

“According To Your Faith”

Matthew 9:18–31

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Matthew 9:18–31 says [18] *While he was saying these things to them, behold, a ruler came in and knelt before him, saying, “My daughter has just died, but come and lay your hand on her, and she will live.”* [19] *And Jesus rose and followed him, with his disciples.* [20] *And behold, a woman who had suffered from a discharge of blood for twelve years came up behind him and touched the fringe of his garment,* [21] *for she said to herself, “If I only touch his garment, I will be made well.”* [22] *Jesus turned, and seeing her he said, “Take heart, daughter; your faith has made you well.”* *And instantly the woman was made well.* [23] *And when Jesus came to the ruler's house and saw the flute players and the crowd making a commotion,* [24] *he said, “Go away, for the girl is not dead but sleeping.”* *And they laughed at him.* [25] *But when the crowd had been put outside, he went in and took her by the hand, and the girl arose.* [26] *And the report of this went through all that district.*

[27] *And as Jesus passed on from there, two blind men followed him, crying aloud, “Have mercy on us, Son of David.”* [28] *When he entered the house, the blind men came to him, and Jesus said to them, “Do you believe that I am able to do this?”* *They said to him, “Yes, Lord.”* [29] *Then he touched their eyes, saying, “According to your faith be it done to you.”* [30] *And their eyes were opened. And Jesus sternly warned them, “See that no one knows about it.”* [31] *But they went away and spread his fame through all that district.*

We will also be looking at a parallel passage of this in Luke 8. We have a great challenge before us as we think of the assignment to go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature. How many people are in the world? You have something like seven billion. How many of those have never heard the Gospel in their own language? It is probably about two billion therefore quite a few still have never really heard but those who have heard, many of those are not true believers. So we have a big job before us. Then there is our country with its moral decline and its decline in many other ways. We are supposed to do something about that. We are to be salt and light. We are to have an impact on the culture. We have a big job to do. We think of the generation coming along and our children growing up. What are they going to face? We have a big job.

When we see these three situations where there is the man, Jairus whose daughter has died, the woman who has been hemorrhaging for twelve years and these two blind, just let them represent the need all around us and the challenge that Jesus gives in each case to believe and according to your faith shall it be done unto you as a real key to us to tackling the challenges before us. Let's start by looking at the first situation.

There is Jairus and his daughter's situation. Matthew 9:18 says [18] *While he was saying these things to them, behold, a ruler came in and knelt before him, saying, “My daughter has just died, but come and lay your hand on her, and she will live.”* When you read the other gospels you find that when he comes to Jesus she is at the point of death but while he is talking with Jesus someone comes and says she is dead. In Luke 8:49–50 it says [49] *While he was still speaking, someone from the ruler's house came and said, “Your daughter is dead; do not trouble the Teacher any more.”* [50] *But Jesus*

on hearing this answered him, “Do not fear; only believe, and she will be well.” Jesus challenges Jairus to trust Him and believe.

When we talk about believing in Christ the first thing we have to believe is the Gospel. We have to put our faith in Jesus Christ as God the Son who died for us. That is no small thing. I pastored a church for a year in Oxford, Alabama while I was in seminary in Atlanta and I wasn't a Christian. My problem was I didn't believe in Jesus Christ. It's always good if you can become a Christian before you get out of seminary. Here is what I believed. I believed that Jesus Christ was God the Son who always existed who at a point in time became man and was fully God and fully Man who lived under the law, kept it perfectly, then went to the cross to die for our sin, like someone would do to pay your fine in court, that He rose from the dead, ascended to heaven and one day He was coming back. That's what I believed but I didn't believe in Jesus Christ.

The difference in believing about Jesus and in Jesus is that believing in Jesus we put our trust in Him as our approach to God for our forgiveness. When I went to seminary I went out of a two-fold motive. One is that I believed God wanted me to go from various things that had happened in my life but two, I thought I had been so bad that if I'm going to get to heaven I'm going to have to be a preacher. Notice what I'm trusting in here. It is my improved record and not Christ's death. I believed He died for me but counting on my improved record is earning my way into heaven. I had totally missed that salvation is by grace and that it's a gift.

After I had been in seminary for a year I knew something wasn't right. I didn't feel like asking my congregation how you can be sure you're a Christian or any of my professors but there was an air force Chaplain at the seminary doing some post graduate work. I was in the Naval Air reserves and he would go flying with me so I felt free to talk with him. I asked him, “Joe, what does it mean to believe in Jesus Christ?” He gave me a track with that title written by a pastor up in Canada and it wasn't just believing about Him but trusting in Him. The Greek word *pisteuó* which is translated ‘believe in’ means rest all your weight upon Him, rely on Him, trust Him and I began to realize that I trusted in my improved record. I just shifted my trust from my improved record to Christ.

