

What Went Wrong in Nazareth?

- I. They wanted to walk by sight and not by faith.
 - I. They didn't understand God's grace.
 - III. They rejected their only Savior.

Dear Christian friends,

It's painful to look at these verses. Jesus was preaching in His **hometown** of Nazareth. He's a local boy who's MADE IT BIG. Jesus has become a well-known and **well-liked** preacher. He's done some impressive miracles in **other cities** – including nearby Capernaum. The people are EAGER to hear what Jesus has to say. Yes, ***“The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on Jesus.”*** AT FIRST ***“they all spoke well of Him and were impressed by the words of grace that came from His mouth.”*** But by the end of it all – WOW! ***“All those who were in the synagogue were filled with rage. They drove Him out of the town ...in order to throw Him off the cliff.”*** Talk about a TOTAL CHANGE in attitude! What WENT WRONG in Nazareth?

It's painful to look at these verses but this is unfortunately a STILL FAMILIAR sight. People can't physically run Jesus ***“out of town”*** but there are plenty who still PUSH JESUS OUT of their hearts and lives. There **are plenty** who get furious and just won't listen when Jesus BLUNTLY CONFRONTS them with **their sin** or BOLDLY PROCLAIMS that **He is** their only Savior. There **are plenty** who AT FIRST listen to Jesus but IN THE END they want nothing to do with Jesus.

It's painful to look at these verses but we NEED to. We want to learn from them so that we ourselves DON'T ALSO **end up** like this **and** so that we can better understand and reach out to those who have **fallen away** from Jesus. So, WHAT WENT WRONG in Nazareth? 1)They wanted to walk by sight and **not by faith**. 2)They didn't understand **God's grace** and 3)they rejected their **only Savior**.

I. They wanted to walk by sight and not by faith.

“All spoke well of him and were impressed by the words of grace that came from His mouth.” We're not told the EXACT WORDS of Jesus' sermon but we do know what text He preached on. Jesus used this prophecy of the **coming Savior** from Isaiah 61 – ***“The Spirit of the Lord is on Me, because He anointed Me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent Me to proclaim freedom to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free those who are oppressed, and to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.”*** After reading that Jesus had told the people sitting there in front of Him, ***“Today, this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.”***

WHAT WORDS of grace Jesus had for them! HE was the Christ – the **Messiah** – the long-promised Savior – **yes**, the eternal Son of God born our brother. AS PROMISED Jesus had come to rescue us from sin's guilt – from death's grip – from the devil's power. IN OUR PLACE Jesus would perfectly obey all the commandments. **On the cross** Jesus would endure the death and hell we had coming because of our sins. TRUSTING in Jesus we have God's forgiveness of all our sins – we have peace with God – we have a whole new relationship with God – we are going straight to heaven when we die. WHAT WORDS of grace to sinners who only deserved God's **wrath** and **eternal rejection**!

What sweet words of grace – but WAIT a minute! ***“Isn't this Joseph's son?”*** Something was NOT MAKING SENSE to them. They had known Jesus **from little** on. They knew Mary and Joseph – knew Jesus' brothers and sisters. Jesus had been the KID **next door** - their **neighbor** – a classmate – a **friend**. They had furniture Jesus had made for them as a carpenter. Sure, Jesus had always been NICE – **polite** – **respectful** – **honest**. BUT! But there's NO WAY He's the Son of God – the promised Savior. NO! Jesus was JUST ONE **of them** – just like them. THEY weren't God and neither was

Jesus. They weren't the **Savior** – and neither was Jesus. It just COULDN'T BE. That just didn't make ANY SENSE.

Do you see WHAT WENT WRONG in Nazareth? They wanted to walk BY SIGHT and **not by faith**. **Rather** than humbly accepting whatever God said they wanted to be the FINAL JUDGES. It didn't make sense to them that Jesus was the Son of God, the Savior – THEREFORE it just wasn't true.

How we need to LEARN WELL this lesson! God tells us plenty of things our **sinful natures** DON'T WANT TO HEAR – take your pick of any commandment – God always coming first in our lives – loving God more than anything/anyone else INCLUDING ourselves – always living GOD-CENTERED – God-PLEASING lives as spelled out in those commandments. We have no right to **tell God**, “No, this is how we're going to do things.” When God promises to send NOT JUST the **really bad** people but all unrepentant sinners to hell – telling ourselves, “God would NEVER DO that!” won't change what GOD SAYS He will do.

The same goes with the **gospel**. That Jesus is both God and man in one person – that God gives us all the credit for Jesus' perfect life and innocent death – that the Bible is God's perfect Word **without any mistakes** – that with the bread and wine of Holy Communion Jesus really does give us the very same body and blood He gave into death on the cross for our forgiveness – that Jesus will raise all the dead back to life on the Last Day, etc. – NONE of that makes any sense. But ALL of that is true because GOD SAYS just that. God's Word alone determines WHAT we believe and HOW we live – NOT what feels right or makes sense to us. DON'T REPEAT the mistake these **people in Nazareth** made!

