

Perfecting an Imperfect Faith, Part 4

Luke 8:49-56

Please turn in your Bibles to Luke, chapter 8 and verse 40. Luke 8:40. We'll be going through that account to the end of the chapter, verse 56. Let's start in Luke 8, verse 40. "When Jesus returned," that is, he's returning from the Gerasene region, returned in the boat, "the crowd welcomed him, for they were all waiting for him. Came a man named Jairus, who was a ruler of the synagogue. And falling at Jesus' feet, he implored him to come to his house, for he had an only daughter about 12 years of age, and she was dying. And as Jesus went, the people pressed around him."

"As he went, the people pressed around him," and then this in verse 43, "There was a woman who had a discharge of blood for twelve years. And though she had spent all her living on physicians, she could not be healed by anyone. She came up behind him and touched the fringe of his garment. "Immediately her discharge of blood ceased. And Jesus said, 'Who was it that touched me?' When all denied it, Peter said, 'Master, the crowds

surround you and are pressing in on you.' But Jesus said, 'Someone touched me. For I perceive that power has gone out from me.' When the woman saw that she was not hidden, she came trembling and falling down before him, declared in the presence of all the people why she had touched him and how she had been immediately healed. And he said to her, 'Daughter, your faith has made you well. Go in peace.'"

That poor woman, suffering this chronic condition, twelve years of bleeding that rendered her physically weak, and because of that, the nature of her illness, she was socially isolated from the Jewish community, being ceremonially unclean, and add to that she's financially bankrupted by this condition and she comes with a faith, with a confidence in Christ.

Her faith is imperfect and, and uninformed. It's mixed, as we see there, by a bit of superstition. She thinks that magic power will come out of the tassels of Jesus' garments, so she touches that. So it's imperfect faith, certainly. It's also not a very clear and informed faith to understand that faith is meant to reconcile us to God by relationship. She kind of wants to remain anonymous. She doesn't want to face him from the front. She comes up behind him. She's reluctant to make herself known personally to Jesus Christ.

So her faith is weak. It's imperfect. It's uninformed. It's, you could say, ignorant. And still Jesus' power flows through the conduit of her faith. She's healed immediately. There's no lack of power in Christ, no lack of power of God for those who believe. And Jesus' mercy and grace, it doesn't stop there. It doesn't merely deliver a healing to this dear woman.

His mercy and grace goes further still. He intends to see her mind instructed. He intends to see her faith strengthened; her faith matured. He wants her to rejoice in giving glory to God, not privately, but publicly to everybody for the healing that she has received. Her public testimony is going to go further than the physical healing to restore this woman to the community because they need to know ceremonially, she's been made well. So this is a, has a social implication. She's going to be reintroduced to the community of believers, the family of the faithful from which she'd been estranged for these twelve long years.

Now, while Jesus took the time to minister to this dear woman, he's tender toward her, he's personally engaged with her, looking her in the eye. He's, he affectionately refers to her as daughter. While this is going on, as compassionate of a scene as

this is, we the reader know. Wait a minute. What about Jairus's daughter?

Just a few verses earlier, Jairus had taken the posture of a praying saint, a worshipping believer. He's imploring Jesus to come and save his daughter. He's declared his faith in Christ, knowing that Jesus' touch is enough to deliver this daughter, his daughter, from certain death. And now in the case of this, this suffering woman, his faith is vindicated, validated big time. He's just watched the touch of this woman to Jesus Christ, and the power flows, and it immediately heals her. He knows the powers there. And now at this point in the narrative, we're going to see Jairus' faith is pushed to the brink with an incredible test.

His faith must be tested in order that the weaknesses, and the imperfections, and the impurities in his faith may be exposed and dealt with, removed by the Lord. Jairus' faith, it's about to be tested. His trust in Christ, his confidence in Christ, is about to be put through the crucible of sorrow, a crucible of this incredible trial. Jesus intends to take Jairus beyond the limits of his own believing and stretch his faith further than he ever thought it could go.

