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Jesus, the Dead, and the Despairing; Matthew 9:18-26

GPBC

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Introduction – Matthew is systematically demonstrating the all-encompassing authority of Jesus throughout chs 8-9. The miracles of Jesus undeniably prove His authority, and such authority proves He is none other than the Messiah.

We have seen through the miracles of Jesus that He has authority over the physical, natural, and spiritual realms. And behold, wonder of wonders, Jesus holds the greatest authority of all, He can forgive sins. He can reconcile unholy sinners to the one true Holy God. He has the authority to accomplish whatever He declares. If He declares a sinner forgiven, the sinner is forgiven. To demonstrate His authority to accomplish by declaration, He looks to the same sinner who happens to be paralyzed and says, “Walk.” And to our amazement, he walks. But again, the greater amazement is not new legs for the rest of this life. The greatest amazement is that this sinner has been given eternal life. That’s why Jesus came. To save sinners. And in saving sinners, He will ultimately give every single one of us new bodies free from every ailment and corruption caused by sin. Every believing paralytic today is promised to one day have new legs that last forever!

However, when we’re dealing with our sin, it turns out that we actually need more than just forgiveness. When sin entered creation, death came with it. The reality of death is the result of sin. Therefore, we need a Savior who is able not only to forgive our sin, we need a Savior sufficient enough to overcome the consequence of our sin. We can do neither. We can’t wipe away our sin and we can’t overcome death.

And this is precisely where Matthew now takes us in these miracle accounts. Jesus not only has the authority to forgive sin, He has the authority over death.

- I. A Daring, Faith-drenched Request (vv18-19)
 - a. Understand this request is daring for two reasons:
 - i. A ruler means this man is a ruler of the synagogue. So he is among those who are opposing Jesus. His peers deny and even hate Jesus. And yet he comes to Jesus. This is daring for him to do, but there comes a point when it doesn’t matter what

others think about you or may do to you – his daughter is dead and he knows Jesus is his only hope.

ii. We know Jesus can heal any manner of sickness or disability. We know Jesus can cast out demons. We even know Jesus can forgive sins. But this girl is dead. It's too late now. Nothing can be done now. That's an impossible bridge to cross. You don't come back from that one. This request is unbelievable daring!

b. And that is why it is so drenched in faith. This man is not only asking Jesus to do the impossible, he believes that He can! Read v18.

c. Now we need to see the point of v18 is not the amount of faith the man has or the extent of faith the man has. It's not about the quality or quantity of his faith. It's where the man places his faith.

i. What makes faith great is not how much you have but where you have it. The object of this man's faith is Christ alone!

d. Look at v18 again.

i. What comes between the ruler's daughter being dead and the ruler's daughter being alive? What makes the difference between dead and living? It's not what the man brings in his faith; it's where the man directs his faith!

ii. My daughter has just died...but you come and you lay your hand on her...and she will live!

e. That's what Jesus does! He brings dead people to life!

i. Ephesians 2:4-5 – “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...”

f. Now look how Jesus responds to this daring, faith-drenched request that places everything impossible in Him, that makes Him the object of that kind of radical faith – Jesus rose and followed him.

g. Daring faith that admits our inability and totally relies on the grace and power of God, faith that makes much of Christ, moves God!

II. A Daring, Faith-drenched Reach (vv20-22)

a. Just like that request, this reach is daring for two reasons:

i. Because this suffering had lasted for twelve years! For 12 years she had suffered and had tried every treatment imaginable and no cure was found. For 12 years she was unclean. For 12

years she was unable to take part in worship. For 12 years others had to keep their distance or they would be unclean. Her suffering was physical, social and spiritual – for 12 years.

1. I had someone tell me not too long ago that they had struggled horribly for 10 years. Don't give up and don't lose hope. You're not alone. Follow this woman's path, and keep pressing until you take hold of Jesus.
 - ii. She dared as an unclean person to touch the Savior. In that culture if someone unclean touches you, you become unclean. But with Jesus, the very opposite is true. When the unclean touch Jesus, they don't transfer their uncleanness to Jesus but rather Jesus transfers His cleanness to them.
- b. That's why this reach was daring, but let me tell you why this reach was drenched with faith in Jesus, faith that has Jesus as its object.
- i. It took a tremendous faith in Jesus for the ruler to believe that if Jesus will just touch my daughter, He can bring her to life. If He will come and if He will lay His hand on her, if He will touch her, she will live. Great faith because it is in Christ.
 - ii. But I think her faith in Christ was even greater. She goes even further than the ruler. Her faith in Christ was not if He will come to me and if He will lay His hand on me. Her faith in Christ believed if I can just touch, not even Him, if I can just touch His garment – I will be made well. And notice, she just touched the fringe. Just the fringe of what belongs to Him and what is His.
- c. You've tried everything else. Have you tried Jesus? You've tried doctors. You've tried medicine. You've tried living by the Bible. You've tried church. You've tried to please others. You've tried everything. Have you tried Jesus? Have you laid your life down and surrendered everything to Jesus? Have you embraced Jesus as your only hope and life and treasure?
- d. Jesus is not only the only answer to death; He's also the only answer to dying. He's also the only answer to despair.
- e. III. If I could just touch the hem of His garment. If I could just touch some part of His clothes, I know I'd be healed, my sins all forgiven. Just reach up and touch Him and I know you'll be whole.

- III. The Words and Actions of Jesus to Dead, Despairing, Daring Faith
- a. Quickly I just want us to see the mercy and compassion and condescension and grace and power and authority of Christ in responding to daring faith in Him!
 - b. In v19, he rose and followed. He could have just said but He goes because He's going to do more. If He shows up at the ruler's house and the girl is raised, then the crowds of mourners will have witnessed the miracle too.
 - c. In v22 – Jesus turned and saw her. He stopped, He paused in His travel to work another miracle, in His busy day – He turned and saw her – He gave His full undivided attention to a woman who had no one else.
 - d. He said, "Take heart" – btw that's the one thing she had learned after 12 years of suffering and no cure to never do – but it's different now, this is Jesus! "your faith" that is, faith in Him, "has made you well."
 - e. V23 tells us the ruler's situation was true. His daughter was in fact dead. But Jesus says the strangest thing – "the girl is not dead but sleeping." Now was Jesus unaware of the fact that she was dead?
 - f. Listen very carefully – Jesus said she was sleeping because He not only sees us where we are and what we are, He also sees us as who we are and what we are in Him!
 - g. One last thing – notice Jesus didn't do what the ruler asked. He didn't lay His hand on her – sometimes God doesn't do exactly what we asked because He has a better way – but rather He took her by the hand. He reached out and took hold of a dead hand and lifted this little girl right into life!
 - h. That's what He does – He reaches down into our deadness and lifts us right into His life!

Conclusion – Jesus has authority over death and dying and despair. He not only can forgive sin; He can overcome sin's consequence, which is death. Summer and I have often said that our favorite Christmas carol is Joy to the World. Every line in that carol is wonderful, but the reason we love it so is found in the third verse – He comes to make His blessings flow far as the curse is found, far as the curse is found, far as, far as the curse is found. Hallelujah! What a Savior!