

## “The Unclean Made Clean by Faith”

*Series: Jesus and His Gospel: Studies in Mark – Part 15*

*Mark 5:21-43*

**Introduction:** Take your Bibles and turn to Mark 5, Mark chapter 5.

Have you ever been drawn into some new health craze where the reports on the commercials are all about people shedding weight and having a better complexion and a healthier digestive system and just overall better health? Well, I have. I remember one time when we were living in PA I had seen an advertisement for this new miracle solution which promised greater health if you would just try it out. Its claim was based upon the thought that bad digestive health was a result of the parasites that we supposedly pick up through various means in the normal course of life. They used some incredible statistics to bolster their point, and as I read the article the hook was set. I could totally see where I had some of the symptoms they were describing and obviously they must know what they are talking about. But I didn't just buy into the idea that my symptoms must be because of these parasites they described, no, that wasn't enough – I was convinced that this was my problem and that this solution they were selling was the only answer. And so I ordered the miracle solution and anticipated its arrival. Soon after it showed up I opened the package and read the directions. I had to mix this nasty Metamucil like substance into a glass of water every morning a half hour before my breakfast and await the little miracle solution to do its trick. And so I faithfully partook of my miracle solution day in and day out. At first I was really anticipating great results. I always knew in the back of my mind that this was probably a hoax, but I was comforted by the 90 day money back guarantee. A few days into my experiment my mom was at our house for a visit – my mom who at the time was completing over 25 years as a Registered Nurse – yeah, needless to say, she was not impressed with the idea. It didn't take me too many days of choking the miracle solution down to realize that either parasites were not my problem, or I had bought into a raw deal! I had bought into their idea. I read their testimonials. I heard of Randy in Illinois who lost 40 pounds, and Joe in Florida who lost 25 pounds in 8 weeks, and Carol in Washington who was feeling so much better and had lost 10 pounds in 3 weeks. I believed that these results could be brought to my life if I would just step over the threshold of my skepticism and decide to buy the miracle solution.

In our text in Mark 5 Jesus is confronted by two people who needed his help. They had heard of his healing capability, they had seen those who had been rescued from serious disease all because this Rabbi from Nazareth had healed them. They heard and saw, and they believed Jesus could help them. But unlike my miracle solution that was going to finally solve all of my health concerns that panned out to be a hoax – Jesus was no hoax. He proves himself to be able to heal. Let's read mark 5:21-43.

After the stilling of the terrible storm on the Sea of Galilee, most certainly some of those boats that were with the disciples that night had returned to Capernaum and reported to the masses the amazing miracle – how with 2 words he had stilled the storm and brought a great peace. You can imagine the crowd gathering on the shore as they spot the familiar ship of Jesus and his disciples cresting the horizon of the lake headed for shore. As had been the custom of the crowds he was once again being mobbed, but into the heart of this scene come Jairus – one of the leaders of the synagogue in Capernaum. Being a leader in the synagogue meant that he was a well-respected man in the community. He had influence and obviously money. He is in the upper echelon of the social strata. But on this day, his entrance into the midst of the crowd was not to flaunt his power, or to use his influence, or to insert his greatness. On this day, he was a desperate man in need of Jesus' help. And so he falls before the Lord and tells him that his little daughter is on her death bed, but he is confident that if Jesus can just lay his hands on her she will be healed and live. Jesus goes with the man, and on the way, another desperate soul finds Jesus and seeks his healing touch. The text tells us that she was from the opposite end of the spectrum from Jairus. In fact, she has no money because she has spent it all on health care costs. She doesn't even have a name in the text. She is not respected in the community, but rather because of her discharge of blood she is considered unclean by the Mosaic Law and is not to have any contact with anyone. But on this day, just like Jairus, she inserts herself into the crowd, and more importantly into the ministry of Jesus and seeks his healing. And though there is great contrast between these two individuals, there is also great similarity. They are desperate for Jesus to help them. In both cases the unclean are female – Jairus' daughter, and the woman who touched Jesus' garment. Both are referred to as daughter in the text. Both of them are made clean by the healing touch of Jesus. The woman had been struggling with the discharge of blood for 12 years, and the girl is 12 years old. In both cases Jesus is rebuked and mocked for something that he says.