It's not that Jairus' faith is too small, too insufficient. The problem is that his vision of God is too small. His faith needs testing so that he'll see that God is bigger than his faith. He needs to learn to take what he knows to be true about the living God and then connect that, personally and practically, to his own life, to his walking through life.

He wants your faith strong. It's exactly what this text shows us as Jesus attends to the faith of his believing people, strengthening it during testing, upholding it during weakness, perfecting what's lacking, rewarding their faith with rest and peace in the end. There is also, as we're going to see, a lesson in this text in what we're going to cover here at the end, a lesson in faith in this text for unbelievers, as well, which we'll get to in a moment.

As we get back to Jairus here, he's been waiting patiently for Jesus to finish his ministry to this woman, and from verses 49-56 the focus in the narrative shifts back and forth. The focus starts with the believing Jairus, and then shifts to the unbelieving crowd, and then turns back to the believing disciples in this text.

First point we're going to find: Jesus, here, encourages believers to trust in his power. Jesus encourages believers to

trust in his power. And he encourages them to trust him in the face of incredible testing, where it seems, humanly speaking, it is impossible to trust, way beyond human ability.

And that's the point, isn't it? The interruption by the woman with the flow of blood must have been pretty stressful for Jairus. But notice we don't see in the record, Matthew, Mark or Luke, we don't see in the record one word of complaint voiced by Jairus. We understand, right, we would understand if he became somewhat impatient. He's been standing by quietly as Jesus turns his attention here, rushing to his house, and then he stops, turns his attention to this woman. He ministers to her need. The woman, she'd received her healing in an instant.

But Jesus wants more from her. He wants to take more time. He takes time to look for her, to identify her, and Jairus is thinking, Will you just show yourself? He knows. Rather than pointing her out, he takes time to allow her to come forward on her own. He takes time to hear her voice her confession, takes time to hear her reason for touching Jesus' garment. He takes time to hear her public testimony of immediate healing.

And all the while, Jairus must have felt the clock ticking, each precious second passing by. He must've wondered about his home. What's going on there? Is his wife is with his daughter,

and his wife, his daughter's life is hanging in the balance, but Jairus, nonetheless, he trusted. He waited. He calmly steadied himself. Surely, Jesus knows what he's doing. What's his reward for waiting patiently? Look at verse 49. "While Jesus was still speaking, someone from the ruler's house came and said, 'Your daughter is dead. Do not trouble the teacher anymore.'" Now, does that seem a proper, fitting reward for such patient faith? All that waiting around, waiting for this woman to come forward, waiting for her to confess and testify and explain. She's already received her healing. He could have been back at his house, Jesus laying his healing hands on his little girl. Just one touch and she's up and playing with her friends in the afternoon.

How has his patient faith been rewarded? Instead of the good news from the messenger that he hoped for, the messenger instead adds sorrow upon sorrow. Jairus hears the dreaded news. The words that he feared have come to pass, "Your daughter is dead." This is, had to be the most horrible, gut-wrenching moment of his entire life.

You ever felt that way? Like you've done everything right. You've waited patiently on the Lord. You've been serving, you've been faithful, you've kept your cool, you've been calm, you've

done everything right. And then when you think you'll be rewarded with what you've hoped for, you find at the end of that, the goal that you get to and attain to, you find instead another trial. You find a new affliction. You find another severe test waiting for you. What is God doing in that moment?

Let's keep reading, find out what God had planned for Jairus and his family. News came, Luke tells us, "while Jesus was still speaking." Now that's important. It's important we remind ourselves, what had Jesus been saying? At that moment, what words were coming out of his mouth? Look at the previous verse, verse 48. Jesus said to this woman, "Daughter, your faith has made you well. Go in peace." Why is that important? Because that is exactly, oh yes, the woman needed to hear that, but that is exactly the message that Jairus needed to hear in that moment, in this very moment when the messenger from his house comes to deliver the worst news possible. Immediately before hearing from him, Jairus needed to hear the message of the Gospel. Faith leads to salvation, and salvation brings peace.

