

THE HOME OF JAIRUS TO SILENCE THE SCOFFERS
THE HOME OF JAIRUS TO SILENCE THE SCOFFERS (LUKE 8:41-42,49-56)

Jairus the ruler of the synagogue had a terrible problem; he was caught between a rock and a hard place! His authority among the Hebrew congregation was unquestioned. He had ruled with dignity and honor. Every sabbath and as often as necessary he warned his people against the heretic from Nazareth who had apparently violated Jewish laws. Nevertheless, his pride and love were in conflict. His daughter lay dangerously ill, and Jesus alone offered the prospect of recovery. If he sought aid from the Healer, his job would be in jeopardy, and critics would be merciless in their denunciation. If he refrained from antagonizing the Pharisees, he would attend the funeral of his child. It will never be known how fierce the battle was within his soul before he made an irrevocable decision.

"And, behold, there came a man named Jairus, and he was a ruler of the synagogue: and he fell down at Jesus' feet, and besought him that he would come into his house: For he had one only daughter, about twelve years of age, and she lay a dying." The need was urgent, the situation desperate, but something had interrupted the journey toward the ruler's house. A woman had touched the hem of Christ's garment, and time was being wasted! if Jesus continued to interrogate people, delay might be fatal. "While he yet spake, there cometh one from the ruler of the synagogue's house, saying to him, Thy daughter is dead; trouble not the Master." The Lord overheard the remark and said, "Fear not; believe only, and she shall be made whole" (Luke 8:49-50).

The crowd was approaching the home where the tragedy had occurred, and the professional mourners were already expressing their pseudo grief. Wails and excessive sobbing endorsed the news that the child had expired. The noise subsided when Jesus said, "Weep not; she is not dead, but sleepeth." Every person present was amazed when the cries of anguish were replaced by hysterical laughter; it was disgusting and revolting when, in the presence of grieving parents, the hypocritical minstrels "laughed him to scorn." Slowly, the Savior opened the door and asked the offensive cynics to leave. Their mirth disappeared, their job was cancelled, and the frustration and bitterness was evident to all. Yet they left, for He who had cleansed the temple and expelled the money changers was determined to enforce their departure. They did not know they were in

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the presence of the Lord of life. When Jesus left that home, the girl was enfolded in the arms of her mother, and the adoring father was struggling to maintain his composure. His congregation might not be sympathetic. The Pharisees would cause endless problems, but at least his daughter was alive, and nothing else was important. Once again the great Physician had made a special house call, and the little family would always be grateful.

The Difficult Decision. . . Faith Taunted

The writers of the Gospels said Jairus was one of the rulers of the synagogue. That could mean he was a ruler of one particular synagogue to which he belonged, or he was a member of an elite company of men who supervised Hebrew jurisprudence throughout Galilee. What remains of the burned-out synagogue in Capernaum enables visitors to understand the importance of this position. A long and conspicuous stone seat placed at the front and to the left of the congregation indicates rulers sat apart from the main audience and were regarded with esteem and honor. When circumstances demanded, these elected officials were responsible for the instruction of young people. They were in charge of the sacred rolls and

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responsible for the maintenance of the sanctuary. They offered advice and guidance to the community and in matters of vital importance gave counsel to individuals. Their decisions were irreversible; there was no court of appeal. All matters of internal unrest were referred to the ruling body of elders who were expected to maintain high standards of spiritual morality.

Jairus was a ruler of a synagogue, and all these conditions applied to him. When the teachings of Jesus appeared to challenge the Hebrew faith, it would have been his duty to warn the congregation of consequences which followed heresy. No one ever questioned the sincerity of the man whose child was known throughout the area. When the girl was threatened by death, her father was placed in a very difficult situation. It was not easy to forget the advice he had given to others, but it was terrible to watch the suffering of his adored child. How could he seek assistance from Jesus when his congregation remembered his earlier denunciations? It was exceptionally hard to decide what he should do. He either had to preserve his honor or lose his child. The rich young ruler chose between wealth and discipleship and refused to abandon his money. The ruler of the synagogue was forced to choose between his child and

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local popularity. The world now knows the daughter was raised because her father knelt! "He fell down at Jesus' feet, and besought him that he would come into his house" (Luke 8:41).

A Disturbing Delay... Faith Tested

Language could never express the ruler's happiness when Jesus granted his request. He wanted to run all the way home. When the party came to a halt, the man wondered why Jesus had paused on the roadway. "And a woman having an issue of blood twelve years, which had spent all her living upon physicians, neither could be healed of any, Came behind him, and touched the border of his garment: and immediately her issue of blood stanchèd. And Jesus said, Who touched me? When all denied, Peter and they that were with him said, Master, the multitude throng thee and press thee, and sayest thou, Who touched me? And Jesus said, Somebody hath touched me: for I perceive that virtue is gone out of me" (Luke 8:43-46).

