

“SUFFERING AND SAVING FAITH”

I. Introduction

- A. We are in the midst of a section of Luke’s Gospel where the focus is upon Jesus’s authority over the various things that pose a threat to us in this life.
1. The miraculous stilling of the storm demonstrated Jesus’s authority over the forces of nature.
 2. The exorcism of the man possessed by the legion of demons demonstrated Jesus’s authority over the spiritual forces of darkness.
 3. In this text, Jesus performs two miracles that demonstrate his authority over disease and death.
- B. These miracles are arranged in a sandwich-like structure by Luke, so that the account of the healing of the woman who had the discharge of blood is set within the account of the raising of Jairus’s daughter.
1. It is interesting that Luke would do this, since Jairus and this woman had very little in common.
 2. He was a synagogue ruler.
 3. She suffered from a condition that rendered her ceremonially unclean.
 4. Yet Luke set them alongside each other because both of them were in desperate situations, both realized that Jesus was their only hope, and both placed their trust in him.

II. An Urgent Request

- A. Our passage begins by introducing this man named Jairus, who was one of the rulers of the synagogue.
1. These men had the responsibility of overseeing the teaching and worship that took place in the local house of worship.
 2. To use our terminology, Jairus was somewhat like a “ruling elder.”
 3. In first century Israel, this made him an important man in the broader community, not just in the synagogue.
 4. Luke tells us that when Jairus came to Jesus, he fell down before him and begged him to come heal his dying daughter.
 5. Notice that this girl is identified as “an only daughter.”
 6. This underscores the fact that Jairus dearly loved the girl and was afraid to lose her.
 7. It was his fear of loss that drove him to Jesus.
 8. He was confronted by a situation that he dreaded, a situation that was beyond his control, and this caused him to go to Jesus and seek his help.
- B. One of the things we can learn from this is that God wants us to humble ourselves before him and bring our requests to him.
1. God wants us to realize how much we stand in need of his help, and he wants us to ask for it.
 2. This is illustrated in C.S. Lewis’s Narnia story *The Magician’s Nephew* at a point in the story when Aslan sends several of the characters on a journey.
 3. When the mission proves to be taking longer than expected, one of the characters wonders why Aslan didn’t send any food with them.

4. The character reasons that Aslan should have known that they would get hungry on such a long journey.
 5. But another character responds by saying, "All the same, I believe he likes to be asked."
 6. God does indeed like to be asked.
 7. He wants you to bring your requests to him.
 8. Your prayers are one of the means that he uses to accomplish his good purposes in your life.
 9. In a real and mysterious way, prayer is a means of grace.
- C. Consider for a moment what would have happened to Jairus's daughter if he had not asked for Jesus's help.
1. The girl would have died of her sickness, and then she would have remained dead.
 2. Think about what this teaches us about the importance of prayer.
 3. Who knows what you might miss out on receiving if you fail to bring your requests to the Lord.

III. A Desperate Touch

- A. Jesus agrees to help Jairus, but as he is on his way to Jairus's house, a delay occurs, a delay that proves fatal for Jairus's daughter.
1. As the crowd is pressing in on Jesus, a woman in need of healing comes to him looking for help.
 2. This woman had had a discharge of blood for twelve years, a description that indicates that she suffered from a chronic uterine hemorrhage.

3. She had spent all of her money on physicians, all to no avail.
 4. Nobody could help her.
 5. And this was not just a matter of physical suffering for her.
 6. Such a condition would have resulted in social alienation and even exclusion from the covenant assembly of God's people.
 7. Under the Mosaic law, menstrual bleeding made a woman ceremonially unclean and subject to quarantine until her period came to an end.
 8. In this case, the woman's continuous bleeding would have made her perpetually unclean, a factor that would have forced her to live a very secluded life.
- B. As we consider this, we might be tempted to wonder if the Old Testament laws pertaining to ceremonial uncleanness were overly strict.
1. Why God would exclude people who were suffering physical maladies from participating in the public worship of the covenant community?
 2. It seems harsh to us.
 3. But we need to remember that Israel was a unique nation.
 4. God made his glorious presence dwell in their midst.
 5. In the historical unfolding of God's plan of redemption, Old Testament Israel served as a type, a foreshadowing, of heaven itself.
 6. And there will be no sickness or disease or death in heaven, because all of those things are a result of human sinfulness.
 7. As Revelation 21:27 says, "nothing unclean will ever enter" the new creation.

