

## Delays Are God's Appointment

Matthew 9:18-26; John 11:4-6

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Delays to our plans and prayers test our faith in God. Delays either will become stumbling blocks or building blocks to your faith. Your Heavenly Father lovingly and wisely has ordained these delays to strengthen your faith and to cast you upon Him rather than to destroy you. God delayed for years in giving to **Abraham and Sarah** their promised son, Isaac. God delayed the entrance of **Israel** into the promise land for 40 years, and how the patience of Moses was often tried during that time. God delayed giving **David** a permanent victory from the deadly pursuit of Saul and his army. Jesus delayed giving **the apostles** immediate escape from that fearful storm that threatened their lives. God delayed in giving **the prodigal son** a repentant heart and returning him back to his father. Are not delays to that for which you have earnestly prayed a huge test as to who it is in whom your trust is firmly placed (whether you have prayed to find a godly spouse, or to be healed, or a promotion at work, or the salvation of a loved one, or the return of a prodigal child, or reformation within your family, the church, or the nation)? Delays ultimately reveal who you believe is in control of your life and who is most wise and has the best plan for your life: you or your loving Savior (Romans 8:28)?

Let us consider today from our text the delay to the urgent plea of a desperate father on behalf of his dying daughter. The main points from our text this Lord's Day are the following: (1) The Evidence of Faith (Matthew 9:18-19); (2) The Delays That Test Faith (Matthew 9:20-22); and (3) The Reward of Faith (Matthew 9:23-26).

### I. The Evidence of Faith (Matthew 9:18-19).

A. One day as the Lord Jesus was teaching, a certain Jewish ruler of the synagogue came and fell down at His feet and worshipped Him, pleading for the Lord's mercy. We learn from the Gospel of Luke that his name was Jairus. From what we read here concerning Jairus, he was a man of faith who trusted in Jesus Christ as Savior.

B. Consider these evidences of Jairus's faith in Christ.

1. First, His faith in Jesus is evidenced by the worship he gave to Jesus (Matthew 9:18). Jairus recognized his great need of the Lord Jesus and the Divine authority of Christ as he fell at His feet. He was publicly professing Christ's greatness and his smallness. Though Jairus himself held a place of great honor as one of the rulers of the synagogue, he casts off all confidence and pride in himself, and casts himself at the feet of Christ. This he did at the risk of his own job and reputation within the Jewish community. The Jewish leaders were already plotting how to kill the Lord, and here one of the rulers of the synagogue bestows such honor upon Him.

a. True faith in Christ is manifested in showing honor to and reverence for the Lord Jesus Christ (even in the face of opposition and persecution). Where one is willing to suffer for Christ and His truth, one evidences that he/she is united to Christ by faith. Jairus was not embarrassed or ashamed to make it known to all those present that he was a follower of Jesus Christ.

b. In the way that you live do you act as though there is never a good time to let others know that you are a Christian? This was not true of Jairus.

2. A second way in which the faith of Jairus was evidenced was by the certainty expressed in his urgent plea to Jesus: "But come and lay thy hand upon her, **and she shall live**" (Matthew 9:18). His daughter was near death's door ("My daughter is even now dead" likely means "she is even now at the point of death"—for she was not yet known to be dead—"she lay a dying" Luke 8:42). She was his only daughter and

was just 12 years old (Luke 8:42). In the flower of her youth, she was breathing her last breaths when Jairus left home to seek Christ' mercy.

a. These words of Jairus convey his confidence and certainty of faith in Christ. He believed nothing was too hard or too difficult for Jesus. With God nothing shall be impossible. That is faith.

b. Faith is not telling God what He must do (contrary to many charlatans). Faith believes the Lord is able to do what is impossible to man, and is resting its case in the almighty hands of the Lord Jesus.

c. Jairus looked with confidence to the mercy and power of Christ alone to heal his daughter and not to himself as being worthy. The very nature of faith looks away from your own faith as being the reason God should hear your urgent cry, and looks rather to the power and goodness of Jesus Christ and rests in His love and mercy.

