

## Faith in Him Who Raises the Dead

**Mark 5:21-24** <sup>21</sup> Now when Jesus had crossed over again by boat to the other side, a great multitude gathered to Him; and He was by the sea. <sup>22</sup> And behold, one of the rulers of the synagogue came, Jairus by name. And when he saw Him, he fell at His feet <sup>23</sup> and begged Him earnestly, saying, "My little daughter lies at the point of death. Come and lay Your hands on her, that she may be healed, and she will live." <sup>24</sup> So Jesus went with him, and a great multitude followed Him and thronged Him.

**Mark 5:35-43** While He was still speaking, some came from the ruler of the synagogue's house who said, "Your daughter is dead. Why trouble the Teacher any further?" <sup>36</sup> As soon as Jesus heard the word that was spoken, He said to the ruler of the synagogue, "Do not be afraid; only believe." <sup>37</sup> And He permitted no one to follow Him except Peter, James, and John the brother of James. <sup>38</sup> Then He came to the house of the ruler of the synagogue, and saw a tumult and those who wept and wailed loudly. <sup>39</sup> When He came in, He said to them, "Why make this commotion and weep? The child is not dead, but sleeping." <sup>40</sup> And they ridiculed Him. But when He had put them all outside, He took the father and the mother of the child, and those who were with Him, and entered where the child was lying. <sup>41</sup> Then He took the child by the hand, and said to her, "Talitha, cumi," which is translated, "Little girl, I say to you, arise." <sup>42</sup> Immediately the girl arose and walked, for she was twelve years of age. And they were overcome with great amazement. <sup>43</sup> But He commanded them strictly that no one should know it, and said that something should be given her to eat.

Aubrey de Grey is a gerontologist – a scientist who studies ageing. He believes that the first person who will live to 150 years is already alive, and the first person to live to 1000 will be born in the next twenty years. De Grey is one of many scientists who believe they will be able to stop ageing altogether, like stopping infection or disease. These scientists believe they already understand why we age, and are developing ways to counter that. In essence, these men are saying that through science and technology, we will defeat the one thing we have not been able to defeat – death. Science will make man immortal.

Or to put it another way – science will give man eternal life. The way to eternal life is not through Christ, but through human knowledge. And the wages of sin is not death, because science will make death a thing of the past.

From a Christian viewpoint, this is twisted and perverse. Adam and Eve were driven out of the Garden of Eden because they became sinners, and God did not want them to keep eating of the tree of life and living forever as sinners, cut off from God's presence. Death would be a judgement, but it would also be an escape – an escape from a cursed and sin-tainted life. And from a biblical point of view, only one Person holds the power over life and death.

**Revelation 1:18** <sup>18</sup> "I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and of Death.

That person is the One that we are to place our trust in. Modern secular people hate to hear it, but they place their faith in science, the way Christians place their faith in Christ. Science is their religion, scientists are the priests, and they place their hope, their trust, and even their worship at the feet of scientists.

When it is all over, history will show who placed their trust in the right place and wrong place. Secular atheists believe Christians are trusting in childish superstitions which science will one day sweep out the door into the dustbin of history. Christians believe that the speculations of science will prove to have been a broken stick to lean on, and a rotten bridge to cross.

Our passage today shows us in powerful detail why you do well to place your trust and faith in Jesus Christ the Son of God. As Jesus deals with the death of a young girl, we learn what sort of authority and power He has.

Remember, you are reading not fable, not mythology, but history. This is an eyewitness account, probably of Peter, related to Mark. As we read this fast-paced account we'll see Jairus' faith, how it was tested, tried, and rewarded. It was tested through a desperate situation, through delay, through depressing news, through distractions. But ultimately Christ desired faith from him, and it was rewarded in the death of death.

