

Introduction

I can't think of a more stressful time for a parent than when their child becomes ill. I remember how helpless Melissa and I felt when our son Philip began wheezing when he was less than a year old. Our daughter Ariail contracted pneumonia a couple times as a child for which we had to make late-night trips to the emergency room. The Lord brought us through those experiences, but they produced a lot of prayer and a lot of adrenaline. If you have had children, you can no doubt identify with what I am talking about. And we both can at least begin to sympathize with the ruler who came and knelt down before Jesus in our text this morning.

[Read Text; Pray]

When an astonishing event occurs, people will talk. People who would never talk to one another under everyday type conditions will talk when something extraordinary happens. And for sure something extraordinary took place when the ruler of the synagogue asked Jesus to come and heal his daughter. Verse 26 says that the report went through all of the district. What Jesus did was so profound and so amazing that people would not keep quiet about it. And yet what happened on that day is just a glimpse into an even more important work of Christ that directly affects most of us in this room this morning. So let's dig in.

First, I want you to see . . .

I. The Intertwining of Two Miracles.

A. At the outset of the passage we are introduced to a devastating experience in the life of a parent. While Jesus was instructing the disciples of John, a ruler in the local synagogue came in the place and knelt before Jesus saying, “My daughter has just died.” Surely a hush settled over the party that was in progress as the gravity and weight of grief could be felt by those in the room. The ruler continued, “But come and lay your hand on her, and she will live.” And Jesus rose and followed him.

B. And then as Jesus was making his way to the home of the ruler, he was interrupted by another situation needing ministry. It was a little different. Whereas Jesus was on his way to deal with a matter of life and death and to minister to a situation involving a synagogue ruler, no less, here comes an unnamed woman who has been suffering from the same condition for some 12 years. But Jesus is as sensitive to her needs as to anyone's else's. He heals her as well and speaks to her with kindness and encouragement.

C. Afterward Jesus continues on to the home of the ruler where he raised the ruler's daughter from the dead. These two mighty works of Christ and these two acts of compassion are seemingly woven together into one event involving two healings, one of which occurs in the midst of the other.

D. Highlighted in the intertwining of the two healings is the fact that Jesus is unflappable. He is flexible. In the midst of dealing with one highly-charged situation, he deals with another. On the way to minister to a grief-stricken family and their deceased daughter, he ministers to a desperate woman. The intertwining of these two miracles gives us an appreciation for the fact that among the important situations we experience in life are those that occur along the way. God exercises providence over all of life, the seemingly big things and the seemingly little. We need to trust him in both and trust him with the flow of events in our lives.

Second I want you to see . . .

II. The Authority of Jesus Over Two Afflictions.

A. The intermingling of the two situations brings together two different ailments but both put stress on separation. The ruler's daughter was dead. Death is separation from the body and separation from the living. The grief of losing a loved one is what it is because of separation, a final separation at least for the rest of life. Dead people do not hear, think, speak, or respond. As long as we remain alive, we are separated from the one who has died.

Meanwhile, the ailment of the woman was a discharge of blood. It had persisted for 12-years. A flow of blood like this would render a person unclean and ceremonially defiled. In that condition she would be continually unclean. Leviticus 15:25ff. Set forth the Lord's instruction. "If

a woman has a discharge of blood for many days . . . all the days of the discharge she shall continue in uncleanness." Such a condition meant that everyone who touched her would become unclean. Everything on which she would sit and everything on which she would lie would be rendered unclean. Everyone who touched these things would also become unclean. She could not enter the tabernacle or later the temple to worship God. Uncleanness in the house of God would defile it and greatly offend God. And so though the situation was not as complete a separation as death itself, there is a separation from God and from worshiping him. There is a separation from interacting with people in a normal way because of the threat of rendering them unclean.

Very much aware of this consequence, the woman approached Jesus from behind and touched, not Jesus himself, but only the fringe of his garment. Did you ever wonder why the woman intended only to touch the fringe of Jesus' garment and not Jesus himself? Well here is the answer. It is because she knew that according to the law if she actually touched Jesus, she would render him unclean. And she wasn't supposed to do that.

B. But neither death nor a defiling hemorrhage was greater in power than Jesus. He was able to heal, and these who came to him were convinced of that. I want you to see the faith in both cases. In both situations people were looking squarely at what was impossible with men. And yet they believed that these were not impossible situations for Jesus.

