

LIFE-GIVING POWER

Matthew 9:18-19, 23-26

Mark 5:22-24, 35-43

Luke 8:41-42, 49-56

The question of power is important in every realm of life. If the wheels of industry are to turn, there must be power. If the body is to be kept under control, there must be power. If the preacher is to preach, there must be power. If the saint is to serve, there must be power. If the sinner is to be led to Christ, there must be power. If anything worth-while is to be done in the home, in the church or in society, there must be power. The what and how of power is, therefore, an interesting and an important matter for study.

After our Lord had returned to the western shore of the Sea of Galilee, having just come from healing the Gadarene demoniac, a crowd was waiting for Him. Among the crowd was one who was tortured with agony as he was waiting and watching for the boat to land, for on the moments hung the life of his beloved child. The name of this father was Jairus.

Jairus held a position of honor. He was a ruler of the synagogue at Capernaum, of which the ruins are still to be seen. This ruler, with a sad heart, quickly approached the Saviour and fell down at His feet. He was in great distress because of the critical illness of his twelve year old daughter, who was his only child. This shows us that even the greatest men are helpless in many respects. The fact that he was a ruler in the synagogue is a proof of the estimation in which he was held by the community to which he belonged. The word ruler indicates position, power, influence and personal supremacy of one kind or another. Yet, here he is coming to Christ for help. There is a point at which all human might becomes utter weakness.

In addition to being an outstanding leader, Jairus was a kind and loving father. He dearly loved his daughter. She was the light of her father's eyes and the joy of his heart. Even as a child, she rejoiced to see her father come home, and he smiled with joy when she came running, jumping and skipping to meet him. Having become ill, she grew weaker day by day, until it appeared that she was going to die. At least she was beyond human help. But, her loving parents still had hope for her. Their hope was in Christ. If Jairus had not been quite sure that Christ Jesus could heal her, He would not have been willing to leave his daughter at death's door to seek Him out. Nothing short of an absolute conviction of Christ's power to heal would have taken Jairus away from his daughter's bedside. Believing that Christ had power and could heal his daughter, Jairus sought out the Lord Jesus and earnestly pleaded with Him to come to his home, saying, "Come and lay Thy hands upon her, that she may be healed; and she shall live."

After listening to the entreaty of the broken-hearted father, with the tenderness and compassion that were always characteristic of Him, Christ set out at once to give the blessing that was sought and requested. This journey on which He went with Jairus was no ordinary one. It was an exclusive mission of divine ministry.

Accompanying Christ and Jairus on this journey were the disciples of our Lord and vast crowds of people. The Master was exceedingly fond of crowds, for He was always delighted to bless as many as possible. What a beautiful picture is this of our Saviour in the fulness of grace, and

in the beauty of redeeming love, traveling everywhere, in the house, by the wayside and on the crowded streets, His ears open to the cry of human woe, and His hand ever ready to help. This particular concourse of people accompanying Christ simply wanted to see a miracle performed. They were just sight-seers and gossipmongers. They were curious and eager to see what the Lord would do or fail to do.

On the way, as the crowds thronged Him, a woman who was suffering from a constitutional illness, having learned that Christ was traveling that way, said in her heart, "Perhaps He could do something for me." She promptly endeavored to reach Him. While He was delayed in conversation with this woman, whom He healed, a messenger came from the ruler's house and said to Jairus, "Thy daughter is dead. Why troublest thou the Teacher any further?" That was a very sad report which was made to that loving father.

A sympathetic imagination will help us to understand what all this meant to Jairus. His daughter was twelve years of age, which meant that he had had twelve years of sunshine in his home, twelve years of the music of her feet as they had pattered, and twelve years of the sweeter music of the lips that had prattled. Now those feet were still, and becoming icy, and the lips were silent. Before Jairus had a chance to speak a hopeless thought, Christ spoke to him saying, "Be not afraid, only believe." This call demanded that he banish fear and exercise faith. It suggested that there was a reason for hope.

Christ did not permit but three of the apostles to follow Him and Jairus on their momentous mission to the home where the precious daughter lay dead. They were Peter, James and John. The work on which He was entering was so strange and mysterious that those three only, the flower and the crown of the apostolic band, were its fitting witnesses.

When the Lord Jesus and this small group arrived at the home of Jairus, they found there a motley crowd of neighbors and hired mourners making a perfect tumult of noise, according to the custom prevalent among Jews on such occasions. The hiring of mourners, who wail and beat upon their breasts, is still customary in Palestine, and there are women in nearly every community who are exceedingly cunning in this business. These are kept in readiness, and when a fresh group of sympathizers comes in, they take up such a wailing that the newly arrived may more easily unite their tears with the mourners.

As Christ and His company entered the house He said, "Why make ye this ado, and weep? the damsel is not dead, but sleepeth," meaning that her decease would be no more than a temporary sleep. Those in the house who heard His declaration "laughed him to scorn, knowing that she was dead." More than that, they claimed to know that no one could ever raise her from the dead. That was the cause of their scorn and laughter. That sort of thing is the trouble with many people today--they simply regard theories as facts. Men still reject Christ, and dismiss Him with scorn and ridicule.

In the presence of their laughter and ridicule Christ in quiet majesty put the whole company outside. He did not argue with them. He knew perfectly well that no human argument could demonstrate to them the accuracy of His vision. There was only one thing to do, and that was to exclude them. The presence of this crowd of turbulent mourners was inappropriate and superfluous. They were mourners for the dead, and He was not going to permit the girl to remain in that condition. He certainly did not have any intention of permitting those scorers to witness her resurrection. He never cast pearls before swine at any time in His ministry. He would not

suffer those who had derided Him to be spectators of the miracle He was about to perform.

Then Christ and His disciples and both parents of the girl "entered in where the damsel was lying." He took with Him and the father and mother persons sufficient to attest the miracle. He favored the believing parents with admission to behold it. Surrounded by sympathetic souls, in the presence of the dead, the parents believing, hoping against hope, and the three witnesses chosen because of their preparedness of spirit, Christ spoke His word of power and the damsel was restored to life. He simply took the corpse by the hand and said, "Talitha cumi! Maid, arise!" The little girl opened her eyes, looked up, arose and walked again in perfect health. As Luke said, "And her spirit came again, and she arose straightway." A dead person had come to life again.

Truly Christ had called her back to the world and all its circumstances. Knowing that she had returned to the earthly level, and needed sustenance for her continued existence, Christ commanded them to give their child food to eat. Although she had been restored to life by a miracle, she was to be kept alive by having the proper nourishment. Therefore, He commanded them to give her food, because in the ecstasy of their hearts at receiving her back to life this very commonplace matter might be forgotten even by her fond and devoted parents. His command to give her food was intended to supply a physical need. It also calmed the apprehensions of the parents and convinced all who knew about it that Christ had adequate power to grapple with death.

The spiritual teaching of this miracle is not far to seek. It declares that it is Christ alone Who can raise us from the death of sin to the life of righteousness. He quickens those who are "dead in trespasses and sins."

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Sunday School Lesson

For February 4, 1951

By H. C. Chiles

THE MIGHTY WORKER

Mark 5:21-24, 38-43

This lesson is about the mighty power of Christ and the wonderful use which He made of it. In a most effective manner, Mark sets forth Christ's power over demons, over disease, and over death. He portrays Him only as the matchless teacher but also as the mighty worker of miracles.

Having been requested by the Gadarenes to leave their country, Jesus re-crossed the sea to the western shore in Galilee, where a great multitude met Him. A multitude was ever ready to gather about Him because of His gracious words and His wonderful deeds. Curiosity drew many to Him, but their responsibility was all the greater from hearing His teachings and seeing His works.

I. A Pleading Father. Mark 5:21-24.

Into the midst of this throng of curiosity seekers, there came Jairus, a ruler of the synagogue and a member of the party which was so hostile to Jesus. Jairus was in serious trouble and great sorrow. His position did not exempt him from trouble. In fact, trouble is a visitor in every home, regardless of how securely that home may be established on wealth or social position. In his case, the light of his house was going out and the comfort of his heart was fading away because his only daughter, who was just twelve years of age, was at the point of death. Any person who has had a similar experience can well understand the anguish of his heart. Children strike their roots deep into our hearts and when they are torn from us our whole beings are rent.

Everything that earthly care and human skill could do for the girl had been tried, but to no avail. Although her condition was very critical, Jairus had the conviction that the Lord Jesus could help her.

In his need, and with some knowledge of the miracles Christ had wrought, this loving father turned to Jesus. As an act of deep respect and genuine reverence, he assumed the position of an humble suppliant by dropping upon his knees

and bringing his forehead to the ground at the feet of the Master. Note that, even in his distress, he approached Christ with due respect. There is altogether too much familiarity in the approach of many to the Lord in these days. Listening to some prayers today, and hearing people refer to Him as "you", one could easily get the idea that the Lord Himself is but a man, and not a very dignified man at that.

Jairus had faith in Christ's power to heal, but he was not certain about His willingness to do so, hence the urgency in his entreaty. On His face before the Lord, with intense earnestness and in the fewest possible words, this anxious father presented his case by saying, "I pray Thee, come and lay Thy hands on her, that she may be healed; and she shall live." This is the sort of cry which always arrests the attention of our Lord and brings blessings from His hands.

Despite the fact that the needy multitudes surrounded Him, the sympathetic, loving, and gracious Saviour did not brush Jairus aside. Leaving the throng, Jesus went immediately with the troubled father to restore his little daughter. On the way to the house, a woman, who for twelve years had been a sufferer from a hemorrhage, approached Jesus. Fondly clinging to life, she had gone to numerous physicians, who had done their utmost for her, but her case defied their skill and ability. Although no one else had been able to help her, she was fully persuaded that Jesus could and would heal her. With modesty, she made her way through the crowd, came up behind Jesus, stooped down, and nervously and appealingly touched the kraspedon on His robe or the tassel on the hem of His garment. Seeing her need of healing and her desire for the same, Jesus permitted her faith to lay hold upon His heart and power in such a way that she got what she desired.

We can imagine the impatience of Jairus at this interruption. His daughter was dying when he left home, so every minute was precious in his sight. To him all this time was lost in healing a woman whose case had lasted twelve years, and might well have waited an hour longer, and in listening to her explanations.

II. A Powerful Friend. Mark 5:35-43.

While the party was enroute to the home of Jairus, a courier brought the information that the girl was dead, and then made a suggestion that Christ not be troubled any further. Surely if ever

a man's faith was tried, it was the faith of that poor, father, who reasoned, "Oh, that the Master had not delayed by the way!" How difficult it is for people to learn that His delays are not necessarily denials!

Lest the man's faith might suffer eclipse, Jesus uttered these encouraging words, "Be not afraid, only believe." These words mean, "Do not be discouraged at these tidings, and do not distrust My power to help you." These encouraging words from Christ and His continuance toward his house strengthened Jairus against despair, even though he did not know what the Lord might do.

On their arrival at the home the neighbors were making a great ado. The hired mourners, chiefly women, were already there, weeping and wailing. Their mourning was a source of income to them. Jesus told the crowds assembled there that she was not dead, but asleep, thus giving His view of death. To Him she was only asleep, but to them she was dead, therefore, they laughed and jeered at Him. Someone is always laughing at the wrong time, but laughs disprove nothing.

Putting all the professional mourners out, Jesus took Peter, James, John, and the parents of the child into the room where the corpse was lying. The simplicity with which He performed this miracle is startling. Taking the child by the hand, He said unto her, "Damsel, I say unto thee, arise." At His command, the spirit entered the lifeless corpse and immediately she arose and walked, just as she had done prior to her illness and death. The disciples and the parents were amazed at such a signal instance of the power of our Lord. We cannot imagine the joy of those parents or estimate their gratitude to Him for doing this mighty work in restoring their daughter to life.

As surely as our Lord presented this child to her parents, He can save any sinner who trusts in Him and bring him into the family of God. As tenderly as He ordered food given to her, He will look after one's spiritual being, and provide the proper food for spiritual growth. Christ is sufficient for all our needs, and He is exceedingly anxious to supply them.

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