As Jairus is ripped with concern over his daughter, he hears Jesus say to a veritable stranger in the crowd, "Daughter, your faith has made you well." Jesus shows affection for believers, calling a stranger whom he did not know, calls her a



daughter. Oh, she's known from before the foundation of the world to Jesus. She's in the family of faith.

So as Jairus is hearing that his own daughter has succumbed to her illness, he hears the assurance of Jesus to this woman, "Daughter, your faith has," saved, "made you well," or literally, your faith has saved you. It's the verb *sozo*. In this most profound, paralyzing sorrow, when it seemed like Jairus' whole world is in turmoil, completely crumbling and falling apart, Jairus needed to hear Jesus tell that woman, "Go in peace."

Jairus is, here, tempted to despair. But Jesus is able to help him, to lift him up from this pit of despair and tuck him safely away in the refuge and the strength of God. Look back at verse 49. This messenger delivered the bad news and he delivered it, if you notice, rather bluntly, didn't he? "Your daughter is dead. Don't trouble the teacher anymore." But that messenger said something else, there, not just informing him of the facts, but he says something else. Gives an encouragement to Jairus. "Don't trouble the teacher anymore." Same thing in Mark's account, calls him the teacher. And Jesus is rightly identified as the teacher.

But we find here that this messenger is speaking better than he knew at this moment. Jesus, yes, he, he was at this moment teaching Jairus. He's the teacher, for sure, but the messenger is using that moniker teacher kind of as a reason not to trouble Jesus any longer. The messenger is telling Jairus, look, the problem has now surpassed Jesus' ability. He's a teacher. He's not a miracle worker. Time to let Jesus get back to his business of teaching. He's a rabbi. Let him get back to it.

In one sense, we may understand the messenger's thinking here, but notice, this encouragement from the messenger not to trouble the teacher, you know what happened? It just dialed up the intensity of testing for Jairus' faith. It's subtle here, but Jairus is being tempted by this trusted messenger from his household. He's being tempted here to enter into this messenger's unbelief about Jesus Christ. He's being tempted here to doubt Jesus, the one before whom he had just bowed and prayed. Jairus is being tempted to think that his little girl's death is beyond Jesus' power because after all, Jesus is simply a teacher. It's not in his purview to handle things like death.

Further, the messenger tells Jairus, "Don't trouble the teacher anymore." That's a temptation to think the situation,

here, is beyond Jesus' care, like he's going to be irritated. That's the verb, there, don't trouble him. It's like, it's a, it's a verb that's actually, literally pictures the flaying of the skin. So it's, I mean, that sounds painful, but it's a, it's a, it's a picture of irritation, irritant. So, don't irritate the teacher. So he's tempted to think that this is beyond Jesus' concern. You really ought not to trouble Jesus with this problem that he can't possibly solve.

Again, it may seem subtle, but in this moment of a profound bad news, terrible sorrow of a parent in grief, Jairus is now being assaulted in that moment with fear and doubt in a very simple report. He's being tempted to fear and despair. He's being tempted to think Jesus lacks the power, and lacks the will, and lacks the compassion to deal with the gravity of this situation.

None of that is true. In Mark's account, we find out that the messenger didn't announce the news to the crowd, but rather he spoke to Jairus privately, kind of quietly whispering in his ear. That's how doubts creep in, don't they? They draw near as trusted friends. They whisper into our ears. They insinuate thoughts into our minds. They're nothing but undiluted poison to kill us, kill our faith, subtle temptations to destroy faith, to

create doubt and distrust and disbelief, and beloved, that is not healthy.

