

HOPE FOR THE HOPELESS

What comes to mind when you hear the word hopeless? Some people might think of some dreaded disease such as AIDS or cancer, which strikes fear in most people. It could be bankruptcy or a loved one going to prison. Others may think of the world situation such as the starvation in Ethiopia or the fighting in the Middle East. Several years ago, or even several months ago, many would have thought that the situation in Communist Russia was a hopeless one and yet we see progress being made. When Mao Tse-Tung was dominating China, many thought that the situation there was hopeless. We come face to face with many difficult situations everyday and there may be a tendency to think that some of these difficulties are hopeless situations. However, the worse thing that we can do is to give up and abandon hope. In cases where we can only see hopelessness it is likely that we have failed to factor in what God can do. Jesus ran into many situations in His ministry that could have been classified as hopeless and yet He was able to bring triumph and victory out of such things.

LUKE 8:41-42 When a parent has a sick child and that sickness will not respond to treatment, then there seems to be an overwhelming sense of helplessness because you can't do anything to help. When such a sickness progresses to the point that it appears that death is the result, then hopelessness takes over. There are likely to be many other feelings such as anger and guilt that a parent feels in such a situation. Jairus was a leader in his community and was likely to have been a person who could have afforded a physician and whatever medicines were available then and none of these could help his daughter's condition. Humanly speaking, this was a hopeless situation. But Jesus was in that area and Jairus had refused to abandon hope. Jairus had heard about the miraculous healings Jesus was doing and this news gave him hope that some help could be found. Jairus realize that unless Jesus could or would help that all hope was gone. It was a desperate situation. We see the desperation in Jairus as he fell down before Jesus begging Him to come to his house.

This was a period of time in the ministry of Jesus when He was still popular and there were large crowds that gathered where ever He went. When Jairus came to Jesus there was a large crowd there pressing in on Jesus. Apparently, all the crowd was going with Jesus and the disciples as they went toward Jairus' house.

LUKE 8:43-48 In the midst of one potentially hopeless happening we see another hopeless situation unfolding as Luke interweaves these two events to show the power and compassion of Jesus. We see Jesus is not limited by the confines of human knowledge or experience. It may have been that had this woman had such a health condition in today's world of modern medicine that it could have been helped at once rather than having lasted for twelve years. At that time the cure was beyond human capability and we will find that no matter how advanced medicine becomes there will

be problems that are beyond man's ability to solve. It is in such situations that many people find themselves today, since they are dependent entire on the medical profession, they see no hope for their condition. This woman had exhausted all her financial resources on physicians and she had nothing to show for it. She was a woman who had not given up hope of getting better. She wanted to get over this condition so much that she was willing to spend everything she had. This is how important good health can be. Her hope was still alive and it was now directed toward Jesus. Again this was a desperate situation for this woman. She was evidently a shy person, perhaps embarrassed because of her condition, and yet she knew that she had to get to Jesus because He was all that stood between herself and hopelessness. She thought that if she could just touch Jesus' robe – not even touch Him – that she would be all right. She made her way through the crowd and, coming up behind Him, reached out and touched the border of His garment. You would have thought that such a simply thing would have gone unnoticed. Jesus stopped – the whole procession stopped – and He asked, "Who touched Me?" Peter found that question amazing: with all the crowd bumping against Him, how could He be concerned if someone touched Him.

What a difference FAITH makes as we come in contact with God. Our faith directed toward God can literally stop the procession of history while God gives specific attention to needs that we bring to Him. So many people come to church but do not exercise faith in the process and never really "touch" God in the sense that this woman touched Jesus. I believe that this passage shows us that God's power is there and is available to us if we will reach out in faith believing for our need to be met.

The woman knew that Jesus knew even though He asked, "Who touched Me?" Knowing that she could not hide, she made the declaration that she had touched Him and now she was healed. I wonder if Jesus is continuing to ask, "Who touched Me?" of those whose lives have been changed because they "touched" Jesus in faith believing for salvation. The expectation from such a question is that we would witness to the power to transform that comes from the God of all compassion that loved us enough to save us.

LUKE 8:49-55 As the scene changes focus back to Jairus, there came the devastating news that his daughter was dead. We've been talking about hopelessness and we see, in death, a resignation to the finality of physical death. Most people won't allow themselves to even hope that the condition could be reversed. Certainly the messenger that brought the news to Jairus felt that way about it.

When Jesus sense that hopelessness was about to overtake the situation, He responded with a promise to Jairus and encouraged him to keep his faith. Without hope his faith would have nothing to focus on and without the promise that his daughter would be made whole he had no basis for hope.

As Jesus arrived at the home, He encountered skeptics that would not believe beyond their own experience. Notice that before proceeding Jesus separated Himself from those that were skeptics. I am convinced that the reason we don't see more miracle in the church today is because of all the skeptics that make up such a large percentage of the congregations. Having separated those that would not believe from those that would, he then did the impossible from the standpoint of human efforts--He call the dead back to life.

If Jesus can bring hope to such hopeless situations as we see here, then He can certainly handle the problems that we face day in and day out. Trust Him!