

Chapter 15

GO THY WAY. THY SON LIVETH

John 4. v. 45 - 54

When we are happy and prospering in the world, then we feel no need of God. No, we sing and play, eat and drink, rough and tumble and there is nothing that troubles us. Then we find life in this world not at all bad. On the contrary, we find it very enjoyable. Do we then think about God, who gives us everything? ... are we thankful to the Lord for all His blessings? ... No alas, we forget that. Things are as they should be, surely? We think that we have a right to these things.

O yes we do kneel down at night, before we go to sleep. We do say our prayers, but we do that because it is the proper thing to do. We are used to doing this. We generally gabble through our prayers quickly without a thought. When, a little later we lie in bed, we sometimes cannot remember whether we have prayed or not. Is this not true? ... Sad to say, it is often so.

But we have no felt need of the Lord. Not a bit of it! We are quite satisfied with our little life, full of pleasures.

But it is quite another matter when we get into trouble. Let us only become very ill. Just let a heavy thunderstorm rage in the summer. Yes, then things are different. Then we pray frequently. Then the Lord must help us or protect us from death. Oh, then we think "The more we pray, the quicker the Lord will answer us."

And when the Lord hears us, and we are helped? ... Well, then again we put the Lord on one side. We have, alas, mostly an

EMERGENCY GOD! Dare you say that it is not true? ... Are there some among you with whom it is otherwise?

I fear that most will have to answer, "Yes, it is true." Such is our evil heart, such is our ingratitude. We live by nature without God in the world. Is it not terrible? Oh, what a nerve we have.

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After the death of Herod, the murderer of the children in Bethlehem, his kingdom was divided into four parts. At first one of his sons ruled over Judea, but in the days when Jesus walked on this earth, the governor PONTIUS PILATE controlled Judea in the name of the emperor. Another of his sons ruled over Galilee. His name was also Herod. Herod, the child-murderer had been a wicked king, but his son Herod, who now reigns, is also a wicked king. He himself was not worried about God, and neither did his servants, his nobleman, care about God.

No, so long as they had fun and pleasure in life, so long as they could make merry in the royal palace, then all was well. The more celebrations there were, the happier they became.

In the city of Capernaum, which lay on the bank of the lake of Gennesaret, there lived such a nobleman. He was married and had apparently one child, a boy, of whom he was extremely fond.

In Capernaum there was a lot of talk

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about the new Prophet, this Jesus of Nazareth. Those who had gone to the Passover had returned from Jerusalem and had told with elation what had happened in Jerusalem. They had told how Jesus had driven out the buyers and sellers from the temple, and how He had overturned the tables of the moneychangers. They had also related the other wonders and signs.

Most likely this royal nobleman has also heard tell of it, but what did this new Prophet matter to him? ... Nothing. He has no need of Him, and doesn't want anything to do with Him. Perhaps he has talked with others mockingly about it. This nobleman was happy and contented. When he came home from work his wife cared for him, and his little boy ran playfully to meet him.

To thank the Lord for his happiness and prosperity? ... The nobleman didn't think about that, such a thing did not come into his thoughts.

Can you see now that the royal nobleman of Capernaum was just the same as we ? ... He too, had no need of the Lord. He could manage quite well without God.

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On a certain day, when he comes home from his daily work, his wife tells him that their child is ill. The nobleman goes to him at once.

The little fellow lies in bed with a high fever.

Perhaps the nobleman thought that it would soon improve. Yes, once his boy had had a good sleep he would get better. Of course! He must have been playing a bit wildly, and has got a chill.

But the child does not improve. On the

contrary, he gets a lot worse. The fever increases. The child turns his little head restlessly on the pillow. His breathing becomes quick and agitated. Sometimes the little fellow groans softly. Then again he waves his little hands about wildly and talks confusedly. He is delirious.

The father and the mother are worried. Very likely they called in the best and most learned doctors. But nothing helps.

Silently, with a white face, the father sits by the bed of his dangerously ill child. The mother weeps. Oh, their hearts shrink with fright and grief at the thought that their child could die. No, no, not that, then their all would be gone. They cannot, they will not lose him. No, no! If only they could remove that fearful destroying fever.

