



Without Honor

Matthew 13:53-58

- 1. They took offence at Jesus (verse 57a).**
- 2. They dishonored Jesus (verse 57b).**
- 3. They didn't believe in Jesus (verse 58).**

One of the things that I have come to appreciate about the book of Matthew is how Matthew changes his style from section to section. Though we have been in the gospel of Matthew for two years, we haven't been saying the same thing again and again and again during this entire time. There has been some variety in the process. Though we have been looking at one book, with one unifying theme, it is as if we have had short sections that explain things a bit differently.

We have several chapters of narrative (or, story) about Jesus. Then, we have several chapters of didactic teaching by Jesus. Then, we have some chapters of narrative about Jesus. Then, we are back to Jesus teaching again. This is the pattern throughout the entire book of Matthew.

For instance, in chapters 1-4, we have a section of narrative, which begins with the birth of Jesus and continues on through the beginning of the ministry of Jesus. Then, in chapters 5-7, we have the Sermon on the Mount, in which Jesus teaches about perfect righteousness. In chapters 8 and 9, we are back to narrative again. We find Jesus roaming around the villages, healing many people. In chapter 10, we return to read of Jesus instructing His disciples. In chapters 11 and 12, we are back in a more narrative section. Jesus was performing miracles, but being rejected by many. In chapter 13, we have been in a teaching environment again, as He teaches the parables.

Though we have been two years at Matthew, the style has changed a bit, which has helped us along the way, so that we haven't been caught in a rut. It is almost as if we have started afresh with a new section of Matthew every few months. But these sections haven't been disjointed. They have all focused their attention upon Jesus Christ. Particularly, they have focused their attention upon Jesus Christ as the King.

In chapter 1, Jesus was born as a king. In chapter 2, Jesus was worshiped as a king. In chapter 3, John the Baptist prepared the way for the king. In chapter 4, Jesus defeated Satan's temptations. In chapters 5-7, Jesus taught about His kingdom. In chapter 8-9, Jesus demonstrated His authority as a king. In chapter 10, Jesus sent His disciples to proclaim the nearness of His kingdom. In chapters 11-12, we see the kingdom of Jesus face opposition. In chapter 13, Jesus again taught about the nature of the kingdom.

Today, we encounter another transition. Matthew will begin to give us another narrative section in the life of Christ. This will take place for another four chapters (through the end of chapter 17). These chapters are action packed. We will see Jesus doing some miraculous things: feeding thousands of people (Matt. 14:13-21; 15:32-39), walking on water (Matt. 14:22-33), being transfigured before the disciples (Matt. 17:1-13), casting a demon out of a boy (Matt. 17:14-21), and pulling money from the mouth of a fish (Matt. 17:24-27). We will also see Jesus exposing the evil of the Pharisees (Matt. 15:1-14; 16:1-12), and beginning to reveal His plan to die at the hands of the religious leaders (Matt. 16:13-23; 17:22-23). In all of it, we will deal face to face with Jesus as He really was.

We come now to the end of chapter 13. From verses 53-58, we will see Jesus returning to His hometown,

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53. And it came about that when Jesus had finished these parables, He departed from there.
54 And coming to His home town He began teaching them in their synagogue, so that they became astonished, and said, "Where did this man get this wisdom, and these miraculous powers?"
55 "Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not His mother called Mary, and His brothers, James and Joseph and Simon and Judas?"
56 "And His sisters, are they not all with us? Where then did this man get all these things?"
57 And they took offense at Him. But Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not without honor except in his home town, and in his own household."
58 And He did not do many miracles there because of their unbelief.

Verse 53 sets the context for us. Jesus had just finished teaching the parables as found in the major portion of chapter 13. These were taught in Galilee, by the sea (according to verse 1). Now, Jesus and his disciples leave. "He departed from there." Verse 54 tells us that he came "to His home town." Some translations read, "into his home country" (KJV, MKJV, NKJV). The idea is the same. Jesus came back into the region in which He grew up. He came back into the town of Nazareth, where He spent His childhood years. Matthew 2:23, says that Jesus "resided in a city called Nazareth." Luke 4:16 says that Nazareth was where Jesus "had been brought up."

Verse 54 continues to describe what it was that Jesus did when He came back home. "He was teaching them in their synagogue." Jesus

would have been very familiar with this place. This was the place where the religious services were held, where the worship took place. It was the center of all cultural life. As a child, Jesus would have been brought to this synagogue every week of His life to join in the worship of God with the religious community that lived there. But when Jesus was in the synagogue this time, it was as a leader, rather than as a participant.