8. In the Old Testament era, God used the category of ceremonial uncleanness to teach his people that the human body in its fallen state really is, in the words of the apostle Paul, a “body of death.”
 9. The Old Testament purity laws showed that the plan of salvation is about the complete removal of everything that sin has wrought in this world.
 10. We need to understand the ravaging effects of the fall before we can appreciate the radical extent of redemption.
- C. This woman’s ceremonial uncleanness was probably the reason why she decided to approach Jesus in the way that she did.
1. She had obviously heard reports of the things that Jesus was doing.
 2. She clearly believed that he had the ability to heal her.
 3. But she seems to have had doubts about whether he would be willing to heal her.
 4. Jesus was a prophet mighty in word and deed.
 5. Would he be willing to subject himself to ceremonial defilement by extending his hand to touch her?
 6. She seems to have reasoned that Jesus would not be willing to do so, and she set out to touch Jesus’s clothes secretly in hopes of being healed.
- D. As Peter pointed out, there were a lot of people in that crowd, and many of them must have bumped into Jesus as he made his way through the mass of people.
1. But the only contact that resulted in a miraculous healing was when this woman reached out and touched Jesus’s garment.
 2. The reason why is because she was looking to Christ with faith.

3. She believed that he could heal her, and she was healed.
 4. As one commentator puts it, "It was the grasp of her faith rather than her hand that had secured the healing she sought." [Lane, 193]
- E. When you think about it, this woman's faith was not without defects.
1. She believed in Jesus's power, but she seems to have doubted that he would have enough compassion to help her.
 2. Her faith was weak, but it was still real faith.
 3. This is evident in Jesus's words, "your faith has made you well."
 4. One of the lessons that we learn from this miracle is that Jesus does not snuff out a smoldering wick of faith.
 5. On the contrary, he fans it into flame.
 6. He assures this woman that her uncleanness has been removed and that she is at peace with God.

IV. An Exhortation to Believe

- A. The woman was healed by faith, but the delay put Jairus's faith to the test.
1. Before Jesus was able to continue on to Jairus's house, a report reached them that the girl was no longer at the point of death but had succumbed to her sickness and died.
 2. She was gone.
 3. Why should Jairus trouble Jesus any further?
 4. It was too late for Jesus to do anything.
 5. Or so it would seem.

- B. We can imagine what Jairus might have been thinking upon receiving this heartbreaking news.
1. 'If only Jesus had realized the urgency of the situation.'
 2. 'If only Jesus had not let himself be delayed by that woman.'
 3. 'If only Jesus had gotten to my house in a more timely manner.'
 4. We all struggle with these kinds of thoughts at times.
 5. We question God's timing.
 6. We question God's wisdom.
 7. And whenever such questions arise in our hearts, we need to remember the words of David in Psalm 31: "But I trust in you, O LORD; I say, 'You are my God.' My times are in your hand". (Ps. 31:14-15a)
- C. Jesus responds to the report of the girl's death by telling Jairus, "Do not fear, only believe, and she will be well."
1. Jairus had to resist the temptation to let himself be consumed by his sadness.
 2. He had to trust Jesus's words and wait to see what he would do.
 3. What mattered for Jairus was the same thing that mattered for the woman.
 4. Both needed to cling to Jesus in faith.
 5. Whenever our circumstances cause fear to well up within us, faith needs to prevail over feelings.
- D. I would imagine that Jairus's faith was pretty weak at this point.