But the greatest similarity to be found is faith. Both Jairus and this woman had heard the reports about Jesus, and they both believed that Jesus could help them and so in an act of faith they sought him out. Both Jairus' and the unclean woman's faith was incomplete and immature, but it was faith nonetheless. And it is this faith in Jesus that is the focus of the passage. The confidence of Jairus in the ability of Jesus to heal his daughter is ravaged when he is met by a messenger telling him that his daughter has died and he should no longer bother the teacher. What does Jesus say in response in verse 36? "Do not fear, only believe." In other words, Jesus is not only to help sick people, but he can also cure dead people. But this will require the faith of Jairus to persevere through this news of his daughter's death – Jesus is able, only believe. With the unclean woman, there was a mob of people who were pressing up against our Lord constantly. As he walked to Jairus' house he had been touched by many different people, and yet the text is explicit to tell us that it wasn't until the woman touched him that he felt power leave him as she was healed of her disease. Obviously the difference maker was the woman's faith. It was an immature and incomplete faith, but it was faith.

Now, we have talked several times about faith in our study of the book of Mark. Most recently we saw helpful lessons about faith as we studied the response of the disciples to the storm on the sea. So, there is a little bit of risk here this morning that you will think we are talking about a familiar topic and kind of tune out. Or there may be the temptation to assume that your faith in God is solid and needs no help. But may I remind you that faith sits at the foundation of your daily walk with God. Faith is not merely the foundation stone which signifies your initial trust in God for salvation and then can be built upon by other things. No, faith in God must be strengthened and established as it is said in Colossians 2.

- <sup>6</sup> Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, <sup>7</sup> rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving. (Col. 2:6-7 ESV)

As we walk in Christ Jesus the Lord we are rooted and built up in him and established in the faith. May that be true of us today as we consider Jesus! May we see all the more how to walk by faith so that we may be further established in the faith.

As we consider these two desperate souls in Mark 5 I want to make this point to you - As desperate souls, we must place our faith in Jesus. Let me flesh that idea out to you by making three points of explanation about faith.

### **I. Faith is Compelled By Desperation**

- a. The first of these is that faith is compelled by desperation. Jairus and this woman are in times of deep desperation. Luke tells us that this is the only daughter of Jairus. She was so sick that Jairus knew the end was near. In fact, the slight delay of Jesus by the interaction with the woman guaranteed that this girl would die – in other words, this was no misdiagnosis – she was deathly ill.
- b. And desperation also filled the heart of the woman with the discharge of blood, and for good reason! She had been dealing with this health problem for 12 years. Verse 26 tells us that she had suffered much under many doctors. She had spent all that she had looking for a cure from these doctors, and yet the issue had not gotten any better – only worse. Isn't it somewhat encouraging to know that some things never change? Doctors were not the infinite and all-powerful answer in the 1<sup>st</sup> Century, and they aren't that today either. As hard as medicine tries, sometimes there is just nothing it can do. And this left this lady in a desperate situation. For 12 years she had been unclean because of this discharge. For twelve years she had been relegated to the fringes of society because of her health issues. For twelve years she had paid one medical bill after another for a cure that never came.