When I did that my life began to change pretty dramatically because when we surrender our will to Him in true repentance and that part for me happened when I was in the service where I really started to get serious about trying to do His will and when I went to seminary. We have to surrender our will to Jesus Christ. Jesus said to His disciples in Matthew 16:24–26 [24] *“If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. [25] For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. [26] For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what shall a man give in return for his soul?”* So we have to repent and put our faith in Christ. Surrender and trust.

When we do that we are then legally cleared. We are justified. We actually get Christ's record credited to us and we're adopted into God's family. He is our heavenly Father. [12] *But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.* (John 1:12) That is settled. That is tremendous and that's where we start but then we want to appropriate the power that is at work in us.

When you get married the two become one flesh but when you become a Christian God's Holy Spirit unites with your human spirit. Jesus told His disciples that

He would leave, go to the Father and He would give them another comforter in John 14. John 14:16–17 says [16] *And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, [17] even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you.* They had the Holy Spirit since they had become Christians but they were going to get a greater indwelling of the Spirit starting at Pentecost. Since Pentecost everybody who becomes a Christian starts off with that greater indwelling of the Spirit.

Jesus says I will not leave you comfortless for I will come to you. He would come through the Spirit and dwell in them and produce fruit through them. In John 14:12 Jesus says [12] *“Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father.”* The Father will give you another comforter, the Spirit of Truth in whom the world cannot receive. So He would come and live in us and do these works through us.

So we can do a greater work than Him? What could be greater than raising Lazarus from the dead? Which is a greater miracle, a physical resurrection like Lazarus or a spiritual resurrection where you lead someone to Christ and they pass from spiritual death to spiritual life? Passing from a spiritual death to spiritual life is a greater miracle, a great work and He uses us to do this in the process. We are instruments for that. What a privilege to be used like that if we'll step out to appropriate what we have as Christians and start really bearing the fruit there.

Matthew 9:20–22 says [20] *And behold, a woman who had suffered from a discharge of blood for twelve years came up behind him and touched the fringe of his garment, [21] for she said to herself, “If I only touch his garment, I will be made well.” [22] Jesus turned, and seeing her he said, “Take heart, daughter; your faith has made you well.” And instantly the woman was made well.* So here is the restoration of the woman with this discharge of blood that plagued her.

Think on this. She just wanted to touch Jesus. Here He is with this crowd all around Him and she had been so weak from this hemorrhaging. She has to fight her way through this crowd and she believes if she just touches His garment she'll be healed. Here you are at the Auburn Alabama game and you want to touch the Auburn coach. You would have to fight your way through the crowd to do that and that is something she had to do. Finally she touches Jesus and she is healed. It's amazing to see Christ's reaction there. He says “Take heart, daughter, your faith has made you well.” Instantly the woman was made well.

Here is Luke's account of this in Luke 8:42b–45 which says [42b] *As Jesus went, the people pressed around him. [43] And there was a woman who had had a discharge of blood for twelve years, and though she had spent all her living on physicians, she could not be healed by anyone. [44] She came up behind him and touched the fringe of his garment, and immediately her discharge of blood ceased. [45] And Jesus said, “Who was it that touched me?” When all denied it, Peter said, “Master, the crowds surround you and are pressing in on you!”* If you were at the Alabama Auburn game and the coach said “Who touched me?” I'd say “Who didn't touch you?” That is basically what Peter is saying here to Jesus.

Luke 8:46–48 says [46] *But Jesus said, “Someone touched me, for I perceive that power has gone out from me.”* (It's almost like Jesus didn't will it to be that way yet I hate to read into it that way.) [47] *And when the woman saw that she was not hidden, she*

*came trembling, and falling down before him declared in the presence of all the people why she had touched him, and how she had been immediately healed. [48] And he said to her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace."* Again, it is your faith here.

Here is the key. He challenged the ruler to just believe. A man comes and tells him his daughter is dead and Jesus says to just believe. Here He says to the woman your faith has made you well. It is the importance of us trusting Him. Think about this. There were many sick people around in the crowd and she was healed but many of them didn't. The difference was her faith. She appropriated the power available. It's not that He has to have our faith but normally He chooses to channel His resources to us in response to faith in a sense.