1. He had just learned that the daughter he loved so much was gone.
 2. It is a terrible blow for a parent to lose a child.
 3. Martin Luther expressed this powerfully after the death of his infant daughter Elizabeth.
 4. He said, "There is no sweeter union than that in a good marriage. Nor is there any death more bitter than that which separates a married couple. Only the death of children comes close to this; how much this hurts I have myself experienced."
 5. Luther would experience that hurt again years later when his daughter Magdalene died at the age of thirteen.
 6. That death was a heavy loss for Luther.
 7. We can surmise that the same would have been true for Jairus.
 8. His world was in ruins.
 9. Still, he did as Jesus instructed, and he brought him to his home.
- E. When Jesus reached Jairus's house, they were met by a crowd of mourners.
1. But Jesus told the mourners that the girl was not dead, but only asleep.
 2. This does not mean that she was only in a coma.
 3. The Bible sometimes uses the language of sleep to describe the deaths of those who are not going to remain dead.
 4. We see this in Daniel 12, where the resurrection on the last day is described this way: "many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake."

5. We see the same thing in 1 Corinthians 15 and 1 Thessalonians 4 and 5, where Paul refers to deceased Christians as those who have fallen asleep.
 6. These texts use sleep as a metaphor for death in order to call our attention to the fact that there will be a future resurrection.
 7. There will be a day when all the dead are woken up and brought before the throne of God.
 8. Here in our text, the reason why Jesus says that the girl is sleeping is because her death is only temporary.
 9. She is going to “wake up” when she hears the voice of her Lord commanding her to arise.
- F. The verb “arise” in verse 54 reminds us of the Christian hope of future resurrection.
1. The New Testament frequently employs this word to refer to the resurrection of the dead.
 2. On the last day, Jesus will issue the same command that he gave to Jairus’s daughter to every deceased Christian as we lay in our graves, and we will respond obediently to that command.
 3. On that day, we will experience something far more glorious than what happened to the girl in this passage.
 4. She was raised from death to return to this present life.
 5. She eventually died again.
 6. But we will be raised in glorified bodies that are fit for the life to come.
 7. When we are raised, we will never taste death again.

8. Christ's mastery over death in the case of this girl is a great comfort for us.
 9. It assures us that our Lord will not allow death to keep its hold on us.
- G. It might seem odd that Jesus would command the girl's parents to tell no one what had happened.
1. After all, everyone would know that this girl who had been dead was now alive again.
 2. Yet Jesus was very careful to make sure that people did not get the wrong idea about what he had come to do.
 3. His miracles were signs, pointing to much more significant spiritual realities.
 4. He did not come in order merely to resuscitate people from a state of death temporarily.
 5. Jesus came in order to defeat death once and for all by dealing with its root cause.
 6. He tasted death for us in order to atone for our sins.

V. Conclusion

- A. What would have happened if Jairus's daughter had gotten better on her own?
1. What would have happened if the doctors had been able to heal the woman?
 2. On the one hand, these people would have been spared a great deal of suffering and sorrow.
 3. On the other hand, they never would have come to Jesus for help.

4. The things that burdened them, the things that troubled them, these were the very things that drove them to Christ.
- B. What is there in your life that brings you pain, or sorrow, or fear?
1. Some of you, like the woman in this passage, suffer from serious health problems.
 2. Some of you, like Jairus, worry about losing someone you love or grieve over a loss that has already taken place.
 3. Others are under financial strain, or are discontented with their work situation, or are saddened over a broken relationship, or worry about the spiritual condition of a loved one, or are plagued by guilt, or loneliness, or depression.
 4. The list could go on and on.
 5. We would like to be relieved of such burdens.
 6. You can certainly pray to that end.
 7. It may be the Lord's will to bring you relief in this life.
 8. On the other hand, it may be his will to wait until the next life to do so.
 9. Whatever the case may be, you can be certain that he is using your burdens to keep you looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of your faith.