Possibly the Lord only paused for a few minutes, but to the worried parent the delay seemed endless. Why could not that woman have chosen another time to seek assistance? His daughter was dying; the need was critical and urgent. What if she expired before the Healer arrived? During those terrible moments the faith of that father was severely tested. Then the dreaded event happened. "While he yet spake, there cometh one from the ruler of the synagogue's house, saying to him, Thy daughter is dead; trouble not the Master" (Luke 8:49).

During such moments doubt sometimes overwhelms the soul. When clouds fill the sky, it is easy to forget the sun continues to shine. The man was exceedingly anxious, "But when Jesus heard it, he answered him, saying, Fear not: believe only, and she shall be made whole" (Luke 8:50). All the miracles of the Savior carried His hallmark of kindness. Had he hastened to the home of Jairus, an impoverished woman would have been denied the pleasure of meeting her greatest Benefactor. Even the delays of the Lord are proof of His care. Circumstances may suggest God is sometimes forgetful, but in moments of distress He is never far away.

The Deadly Distraction... Faith Threatened

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They had reached the street in which Jairus resided, and the unusual noise indicated tragedy had devastated one of the homes. The mourners who were always hired for such events were already

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at work; their wails of grief echoed through the street, and people were listening and waiting to see anything spectacular. Describing the scene, Matthew wrote, "And when Jesus came into the ruler's house, and saw the minstrels and the people making a noise .. (see Matt. 9:23).

"In the later part of the Old Testament paid professional mourners, generally female, take an important place in the mourning rituals. Known as 'mourning women' or 'skillful women' (see Jer. 9:17), 'cunning women' or as 'singing women' (see 2 Chron. 35:25), these individuals embellished the funeral rites with skillfully contrived dirges and eulogies (see Amos 5:16). Sometimes they were accompanied by flutes. Their office was passed on from mother to daughter (see Jer. 9:20)" The Zondervan Encyclopedia of the Bible, vol. 4 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1976), p. 306.

These people who were completely insensitive to the grief of the family listened to the words of Jesus and laughed him to scorn. It was disgusting that they filled a house of sadness with hysterical mirth. It may never be known whether payment was made for their abominable performance, for before they could complete the dirges, the Savior expelled them. Throughout those tragic moments the troubled Jairus listened and watched. Maybe earlier fears returned to ask, "What will happen if Jesus cannot do what I require? What will my colleagues say and think if after all this my daughter is buried?" The Lord was aware of those fears. "For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust" (Ps. 103:14). God never whips His children in an effort to make them follow Him; He prefers to hold out His arms and say, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matt. 11:28). Christ knows when faith is being tested; when danger surrounds us, "underneath are the everlasting arms." Probably the Lord expelled the scorers, "But when he had put them all out" (Mark 5:40), because He desired to safeguard the future of the ruler. Later "he charged them straitly that no man should know it; and commanded that something should be given her to eat" (Mark 5:43). Since the critics were biased, the less they knew the better for all concerned.

The Delightful Deliverance. . . Faith Triumphant

"And he took the damsel by the hand, and said unto her, Talitha cumi, which is, being interpreted, Damsel, I say unto thee arise. And straightway the damsel arose, and walked; for she was of the

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age of twelve years. And they were astonished with a great astonishment. And he charged them straitly that no man should know it; and commanded that something should be given her to eat" (Mark 5:41-43).

Perhaps the father was unable to speak. His eyes were filled with tears. His arms were now around his restored child. Amazement was spreading among all who had witnessed the miracle. They were excited, and even the people in the street were astonished. The Preacher had done the impossible. 'Talitha cumi' is Aramaic for "Maid, arise," and it seems strange to find this little bit of another language squeezed in among other words in the Gospel. Mark probably learned from Peter these unforgettable words as the Lord had spoken them, so Peter and Mark reproduced them. The parents were overjoyed. The others were excited, but, with care so charac-

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teristic of the Friend of children, Jesus remembered that little girls can be hungry! He commanded that she be given something to eat. Doubtless His command was obeyed, and when the parents saw their child happily eating what was provided, their cup was full and running over. Thus did the Lord reward a man, who, throwing aside his preconceived notions, desperately asked for help. "No good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly" (Ps. 84:11).

"Perhaps the Lord commanded the parents to refrain from broadcasting the news of the miracle because He knew His enemies would endeavor to make this event another cause for sarcastic comment. If they were capable of laughing when the parents were breaking their hearts, they might also say the girl was never dead! The entire episode could become an object of ridicule as embittered men accused the parents of being sensationalists, fools, people who hastily jumped to conclusions. There are times when silence can be golden" (taken from the author's commentary, Mark's Superb Gospel, Kregel Publications, 1985, p. 147).

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