There is the feeling that there is something real significant here. The key to great resources that are available to us, being appropriated is us trusting Him. It is stepping out in faith, tackling things in faith. If it was a matter of Him being here in a crowd and me fighting my way through the crowd to get to Him to touch Him then I'd do that but He's not here. Is that right? He is here He is just not here physically but He's here. We do what she did when she laid hold of those great promises that we have in Scripture.

Some promises in Scripture are when Jesus said in Matthew 7:7–8 which says [7] *"Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. [8] For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened."* Then there is the promise in Matthew 28:18–20 which says [18] *And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. [19] Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, [20] teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."* I'll be with you and empower you, He says. Then there is the promise in Acts 1:8 which says [8] *"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."*

Over and over in His Word are His promises to us. I also think about Peter when he is in the boat and sees Jesus walking on the water in the storm. Matthew 14:28–30 says [28] *And Peter answered him, "Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water."* [29] *He said, "Come."* So Peter got out of the boat and walked on the water (he starts appropriating power) and came to Jesus. [30] *But when he saw the wind, he was afraid, and beginning to sink he cried out, "Lord, save me."* Here is lack of appropriation of power on Peter's part when he began sinking. His focus shifted from Christ and his relation to Christ to the storm and his relationship to the storm. His faith goes down and he quits appropriating the power. We have to have our focus on Christ and trusting Him. We want to learn to do this.

How do you develop faith like that? God gives us saving faith. He uses His Word and faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God. Someone shares the Good News with us and God has to open our mind and heart. It says that Satan blinds men's hearts unless the light of the Gospel shines in. ([4] *In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.* (2 Corinthians 4:4)) We have to open our mind and heart. God opens us to the Gospel. Then our faith develops in us

when we focus on the promises and then as we hear how others have applied them. Then we step out in faith and our trust grows.

This Air Force chaplain that led me to Christ in seminary also disciplined me, not in a formal way but once a month he'd take me to a Christian bookstore in Atlanta and told me to read these biographies of these particular Christians, like Hudson Taylor, George Mueller, Amy Carmichael of all these Christians who had stepped out with God and God had done dramatic things in their lives. As I read those biographies my faith grew and I was moved to step out in various ways.

Then I took a course in seminary called 'Realization of the Spiritual Life.' This professor shared how when he was a pastor that his church had an evangelistic series for a week and the guest evangelist preached and that night Dr. Gooskey got the officers together and said "we need to pray about this thing." The guest evangelist said he felt there was some barrier to communication and he wanted to pray that God would remove any barriers and loosen him up. Dr. Gooskey said 'shouldn't we pray about some other things as well.' One wanted to see the church filled because he hadn't seen that since he had been there. Another said they'd like to see someone get converted. So they decided to pray for three goals; that there would be no barrier to communication and the evangelist would be loosened, that the church would be filled at least one night during this series, and 30 people would get converted in that week and join the church on profession of faith.

So they prayed that way and felt God would answer them. The next night the evangelist got up to preach and in the first five minutes everyone knew he was loose. The crowds began to build and the last the church was packed. He preached and gave the invitation to come forward to accept Christ and 30 people came forward to join the church on profession of faith. That really influenced me and I took that tape so when I started Briarwood I played it for our officers when we were starting Briarwood and we set some financial goals. God answered in amazing ways.

Then I was asked to speak at a General Assembly in our denomination and I shared that there and there was a young man there. His problem wasn't financial but he was starting a church up in Virginia. His problem was that there were no young people in the church that had children and when a family with young children would come to church they wouldn't stay because there weren't any other children. So he applied it to that he got his officers to pray with him that God would bring one family with young children once a month for the next six months and stay. I didn't know about that but about a year or two later he asked me to come speak and he told me about it. He said that for the next six months one family a month with young children came and stayed and when I got there were many families with young children. Hearing how others have done it, stepping out, trusting God and exercising faith is what we need to do.

In one of the early years of our church we were having an officer's retreat and one of the officers named Bill Steelgal asked that we set a goal in people coming into full time ministry in our church. They talked about it and decided to ask God to bring forth one person a month into full time ministry either here or overseas in the next year. That was a big goal and more than all the previous years combined. Every Sunday morning I would stand in the pulpit and say "God, we as a congregation are asking You to call forth an average of one person a month into full time ministry with at home or overseas this

year.” The officers would pray and other groups in our church would pray. At the end of the year 13 had gone.

