

The Exercise of Faith

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References: Mark 5, Mark 5:21-43; Romans 5:6; Romans 10:9

Introduction

Well, I'd like to thank Cady for suggesting these stories—two stories. On Wednesday nights, as you know, we have our Q and A, question and answer. We get anywhere from 12 to 20 come out, usually 16 or 17, and there are good questions that are brought before us. Last Wednesday, Cady had a question about two intertwined stories in the Gospel of Mark. It was actually in Luke, but we had to turn to Mark for the details. It's the story of Jairus and his daughter, and it's the story of the woman who had a hemorrhage for twelve years. They were intertwined stories, but it's a story of the exercise of faith.

Where God meets man is **by faith**. In faith. Simple thing. Not through effort or prayers or any other way. God does not meet man except through the one avenue of trust—faith in His word. So we're going to take a look specifically at the exercise of faith in Mark in these two stories. Turn with me then to the Gospel of Mark, chapter 5. We'll start to read at verse 21.

[Mark 5:21-43 NKJV] - ²¹ Now when Jesus had crossed over again by boat to the other side, a great multitude gathered to Him; and He was by the sea. ²² And behold, one of the rulers of the synagogue came, Jairus by name. And when he saw Him, he fell at His feet ²³ and begged Him earnestly, saying, "My little daughter lies at the point of death. Come and lay Your hands on her, that she may be healed, and she will live." ²⁴ So Jesus went with him, and a great multitude followed Him and thronged Him.

²⁵ Now a certain woman had a flow of blood for twelve years, ²⁶ and had suffered many things from many physicians. She had spent all that she had and was no better, but rather grew worse. ²⁷ When she heard about Jesus, she came behind Him in the crowd and touched His garment. ²⁸ For she said, "If only I may touch His clothes, I shall be made well." ²⁹ Immediately the fountain of her blood was dried up, and she felt in her body that she was healed of the affliction. ³⁰ And Jesus, immediately knowing in Himself that power had gone out of Him, turned around in

the crowd and said, "Who touched My clothes?" ³¹ But His disciples said to Him, "You see the multitude thronging You, and You say, "Who touched Me?" ³² And He looked around to see her who had done this thing. ³³ But the woman, fearing and trembling, knowing what had happened to her, came and fell down before Him and told Him the whole truth. ³⁴ And He said to her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well. Go in peace, and be healed of your affliction."

³⁵ While He was still speaking, some came from the ruler of the synagogue's house who said, "Your daughter is dead. Why trouble the Teacher any further?" ³⁶ As soon as Jesus heard the word that was spoken, He said to the ruler of the synagogue, "Do not be afraid; only believe." ³⁷ And He permitted no one to follow Him except Peter, James, and John the brother of James. ³⁸ Then He came to the house of the ruler of the synagogue, and saw a tumult and those who wept and wailed loudly. ³⁹ When He came in, He said to them, "Why make this commotion and weep? The child is not dead, but sleeping." ⁴⁰ And they ridiculed Him. But when He had put them all outside, He took the father and the mother of the child, and those who were with Him, and entered where the child was lying. ⁴¹ Then He took the child by the hand, and said to her, "Talitha, cumi," which is translated, "Little girl, I say to you, arise." ⁴² Immediately the girl arose and walked, for she was twelve years of age. And they were overcome with great amazement. ⁴³ But He commanded them strictly that no one should know it, and said that something should be given her to eat.

Now, the Lord blesses the reading of His word publicly and privately. The question that Cady had was: in the case of the woman, He made her openly confess her faith; in the case of Jairus, He forbade them to tell what happened. So I'd like to expand a little on the remarks that were made on Wednesday night, I think for our benefit, to understand a little more of the wisdom of God in dealing with individuals when they come to Him by faith.

Three Displays of Power

This portion in chapter 5 is actually three stories that are put together by this master storyteller, Mark. And he groups them together, these three stories: the one of the demon-possessed man, the woman that was healed, and Jairus' daughter. So we see there His power displayed—the Servant of Jehovah, His power displayed over, number one, **demons**, in the first story; in the second story, His power over **disease**, healing the woman; and His power over **death**, the resurrection of this young girl.

It was in compassion that the Lord, or God the Father, sent the Son across the sea to cast out the demons of that man on that far shore of the Gadarenes. Now, we don't read of that man's faith, but we know that he cried out day and night, and God heard his cries. He knew that man in his torment and his agony, and He sent His Son across the lake to cast out those demons.