They made a second BIG MISTAKE –

II. They didn't understand God's grace.

Jesus knows what they're thinking. ***“Certainly you will quote this proverb to me, ‘Physician, heal yourself!’ Do here in Your hometown everything we heard You did in Capernaum.”*** They've heard about the miracles Jesus had done in OTHER cities. He should do that RIGHT THERE in Nazareth. **Why** should Jesus treat strangers BETTER than them? They figured JESUS OWED THEM SOME special attention – some special favours. AFTER ALL this was His **hometown** – they were family so to speak. It was ONLY RIGHT and FAIR.

Do you see WHAT WENT WRONG in Nazareth? They didn't understand **God's grace**. Grace is God's UNDESERVED love. God doesn't owe anybody ANYTHING. God deals with us IN GRACE – not as if WE DESERVE whatever.

Jesus brings us two familiar **OT incidents** that make just THAT POINT. ***“In Elijah's time”*** God sent a severe famine and drought on His IMPENITENT people. They just wouldn't give up their sinful ways and return to God. There were plenty of widows in Israel who COULD HAVE USED Elijah's help **back then**. But God sent Elijah OUT of the country to a Gentile widow and helped her instead. ***“In Elisha's time”*** there were plenty of lepers ***“yet not one of them was cleansed – only Naaman the Syrian*** (a foreigner – the ENEMY!)” WHY did God help those Gentiles **instead** of His **chosen** people? It was PURE GRACE – God showed them UNDESERVED love. The OT Israelites figured, ***“Hey, we're God's people even if*** we're NOT ACTING like it. GOD OWES us His help **even if we're not listening** to Him.” Those **people in Nazareth** were repeating that mistake of NOT UNDERSTANDING **God's grace** – of thinking God OWES them.

How we need to LEARN WELL this lesson! Before talking about GOD OWING us we need to be clear on WHAT WE OWED God **and** what God has really gotten from us. Simple honesty is praying as the psalmist did, ***“If You, O LORD, kept a record of sins, O Lord, who could stand?”*** Simple honesty is admitting that ***“God does not treat us as our sins deserve, or repay us according to our iniquities.”*** Grace – UNDESERVED love – is the only explanation that God STILL WANTS to have a

good relationship with us. **Grace** – UNDESERVED love – is the only reason we HAVE JESUS as our Savior – that **in Jesus** we have God's forgiveness – we are God's redeemed, beloved children – we are heirs of eternal life in heaven. EACH ONE of us needs to confess WITH FULL UNDERSTANDING just as Paul did, ***“By the grace of God I am what I am. For it is by grace (we) have been saved, through faith, and this not from ourselves, it is the gift of God, not by works, so that no one can boast.”***

They wanted to walk BY SIGHT and **not by faith**. They didn't understand **God's grace**. That led to the GREAT TRAGEDY of Nazareth –

III. They rejected their only Savior.

They didn't like Jesus TREATING them **like that** – saying things like that to them. They didn't like it ONE BIT and they weren't going to PUT UP with it either. The congregation turned into an ANGRY MOB with murder on their minds. ***“They got up and drove (Jesus) out of the town. They led Him to the brow of the hill on which their town was built, in order to throw Him off the cliff.”***

Do you see WHAT WENT WRONG in Nazareth? They rejected their ONLY Savior! Without Jesus they would have to GO THROUGH life. Without Jesus' love and help – **without** His forgiveness – **without** His power - promises and **presence** they would HAVE TO HANDLE life's up and downs. **Without Jesus** they would have to deal with death and the devil. **Without Jesus** they would ONE DAY have to stand before God and ***“give an account”*** of their lives. **Without Jesus** they would end up hearing God tell them, ***“I don't know you. Depart from Me, you who are cursed.”*** Without Jesus that's ALL YOUR LEFT with. You're ON YOUR OWN. They didn't even realize that they WERE DOING THIS **to themselves!** Those who reject Jesus today – who don't want to BE BOTHERED by Jesus – they DON'T SEE it either. Falling away from **Jesus** they are falling away from their ONLY Savior.

It is painful to look at these verses. It hurts to see this REPEATED **so often** still today. How we need to pray, “Lord, HELP us to learn from **what went wrong** in Nazareth. Oh, please help us to WALK BY FAITH **through** this life. Help us to understand – and EVER TREASURE! – Your **amazing grace**. Help us so that we NEVER LET ANYTHING come between us and You, our **only Savior!** AND help us to LOVINGLY reach out to those who **have fallen away** from You, the **only Savior.**” Amen.

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