- c. But these desperate times were the fertile soil of faith. These moments where answers were elusive and solutions through human means didn't come – these moments proved to be fertile soil for faith.
- d. You see Jairus would have never found himself prostrate on the ground before Jesus until his only daughter lay on her death bed. If things were good and right and fine in his life he never would have thrown himself before Jesus in faith seeking his help.
- e. The same is true of the woman. She would have never imagined herself in a large crowd pushing her way aggressively through, her unclean body rubbing up against people at every turn, just for the chance to touch a rabbi's garment. But 12 years of suffering with ever decreasing health exasperated her to the point of being willing to do this. She was shouldering through the crowd because she was desperate.
- f. Desperation often puts us in a situation where we are willing to set aside our cultural and religious and social inhibitions in order to search for a solution.
  - i. *Illustration:* I will never forget the sun-soaked day of July 4<sup>th</sup>, 2010. It was a quiet day at our house. We didn't have any plans for the 4<sup>th</sup> so we decided to drive 40 minutes to Lancaster, PA's fireworks display. As we entered Long's Park we saw a sea of people, easily 10,000 plus people spread across acres of beautiful green grass dotted with trees. On the way through the crowd to find a spot to put our stuff and claim our turf we passed a playground. Our boys at the time were 4 and 6 and so playgrounds were the hottest thing around. The only problem with this playground was that there were so many kids playing on it, it looked like a school of piranhas devouring its prey. But like good parents we promised we would bring them back. And so in a matter of minutes I found myself walking on the ground as my 4 and 6 year old boys played on the playground. They had to stay together and I was keeping a watchful eye – what could go wrong? Well, sure enough, the boys started to go across a bridge type thing and Zach noticed that his shoe was untied and so he sat down to tie his shoe. I yelled to Micah to wait for us, but he kept going and was soon out of sight. I figured he would wait on the other side for us and we would find him in a few seconds. As we finally got to the other side – there was no sign of Micah. Certainly he just went back to the beginning – I'll just go back there and he will be there – still no sign of Micah. With Zachary in toe I picked up my pace as I cruised around the crowded playground looking for Micah. I checked every slide every hiding spot, every swing – still no Micah. I checked them again. I started running around the playground as my anxiety increased with each step – still no sign of Micah. So I then decided I needed to take Zachary back to Julie so that I could look more effectively for Micah. And I had to deliver some of

the worst words a father ever has to say to a mother – I have lost your son. At the time of this incident Julie was 8 months pregnant with Lauren, and Ashleigh was just a year and a half old. As those words crossed my lips the panic of the situation hit us both. Julie quickly asked the people on the neighboring blanket whom we didn't even know to keep an eye on our other two children so that we could find Micah. We were quickly putting aside all societal and cultural inhibitions in search for our son. My very pregnant wife was running around the playground screaming at the top of her lungs in search for Micah. I was dashing in and out of the crowd on my way to a nearby playground to see if he had wandered over there. The desperation of the situation quickly overcame all inhibitions and I was soon willing to do whatever it took to find my son. And in the midst of my desperation I have never prayed without ceasing like I did in those moments. "Please God – help us!" "Please God – keep him safe!" As every possible evil outcome raced through my mind my level of desperation rose. With each passing minute that Micah wasn't found I was sure we had lost him forever. But then I heard it over the loudspeaker – 4 year old boy with a green baseball t-shirt has been found and he is at the white First Aid tent. Thank you God!

- g. The point is, our desperation provided fertile soil for faith. Never have I been so aware of my need for God's intervention than in those moments. Never have I felt so helpless and so hopeless than in those moments. Never has my heart been so willing to fall in worship before my God and cry out to Him for help and salvation. Faith is compelled by desperation.
- h. How vital for us then to look for desperate souls. Part of our strategy in sharing the Good News of the Gospel should be to look for those who are especially aware of their great need. Maybe they are facing some financial or physical crisis. Maybe their marriage is faltering, maybe their kids are rebelling, maybe their job is in question – whatever the desperate situation – as believers in Jesus Christ we must remember that desperate soils are fertile soil for faith. And as ambassadors of reconciliation we must be bold and clear to share the hope found only in Christ that supersedes the momentary desperation and give hope in light of eternal desperation of sinful mankind.
- i. But we must not just be on the lookout for desperation in unbelievers. Part of what we are to do as members one of another is to encourage one another and build one another up. So, part of what we as members of the body of Christ are to do is to look for those in desperate circumstances around us, knowing that these can cause us to falter in our faith, and we need to be the voice of encouragement – don't fear brother, don't fear sister – only believe. God is able. God is powerful. God is worthy of your trust. These desperate moments that confront our brother or sister must be met by our encouraging voice – "trust God, brother!"