Fun and pleasure? ... Making merry? ... The nobleman has no thought of that. He could cry with anxiety and trouble. Is there nothing more that can be done? Can nobody help that little boy? ... Must they just sit back and wait, till death comes? Then he hears, that the new Prophet from Nazareth, Jesus, has returned from Judea and is again in Galilee. He is in Cana.

Cana lay about 20 miles away from Capernaum. That is quite a distance.

Suddenly the grieving father thinks: "Would He not be able to make my child better? Oh, if only that could be true." Jesus has already done so many wonders. Doubtless he has heard how Jesus, a short while ago, had turned the water into wine at a marriage feast in that same Cana. Oh, at first he had not given it much thought. Perhaps he had then laughed about it, and had said that it wasn't true. Be that as it may, he had never sought out the Prophet.

But now, things are different. Now he

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laughs no more. No, the idea becomes more and more certain in his mind that Jesus can still save his child from death. If there is anyone left who can help his child, then it is He. He alone.

Suddenly he rises resolutely. Do you know what he will do? He will go to Him. He will ask it of Him. What people will say about it matters not to him at this moment. If only his child gets better again. A few weeks back he wouldn't have done that. No, not for a hundred pounds. But now he is in dire need, now that his only boy is dying, now indeed he will do it. Yes, he would do anything, if only he can save his child.

Very early in the morning, he leaves home. He casts just one more glance at his dying dear one, who turns and tosses restlessly. Tears well up in his eyes. Then he turns away and leaves home in haste. Will he see his child alive again?... He doesn't know.

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The Lord Jesus remained with the Samaritans for two days. Then He travelled on to Galilee and came to Cana.

The news spreads like wildfire from mouth to mouth. "Jesus is here again."

Many go to look for Him. They have not yet forgotten the first miracle and now they hurry to Him, out of curiosity. Who knows, perhaps He will perform another miracle. They hope so anyway. Before long then the Lord is surrounded by a multitude of people.

It is one o'clock in the afternoon. Suddenly a man approaches in haste. He forces his way quickly through the people. It is the royal nobleman from Capernaum, who left his home so early this morning. He has walked for hour

after hour. Moreover the road from Capernaum ran uphill, for Capernaum lay in a plain and Cana was on a mountain range. So the walk had been doubly difficult.

It is no wonder then that this man arrives at last in Cana at one o'clock in the afternoon, flushed with the heat and from exhaustion. Yet he himself feels no tiredness. Anxiety for his child has driven him forward; the same anxiety has given him strength. His thoughts were continually at home. How would it end? ... Was the lad still alive? ... He doesn't know.

Look, there he stands in front of the Lord Jesus. He implores Jesus to come with him to his dwelling and heal his dying boy from the deadly sickness. In fearful tension he waits for the answer. Will Jesus do it?

The Lord sees those anxious, questioning eyes; He knows what is going on in the heart of that father. He knows too, that the nobleman has come to Him only out of necessity. Will He do it? ...

Listen! The Saviour speaks: "Except ye see the signs and wonders, ye will not believe." It is just as though the Lord says: "Yes, you come to me now, because your child is ill, for Me to help you. But you do not believe My words, no, I must do signs and wonders." So He gently reproves the nobleman, because he had not come to Jesus for the everlasting blessing, for the forgiveness from sin and guilt, but for an earthly blessing. The nobleman does not come to Jesus to receive a new heart, to live thence forward to God's honour, but to obtain the healing of his child.

Oh, look at the nobleman standing there. What the Lord says is true. Jesus does not in fact answer directly the urgent plea of the anxious father. What will the father do now? Go away

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sadly and think: "He refuses, He will not do it?" Does he get angry because Jesus does not go with him at once?

No, he stays where he is and repeats his question: "Sir, come down ere my child die." The nobleman cannot go away, for this is the only hope of saving his child from death. If Jesus does not come then the lad will die.