Now He returns again across the lake, it says. Now, verse 21, when He had crossed over again by boat, He had made that one trip for that one purpose: to heal and cast out the demons of that one man—or two men, there may have been two, another account gives two, but one prominent man. God heard their cries. Now He comes back, and these two stories are interwoven for a purpose—the reason for that, as we'll see in a moment. And a great multitude was gathered to Him by the sea.

Jairus: A Desperate Father's Faith

And while He's there, a man appears—his name is Jairus. And when he saw Jesus, it says he fell at His feet and begged Him earnestly. That's an act of worship, falling at His feet. It's an act of absolute bringing yourself to the feet of another because he could not do anything of himself. He was at the end of himself. But it's a remarkable action.

Who is this Jairus? Jairus was a ruler of a synagogue. He was not only an important man in the community—a very public and important man—but the rulers of the synagogues and those who ran them usually were Pharisees, and they were much in prejudice against the Lord Jesus, against this country prophet that came from a despised city, Nazareth. And so, full of prejudice, the Pharisees had rejected already the messianic claims of the Lord Jesus. They said that He got His power from the devil—earlier on in the account, we find that. They couldn't deny the miracles, the signs of the Messiah, the King. They couldn't deny that, but the only thing they could come up with in their twisted, wicked minds was that that power came from the devil. And so they committed the unpardonable sin.

Now, Jairus must have sided with them because he was part of the establishment—the establishment that had already rejected the King and His message. Not only that, but these Pharisees would also cast out anyone who believed in Jesus, cast them out of the synagogue, excommunicate them. So when he came to Jesus, this man had really relinquished everything that he had been of his self-importance. He now was reduced to an agonized father who loved his daughter, which superseded everything else in his life.

They knew that He was a prophet sent from God. The Pharisees knew that. Remember what Nicodemus said on that night? "We know"—that is, the Sanhedrin, the Pharisees. Everyone there knew that He was a prophet sent from God, and that should have been enough to

secure at least a respect for this Man. But the Pharisees, they decided they didn't want anything to do with this Man, and they would cast out anybody who confessed the name of Jesus as the Christ.

Not only that, but he had already made a decision, a strange decision to us: his daughter was so low when he came to Jesus that he had already hired professional mourners to come to the home, and they were there meeting them when they returned. So he had at one point given up all. But there was a crisis in his life: "Am I going to set aside all my prejudice, or will I give up everything in faith that my daughter might live?" The decision is made. He leaves his home, and when he saw Jesus—he was searching for Jesus: "Where is He in the crowd? Somewhere"—when he saw Him, he comes, he falls down at His feet and begs Him earnestly, saying, "My little daughter lies at the point of death. Come and lay Your hands on her, that she may be healed, and she will live."

Now, the Lord meets us in our faith. In the stage of our faith, the Lord will meet you and me. Not only that, He wanted to test Jairus' faith as well, because there's another story that's going to interrupt this story. It's going to delay the healing. He wanted to test and He wanted to strengthen Jairus' faith.

Sometimes when God seems to draw a curtain across His throne, and we are in darkness and there are difficulties, it may be God wanting just to test our faith—not that it would fail, but that it might be **strengthened**, that we can be confident to wait even in the times when the difficulties are great and the challenges mount up and there seems to be no way out. That was Jairus' position. Because as they go, the Lord Jesus doesn't just heal her from afar; He goes with them as per his faith. "Come and touch her," he says. "Come, lay Your hands on her." So Jesus does according to his faith: He goes, and He's going to lay His hands on her.

Abraham, the great exemplar of our faith, the great example of faith—faith triumphant, even to the lifting up of his son to sacrifice him at the word of God—that was a mature faith already. There were other tests. Remember Abraham sitting in his tent door one hot day, and three men appeared: one was the Lord, and two angels that came for the purpose of destroying Sodom where his nephew Lot was. Abraham, when left alone with the Lord—the two angels having gone on their journey down to Sodom to destroy it—Abraham and the Lord are there, and Abraham begins to plead for Lot. Not directly; his faith was not strengthened yet to ask, "Lord, would You save Sodom for one righteous man?" He didn't have that amount of faith yet. He said, "Would You save it for fifty, forty, thirty, twenty, ten righteous men?" And his faith failed him at that point because he thought perhaps there must be ten righteous men in Sodom. But there wasn't; there was only one righteous man. But the Lord answered his prayer, the Lord answered his real desire, and Lot was delivered.