## II. Faith is Reasoned

- a. Faith is also reasoned. So, faith is compelled by desperation, but faith is also reasoned. By this I simply mean that faith and reason go together. Faith in God is a partner of reason. Many think of Christian faith as a blind faith or as an unreasonable faith. Many look at the nature of faith and think that reason must be cast aside in order for faith to be active. In other words, if you are to express faith in God then you must check your brain at the door and just believe.
- b. But that is not what is happening here in the text. Jairus reasoned within himself about the facts. The facts were, Jesus had proven himself to be able to heal all kinds of illness. Jairus' daughter was suffering from some kind of illness of which there was obviously no other possibility of a cure because she was on her death bed. Therefore, Jesus should be implored to come and heal his daughter. This a logical sequence, but yet it is not simply a logical sequence. So look at what he says in verse 23 – “Come and lay your hands on her, so that she may be made well and live.” There is not only logic in this. There is logic in the sense that he had seen and heard of Jesus doing this before, but there is also faith in the sense that he is asking Jesus to do something that no other man can do. No other physician can come and simply lay his hands on his daughter and make her well. This is faith. Faith and reason go together.
- c. The woman with the discharge of blood is very similar. Verse 27 tells us that she had heard the reports about Jesus and so based on what she had heard she reasoned that if he can heal a leper and make a lame man walk and heal a withered hand, then certainly he can heal her. She reasoned that if she just touched his garment then she would be made well. And yet this is a statement of faith as well. So this is certainly no scientific formula – diseased woman plus the touch of the garment of another equals total healing! There is an aspect of this that reason alone cannot explain. Her faith did not check reason at the door, but her faith was not based simply upon reason. So there are two errors to be avoided here – the error of thinking that faith is completely absent of reason and the error that faith is the same thing as reason. As Ravi Zacharias has said:
  - i. “God has put enough into the world to make faith in Him a most reasonable thing, and He has left enough out to make it impossible to live by sheer reason or observation alone.”
- d. Jairus and this woman in Mark 5 had been given plenty of reasonable things to lead them to look to Jesus as their only hope in the face of sheer desperation, but reason and logic alone would have kept them from actually seeking him like they did. It required belief in Jesus' ability to actually bring healing to them.
- e. Along these lines I want you to notice that their faith was immature and incomplete. The woman in particular had a faith that believed in the possibility of Jesus' healing. She so believed in this possibility that she pushed through a crowd she would have normally had nothing to do with. But she still viewed Jesus as one

more option. Granted it may have been her final option but he was just one more option. And yet she still exercised this faith and found Jesus and touched him.

- f. At the moment of that touch her faith and Jesus were brought together and this brought healing. It was not her touch that healed her, but rather her faith, and this is what Jesus is drawing out in verses 30-34. Having sensed that healing power has gone out from him he turns and asks who it is that touched him. Well, there were many who were touching him – as Mark already said in verse 24 – a great crowd thronged about him. It was a silly question which drew the sharp criticism of the disciples – what do you mean – who touched you? Look around – who hasn't touched you?
- g. But the others who were touching Jesus were not touching him as a means of seeking His healing. Jesus knew full well who it was who had touched him and who it was who had been healed. We know this because in verse 32 it says that he looked around to see who had done this thing. This sounds pretty open ended like he is simply scanning the crowd to see whoever it was who might have done this. But the Greek is much more specific here. Greek words can make distinctions between masculine and feminine through the type of ending they have. Both the article before the word for “who” and the verb for “had done” have a feminine ending. In other words, Jesus is not looking for a generic who, he is looking for a specific lady whom he knew had done this thing.
- h. Why go through this hassle? Why put this lady through the embarrassment of having to publicly admit that she had touched the Lord because she was seeking his healing from a discharge of blood? Why not just look back and give her a wink and let her be on her way? Because Jesus was maturing her faith. He was drawing out the confession from her mouth that she had already made with her action. He was making known to all that were in the crowd, and to us, that reason propels faith and that Jesus is the source of hope and healing. Jesus was making known that faith makes us well, not some superstitious touch of a garment. It was not the garment that had healed her – it was Jesus who had healed her and she needed to have that made known to her, and so did everyone else around her.
- i. So, our faith in Jesus Christ is a reasoned faith. It is not an illogical faith based in some illogical hope that some religious ritual or superstitious act will actually bring salvation. Faith that saves has as its object the person and work of Jesus Christ, for it is obvious and logical and reasonable that he alone is able to save.