1. Look at the faith of the ruler. "A ruler came in and knelt before him." That is faith right there. This man is called a ruler. He served as one of several elders in the local synagogue. Elders in the synagogue were leaders exercising oversight and maintaining order. It is fascinating to note the setting we have been observing in past messages. Jesus has been feasting with tax collector and sinners. He is called on the carpet by the Pharisees, and then questioned by certain disciples of John the Baptist. But then in comes this synagogue ruler in great distress over the sudden death of his daughter, and whom does he approach but Jesus. And notice how he approaches Jesus. He kneels before him. Several translations say, "he worshiped him." He is paying homage to this one who has healed others. And he is going a step further in his request. For he is not asking for a

disease to be healed or a lame limb to be restored or a demon to be cast out. He is asking for a person who has died to be raised to life! Jesus has done some incredible things up to now, but the gospels do not report a resurrection prior to this request. And yet this ruler's confidence is unshakeable. He says, "My daughter has just died, but come and lay your hand on her, and she will live." What no one else could do, Jesus can. The Pharisees cannot. The disciples of John cannot. The tax collectors and sinners cannot. But Jesus can. And he is sure of it. His faith is strong not because he is strong, but because he grasps who Jesus is. That's all faith is. It does not have to be great faith just a little faith in a great God. That is what he had.

2. Now look at the faith of the woman. She said to herself, "If I only touch his garment, I will be made well." Again we have a desperate situation. In fact Luke tells us in his account of this event that the woman had spent all her money on doctors seeking to be healed of her discharge and without success. She was at the end of her rope. But she was convinced Jesus could do something for her no one else could. And he acknowledged her faith, "Your faith has made you well," he said. And instantly she was made well.

C. Jesus has authority over death and over defiling discharge. He can do what no one else can do for those who come to him in faith. There is an important lesson for us here. There is nothing that will ever come into your life that is bigger than Jesus. There is no challenge so great he cannot handle it. There is no temptation that has taken you but such as is common to man and God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability. There is no attack of Satan so strong that he cannot handle it. There is no fleshly desire so intense from which he cannot rescue you. There is no enemy who can do to you anything he cannot prevent.

What we must do is face these obstacles, challenges, temptations, weaknesses with the faith that we see in the ruler and in the woman. The world may say the situation is hopeless. The doctors had shaken their heads before the woman. The flute players and the crowd in the ruler's house had already begun to make a commotion and when Jesus indicated he was bringing this girl back, they laughed derisively. But it did not keep

him from taking her hand. And it did not keep her dead. She rose because Jesus Christ is able. He is able to do exceeding abundantly beyond all we can ask or think. Now I am not saying he will do anything we want him to do. I am saying he can do anything he wants to do. And I am saying we need to trust him.

We need to pray like the ruler prayed to Jesus, with absolute confidence that he is able. We need to live confidently with the assurance of that prayer. Jesus Christ is able. He has authority over death. And if death is subject to Jesus, there is nothing that is not.

Third, I want you to see . . .

III. The Compassion of Jesus in Two Touches.

A. The Ruler had said to Jesus, "Come and lay your hand on her, and she will live." And when Jesus went onto the ruler's house, he took the daughter "by the hand, and the girl arose." It was through his touch that she was brought to life. The God of the universe reached out a human hand she could feel and onto which she could pull up. In tenderness and kindness he touched her. It was personal.

B. The woman had said to herself, "If I only touch his garment, I will be made well." And that is what she did. She touched the fringe. And Jesus compassionately spoke to her, "Take heart, daughter, your faith has made you well." How kind! He was on his way to heal the ruler's daughter, and on the way he heals this woman and calls her "daughter." She might not have had a prestigious father to plead her cause, but she had a precious savior to call her daughter and reach out to take care of her in her distress and anguish. Both of these healings were brought about in a personal encounter with the living God in the person of His Son.

C. This is who Jesus is. Those who reach out to him in faith he welcomes and comforts with compassion. Your faith does not have to be perfect. The woman's was not perfect. The tassel did not do it. The garment did not heal the woman. Jesus healed her. And he was patient with her. You can believe he will be this way with you as well it you will draw near to him believing. Bring your deadness. Bring your defilements. Bring your weaknesses. Bring your sins. Do not get sidetracked by questions about

rituals as the disciples of John had been. Do not resist him because of things you do not yet understand as the Pharisees did. But like the synagogue ruler, go and bow before him in faith. And he will do mighty things in your life.

Finally, I want you to see . . .

IV. The Power of Jesus Over Two Facets of Sin.

Sickness is present in this world because sin is present. Jesus has power and authority over sickness because more fundamentally he has power and authority over sin. He dealt sin the decisive blow by going to the cross and suffering the penalty of our sin in our place. Jesus had recently spoken to the Pharisees about why he was hanging out with tax collectors and sinners. He said, "It is not those who are well who need a physician but those who are sick. I came to call sinners." So we see even Jesus mingles together the concepts of sin and sickness.

Sickness is to the body what sin is to the soul. The various instances of Jesus' healing sickness provide numerous glimpses into the reality of his greater work with regard to sin. We have seen in a leper the ugliness of sin. We have seen in a paralytic the spiritual paralysis of sin. Two other facets of sin are borne out in the "daughters" whose healings we are studying this morning—death and defilement.