His teaching was giving those in Nazareth reason to marvel. Verse 54 said, that "they became astonished." This isn't anything new to Jesus. He often astonished the crowds by His teaching. We have seen this in Matthew. When Jesus finished preaching the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew tells us that "the multitudes were amazed at His teaching; for He was teaching them as one having authority, and not as their scribes" (Matt. 7:28-29). Even as a young child at the age of twelve years old, Jesus astonished the religious leaders with His understanding of the law. Jesus was "sitting in the midst of the teachers [in the temple], both listening to them, and asking questions. And all who heard Him were amazed at His understanding and His answers" (Luke 2:46-47). They began to express their astonishment in verse 54 by asking a bunch of questions, "Where did this man get this wisdom, and these miraculous powers?" For thirty years, Jesus maintained a fairly low profile in the community. Justin Martyr (about 150 A.D.) tells us that before His ministry, Jesus made plows and yokes for farmers (Dialogue 88.8). He looked like a fairly ordinary laborer in this fairly ordinary town.

But, when He launched His ministry, His preaching gifts and His miraculous abilities became known to all. There was no doubt now of Jesus wisdom or of His miracle working power. The question was, "Where did it come from?" As those in Nazareth had known Jesus, He had appeared to them as an ordinary man. This is what the townspeople were saying in verses 55 and 56: "Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not His mother called Mary, and His brothers, James and Joseph and Simon and Judas? And His sisters, are they not all with us? Where then did this man get all these things?"

They knew that His father was Joseph, who built buildings for those in the city. They knew that His mother was Mary, who was known for her godliness. They knew His brothers very well. They identified them by name. Certainly they watched them grow up and become young men. Perhaps they too became carpenters in Nazareth, having learned the trade from their father. They knew His sisters as well. We don't have their names recorded, but I believe that they could have named them. They knew that Jesus had received no special, religious education. They knew that Jesus wasn't part of some royal family. He was a common laborer like themselves. But, now they were astonished at the preaching and healing abilities of Jesus.

Sadly, their astonishment didn't culminate in worship and acceptance of Jesus as the Messiah, as it ought to have done. Rather, it culminated in (1) taking offense at Him and (2) dishonoring Him and (3) not believing in Him. All of these questions posed in verses 55 and 56 weren't asked to genuinely seek answers. Rather, they were attempting to discredit Jesus. "He's no super-hero. He's just an ordinary guy like you and me. We know his father and his mother and his brothers and sisters. What right does he have to come and preach to us like he does."

This morning, I want for us to look in depth at the three to Jesus' hometown ministry. Every single one of them is bad. Nazareth is a negative example for us. The Bible often teaches us by negative example. Consider Solomon's teaching to his son: "I passed by the field of the sluggard, And by the vineyard of the man lacking sense; And behold, it was completely overgrown with thistles, Its surface was covered with nettles, And its stone wall was broken down. When I saw, I reflected upon it; I looked, and received instruction. A little sleep, a little slumber, A little folding of the hands to rest, then your poverty will come as a robber, And your want like an armed man" (Prov. 24:30-34). Solomon was instructing his son to look at the sluggard and to see the results of his laziness: poverty. Then, go and do the opposite. For us this morning, Nazareth is a negative example. My goal this morning is to demonstrate how Nazareth responded poorly to Jesus and exhort you to do the opposite.

These responses are seen in the last two verses in chapter 13. The first is that ...
1. They took offence at Jesus (verse 57a).

In verse 57, we read that "they took offense at Him." Jesus was their stumbling block. In the margin of your New American Standard, it reads, they "were being made to stumble." Jesus was tripping them up. They viewed Jesus as a trouble maker. They viewed Jesus as being out of His mind. Rather than accepting Jesus as a hometown hero, they rejected Him as one who ought to be shunned.

Now, Matthew doesn't tell us exactly why the people took offense at Jesus. But Luke gives us some insight into what might have happened. Turn in your Bibles to Luke 4. Luke records for us what took place when Jesus came to Nazareth to speak in the synagogue there. Luke was probably referring to an earlier occasion in the life of Jesus. Luke puts this visit of Jesus to Nazareth just following the temptation of Christ, which was described in verses 1-13.

Let's begin reading with verses 14 and 15: "And Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit; and news about Him spread through all the surrounding district. And He began teaching in their synagogues and was praised by all." Jesus was viewed as the rising religious figure who came onto the scene.