## **I. The Desperate Situation**

*<sup>1</sup> Now when Jesus had crossed over again by boat to the other side, a great multitude gathered to Him; and He was by the sea. <sup>22</sup> And behold, one of the rulers of the synagogue came, Jairus by name. And when he saw Him, he fell at His feet <sup>23</sup> and begged Him earnestly, saying, "My little daughter lies at the point of death. Come and lay Your hands on her, that she may be healed, and she will live." <sup>24</sup> So Jesus went with him, and a great multitude followed Him and thronged Him.*

Remember the situation? Jesus had cast out demons from a man on the other side of the Lake. The residents there had asked Jesus to leave, and so He returned. When He got back, people were waiting and soon a great crowd gathered. And from this crowd came a ruler of the synagogue, named Jairus. The ruler of the synagogue was not a rabbi. He was usually a respected, responsible man, probably wealthier, who was appointed to oversee the synagogue buildings, to make sure things were ready for worship, and basically take care of physical matters at the synagogue.

Jairus would not necessarily have been in with the Pharisees, but undoubtedly he knew that by approaching Jesus he might offend them. But it didn't matter. He was desperate.

Look at what he did. He fell at Jesus feet. He begged him. He is not worried about how he will be perceived. He wants his request to stop Jesus in His tracks, push everything out the way and become Jesus' top priority. He knows Jesus is exceptionally busy, but He wants Jesus to put everything else aside and attend to his problem. And to make his point, he literally throws himself at Jesus' feet.

Why?

He tells Jesus, "My little daughter is at the point of death". The word for *daughter* in the original language is a word that a parent uses to say, my little one. It's a term of endearment. And this little one that is so dear to him, is at the point of death. While Jesus was in the boat, while Jesus was on the other side of the Lake, Jairus saw his daughter get worse and worse. He saw the physicians shake their heads and back out the room. He paced up and down, praying, hoping against hope that Jesus would show up.

Now when he heard Jesus was back, he must have sprinted to Jesus, tunneled through the crowd and hung onto Christ's ankles, pleading with Him to come. Jairus knows one thing – if Jesus lays His hands on his daughter, she will be fine. Regardless of what the rabbis say, he knows Jesus can heal.

Isn't it strange how desperate situations drive some people to God, and drive other people away from Him? Some use the crisis to lead them to deeper faith, others use it as an excuse not to believe.

Jesus agreed and no doubt headed off at a brisk pace to Jairus' house. But along the way, as we studied last time, there was a delay.

## **II. The Delay**

The woman with the issue of blood had come to Jesus, touched Him, and Jesus had taken the time to stop, find her in the crowd, address her, have her tell her whole story, and then comfort her that her faith was well-placed and rewarded.

But all of this was taking up time. All of this was delaying Jesus' arrival at Jairus' house. You have to wonder what Jairus was feeling or thinking when Jesus stopped. Instead of running full speed to Jairus' daughter, Jesus stops, and has a conversation with this woman.

Jairus has faith, but this delay must be sorely testing his faith. Because in his mind, the way the Lord has to work is to come to the house, lay hands on his daughter before she dies. That's how his mind has worked it out. He cannot see another way and is desperate to keep things running according to plan.

At another time in Jesus' ministry there was a woman who wanted Jesus to come and heal her brother, Lazarus, who was sick. And instead of going, John 11 tells us that Jesus deliberately delayed. When he got there, Martha said, Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. If only you had got here on time.

In both cases, the delay was not accidental. God is never late. God is never early. What looks to us like a delay is actually an event which God planned, but which we did not.

*The LORD is good to those who wait for Him, To the soul who seeks Him. It is good that one should hope and wait quietly For the salvation of the LORD. (Lam 3:25-26)*

Jairus, like us, no doubt felt that he needed to keep things going to plan if Jesus was going to answer his prayer.

But they didn't.

### **III. The Depressing News**

*While He was still speaking, some came from the ruler of the synagogue's house who said, "Your daughter is dead. Why trouble the Teacher any further?"*

While Jesus is addressing the woman, while He is speaking to her words of comfort, some have arrived from Jairus' house. Jairus no doubt saw them coming and read their expressions. His worst fears have come to pass. They say to him, in effect, it's over. The thing we needed Jesus to do has slipped out of our hands. The plan has failed, and there is nothing more to be done. Don't bother the Healer any more. Come home, and let us organise the funeral.

Now think about how these people have understood Jesus. Jesus heals. He heals miraculously. He has power heretofore unknown in history. They have faith thus far, that He can heal even this deadly condition.