It has become breathlessly quiet. All wait anxiously to see how this will end, wait to see if the Lord will go with him.

The road to Capernaum is long, though it is downhill, for the nobleman says "Come down". Will the Lord send him away?

No, His heart is full of pity. Yet He does not leave for Capernaum, for that is not necessary. He, the King of kings, has power to heal even at a great distance.

"Go thy way; thy son liveth."

Yes, yes, Jesus can certainly say that, but is it indeed true? ... How is the nobleman to know that he is not being deceived? Does he doubt? Does he hesitate to obey that command? Does he ask if the Lord will come notwithstanding? Does he keep persisting?

No, just read what it says, in God's word: "And the man believed the word that Jesus had spoken unto him, and he went his way."

The nobleman had not expected this answer. He had thought that Jesus would go down with him to Capernaum. And now this? ... But as Jesus pronounces those words there comes into his heart a firm belief that the new Prophet is speaking the truth. Jesus, Himself, gives that faith in his heart. The agonising fear falls away from him, and a blessed calm fills his soul. He feels and believes it: The danger is over, he will see his child again, alive; alive and healthy.

Calmly he turns round and makes his way back to Capernaum. No, he does not rush off at a great pace to see if it is indeed true. On the contrary, he knows, that it is true. Why then should he still make haste? ... That is no longer necessary.

He could have covered the return journey in a shorter time than when he came, since it was a downhill road. But it is the next day when he approaches Capernaum.

His servants walk out to meet him. They approach their master with happy, cheerful faces. As soon as they are near enough they cry: "Thy son liveth."

Oh, the nobleman knew that already, the Prophet from Nazareth had informed him of that the day before. He does ask them "When he began to mend?" He wants to know at about what time the improvement had come.

Instantly the answer comes: "Yesterday, at the seventh hour the fever left him". Do you hear that? They even know the precise time. At the seventh hour, that was one o'clock in the afternoon. You still remember that the Jews calculate their times differently from us? I have mentioned this before haven't I?

The nobleman is moved, for that was the precise time when Jesus said to him "Go thy way, thy son liveth."

Look, there he draws near his home. The door flies open and his wife stands before him beaming with joy.

"Husband, our child is saved. Our boy is better."

He goes to his son. Oh, yes, he can see it! The little fellow looks at him with clear eyes, perhaps puts his little arms round his neck, for he was healed, wasn't he? The Lord Jesus works no



*The royal nobleman meets his servants*

half measures. When the Saviour does something, He does it well. Remember the wine in Cana. And here too!

That day joy and happiness reigns in the home of the royal nobleman. Quite certainly he related with deep emotion what happened the previous day. How he had come to Cana, what Jesus had said to him and how he had gone away in the sure belief that his child would survive.

They all listened to him breathlessly. His wife too has much to relate. How she sat crying by the bed of her loved one: how she had been wondering anxiously whether the Prophet would come. But then she relates also that suddenly there came a change. The irregular breathing became calm. The groaning and delirious moaning stopped all of a sudden. The feverish colour disappeared. The lad's dull, misty eyes had become clear. Most likely the child had called

"Mother, I am better."

There the happy parents sit together. Deep, holy reverence fills their hearts as they think of that great Prophet, yes, more than that, for we read in the Bible that: "himself believed and his whole house."

They believed, that Jesus of Nazareth was the Son of God, the long-awaited Messiah. He had come for a temporal blessing, he obtained with his family the eternal blessing too. You can be jealous of that family. Are you?

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What a lovely story, isn't it? The stories in God's word are all beautiful. But that same Jesus still lives. True, His body is no longer on the earth but in heaven, and one day He will come again in the clouds of heaven.

Oh, boys and girls, are you in difficulties?

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Have you sorrow, anxiety or pain? ... He is mighty to save you from them. Go then to Him with all your troubles. Plead with Him for salvation, for a solution. Do as the nobleman did - persist! Better to pray a thousand times, without result than to pray one time too few. And remember this too- you have no right to any blessing, neither can you earn anything by prayer, but in answer to prayer, the Lord will sometimes help wonderfully - through grace.