In verse 16, we see Jesus coming home. "And He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up; and as was His custom, He entered the synagogue on the Sabbath, and stood up to read." It was the customs of the synagogues of the day to invite visiting rabbis to come and teach. Perhaps you remember in Pisidian Antioch, when Paul had come there on his missionary journey, he was asked, "if you have any word of exhortation for the people, say it" (Acts 13:15). This probably took place with Jesus. Jesus was recognized as a religious teacher, so He was invited to teach.

Verse 17 continues, "And the book of the prophet Isaiah was handed to Him. And He opened the scroll, and found the place where it was written, 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor. He has sent Me to proclaim release to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free those who are downtrodden, to proclaim the favorable year of the Lord.' And He closed the book, and gave it back to the attendant, and sat down; and the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed upon Him."

This was typical of synagogue worship. When the time came for the sermon to be preached, the rabbi would stand up and announce the portion of Scripture from which he would like to read and tell the attendant (verse 17). This attendant (or minister) would walk over to a large wooden structure, called the ark. In the ark were a bunch of scrolls, which contained the Hebrew Scriptures. (This is similar to the reserved book shelf behind the counter at a library). So, the attendant would pull out the scroll that was requested and hand it to the rabbi. When the rabbi was finished reading it, he would hand the scroll back to this attendant, who would place the scroll back in the ark. This is surely what Jesus did. When He had finished reading, he sat down, prepared to teach. When they taught back then, they didn't stand to teach. They sat.

Up to this point, it all was pretty normal. A typical synagogue service. In fact, Jesus had even chosen to read from a favorite, well-known passage of the Jewish people. Jesus had chosen to read from the first few verses of Isaiah 61. It was a passage filled with hope for them. It described the time when their deliverer would come and rescue them. It was the John 3:16 passage of the day. It focussed upon the saving plan of God, when God would come and deliver them. The Jews knew this passage very well. For 700 years the Jews had read these verses. For 700 years the Jews had studied these verses. For 700 years the Jews had meditated upon these verses. For 700 years the Jews had preached from these verses. Isaiah 61 anticipates the coming of the Messiah. The Spirit of the Lord will be upon the Messiah to do miraculous things. Those in bondage will be set free. Those who are blind will be see. Those who are cast down will be freed. His message will come as good news to the poor. His coming would be a demonstration of the favor of the Lord.

It was a typical Sabbath. His text was typical. His manner of reading was typical. But, His exposition of the text was far from typical. In verse 21, Jesus says, "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." Jesus said, "I am the Messiah anticipated by Isaiah!" He certainly continued on to explain how He was healing the multitudes, giving sight to the blind, and preaching the gospel to the poor.

Needless to say, this caused a stir in the synagogue. At first, the people were "speaking well of Him." Verse 22 says that they people were "wondering at the gracious words which were falling from his lips; and they were saying, 'Is this not Joseph's son?'" As Jesus was preaching, they were saying, "Could this Jesus be the Messiah?" Luke tells us that while Jesus was preaching, the people were whispering to each other in amazement over the things that Jesus was saying. Yet, some were certainly skeptical. Beginning in verse 23, Jesus was confronting those who didn't believe. From the words of Jesus, we can detect that they were wanting Jesus to perform a sign for them in Nazareth, just as he had done in other cities. But, Jesus refused, pointing to how few miracles were done in the times of Elijah. He said, ...

"No doubt you will quote this proverb to Me, 'Physician, heal yourself! Whatever we heard was done at Capernaum, do here in your home town as well.' Truly I say to you, no prophet is welcome in his home town. But I say to you in truth, there were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the sky was shut up for three years and six months, when a great famine came over all the land; and yet Elijah was sent to none of them, but only to Zarephath, in the land of Sidon, to a woman who was a widow. And there were many lepers in Israel in the time of Elisha the prophet; and none of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian" (Luke 4:23-27).

Notice how they responded. They took offense at Jesus. "And all in the synagogue were filled with rage as they heard these things; and they rose up and cast Him out of the city, and led Him to the brow of the hill on which their city had been built, in order to throw Him down the cliff" (Luke 4:28, 29). This wasn't simply an escort out of town; this was an assassination attempt. Those in Nazareth tried to kill Jesus. The reason why they took Jesus to the edge of a cliff is because that is how they stoned people. They first threw them off of a cliff, to stun them. Perhaps in the fall down the cliff the man would lose his breath for a moment. Perhaps he would break his leg and couldn't run off. Perhaps he would hit his head and be knocked unconscious. Once he was stunned, the town could pelt him with stones that everyone threw from the top of the cliff. Stones thrown from the top of the cliff would pick up speed and do much damage if they hit someone.