But now that the daughter has died, they conclude, nothing more can be done. Only living people can be healed, and since she has died, the miracle-working Healer can do nothing more.

Their error was to see only a part of Jesus. For the One standing before them was certainly a healer, but He was far more than a healer. He was the Lord and Author of life itself. He was not simply good at healing people who were living: He held life and death in His very hand.

**John 11:25** Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live:

**John 1:1-4** In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. <sup>2</sup> He was in the beginning with God. <sup>3</sup> All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. <sup>4</sup> In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.

Jairus trusted Jesus to be a healer; could he trust Him for more. That's what Jesus wants Jairus to do. He wants him to trust.

#### **IV. The Desire for Faith**

<sup>36</sup> As soon as Jesus heard the word that was spoken, He said to the ruler of the synagogue, "Do not be afraid; only believe." <sup>37</sup> And He permitted no one to follow Him except Peter, James, and John the brother of James.

Even while He is addressing the woman, Jesus has half an eye on Jairus, and hears what they say to him. And as soon as they say it to him, Jesus says, "Do not fear". The words translated *only believe* could be translated, *keep believing*. In other words, "Jairus, you believed in Me up until now. You trusted in Me to come and do a great work for your daughter. You wanted me to work a miracle. You had faith. Don't stop now. Take your faith to the next level. Keep believing."

We wonder what Jairus would have made of that. For him to keep believing must mean there is still hope. But what hope could there be now that his daughter had died? When God has allowed delays and diversions, and the whole situation looks nothing like our original plan, we need to keep believing. Is Christ Lord over desperate situations? Is He Lord over delays? Is He Lord over what looks like a deteriorating situation? Is He Lord over what seems like disaster? We don't need to understand, what we need to do is keep believing.

Remember Abraham's faith?

**Romans 4:18-22** Who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, So shall thy seed be. <sup>19</sup> And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sara's womb: <sup>20</sup> He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; <sup>21</sup> And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform. <sup>22</sup> And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness.

And now, Jesus does something which would He repeat at critical moments in His ministry - at His transfiguration, and when in the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus took just three of the twelve: Peter, James and John. These seemed to form an inner group within the group. For this miracle, none but His most trusted disciples are allowed in.

When they arrived, the scene that greeted them could not have strengthened Jairus' faith.

#### **V. The Distracting Crowd**

<sup>38</sup> Then He came to the house of the ruler of the synagogue, and saw a tumult and those who wept and wailed loudly. <sup>39</sup> When He came in, He said to them, "Why make this commotion and weep? The child is not dead, but sleeping." <sup>40</sup> And they ridiculed Him. But when He had put them all outside, He took the father and the mother of the child, and those who were with Him, and entered where the child was lying.

When Jesus arrives, He sees a tumult. That word refers to a huge uproar, a noisy clamour. It was

made up of weeping and wailing. Already, there would have been the professional mourners who would have been wailing, seeking to outdo each other in the noise and pitch of their wails. It would have been a terrible mixture of genuine weeping and professional weeping.

It's a noisy, chaotic, depressing scene.

And to this scene, Jesus asks what seems like a naïve question. “Why do you make all this noise when the child is only sleeping, not dead?” And the response is predictable- they laugh at Jesus. Why did Jesus say that?

A few options have been suggested. Some say Jesus said that because the child wasn't really dead, just mistakenly thought to be dead, and Jesus was going to heal her from her coma. Though this might seem to tie the pieces together, it is very unlikely that the Jews did not know when someone was dead. Everything in this miracle – the report of the messengers, the presence of mourners, the accompaniment of only Peter, James and John, the later reaction – all points to the child being truly dead.

Some have said that the child was in soul-sleep. That is, she was in a state where the soul is sleeping, awaiting the resurrection. Scripture however teaches that at the point of death, the soul is immediately in the presence of God or in hell. Absent from the body, present with the Lord, says Paul in 2 Corinthians 5:8.

Remember that death for believers is called sleep.