C. Interestingly, Jairus pleaded with the Lord to come with him to the bedside of his daughter and lay His hands on her and heal her. However, note the words of the Roman centurion whose servant was also near death (Matthew 8:8): "but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed." Could the Lord Jesus not have simply spoken the word from where He was standing and healed his daughter? Of course! The faith of Jairus was genuine (though yet growing). His faith in Christ pleaded for the visible presence of Christ in coming to his home and laying His hands on his daughter. Note that Jesus does the Lord rebuke him for not having stronger faith. Does the Lord refuse to accompany Jairus to his house and heal his daughter due to his faith not being as strong as the faith of the centurion? No, for Jesus will not break the bruised reed nor quench the smoking flax. Where there is faith in Christ (even the faith of a mustard seed), He encourages it along—fanning the smoking flax rather than pouring water on it, strengthening the bruised reed rather than breaking it.

1. How we need to imitate our Savior in the way in which we treat one another. We are by nature so quick to be finished with those who struggle in certain areas of sin and temptation, and yet who give evidence of a real faith in Christ (a real faith though a weak faith). At times we don't want to be bothered when others are struggling. However, when we are struggling with some temptation, some affliction, some heartache, or some trial, we are so thankful to have others to come to our help and to encourage us and to pray with us and for us. What hypocrisy there is in our lives at times! For we neither do unto others as we would have others do unto us, nor do we do unto others as Christ has done unto us. Where would you be if Jesus treated you as you at times treat those who are struggling and whose faith is under attack by the enemy? Jesus went with Jairus in order to strengthen his weak faith (Matthew 9:18), not in order to condemn him.

2. Let me be clear here. We are talking about the weak in faith not the obstinate in sin. One who is weak in faith struggles with besetting sins, but desires to be free of the sin, to repent of the sin, to lay hold of the mercy of God that is in Christ Jesus, and to walk in new obedience to Christ. However, one who is obstinate in sin doesn't care and just walks in rebellion against the Lord.

## **II. The Delays That Test Faith (Matthew 9:20-22).**

A. Now we are introduced to a significant delay that apart from God's grace might have turned Jairus away from Christ, but which the Lord used to strengthen the faith of Jairus.

1. This delay was huge because it hindered Jesus from getting as quickly as He could to the dying daughter of Jairus. This delay came in the person of a very sick desperate woman who was dying a slow death due to her continual loss of blood for the past 12 years. No doctors could help her. This woman secretly touched the hem of Christ's garment and was miraculously healed. Though the healing of the woman with the issue of blood was a wondrous miracle, it yet delayed the Lord's coming to Jairus's daughter who was at the point of death.

a. Although we are not told how Jairus reacted to this delay, there was at least the temptation to grow impatient in waiting upon the Lord in this situation. There was the temptation to think, “Lord, it is all well and good that this poor woman has been healed, but my little daughter is about to die at any moment. Could this woman’s healing not wait until my beloved daughter is rescued from the clutches of death? Don’t you care that she is about to die?”

b. Delays in answer to your prayers are always an obstacle over which your faith must leap. We are tempted to doubt the goodness of the Lord and to question His love as if we with our puny, short-sighted knowledge could possibly understand what is presently best for us and our loved ones. What is best, dear ones, is what glorifies Jesus the most (as when the Lord delayed His going to Lazarus in order to heal him before he died, as we see in John 11:4-6). The test to your faith in Christ in such situations is that of thinking you know what is best for you and your loved ones. It is a lie and a deception to think so. Christ knows what is best—even if it means standing by and watching Jesus heal a dying woman while your daughter is at that very moment about to die. God’s appointed delays will tell you in whom you are really trusting—in Christ or in yourself—in His wisdom or yours.