They tried to kill him because of His claim that He was the Messiah. But, the Jews in Nazareth had known Jesus as a boy. Certainly He couldn't be the Messiah! They took offense at Jesus and stumbled over Him. The only reason why Jesus escaped such a fate is because of His supernatural ability to escape. I believe that verse 30 is a miracle. "passing through their midst, He went His way." There were other occasions in the life of Jesus when He did a similar thing. In John 10, they were attempting to stone Him (John 10:31), but the Bible says, "He eluded their grasp," because His hour had not yet come.

Jesus preaches His first sermon in His hometown and they try to kill Him. They hated what He was saying. In Matthew 13, we read of Jesus returning again to Nazareth for a second opportunity to receive Him. Those in Nazareth still refused to believe Him. John gave testimony of this, "He came into His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him" (John 1:11). Rather than believing in Him, they stumbled over Him.

Jesus said in Matthew 11:6, "Blessed is he who keeps from stumbling over Me." (You might easily translate this, "Blessed is he who doesn't take offence of Me.") Those in Nazareth lost any blessing that they may have obtained when they stumbled over Jesus. In fact, they were cursed instead. It is no different today. If you stumble over Jesus today, you will be cursed. If you don't stumble over Jesus, your life will be blessed. Is Jesus a stumbling block for you? Or, is Jesus your treasure?

I'm not talking about the Jesus in your mind. Many have this view of Jesus as a simple, passive, gentle guy, who wouldn't hurt a flea. Certainly Jesus was gentle. He was gentle to those who confessed their sins and followed Him. But, to those who resisted Him, He was anything but gentle. Jesus spoke some very difficult words to the religious leaders of the day. When I ask you if you stumble over Jesus, I'm talking about the actual Jesus, who could preach a sermon and so stir the people to hatred against Him that they wanted to kill Him. Is He your treasure? Have you submitted your all to Him?

Yesterday in Men's Equippers, we caught a glimpse of who Jesus is. We spent our time in Psalm 2. It begins by declaring that the nations are in an uproar, devising schemes against the LORD and against His Messiah (verses 1-2). But God simply laughs at their attempts to dethrone His messiah. God says, "as for Me, I have installed My King upon Zion, My holy mountain" (verse 6). He is the one who is installed to seize the nations and the ends of the earth as His own possession. He will "break them with a rod of iron and ... shatter them like earthenware" (Ps. 2:8-9). At the end of the Psalm, we are told to "worship the LORD with reverence" (verse 11). We are told to "Do homage

to the Son" (verse 12). The idea is that of humbling yourself and kissing the feet of this great King!

This is Jesus. He is the coming, ruling, reigning Messiah, who demands our submission to His rule and His reign. There are many today who take offense at such a Jesus, who demands our submission. Many today say that Jesus simply wants for us to "believe" in Him. He doesn't require any submission to Him as a reigning King. Sure, Jesus wants for us to submit to Him, but it isn't required in any sense for our salvation. I have a difficulty reconciling that thought with Psalm 2:12, "Do homage to the Son, lest He become angry, and you perish in the way." Those who only require "belief in Jesus" with no regard to a humble, submitted, repentant life (that flows from a belief in Jesus), are stumbling over the true Jesus. They aren't accepting Jesus on His terms.

If you stumble over Him, you will be crushed, like earthenware (Psalm 2:9). But if you submit to Him, you will be blessed. The very last phrase of the Psalm says it this way, "How blessed are all who take refuge in Him!" (Psalm 2:12). This is the message of the gospel. Rather than opposing Jesus, you take refuge in Jesus. Rather than being offended at Jesus, you confess that what He says is true. Yet, those in Nazareth refused to submit to Jesus and stumbled over Him.

Let's look at a second response of those in Nazareth.

2. They dishonored Jesus (verse 57b).

This comes in the last part of verse 57 when Jesus speaks to them, "A prophet is not without honor except in his home town, and in his own household." Jesus quotes a common proverb of the day. It is generally true that a prophet of God is received with honor and recognized to be a man of God. However, when a prophet comes home to those who know him well, he is not received. Certainly, this wasn't an absolute statement. There were many prophets who faced great ridicule outside of their hometown. There were also prophets who had honor at home. But the simple truth is that when you look at a man of God from afar, he is often respected. However, when you mix with him on a daily basis, he becomes nothing special anymore. You begin to realize that he has faults like anybody else. You begin to realize that everything that proceeds from his mouth isn't always profound and life changing.