The Woman with the Issue of Blood

Now, the moment that Jairus had come and fallen down at the feet of Jesus, this gave a very weak, impoverished figure of a woman—her condition was chronic, hemorrhaging for twelve years, anemic and weak as you could possibly be—this interlude allowed her the opportunity in her desperate and weak condition to approach Jesus with her need.

This woman had real faith. We read that she came behind Him in the crowd and touched His garment, and this is what her reasoning was: "If only I may touch His clothes, I shall be made well." Just a touch of His clothes! She had exhausted all her resources, weak, in penury, and she's a picture really of helpless humanity. We can do nothing. Paul, writing to the Romans, says:

[Romans 5:6 NKJV] - For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.

We could make no motion toward God in any form of righteousness. But instead, He has bridged the gap. He has come out; He has supplied the salvation; He has the place at the cross; and He has come out with the word. And the Spirit of God is drawing people to those events, and all we need to do is just a touch—a touch. God is touched by faith, even a teeny touch of faith. It isn't the amount of faith; it isn't that she would grasp Him. She didn't need to. She said, "I just need to touch." And she was immediately healed.

The problem was that it was done in secret. The Lord knew that He had been touched. He says, "Power has gone out of Me." There's been a transfer of power. It isn't that He was impoverished, that somehow His power was lessened, but He knew that there had been a transferring of power from Him.

That word power is an interesting word—it is also translated virtue. Now, this woman had this issue of blood, and under the law of Moses, she was unclean all the days of her bleeding, and anything that she touched would be unclean as well. If she pressed through that crowd, everyone she pressed through would be unclean who touched her. She had to be unobserved. She had one idea: to get healed. She went to that place of healing, which was to touch even the hem of His garment—maybe it would do the least harm by touching the hem of His garment. But it was done in secret; it was a faith that had no open testimony, either to herself or to others.

Now, that word virtue—I like that word virtue. Power and virtue. The power of God is a righteous power, it's a virtuous power, it's a cleansing power. And as soon as that woman touched the Lord Jesus, she was made whole, and that included cleansing. Now, He was not defiled by her touching Him, but rather virtue came out and cleansed her and healed her. It's a holy, purifying power.

Confessing Faith Publicly

And so He wants to address her loudly now so that she might come forward: "Who touched My clothes?" And imagine Him looking through the crowd till His eyes fell on her. Well, His disciples said, "Who didn't touch You? Everybody's been touching You. You're pressed around; there's a big throng here. Everybody's been touching You." Of course, His disciples are completely out of the loop; they are not aware of what's been going on. But it's a secret between this woman and Jesus, and He wants to make it public.

It would be uncomfortable for her now. It says in verse 33, "But the woman, fearing and trembling, knowing what had happened to her, came and fell down before Him and told Him the whole truth." Oh, what a soul-searching, soul-cleansing confession that was! It was in public; everybody was gathered around, and they heard her.

But then the Lord, in compassion, speaks to her in grace: "Daughter, your faith"—which was secret, is now public—"has made you completely whole. Go in peace and be healed of your affliction." I can imagine that woman now getting up onto her feet, the strength coming back into her body and the joy of being able to confess that deep secret that she had. Her faith was compounded, we might say. What a wonderful trophy! "Go in peace," He says. She not only had peace, she had joy; she had a great exultation in her heart of what had taken place. All those doctors had been to no avail; all her worries now were just like a night that had passed.

If He had left her alone, it would have been like a stolen healing. It could have degenerated into kind of a superstitious thing; she may have looked back on the moment when she was healed as being almost like a dream. But in making her confess, it consolidated her faith in Him. We read:

[Romans 10:9 NKJV] - that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.

There's a sense in which faith cannot be silent—it must express itself.

I remember so well—I've told this story before—the first time I confessed Christ. The only way I could put it was I was a crazed hippie, 1968. There, in an old log cabin on the backside of Bowen Island, I had been reading the Scriptures, and I had found Christ. He had found me. Two of my friends picked me up one day and drove me into town—two old friends. I was in the back seat; they were sitting in the front. And I had this overwhelming, compelling—I don't know—I had to tell them what had taken place. It was like a Coke bottle shaken up; I was going to burst the bottle! But what was I going to confess? I'd never been to church; I'd never met any Christians. But I leaned over the seat between the two of them, the driver and the passenger, and I blurted out, "I believe in Christ." They said, "Yeah, man, sure. You've dropped too much acid." No, that was real! It was like, to me now, the whole world opened up. It was no longer secret. Everybody knew that I was a Christian because I told everybody after that. They say, you know, the one thing a new Christian should do is leave his old companions. I didn't have to—they all left me! They didn't want any part of me.

