem for Jesus had done many signs in Jerusalem and he went to Jesus because Jesus was the last resort he had tried everything that money could buy but money can't buy everything and in this generation it is a long time for people to learn now money can't buy health and money can't buy one moment of life no matter how much other you have and money cannot buy the blessing of God or the peace of Christ a materialistic age forgets that people work and live today as if money could do everything for them my friend money can do very little for you in the great issues of life and it can do nothing at all for you on the brink of the grave of eternity this man learned that his money was useless to him his faith centered not in his own need but in the need of his son his faith was turning to Christ out of affliction and then
I think we see yet again we see faith trusting Christ with great assertiveness faith took them on to Jesus and when it took them on to Jesus it wouldn't have no for an answer it didn't get the answer it

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looked for immediately he came to Jesus he besought him that he would come down and heal his son verse 47 for he was at the point of death I don't know what he expected but I'm sure he didn't expect this Jesus tells to him and he doesn't seem to be touching the point of the issue at all he says to him except you see signs and wonders you will not believe Jesus was seeing a defect in this man's faith you see faith all faith is not saving faith no faith is not the kind of faith that Jesus is looking for and faith itself is something that saving faith itself is something that comes in degrees and varies in degree
Jesus says you're not really believing and you won't believe except you see signs and wonders he's probably doing many things but he is doing at least this he is testing this man's faith he is taking the little seed the mustard seed of faith that he has and he's putting it into a crucible and then he's setting fire to it and the strange thing about faith is this when you put it in the crucible and you put the blow off to the crucible faith expands it doesn't die out it gets bigger and it gets stronger and that's what happens here because this man begins to plead and he begins to pray and he becomes more earnest than ever the noble man saith unto him verse 49 sir come down stop talking all that theology about signs and wonders and about my faith and what people believe or don't believe come down or the child will die and his faith was being cleared of this a mere desire to see this man work a sign or a miracle
[23:06] Jesus will not answer the faith that looks just for some kind of excitement or some kind of thrill and you know I believe there's a lot of that kind of seeking in the faith of many people they want God to do something that will startle them or that will thrill them or that will be very dramatic preacher was saying to me not very long ago we're living in a day when people yes even church going people people that come to evangelical preaching they're coming by and large to be entertained not to be taught the strong meaty doctrines of God's word that may have been a slight exaggeration I hope it was and yet there's a lot of truth in it if a man's not dramatic if he's not entertaining if he doesn't paint his sermon in bright or lurid colours oh he's deadly dull and boring our minister or his terrible doctrinal and theological we can't make head nor tail on well

Jesus won't have it he's not going to do something merely to entertain Jesus is not an entertainer he's not a circus performer he is the son of God and let's remember that when we deal with him about our own faith we want feelings and we want grand experiences we want to be puffed up Jesus won't have it he brings this man he tests his faith and he brings him to this place where there's the passion of reality may God help us to get that into our religious thinking and our religious experience the passion of reality you see we're dealing with real things you soul is a real thing and the Lord Jesus
Christ is a real person and conversion is a real experience and eternity is real and death is real and sin and last are real and salvation are real they are real entities they are realities and the sooner we get the passion of reality into our faith and our seeking of God then the better God keep us from a mere religion that's there to placate the surface of life life and keep us sailing smoothly along or that we'll look good in the eyes of other people you'd bet they're without a religion at all than a religion of rubbish like that get to grips with the real thing get to grips with God fear trusting Christ asserting itself come down ere the child die this man is pleading for real it's a mother of life and death and you know it's the same as you sure my unconverted friend yes and my
Christian friend it is a mother of life and death eternal issues are at stake and then thirdly let's see this faith taking Christ and Christ's word as its assurance faith taking Christ's word as its assurance what is assurance of faith theological volumes have been written on it but assurance real assurance of faith basis and rest on this not on something you feel or I feel or on something like God says in his word something that Christ assures and promises us of you see where faith took Christ of its word and found assurance here do you verse 50
Jesus sayeth unto him go thy way thy son livid and listen to this now here's faith at a new stage here's a different degree of faith in this man here is an assurance of faith coming into this man's experience and the man believed the word that Jesus spoke there's an assurance of faith and today so many people Christian people are when you talk to them about assurance and ask them about assurance they begin to look in here into their own heart and into their own experience of spiritual things my friend you'll never find assurance of salvation for your soul by looking into your own heart to your own experience you'll find assurance of faith assurance of salvation assurance of your well-being by trusting the word of Christ by believing the word and you see this man really believed how do we know where's the evidence of assurance of faith here it's still in verse 50 come back and

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look for the evidence of assurance where is it he believed the word that Jesus had spoken unto him and he went his way and if you took the sappy sort of evangelical
[29:09] Christians that are going about today this is the reaction they would have in the same situation they would say oh yes Lord I believe but will you really heal him will you really do what I'm asking you to do what I'm in to the Lord Jesus because that would really be a refusal to believe it would be a refusal to be assured you're here tonight and you've been looking for faith and you've been trying to trust and you've been asking the Savior to save you well listen listen to one of the things that Jesus said he says whosoever cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out now you believe that word of Jesus and you can have all the assurance you have the right to all the assurance that God could give to any soul