### III. Faith is Worshipful Not Demanding

- a. Our faith in Jesus must also be worshipful and not demanding. It would be easy to read this text and see here a pattern for how Jesus works throughout all ages. So, it would be easy to look at this and say – well, look at how Jesus responded to faith when Jairus and this woman put their belief in Him. He healed them completely of their problem and so Jesus just wants us to put our faith in Him and then he will respond with healing and salvation. Some will use their

supposed reason here and say that because Jesus responded to Jairus and to the woman's faith with the healing they needed, then we must logically conclude that our faith in Jesus will guarantee his healing touch.

- b. This thought has gone so far in our so-called "Christian" world today that a large segment of Christians have bought into the "name it and claim it" mentality. They reason that we are not getting what we want from God because we do not have enough faith. We must simply speak a word of faith and command the mighty hand of God to do for us what we desire. Among the many problems with this, it is a total misunderstanding of faith. Faith is not demanding, faith is worshipful.
- c. Look at Jairus. His approach to Jesus was worshipful. Even though he was revered in society he had been humbled by his affliction and so he fell on his face in worshipful request before the Lord. The woman with the discharge of blood did not charge into the crowd commanding the Lord to do for her what she wanted. Rather when Jesus asked for her confession of faith she did not boldly proclaim her own faith and flaunt it as though she had been answered because of her great faith. Rather, she fell on her face before the Lord and confessed her great need and confessed her hope in Jesus to save her.
- d. You see, demanding from the Lord what we desire is not true faith. True faith is worshipful. It is worshipful because it is based in reason. It is born in a heart that sees in part the glory of God and the majesty of his person. It is born in a heart that understands the desperation of the condition and the total lack of hope apart from Divine intervention. Those who demand things from the Lord are denied their request in the Scripture. Jesus will be accosted by many throughout his ministry who will demand a sign on the spot as proof that he is the Messiah – but every time he refuses. Why? Because faith that God is pleased to answer is faith that is worshipful not demanding.
- e. At the end of the narrative Jesus strictly charges those who were allowed into the room to witness the resurrection of this girl from the dead to not speak of what they saw. Of the many reasons Jesus told them not to go out and proclaim it from the rooftops that he had just raised Jairus' little girl from the dead, the one reason that stands out is that Jesus did not want to draw attention to the miracle of the moment. He did not want them proclaiming from the rooftops that Jairus' daughter had been raised from the dead because Jesus wasn't on earth to perform miracles. His main goal in his earthly ministry was not to heal as many people as he could. He was on earth to provide for the greatest miracle of all – the salvation of souls from the penalty of sin. These miracles along the way were validation that He was indeed the Son of God and they were a foretaste of the cleansing that is offered in and through this Jesus of Nazareth. So, really, what good is it if Jairus' daughter is raised to life again if that is all that there is to this? Jairus' daughter is not alive on this Earth today is she? Therefore, she eventually died again. So, what is the long-term benefit to this resurrection in Mark 5 if that is all

this is about? But that is not all that this is about. This is a foretaste of the eternal victory over death that is only found in Jesus.