**1 Thessalonians 4:13** *But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. <sup>14</sup> For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus.*

This does not mean that they are not truly dead, nor does it mean that their souls are snoozing away. It means their bodies are awaiting resurrection. In sleep, your body is mostly motionless, even though your mind is still somewhat conscious – dream state. That's a picture of death – you are still conscious and in the presence of God, but your inert body is in the ground waiting for that day of Christ's return and awakening.

And in this little girl's case, her dead body was going to be awoken by Jesus on that very day. That's what Jesus meant, but only those who had utter faith in Him would have understood Him. Those whose faith was partial, inconsistent, incomplete or even absent, would hear in Jesus' words something ridiculous, and foolish.

Do you remember Sarah's reaction when the Lord told Abraham that she would bear him a son? She laughed. In fact, that became the son's name – Isaac means, *he laughs*.

Have you ever been tempted to laugh at the promises of God. “Sure, right, all things work together for good – doesn't seem like it to me!”

Eyes of faith respond not by trying to predict what God will do, but trusting that God will do what He said He would, even if we don't know how.

But for the privilege of seeing such glory, only those with eyes of faith get to see it.

## **VI. The Death of Death**

*But when He had put them all outside, He took the father and the mother of the child, and those who were with Him, and entered where the child was lying. <sup>41</sup> Then He took the child by the hand, and said to her, "Talitha, cumi," which is translated, "Little girl, I say to you, arise." <sup>42</sup> Immediately the girl arose and walked, for she was twelve years of age. And they were overcome with great amazement. <sup>43</sup> But He commanded them strictly that no one should know it, and said that something should be given her to eat.*

He cast all the scoffers out, and brought in only Jairus and his wife, and Peter, James and John. You can imagine the extra chaos when all the wailers and scoffers are now on the outside of a secret meeting Jesus is having.

And here we can tell that Peter was an eyewitness who gave this account to Mark, because it has all the touches of someone who saw it, and knew exactly how Jesus did what He did. Jesus tenderly takes the girl's hand, by now cold, limp and lifeless, and says to her, *Talitha, Kumi*. These are Aramaic words, the language Jesus would have spoken in Israel at the time. Mark is recording for us the exact two words that came out of Jesus' mouth. Not that they were magical, they simply meant, "Little girl, rise up".

How can we begin to imagine the glory of seeing this scene? Yeshua the carpenter's adopted son, speaking to a corpse with her hand in His, and as those words are out His mouth, suddenly her little chest inflates with air as she takes a breath, and then her head moves, and her eyes open, and she looks from face to face, recognising father and mother, not recognising these other four men. And then, remembering her terrible sickness and how it weakened her to the point of death, she now feels her muscles and body completely well. She wants to get out of this bed that has been her prison for weeks. She is up and walking.

And the response of the parents?

They were amazed. *Struck out of their senses* is the idea of the original. Amazed to what degree? Let me give you the original words: *ekstasei megale*'. Their amazement was with ecstasy, astonishment of mega-proportions. I see their mouths open, speechless in overjoyed surprise, the lump in their throat catching, as tears drop. They embrace their daughter, and then their attention turns to Jesus. Who is this? Who can do this? This is no Healer-Rabbi. This is someone else. This One speaks to the dead and they live.

He then gives two instructions: the girl must be given food, since she is probably weakened from her sickness, and this news must not be spread. How will that happen? The mourners are outside the door. Everyone is going to find out when the little girl walks out the door. Probably Jesus wanted some time to get away before news spread. He probably was also happy to leave the mourners wondering if the girl had in fact just been physically asleep, and they had all been mistaken. Either way, Jesus does not want a mob trying to make Him into their political king. Jesus wants faith, faith in His person, faith in His work to save.

Today, He wants your faith. So do the scientific atheists. They claim they can overcome death with their technologies. But they are yet to do it. There is only one Man who has done it. He did it four times in His life on earth - to Jairus' daughter, to a widow's son, to Lazarus, and to Himself.

In the end, the question is not, do you have faith? It's in what or whom will you place your faith? You can place it in the hands of atheistic scientists, who themselves will die. Or you can place it in the one who lives, who died and lives again, who hold the keys of death.