We hear these pastors on the radio who never stumble over the words, preaching outstanding messages day after day after day. Everything that comes from their mouth seems steeped in wisdom. We can lift them up and elevate them and think that they are the greatest men to walk the planet since Jesus. We hold them much higher regard than do those who work with them and live with them, who see their weaknesses and are reminded that they are mere human beings like all of us.

I think about my own family in this regard. You see me different than my family sees me. You might see me up here on Sunday mornings, and throughout the week. You might be over to be with our families. You certainly have seen some of my weaknesses. But, you have never seen my weaknesses like my family has seen them. I'm not trying to hide them from you. (If anything, I want to be very real and fallible with all of you). It's simply that my family knew me when I was in diapers. They knew me when I was a foolish child, and when I was an absent minded college student. And when my sisters think of "Steve Brandon, pastor of Rock Valley Bible Church," they think of "my little brother, pastor of what?" I am their little brother and will always be their little brother.

From time to time as our family is together, my sisters like to remind my entire family just how little I used to be. They like to tell of the time in which I was going into kindergarten. I still wasn't out of diapers yet. They used to threaten me that I would need to bring a diaper in my lunch pail to school. They used to threaten me that I would need to ask the principal to change my diaper every day.

They like to remind the entire family of all of the silly things that I said as a child. For instance, when I was very young, my father used to sit me on his lap to watch the Sunday afternoon football games. As I watched, I was intrigued by the slow motion replays that they used to show between plays. I asked my father, "Dad, I know how they do slow motion on the ground, but how do they do it in the air?" (I used to think that the players re-enacted each play for "slow motion.")

On another occasion, our family was vacationing in Mexico. In Mexico, you have to deal with the language barrier. I remember my parents learning a few Mexican phrases that they would use to speak with the people, "Adios," "Gracias," "por favor." I saw how difficult it was for them to learn even a little Spanish. Now, in the place where we stayed, there was a little Mexican boy, who was younger than I was. He was probably three or four years old. His name was Filipe. I noticed that he spoke Spanish very well. I was shocked that such a little boy could speak Spanish. So, I made the comment, "Filipe is too young to speak Spanish."

On another occasion, I remember our family being on vacation someplace. We had driven up to some kind of store to get some supplies. While we were there, I was left in the car with my little brother, "Stuie." I was probably 6 years old. He was probably 2 years old. The car had been parked on an incline. My brother was playing with the steering wheel. Somehow, he had managed to get the car out of park and shift it into neutral. Since we were parked on an incline, the car began to roll backwards. I remember my father seeing what was happening and running after the car as it was rolling backwards down the hill, completely helpless. Luckily, we didn't hit anything. My comment? "Stuie doesn't drive very well." These stories (and believe me, there are more) are often told when our family gets together.

My sisters remember me as an absent minded college student, more interested in his physics and mathematics than he is about the details of life. Whenever I forget something someplace, or forget to do something that I promised, they tend to roll their eyes as if they expect it to happen. Now, I must admit that I have gotten much better in some of these things. You can ask Yvonne about it. Yet, I think about this past week. Many of you know that I spent the week in California. But, on the way out because of the snowstorm, I couldn't get to Los Angeles. The best that the airlines could do is get me to Phoenix. So, I spent a day in Phoenix with my parents before arriving in Los Angeles. Sure enough, when leaving Phoenix, I left my shaving kit that contained all of my toiletries in Phoenix. I had to get some new toothpaste, toothbrush, shampoo, soap, razors, everything. If my sisters heard this story, they would roll their eyes and say, "There's our little brother."

This is the truth of the Proverb that Jesus refers to in verse 57, "A prophet is not without honor except in his home town, and in his own household." While Jesus was in Nazareth, He received no honor. Of course, Jesus wasn't dishonored due to His sin, like others. (For, in fact, he was sinless). He was dishonored because He was nothing special in their sight. Rather than being accepted as a hometown hero, He was

dishonored as One whom they didn't want to claim as their own. By dishonoring Jesus, they dishonored God and demonstrated themselves to be unworthy of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Consider the stinging words of the LORD, "those who honor Me I will honor, and those who despise Me will be lightly esteemed" (1 Sam. 2:30). Those in Nazareth dishonored the Lord, Jesus Christ. As a result, they were lightly esteemed in God's sight. The same is true today. If you honor Jesus, God will honor you. If you despise Jesus, God will despise you. Is your life honoring to Jesus?