The following year we set a goal of 15 and at the end of that year 17 had gone. The following year we set a goal of 21 and at the end of the year 22 had gone. The following year we set a goal of 27 and at the end of the year 28 had gone. The following year we set a goal of 36 and at the end of the year 28 had gone. The following year we didn't set a goal for that deal was up. I was speaking at a church in Jackson, Mississippi in 1980 which had about 2,000 people at a mission's conference and I asked the pastor if there was anything he wanted me to particularly emphasize. He wanted me to emphasize people going into full time missions. His church was 137 years old and no one from his congregation had ever gone to the mission field and only four men have gone into the pastorate. When I shared the story of our officers setting those goals and what we had seen God do, the next day he went to his staff and shared the story without me knowing.

He said to his staff “How many are you prepared to trust God to bring forth this year from our congregation people going into full time overseas missions?” Finally the youth director said “Thirteen.” So in 137 years when no one has gone you're prepared to trust God for 13? They all agreed and so that was their goal. That year 14 went. When he preached at our congregation's mission's conference nine years later, 57 members of that congregation went on to the mission field with Mission to the World. Hear now how other people have applied it as they have stepped out and trusting God. It makes a big difference. You hear the promises and see how others have applied it. Now apply it to your own situation.

The next situation we have is the raising of Jairus' daughter when they get there. Matthew 9:23–26 says [23] *And when Jesus came to the ruler's house and saw the flute players and the crowd making a commotion, [24] he said, “Go away, for the girl is not dead but sleeping.” And they laughed at him. [25] But when the crowd had been put outside, he went in and took her by the hand, and the girl arose. [26] And the report of this went through all that district.* Jesus had challenged her dad to believe and trust and he did and look what God did there.

Then you get the relieving of the blindness of the two men. Matthew 9:27–31 says [27] *And as Jesus passed on from there, two blind men followed him, crying aloud, “Have mercy on us, Son of David.” [28] When he entered the house, the blind men came to him, and Jesus said to them, “Do you believe that I am able to do this?” They said to him, “Yes, Lord.” [29] Then he touched their eyes, saying, “According to your faith be it done to you.”* (This is the key, their faith.) [30] *And their eyes were opened. And Jesus sternly warned them, “See that no one knows about it.” [31] But they went away and spread his fame through all that district.* The reason Jesus would tell them not to tell others is because the opposition, the religious leaders would get so strong that He couldn't go about His business openly. They did it anyone but in each case here He challenges them to believe. He encourages them when they do believe as when He said to the woman “your faith has healed you.”

We have to apply this to our own particular situation as we have opportunities and needs to tackle things and step out in faith. I think of my wife's sister, Anita. Her daughter died and then it turned out that God had revealed to her daughter as a teenager that she was to die soon. She was keeping a diary and they found the diary under her bed after she had died. God had revealed to her as she was reading Scripture about the fact

that she was to die soon. Then she was killed in a car wreck shortly after that. Her daughter's name was Lovelace and they called her Love.

Anita wrote a book about her daughter and afterward was asked to speak all over at women's meetings. On one occasion she was speaking at a meeting in South Carolina to women and these women had brought their husbands to a supper they were having. All throughout the supper they were trying to get the microphone to work but they couldn't get it to work. They finally introduced Anita and told her she would have to speak without the microphone because they couldn't get it to work. She got up and apologized for what was happening with this situation and said "God can get this microphone to work so let's ask God to do that. Please bow your heads. Dear God, I believe you brought us all here and You want them to hear me so I pray that You would cause the microphone..." BAM, it started working and that took real faith didn't it? You have to step out and trust God. All of us need to apply it to our particular situations and see what God is going to do.

We need to pray and set goals. What promises apply to the goals we're wrestling with? We focus on those promises. We get others to join with us in this in prayer and then we step out and tackle it looking to God to do it. You will be amazed at what God does. I could go into many other details of many other things but we certainly want to have communion here with the Lord. The starting place for all this is trusting Him as our Savior and surrendering to Him as our Master. There I was in seminary pastoring a church and I had not done that. If you have never done that but maybe you believe all about Him but haven't really surrendered or put your trust in Him then that's the starting place. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You so much for this challenge of Your Word. We want to really appropriate Your power. We want to step out and trust You. The starting place is trusting Christ as our Savior and receiving Him as our Master. We pray for each one reading this just to really do that in their heart Lord. Then Father we pray that we would read about others and get a feel how to apply it in our particular situation to the challenges and opportunities before us corporately and as a body of Yours and we would pray this in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.