I don't care whether you feel assured or whether you feel peace or whether you feel joy or whether you dance or whether you're sad or what you feel that will be where your assurance rests your assurance will rest in this that you have believed what Jesus says Jesus says he that believes in me shall never perish if you believe in Jesus you can be assured absolutely assured that that is quite true now supposing supposing someone I come in here I'm converted tonight and they took the Lord Jesus at his word that he'll save to the uttermost anyone that comes unto God by him they came into this church completely unconverted and wondering how to be converted and then they hear a word like that whosoever goes to
God in Christ will be saved and they say well I'll go and I'll trust I'll just trust in the Lord Jesus Christ what could they do they could go out of that church door being absolutely assured that they were saved for time and for eternity of course they could why because they were believing the word of God you say ah but they didn't feel a lot of conviction of sin would it not be better to stay and wait and come back till next and wait till next Sunday night and between now and then they could pray for a whole lot of conviction of sin and let the Lord show them how bad they really are and how much they really need you're beginning to add to the gospel would it not be better to you know not to be too sure of the thing but to go home and pray and say to the Lord well Lord although I trust in you in the church
I'm not very sure would you really come and visit me and give me a wonderful feeling of being saved my friend you're now saying that the gospel is feel saved and you will be saved that's not a gospel at all the gospel is believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you are saved now listen Mr. Nobleman you're taking Jesus and his word and you mustn't do that oh yes says Mr. Nobleman I must do that I can do no other and so says every Christian heart that the Holy Spirit has shined into with the saving power of God this is one of the great things you know that faith has come because you will take the Lord Jesus at his word and you will rest in what he says and it doesn't matter what all the devils in hell will pray you'll believe the Lord Jesus before you believe any of them that's where your assurance is in what God has said not in what you feel or anything like that thy son liveth and the man believed the word that Jesus had spoken unto him and he went his way what a testimony testimony to the
[33:48] Lord Jesus that this man believed his word that's the kind of testimony he has the right to expect of you too faith taking Christ's word as its assurance faith is absolutely satisfied when the Lord Jesus says thy son lives and faith will be absolutely satisfied when it hears the Lord Jesus say thy soul lives and finally this we see faith triumphing in Christ's achievement the faith of this man rejoices not in anything he has done himself not in his going to Christ not in his beseeching Christ not in his pleading with Christ but it rejoices in and triumphs in what Christ achieves let's see how that comes about he set off for home and before he got home he met his servants coming did you notice the first thing his servants said to him did you verse 51 we're at now as he was now going down his servants met him and told him saying lies his son lives he sees his servants and they begin to run to him and before he gets saying one word to them they're shouting to him your son lives and he stops in his trap it's as though he's struck down with a bullet why because these are the very words that had echoed from heaven in his soul they're the very words the Lord

Jesus spoke to him he says where did I hear that before when did I hear that before I heard it yesterday at the seventh house and I heard them from the lips of the man of Galilee thy son living she must have felt his skin going all prickly how did these men know the word that the master had spoken because the word that the master had spoken fitted the reality precisely it wasn't just that the boy began to get better the fever left him he was living there was no long progressive convalescence I son just think of the achievement of Christ and how faith must have rejoiced and

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triumphed in it and you know that's what Christ does it was true they told him things
I son live what a thrilling message came to him what's happening his faith is reaching a higher degree than it's ever been up before he begins to ask about the whole thing he inquired of them the hour when he began to to mend and they said unto him yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left and it was gone the very moment his heart said to him the very moment that Jesus said he lives what a confirmation to his faith that was here was another confirmation his prayer was seen to be answered I don't think there's anything confirms the faith of a believer like real answer to prayer Spurgeon Spurgeon used to get people skeptics coming to him and challenging him about some of the things he said about prayer and about some of the things he said about faith and about Christ too and he would listen to them and he would say I can't argue with you I don't know what you're talking about God answers my prayers this man was the same well of course God answers prayers he's covenant to answer prayers let me ask you my Christian friend when did you last have a prayer answered by God well when did you last ask him for very much remember an old man coming to visit my father very shortly after I was converted came to visit him and he said something like this you know James he said we don't seem to be getting our prayers answered the way we used to be my father said to him no he said and maybe we're not asking the way we used to do maybe that's true maybe we're not asking very much but if we ask much we shall receive much and if we ask little we shall receive little that is a clear testimony of scripture and as the man asks every detail confirms his faith assurance is strengthened becomes stronger and faith reaches a new perfection do you see this verse 53 we're at now so the father knew that it was at the same hour in which Jesus said unto him thy son liveth and himself did what himself believed you say he had been believing all along ah yes but he's believing now as he had never believed before have you ever come across that faith in your experience when God brings you to something new and you begin to believe as you had never believed before that's what happened to this man he was believing now as he had never believed before and his belief was touching his whole household here's this wonderful new testament word his whole house his whole family what a lot this man got from the Lord Jesus he went just to get a wee boy made better he discovered healing for his own soul and he discovered healing for his wife maybe she was
[40:57] Joanna if she was she became a Christian who stood out even among new testament Christians what a lot this man's prayer one from Jesus perhaps the little boy came running to meet him too and said oh daddy the Jesus you went to he made me better other little boys and girls here tonight Jesus can make you better too I'm sure that this little boy too became a believer in Jesus and maybe there was a bigger brother and he became a believer too and maybe there was even a wee sister and she became a believer and some of the servants became believers a whole household brought into a new experience of God's grace and mercy and love and of every one of them the blessing came from the one who can say he lives may he say over your soul and over mine tonight he she liveth and then like himself will be alive in the power of an endless life and the universe it can anything it was ■■■ and he there so

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