This afternoon, we are hosting an open house for Phil Auten, who turned 90 this week. It's from 2-4 this afternoon. I would encourage you to come, to greet Phil and celebrate with him the life that God has given to him. We are going to honor him. When honoring somebody, you go to extraordinary efforts to please them. I think about everything that has taken place to make this day happen. Judy has done a bunch of work creating invitations and inviting the family as well as the church to the party. Yvonne has put forth a great effort to clean our house in preparation for a crowd of people coming over. I know that several of you have put together some food for the occasion: cookies, cake and punch. I trust that many of you will come to honor Phil.

Phil turned 90 on Thursday. Our family came over to his house on Thursday afternoon. We gave him a small present and sang happy birthday to him. Judy fixed his favorite food for him to enjoy on Thursday evening. I was told that they even had an apple pie, upon his request. This is what you do when you honor somebody.

In your life, do you honor Jesus Christ? Do you make special efforts to please Him? Is your life ordered in such a way that when people are with you, it is like you are throwing an open house in honor of Jesus? Is Jesus the invited guest in every conversation that you have? Is Jesus invited to join you in every activity and in every television show that you watch?

If you honor Jesus, God will honor you. If you despise Jesus, God will despise you. Much is at stake in your attitude and heart toward Jesus Christ.

Let's focus our attention upon a third poor response of those in Nazareth.
3. They didn't believe in Jesus (verse 58).

Verse 58, "And He did not do many miracles there because of their unbelief." They didn't believe that Jesus was the Messiah. They didn't believe the message of Jesus. The result was that Jesus didn't do many miracles there, "*because of their unbelief.*" It was their unbelief that caused Jesus to turn from them.

In general, God delights to work in those who trust in Him. Jesus healed the centurion's servant, because of the centurion's great faith. "Go your way; let it be done to you as you have believed" (Matt. 9:13). Jesus healed the hemorrhaging woman, because of her faith. "Daughter, take courage; your faith has made you well" (Matt. 9:22). Jesus healed the blind men, because of their faith. "Be it done to you according to your faith" (Matt. 9:28). Jesus healed the woman's daughter because of her faith, "O woman, your faith is great; be it done for you as you wish" (Matt. 15:28).

But this is no hard fast rule. There are times that Jesus worked miracles even when there was little or no faith. When the storm raged on the sea of Galilee and the disciples were fearful, Jesus said, "Why are you timid, you men of little faith?" He then proceeded to rebuke the winds and the sea so as to make the sea perfectly calm (Matt. 8:26-27). Jesus performed most of His miracles in unbelieving cities: Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum (Matt. 11:20ff). So, God can work in situations where faith is and where faith isn't. But the general rule is this: God will work where there is faith. In Nazareth, there was no faith. So, there were few miracles.

When Jesus left Nazareth, it was in an unbelieving condition. How many churches today are just like Nazareth? They are unbelieving. God has left them in their unbelief. Nothing miraculous ever happens at the church. God has departed from them. But, their programs and activities go on! How many churches have lost their first love, only to have God remove the lampstand out of its place (Rev. 2:4, 5)? How many churches are still going through the motions, without realizing that the engine fell out of the car two miles back. How many churches are holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power (2 Tim. 3:5)? As Nazareth didn't believe, Jesus didn't do many miracles there.

What about Rock Valley Bible Church? Are we believing and trusting God? If Jesus were to come into our midst, would He say, "You are a believing church, I would love to do miraculous things in your midst!" Are there things in your life that can only be explained by your testimony, "I believe in Jesus, and He has been faithful to work in my life?"

I believe that the quality of our prayer life demonstrates the extent to which we trust God. We are to "pray without ceasing" (1 Thess. 5:17). We are to let our requests be made known to God "in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving" (Phil. 4:6). We are to pray at all times for all things. It ought to be our constant hearts desire to send our prayers to heaven in complete dependence and faith upon Him to help us in every moment of the day.

Those who pray that way demonstrate their great faith in God to help them every moment of the day. They are the ones who believe in the promises of God. They are the ones who Jesus will never leave or forsake. May Rock Valley Bible Church be a believing and therefore, a praying people.

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