Well, with her it was the same. It was all out in the open now. Trembling, falling down, fearing—what was she afraid of? Well, it was a secret that she wanted to keep, I guess, to herself, but it was something that needed to be expressed. And that's where confession of Christ is so important for a believer.

Faith Overcomes Death

But we've got another story to end up here. Some messengers arrive about that time from Jairus' house. Verse 35: while He was still speaking to the woman, they came from the ruler of the synagogue's house and said, "Your daughter is dead. Why trouble the Teacher any further?" But as soon as Jesus heard the word that was spoken, He said to the ruler of the synagogue, "Do not be afraid; only believe."

Jairus, at this point—we must go back to him for a minute. He must have been in agony while this event took place with the woman. His daughter was at the point of death; he was desperate, having waited to the last minute. And now, as they were going toward the house, they're stopped by this woman, and I don't think that he could have been very compassionate at this juncture about her problems—he was worried about his dear little daughter! He must have been in agony as Jesus dealt with her. And then suddenly appear this delegation from his house who come and say, "Your daughter is dead."

But Jesus wastes no time. He says to him, "Do not be afraid; only believe." Jairus' faith was a new faith, very new. Remember the crisis? He'd chosen now to come and leave all his life behind him and fall down at the feet of this reviled Jesus. Jesus now is going to grow his faith: "Only believe."

And then they go. Now He selects Peter, James, and John to go with him, and they come to the house of the ruler of the synagogue, and they saw a great commotion, a wailing by these professionals. And so when He came in, He said to them, "Why make this commotion and weep? The child is not dead, but sleeping." Of course, they ridiculed Him. So He puts them all out. He's going to do this healing in secret—not in public like the woman, but in secret—because they had no faith.

Where there is unbelief, God will not give them signs. They had already rejected Him as Messiah; there would be no more signs. He said the only sign that you will have is the sign of the prophet Jonah, and that is His resurrection. His resurrection would be the sign for the nation of Israel—no more open signs. At this point, His public teaching is in parables; He no longer presents the kingdom of heaven publicly. It's in private that He teaches His disciples, and being rejected, He goes to the cross.

And so He puts them all out. This healing would be only for those with faith, to strengthen their faith. He goes in to the child in private. And then we read: "He took the father and the mother of the child, and those who were with Him, and entered where the child was lying." Indeed, as they looked at that child, they knew that child was dead; there was no life. Perhaps the color would tell them, the coldness already setting in. But He took the child by the hand. Remember what Jairus' faith was? He had said, "Come and lay Your hands on her, that she may be healed, and she will live." So He lays His hand on her according to his faith, and says to her, "Talitha, cumi." Immediately the girl arose and walked, for she was twelve years of age.

It was no slow awakening—it was immediate! She stood up. It wasn't just her eyes opening up and color suddenly coming back into her face and then making a few movements—it was immediate! She stood up! And He said, for the evidence of complete healing, to give her something to eat, to ensure that they would see that the healing was absolutely complete.

Conclusion

Faith will see miracles; unbelief will not. One day we're going to see a great miracle—that is, when the Lord comes from heaven with a shout! Everyone who has been born of the Spirit of God is going to answer that shout. It won't be "Lazarus"; it will be, "Come away, my fair one." And everyone who has trusted Christ is going to by faith answer that call and be caught up together with all the saints in the air to meet the Lord in the air.

I trust that you too, with me, will be caught up, will be with Him. The finest miracle and the end of our faith will be in His presence.

So this is a story about faith: Jairus, who had a sudden faith, who put aside everything, and the Lord strengthened that faith—it grew; and the woman, who had a secret faith that needed to be developed as well, to be opened. But it's all the same faith in the same Person that will take us to heaven.

Father, again we thank You for Your grace and goodness to us, for Your mercy shown toward us in sending that Son so compassionate, so gracious, and so full of wisdom. We thank You for Your word again, in Jesus' precious name. Amen.