Well, Jesus, as he often does, he's aware. He overheard the messenger's news. And you know what he did? He intervened. He stepped in. When Jairus is at the brink of despair, he's close to giving in, crumbling before doubt and unbelief, Jesus steps into this moment of his weakness. He intercepted the doubt like a champion, like a hero. He commands strength in believing when Jairus is at his weakest, lowest point.

Look at verse 50. "While he was still speaking, someone from the ruler's house came and said, 'Your daughter's dead. Do not trouble the teacher anymore,' but," verse 50, "but Jesus on hearing this, answered him, 'Do not fear. Only believe, and she will be well.'" Two strengthening commands there, and one very precious promise.

First, Jesus dealt with the despair of doubt that crept into Jairus' mind, the paralyzing power of fearfulness, and Jesus simply commanded him, here, "Do not fear." The tense of the command indicates the Jairus had started to give way to fear. What parent wouldn't? This is dreadful news. The worst has happened. He is beyond his human limits, here. His little girl, she's beyond physician, a physician's skill. She's, she would be

even if the master, if the teacher came and touched, for he, she'd be beyond being able to perceive the teacher's touch. She's a corpse.

So Jairus and his wife, they're facing life ahead of them, the future hobbled by grief, having been severely stung by death that snatched their daughter from them in the prime of her life. Everything is ahead of her marriage and family and everything else. And Jairus' heart is about to give way to fear, which we'd understand, but which Jesus, praise God, will not allow. Fear is so destructive. Fear is spiritually crippling.

So Jesus prohibits Jairus from continuing in fear, and in so doing, make sure you get this. In so doing, Jesus made fearfulness a matter of morality. Fear and hope are moral issues. In other words, let me say it plainly, it is not okay to fear, even when you think that the circumstances seem to warrant it, fear is not okay, even in the face of death, because Jesus said in the face of death, death had happened, "Do not fear." Because of who God is, we cannot fear. We must always trust, always hope, always believe. When we fear, you know what we're saying, if we're believers, that we fear? You know what we're saying? Our God isn't big enough to handle this. We're giving a lying testimony about the God that we say we trust in.

Look, I'm prone to the same weakness as you are. We understand this. We get this. Our faith is weak, needs to be strengthened. How is it strengthened? By coming to understand more fully the God in whom we believe, the God with whom we have to do.

So first, Jesus begins with this arresting command to stop the crippling, paralyzing effect of fear on Jairus' faith. Second, though, Jesus strengthened Jairus' heart by simplifying the path of obedience. I love this. Jesus keeps it really, really simple here. Here's the way forward, Jairus. Two words: Only believe. Only believe. And the word, only, gets special emphasis in the text. It's put first before the verb. So basically, he's grabbing ahold of Jairus' terror-stricken heart, grabbing his mind as it were, and he commands him: Stop fearing; only believe. Just believe, that's all. That's the way forward. He grabs hold of Jairus' little head and subdues his fearful heart, takes ahold of him, and he commands him, "Only believe." Only believe. In light of this overwhelming news, this terrifying distress, stop fearing. Only believe.

Notice, it's only after that Jesus prohibited fearfulness, it's only after Jesus has commanded faith, after getting Jairus' attention with those two immediate commands, only then does

Jesus encourage his heart with this promise of blessing: “and she will be well.” Again, not might, might be well, not she's likely going to turn out okay, hoping the best. None of that. Quite literally again, it's the same word, *sozo*. She will be saved, she'll be rescued, she'll be delivered from death.

Jairus' faith here, and you understand this, put yourself in his shoes, it'd been stressed to the breaking point. When the messenger came to deliver this news, his feeble faith is absolutely exhausted. Jairus stood there, looking down in a dark chasm of despair and hopelessness. Hey, his faith is hanging by a thread, there. And Jesus is there to lift him by that thread. Folks, that's our Savior. That's our Christ. He's unwilling to break a bruised reed or quench a faintly burning wick. He's unwilling to let even the smallest of us in our weakest moment, he will not let us go.