A. Just as surely as the ruler's daughter had died, so surely has every sinner. There may be some question in your mind as to whether the girl was actually dead. After all, Jesus told the mourners in the house she was just asleep. But by this statement we are not to believe that she was not really dead. The ruler said she was dead. The mourners (flute players) said she was dead. And the fact that the report went through all the district says she had been dead. What Jesus was doing was to convey that she was not irretrievably dead. He was indicating that he was about to go wake her up and raise her up. But he was raising her up from death.

Sin is a killer. God had said to our first parents, "In the day you eat thereof you will die." They ate and they died. "The wages of sin is death," writes the Apostle Paul. And this is what Paul writes to believers about who they were before they came to faith in Christ. He describes the nature of every

human being. This is Ephesians 2:1. "And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked." In Romans 5:12, Paul says this: "Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned." This is a grave and hopeless condition of spiritual lifelessness. It is dead to God, dead to righteousness, dead to truth. This deadness is what manifests itself when people look up at the sky and conclude it all just evolved. This deadness is manifest when they deny about God the things that are clearly perceived in the creation. And this deadness is manifest as people live in the passions of the flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind. It is this condition which results in resistance and even ridicule when the gospel message goes out.

The gospel message that commands people to admit their sin, see Christ as the sure provision for that sin, and to repent of sin and trust in Christ's provision falls on death. You might as well go out to a cemetery and tell people to get up out of their graves. There must be another component to the situation for sinners to actually come to life and believe. And the healing of the ruler's daughter portrays it for us.

The ruler came and prostrated himself before Jesus. And he said to him, "My daughter has just died, but [you] come and lay your hand on her and she will live." I am going back to Ephesians 2 now. Paul said, "And you were dead in trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world and were by nature children of wrath like the rest of mankind." And then in verse 5 he sounds just like the ruler: "But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved."

This girl could not lift herself up from the bed. She could not respond to a command. She was dead. But Jesus rose and followed the ruler and went to his house into the room where the daughter was and took her by the hand and the girl arose. She got up because he gave her life. What can a dead girl do in order to live? NOTHING! But Jesus can do something. And what could you do when you were just like the rest of mankind, dead in trespasses and sins? NOTHING! But God can. And if you are believing in

Christ today, it is because he did. He made you alive. And thus you believed. The point is that, as Paul puts it, you are saved by grace. It is not of yourself. It is not of human effort but of divine grace. To God be the glory! Yes we preach the gospel. Yes, we persuade people to trust. But we cannot do the trusting and we cannot create faith. Neither can those who hear the call. But God can, and he does. Every person who is a bonafide follower of Jesus is such in the final analysis because of the power and authority and working of God in their lives. The gospel is the power of God for salvation but it is the power of God at work which brings a dead sinner to live to believe the glorious gospel. And that means that there is hope when we share. There is hope when we preach. There is hope when we pray that something miraculous can happen. And every time a person believes in Christ, I tell you, a miracle has happened just as surely as Jesus raised this daughter from the dead.

B. The second facet of sin to be healed by Jesus as born out in this pair of miracles is defilement. The woman whom Jesus called daughter, because of her discharge of blood was defiled. She was unclean and unfit for fellowship with God at his sanctuary. She was separated from God and therefore from really living. But along came Jesus and what no one else could do he did.

There is an important detail here in the wording that does not make its way out in most translations. Three times we observe the words "made well." They occur when the woman says to herself, "if I only touch his garment, I will be MADE WELL." And then Jesus says, "Take heart, daughter; your faith has MADE you WELL." And then Matthew comments that instantly the woman was MADE WELL. The Greek word in these instances is actually what is usually translated "to be saved." She is saying "If I touch his garment, I will be saved." Jesus is saying, "Your faith has saved you." And Matthew is observing that she was saved. Saved from what? In this place, saved is from defilement, from what makes her unclean and keeps her from God.

Listen. This is what sin does. It separates us from God. It makes us filthy and unfit for fellowship with God. He is holy. He is pure. He is undefiled. And that is what we must be to be right with him. But we can't do it for

ourselves. And no number of doctors can do it for us. And no amount of money spent can rectify the situation. It takes a work of God. And he does it. He removes our defilements. He takes away our iniquity. Through Isaiah the Lord says to his people, "Come now. Let us reason together," says the Lord, "though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall become like wool." Isaiah 53:6 says, "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all."

And in doing this great work, he frees us from death and he gives us life to pursue righteousness. And this we must do by exerting much energy and effort and intention to lay hold of holiness in our own lives, yielding our members not to the lusts and desires of the flesh but to God as those who are alive from the dead.

Conclusion

Romans 6 is a powerful chapter that deals with the freedom we have because of Christ's work. As with the girl who was brought to life, believers in Christ have been raised to life with him. Now we are dead to sin and alive to God. And as the woman was freed from her defilement to seek fellowship with God and to glorify him, we have been freed from the defiling power of the flesh. Paul says, "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions. Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness. For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace."