

Jesus' Power over Death, Part 2

Scripture: Matthew 9:23–26

Code: 2266

INTRODUCTION

A. The Peril of Death

Nothing is more wonderful than to know that Christ has conquered death. The writer of Hebrews tells us that Jesus came to "destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver them who, through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage" (2:14b-15). In other words, he says that men live their entire lives subject to the fear of death, but Christ has come to deliver them from that fear.

Death is the specter that haunts every person's life--the longer you live, the more inevitably it looms in the future. To know that Christ has conquered death, however, is the ultimate joy. Yet, for most of the world, they have no such knowledge, and therefore they fear death. I suppose the man who seemed to be most at peace in my lifetime was Mahatma Gandhi. He seemed to have absolute tranquility of soul, knowing nothing of fear. Fifteen years before his death, Gandhi wrote, "I must tell you in all humility that Hinduism, as I know it, entirely satisfies my soul, fills my whole being, and I find a solace in the Bhagavad and Upanishads that I miss even in the Sermon on the Mount." Then, just before his death he wrote this: "My days are numbered. I am not likely to live very long--perhaps a year or a little more. For the first time in fifty years I find myself in the slough of despond.

[Evidently, he must have been reading the Christian classic, *Pilgrim's Progress*.] All about me is darkness; I am praying for light." Even Mahatma Gandhi, who seemed to have his life in order, saw his confidence falling apart as he began to face the inevitability of death.

B. The Power over Death

Death looms on the horizon of every individual's life. How marvelous it is to realize then, that Jesus came to conquer death. That is made clear in such passages as...

1. John 5:21, 24, 26--"For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and giveth them life, even so the Son giveth life to whom He will.... Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth My word, and believeth on Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life.... For as the Father hath life in Himself, so hath He given to the Son to have life in Himself."
2. John 11:25-26--"I am the resurrection, and the life; he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live. And whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die...." In other words, Jesus claimed to have power over death.
3. John 14:19--"...Because I live, ye shall live also."
4. 1 Corinthians 15:54-57--The work of the Messiah was to conquer death. The Apostle Paul said that the resurrection of Christ took the sting out of death, giving victory over the grave.
5. Revelation 21:4--Ultimately, the Messiah would bring about an eternal state where "there shall be no more death."
6. Matthew 11:3-5--As the Messiah, Jesus was demonstrating His power over disease, disablement, and death. John the Baptist was concerned to know if Jesus was truly the Messiah. Therefore he sent a couple of his disciples to find out: "Art thou He that should come, or do we look for another? Jesus answered and said unto them, Go and show John again those things which ye do hear and see: The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up...." Those credentials help us to know that He is the King.

REVIEW

Wanting us to understand that Jesus is the Messiah, Matthew has presented the miraculous power of Jesus in chapters 8 and 9 over disease, disorder, and death. Besides seeing his power, we also learn how Jesus dealt with people.

I. JESUS WAS ACCESSIBLE (v. 18a)

Everywhere Jesus went, there was a mass of humanity crowding around Him. We always see Him surrounded by people throughout the book of Matthew, as the following phrases show: "And there followed Him great multitudes of people..." (4:25a); "When He was come down from the mountain, great multitudes followed Him" (8:1; cf. 12:15; 19:2; 20:29; 21:8). In other words, Jesus was accessible to people who came with questions to be answered and needs to be met.

II. JESUS WAS AVAILABLE (vv. 18b-19)

In the midst of the crowd, Jesus focused upon a man and a woman. He was not only accessible so that you could attend His meetings; He was also available so that you could face Him individually. He responded to individual people: He touched a leper, He went home with a centurion who had a paralyzed servant, He touched a woman with a fever, He cast a demon out of some men, He healed a paralytic, and He responded to...

A. The Request of Jairus (v. 18b)

1. His Position

A ruler of the synagogue came to Jesus with a great need: his daughter was at the point of death. He also expressed great faith in that he believed that Jesus could bring her back to life.

2. His Prostration

The ruler demonstrated his saving faith by worshiping Jesus. Although worship can be hypocritical (Mt. 18:26) and self-seeking (Mt. 20:20), it can also be genuine. Note the cases of...

a. The Disciples in the Boat After Jesus had walked on the water and calmed the wind, "then they that were in the boat came and worshiped Him, saying, Of a truth, Thou art the Son of God" (Mt. 14:33).
b. The Woman of Syrophenicia We can also see true worship in Matthew 15:21-28: "Then Jesus went from there, and departed into the borders of Tyre and Sidon. And, behold, a woman of Canaan came out of the same borders, and cried unto Him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, Thou Son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a demon. But He answered her not a word. And His disciples came and besought Him, saying, Send her away; for she crieth after us. But He answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel. [Jesus was explaining that the priority of His ministry was to offer the Kingdom to the Jewish people.] Then she came and worshiped Him, saying, Lord, help me. But He answered and said, It is not right to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs. And she said, Truth, Lord; yet the dogs eat the crumbs which fall from their master's table. Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith...." She knew as a Gentile that she didn't deserve the Messianic blessings meant for Israel. Her persevering faith adorned the true worship she offered to Jesus.

3. His Pleading

Similarly, I believe that the ruler of the synagogue offered Jesus real worship, believing that He could heal and even raise the dead. Such faith was greater than that of the disciples, who were rebuked a few times for having "little faith" (Mt. 6:30; 8:26; 14:31; 16:8). If the disciples had little faith, but were saved in spite of it, then certainly the ruler's greater faith must have been adequate for redemption. He had a deep need and great faith, two elements that elicited...

B. The Response of Jesus (v. 19)

III. JESUS WAS TOUCHABLE (vv. 20-22)

A. A Desperate Search (vv. 20-21)

A woman, who had been declared unclean by Levitical law, had been ostracized from society because of an illness she had suffered from for twelve years. She sought healing by touching the tassels of Jesus' garment as He walked with the crowd to Jairus' house.

B. A Double Solution (v. 22)

1. Physical Healing

She came with the humility that was later exemplified by Sir James Simpson. When he lay dying, a friend wished to comfort him and said, "James, soon you will be able to rest on the bosom of Jesus." "Well, I don't know that I can quite do that," Simpson replied, "but I do think I have got hold on the hem of His garment." Not wanting to be exposed in her embarrassment and shame, the woman reached out to touch Jesus in the jostling crowd and was immediately healed (Lk. 8:44). And Jesus, sensitive enough to know the difference between the jostling of the fickle mob and the grasping of a faithful soul, perceived that power had gone out from Him (Lk. 8:46). That tells me that Jesus was so much a channel of the Father's will, that the Father could heal through Him before He even knew who was being healed. He had come to do the will of Him who had sent Him (Jn. 5:30). His intense sensitivity allowed Him to discern between the thrill seekers who pressed against Him out of curiosity, and people who hung on in desperation and faith.

Jesus responded to the woman's seeking heart by granting her a...

2. Spiritual Healing

In addition to the woman's physical healing, Jesus, in effect, pulled her out of the crowd and said, "There's something else: Your healing didn't have anything to do with your faith--that was a sovereign act of God. However, your faith has saved you."

She was saved from the horrors of her disease, but the use of the Greek word *sozo* implies that there was also a redemptive issue involved.

Completing our review, let us consider the redemptive element in being "made well":

a. Mark 10:46-52 "And they came to Jericho; and as He went out of Jericho with His disciples and a great number of people, blind Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus, sat by the wayside begging. And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out, and say, Jesus, Thou Son of David; have mercy on me. And many charged him that he should hold his peace; but he cried the more, a great deal, Thou Son of David; have mercy on me. And Jesus stood still, and commanded him to be called. And they call the blind man, saying unto him, Be of good comfort; rise, He calleth thee. And he, casting away his garment, rose and came to Jesus. And Jesus answered and said unto him, What wilt thou that I should do unto thee? The blind man said unto him, Lord, that I might receive my sight. And Jesus said unto him, Go thy way; thy faith hath made thee well [lit. 'saved thee'; Gk. *sozo*]. And immediately he received his sight, and followed Jesus on the way." I think in that case the word *sozo* indicates that not only was the man healed, but he also received salvation. He had the kind of faith that was sufficient to save his soul: He believed that Jesus was the Lord, the Son of David (a Messianic title).

b. Luke 7:44-50 "And He turned to the woman, and said unto Simon, Seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house; thou gavest Me no water for My feet. But she hath washed My feet with tears, and wiped them with the hair of her head. Thou gavest Me no kiss. But this woman, since the time I came in, hath not ceased to kiss My feet. My head with oil thou didst not anoint. But this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment. Wherefore, I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much. But to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little. And He said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven. [That woman demonstrated so much love and respect for Christ that He redeemed by forgiving her sin.] And they that were eating with Him began to say within themselves, Who is this that forgiveth sins also? And He said to the woman, Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace." The latter phrase uses the same verb *sozo* that the previous passages involving healing use. However, no healing occurred in this last passage; only the forgiveness of sin. That is why the phrase, which clearly speaks of the woman's salvation, also

speaks of the salvation that accompanied the healings of other people.c. Luke 17:14-19 Ten lepers came to Jesus "as He went to Jerusalem..." (v. 11). "And when He saw them, He said unto them, Go show yourselves unto the priests. And it came to pass that, as they went, they were cleansed [Gk. *katharizo* = 'to be washed, cleansed']. And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God, and fell down on his face at His feet, giving Him thanks; and he was a Samaritan. And Jesus, answering, said, Were there not ten cleansed? But where are the nine? There are not found that returned to give glory to God, except this stranger. And He said unto Him, Arise, go thy way; thy faith hath made thee well [or, saved thee; Gk. *sozo*]" It's one thing to be cleansed (*katharizo*); it's something else to be saved (*sozo*). There was a healing of ten but only one was saved. I believe that when *sozo* is used in a healing context, it implies a redemptive aspect, because we know that faith is not necessary for healing. There are many non-Christians who have diseases but still get well, and there are Christians who die. Sometimes God honors our faith by healing, but He always honors our faith by saving us. Not only was He accessible, available, and touchable, but...

IV. JESUS WAS IMPARTIAL (v. 22a)

"But Jesus turned about, and when He saw her, He said, Daughter, be of good comfort..."

A. The Standard of Choice

When Jesus turned around to face that woman, He showed that He was impartial. He could have said, "Look lady, could you let go of My tassel? I'm trying to get to the ruler's house. If we can get this guy converted who runs the synagogue, we can have a revival in this town. So please let go; I have something very important to attend to." No, God has never looked for the superstars, and the famous people; He's always been content with simple folks. The Bible says that the prophet Isaiah predicted when the Messiah would come, He would preach the gospel to the poor (61:1). Paul said that "not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called; but God hath chosen the foolish things...the weak things...and base things...and things which are despised..." (1 Cor. 1:26-28). Christians constitute a motley crew.

B. The Sovereignty of Choice

1. Considered

I was reading a very interesting book called *Fearfully and Wonderfully Made* written by Dr. Paul Brand and Philip Yancey. In it they talk about how the people of God are such an unlikely bunch to be saved. They quote from novelist Frederick Buechner, who said: Who could have predicted that God would choose not Esau, the honest and reliable, but Jacob, the trickster and heel, that he would put his finger on Noah, who hit the bottle, or on Moses, who was trying to beat the rap in Midian for braining a man in Egypt and said if it weren't for the honor of the thing he'd just as soon let Aaron go back and face the music, or on the prophets who were a ragged lot, mad as hatters most of them...? And then Dr. Brand adds: The exception seems to be the rule. The first humans God created went out and did the only thing God asked them not to do. The man He chose to head a new nation known as "God's people" tried to pawn off his wife on an unsuspecting Pharaoh. And the wife herself, when told at the ripe old age of ninety-one that God was ready to deliver the son He had promised her, broke into rasping laughter in the face of God. Rahab, a harlot, became revered for her great faith. And Solomon, the wisest man who ever lived, went out of his way to break every proverb he so astutely composed. Even after Jesus came the pattern continued. The two disciples who did the most to spread the word after His departure, John and Peter, were the two He had rebuked most often for petty squabbling and muddleheadedness. And the apostle Paul, who wrote more books than any other Bible writer, was selected for the task while kicking up dust whirls from town to town sniffing out Christians to torture. Jesus had nerve, entrusting the high-minded ideals of love and unity and fellowship to this group. No wonder cynics have looked at the church and sighed, "If that group of people is supposed to

represent God, I'll quickly vote against Him." Or, as Nietzsche expressed it, "His disciples will have to look more saved if I am to believe in their savior." (Fearfully and Wonderfully Made [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1980], pp. 29-30)

We are a motley crew, aren't we? But we all have this in common: we have a sense of desperate need and we have faith to believe in Christ. Even though Jesus was on His way with the ruler, He impartially stopped to bring salvation to an outcast. As Peter said, "...God is no respecter of persons" (Ac. 10:34). Paul adds that in God's eyes, "there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female; for ye are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:28). Jesus dealt with the woman not from a distance, but in an intimate and tender way, saying, "Daughter, be of good comfort..." (v. 22). What impartiality! It's clear that Jesus loved people. A little outcast lady was as important to Him as the ruler of a synagogue. May God deliver us from playing up to the "respected" people and ignoring the needy.

2. Contrasted

In the book, *A Night To Remember*, Walter Lord tells about the sinking of the Titanic in 1912. When the tragedy was published in *The American*, a New York newspaper, the article focused almost entirely upon John Jacob Astor, a millionaire who had drowned. Eighteen hundred other people also drowned, but typically, the world is only interested in the rich and famous. Not so with Christ. If you learn anything from our passage in Matthew, learn not only how powerful Jesus is, but also how accessible, available, touchable, and impartial He is. That's how it is with God, and that's how it should be with those who represent Him.

V. JESUS WAS POWERFUL (vv. 23-26)

We can express the first four characteristics of Christ, but that is where it stops for us. I can sympathize with you and hold out my hand to help you, but if you're sick, I can't heal you. If you're dead, I can't raise you. Christ's power sets Him apart from all others. Let's examine the passage depicting Jesus' power by first considering...

A. The Ranting (v. 23)

"And when Jesus came into the ruler's house, and saw the musicians and the people making a noise"

By the time Jesus had arrived at the house, the girl was dead and a funeral service was in progress. The noisy racket was quite different from what we are used to in a funeral home within our culture. Three basic things went on at a Jewish funeral:

1. The Rending of Garments

Ripping one's clothes was symbolic of one's grief. The Talmud contained thirty-nine different rules and regulations on how to rip your clothes. For example, a person had to do it while he was standing up, and over or near his heart. The rip had to be big enough to stick a fist through, and it had to be left seven days. For the next thirty days it could be loosely stitched and then afterwards, sewn permanently. In order that women not expose themselves in an indiscreet manner, they would rip their undergarment, wear it backwards, and then rip their outer garments in public.

2. The Wailing for the Dead

Professional wailing women would be sent for and kept in readiness. They would learn the domestic history of the whole family, and bring up names of those who had recently died, trying to touch some tender chord in every heart.

3. The Playing of Flutes

The third element in Jewish mourning was the use of musicians. The Talmud specifically called for flutes: "The husband is bound to bury his dead wife and to make lamentations and mourning for her according to the custom of all countries. And also the very poorest among the Israelites will not allow her less than two flutes and one wailing woman; but, if he be rich, let all things be done according to his qualities."

Jairus was probably well off and his house would be filled with flutes, people ripping their clothes, and mourners wailing incessantly. Flute playing also accompanied mourning in the Roman world. Seneca wrote that there were so many flute players at the funeral of the Emperor Claudius that Claudius himself probably heard them.

B. The Ridicule (v. 24)

"He said unto them, Give place; for the maid is not dead, but sleepeth. And they laughed Him to scorn."

When Jesus saw the musicians and heard the people making all that noise, He said, "Go away. The girl is not dead; she's only sleeping." Some of those present laughed in His face: "What is He saying? He must know that she's dead; it's been reported already. Does He think He is going to raise her from the dead?" But Jesus meant that they could not treat her death as a true death--but rather as sleep--because it would be so temporary. The implication was that Jesus would raise her from the dead, and that brought scornful laughter. Such abrupt laughter shows you that those wailing were paid mourners. They could cry for the child or laugh at Jesus in an instant. Their laughter was the hard laughter of mockery, as when a person laughs at someone they consider inferior. That verb is only used in this story and by all three Synoptic Gospel writers. It is the kind of scornful laughter reserved for mocking a fool. In their eyes, only a fool would think he could raise her from the dead. Although the crowd in Capernaum had seen other miracles, they still didn't believe in Christ. He showed that He was well aware of the fact that people who see miracles don't necessarily believe in Him. At another time He said, "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead"(Lk. 16:31).

C. The Resurrection (v. 25)

"But when the people were put forth, He went in, and took her by the hand, and the maid arose." Mark's gospel records that He said to her, "Talitha cumi" (5:41), which means "Little girl, arise." And when the girl arose, "her parents were amazed; but He charged them that they should tell no man what was done" (Lk. 8:56). Evidently, they couldn't resist telling the wonderful news about how "her spirit came again" (Lk. 8:55)--proof that she was once dead and that Jesus had brought her back to life. Jesus didn't have to touch the little girl with His hand. He could have just said a word to heal her, but it is the way of God to be tender and loving.

D. The Result (v. 26)

"And the fame of this went abroad into all that land."

You can imagine what people said about Him: "He has power over disease, He has power over disorders, and He has power over death--He can redeem. With those words Matthew reaches a pinnacle in his presentation of the power of Jesus Christ.

CONCLUSION

Jesus Christ is the One who holds the keys of hell and death (Rev. 1:18). For that reason, we have no need to fear death. The poet put it this way: "No longer must the mourners weep, nor call departed children dead. For death is transformed into sleep and every grave becomes a bed." As a young man, D. L. Moody was called upon suddenly to preach a funeral sermon. He decided that he would hunt the gospels to try to find one of Christ's funeral sermons, but he searched in vain. He found that every time Christ attended a funeral, He broke it up by raising the person from the dead! And so Christ never gave a funeral sermon. When the dead heard Christ's voice, they immediately sprang to life.

We should rejoice in death because Christ has conquered it for us. He who would not leave His "Holy One to see corruption" (Ps. 16:10), will show us the path of life. In His presence is fullness of joy and at His right hand are pleasures forevermore (v. 11).

I think Arthur Brisbane captured the picture of a funeral from a Christian perspective: He pictured a crowd of grieving caterpillars, all wearing black suits, mourning as they carried the corpse of a

cocoon to its final resting place. Above them fluttered an incredibly beautiful butterfly. Christ gives us hope, and it's a great hope, isn't it? The only thing that can sustain us is knowing that Jesus, our Savior, has power over death.

Focusing on the Facts

1. When men don't know that Christ has conquered death, what are they subject to (Heb. 2:14-15)?
2. Matthew 14:33, 18:26, and 20:20 each portray worship that is either hypocritical, self-serving, or true. Determine what type of worship is identified in each verse and explain why.
3. How did the woman of Syrophenicia demonstrate great faith?
4. What was the Father able to do through Him without His knowing it? Why (Lk. 8:44-46)?
5. What are the evidences for the salvation of Bartimaeus (Mk. 10:46- 52), the woman who anointed Jesus' feet (Lk. 7:36-50), and the leper (Lk. 17:14-19)?
6. How did Jesus demonstrate His impartiality in healing the woman in Matthew 9:22?
7. What type of people might someone unfamiliar with God's ways expect Him to use? Instead, whom has God chosen, according to 1 Corinthians 1:26-28?
8. What lesson did Peter learn in Acts 10:34?
9. Although Christians can reflect most of Jesus' attributes discussed in Matthew 9:18-26, what attribute sets Him apart from everyone else?
10. When Jesus had arrived at the ruler's house, what was taking place? Why? What are some of the cultural practices that people observed at such a time?
11. Why did the people ridicule Jesus at the ruler's house?
12. If people wouldn't believe in Jesus after He performed a resurrection, whom had they already rejected, according to Luke 16:31?
13. How did the parents of the girl react to Jesus' power, and what was the result?
14. Why did Jesus never preach a funeral sermon?

Pondering the Principles

1. Meditate upon John 5:19-29 and then answer the following questions:
 - a. Can the Son act independently of the Father?
 - b. According to verse 21, what can both the Father and the Son do?
 - c. What authority has the Father given to the Son? Why?
 - d. What is granted to the one who hears the Word of Christ and believes in the Father?
 - e. When Jesus raises the dead, what two resurrection options will people face?If you are a believer, honoring the Father and the Son, give thanks to God that you will take part in the resurrection of life.
2. Having considered Jesus' impartiality, read James 2:1-13. Are you following Jesus' pattern of impartiality with your children, your parents, your neighbors, your employees? Do you subconsciously give preference to those you can benefit the most from? If so, how can you begin to show equality of interest and concern to those you may have intentionally or accidentally overlooked? Praise God that He didn't look upon your wealth, your wisdom, or anything else you could offer Him when He chose you to be a child of His.

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