- f. So, we should not see in Mark 5 a pattern of Jesus' power to heal us of temporal disease and problem if we will just place our faith in Him. Rather we should see in Mark 5 the power of Jesus to bring eternal cleansing and eternal victory over death. The reality is, all of us will suffer from physical trial and tribulation, and often God will not remove that from us – does this mean that we do not have enough faith? Not necessarily – this means that God's sovereign control over all things which is guided by his love for you and for others has determined to allow this physical suffering in your life. But the text of Scripture points you to the Savior who not only heals temporal disease, but ultimately he heals us of our eternal disease by grace through faith in Him.
- g. So, see in this text a call to express faith in Jesus in the face of your desperation. For those of you who are not yet Christians I call you to come to Jesus in faith this morning. He alone is able to raise your soul from its dead condition. He alone is able to give you life and freedom from sin. He alone is able to provide the forgiveness and healing because He alone has paid it all on the Cross of Calvary. We can be made whole because he has been touched with our infirmity and our disease. We can be pure because he was made unclean for us. Do you believe this? Have you acted on it by putting your heart's trust in Him alone to save you from your sins?

**Conclusion:** For you Christian brother or sister, this passage is a call to a maturing faith. None of us have perfect faith. All of us need to be more and more established in our faith. So, from this passage what does maturing faith look like?

- Growing Awareness of Desperation resulting in Growing Faith
  - It will look like a growing awareness of your desperation and this should result in a growing and more mature faith. You see the life of faith is not made up of a crisis of desperation where we exercise faith in God and then long seasons of relative peace where we can pretty much just move along through life followed by another crisis at some point where faith is necessary again.
  - No, a growing and maturing faith will have an enlightened eye that will perceive the desperation we face in every moment. Our concern for God's intervention will go far beyond being healed by a physical disease or rescued from a physical affliction. Our concern for God's intervention will soon be evidenced in our knowledge of our need for Christ's grace in each moment. We will grow to understand – not just in our heads, but in our hearts and in our real life experience – we will grow to understand and practice that as Jesus said – without me you can do nothing.
  - Is this your faith this morning Christian? Do you express faith in Jesus in crisis moments, or do you have a growing awareness of your need for Jesus in every moment?

- Growing Blend of Faith and Reason
  - Your maturing faith should also be marked by a growing awareness of the trustworthiness of God. In other words you should be able to explain better now why it is logical and reasonable for you to put your faith in God than you could 5 years ago.
  - And yet, this growing comprehension of the trustworthiness of God must be coupled with a growing expression of faith in God. So you will not simply know the reasons why you should trust God, but a maturing faith will act upon the reasonableness of this faith and will actually express this faith in God. Fear will find little sway in your heart as you grow in reasoned confidence in God's trustworthiness.
- Growing worship filled with action and absent of demand
  - Your maturing faith should also be marked by a growing heart of worship that propels action and is absent of demand. So mature faith is not found in the Word faith movement or the name it and claim it movement. Mature faith is found in those who fall down before the Creator and Maker of all and humbly ask Him for help and healing. Mature faith will compel us to act on the belief that God is able to intervene, but it will not be presumptuous and demanding of God. This kind of mature faith is concisely expressed by Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego when they faced certain death in the fiery furnace because they would not disobey Yahweh God and bow down to Nebuchadnezzar's idol. In the face of the severest affliction, the threat of being thrown into a fiery furnace, they expressed mature faith this way –
    - <sup>17</sup> If this be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of your hand, O king. <sup>18</sup> But if not, be it known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up." (Daniel 3:17-18 ESV)
  - They had full confidence in God's ability to deliver them. They were even sure that he was going to, and they were going to act based on that faith, but they were not presumptuous of God. In other words, they knew that God might not choose to save them for whatever reason he deemed best. And so they wanted to Nebuchadnezzar to know that even if they died in the fire it was not because Yahweh God was not God. There was no other God, whether or not Yahweh God chose to act as they had faith that He would.

Let's pray.