2. Then comes the greatest potential blow to Jairus’s faith: the news that his daughter has now died: “Thy daughter is dead; trouble not the Master” (Luke 8:49). At this point there was the temptation to view this as a hopeless situation (she’s dead), or even to blame Christ for the death of his daughter (“Lord, her death might have been prevented if only you would have hastened to come to her”). Up until this point in Christ’s ministry, there had not been a recorded incident of anyone being raised from the dead (this is the first one recorded in the Gospel accounts).

a. Here is perhaps one of the greatest trials of faith: to have a loved one taken away from you by death (especially a child). The questions, the doubts, the guilt, the blame-shifting, the anger, and the despair all come rushing in like a torrent of temptations. Here is a trial of faith in Christ like few others. But here the Lord further encourages the weak faith of Jairus with these words: “Fear not: believe only, and she shall be made well” (Luke 8:50). Jairus was herein encouraged to take his despairing eyes off of the seemingly hopeless situation that stared him straight in the face (the death of his beloved daughter), and to turn his believing eyes upon Christ who can even breathe life into the dead.

b. The Lord Jesus is speaking the same words of faith and encouragement to you this Lord’s Day in your seemingly hopeless situation: “Be not afraid, only believe.” If even death itself is not hopeless, dear ones, then nothing else in this life is hopeless. What Christ will do in each of those situations, none can know for sure, but whatever it is—IT IS NOT HOPELESS. For nothing is impossible with our God. Be not afraid, only believe. Cast all your worries and cares upon Him, for He careth for you.

### **III. The Reward of Faith (Matthew 9:23-26).**

A. Now as if this situation was not bleak enough already, when Jairus, the Lord Jesus, and His apostles arrive at the home, there are great tears and loud mourning for the death of this beloved child (Matthew 9:23). But then in response to the words of Christ, their tears turn to scorn for the Lord Jesus (Matthew 9:24). His faith having been strengthened by Jesus, Jairus is tested as to whether he will follow the Lord even when Jesus becomes a laughing stock before family and friends. Dear ones, those who oppose the truth of Christ will either rage or laugh, in order to shake you from following Christ and His commandments. But if Christ has spoken it, be willing to endure to death the opposition of others (whether it be Christ’s word concerning the purity of worship, the doctrines of grace, or the commandments of God). The faith of Jairus was not overcome by the opposition of others.

B. Jesus brought with Him into the room where the lifeless corpse of that once vibrant little girl was laying the parents and three other witnesses: Peter, James, and John (Luke 8:51). He took her hand and told her to arise, and she sat up, and He gave her back to her parents. Can you imagine the astonishment and

the amazement on the part of the parents and all those who had just a short time earlier laughed Jesus to scorn?

1. Did this young girl raise herself from the dead? Was it her faith that did so? Of course not! She was dead. She was lifeless. So likewise no sinner raises himself/herself from spiritual death by first believing in Christ. It is Jesus that must first speak life into our dead souls and give us spiritual life and faith. And then and only then will we look to Jesus Christ for salvation.

2. Dear ones, if such a miracle in raising this young girl from the dead caused amazement, should not you who have been spiritually raised from the dead and trust in Jesus Christ alone be in even greater amazement at His grace and power in your life? Have you lost the amazement of your salvation and the glory that awaits you?

C. The Old Testament forbade an Israelite from touching the dead (Numbers 19:11), and yet Jesus demonstrated that He was not rendered unclean by touching the dead. Dear ones, Jesus is not made unclean by your uncleanness. To the contrary, He removes your uncleanness and He is praying for you in all your struggles with sin. We are herein taught that our worst sins brought to the Lord Jesus Christ will not pollute Him. Rather He will make the vilest sinner clean. This is your only hope. If death, your greatest enemy, has been conquered by Christ through His resurrection, then nothing can separate you from the love of Christ. May the many delays and trials that you endure in this life only strengthen your faith and your grasp in clinging more tightly to your Savior.

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