

JESUS IS THE TOUCH OF GOD

SCRIPTURE Matthew 9:18–26: 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.

SYNOPSIS Jesus is God come to man—“God with us” (1:23). He commands creation (8:23-27), damns demons (28-34), and saves sinners (9:1-13). Sin has separated man from God, but God comes to us in Jesus to save us from what separates (1:21). Our uncleanness does not hinder Him. Though He is perfectly pure and cannot look upon sin without holy wrath (Habakkuk 1:13), He is perfectly gracious and comes to touch us in holy love, to take away our sin and reconcile us to Himself. In this message, we see how Jesus is the glory of a new dawn that touches us in the depth of our uncleanness. Matthew points us to an immediate application of the previous passage, showing that Jesus is the light that brings an end to the darkness of affliction and raises the radiance of resurrection life. Jesus’ touch is the touch of God and is wonderfully demonstrated in this passage.

APPLICATION QUESTIONS

1. **FAITH** — This passage is not prescriptive. It is not written to teach us how we are to do anything. It is written to reveal the glory of Christ. In context, the list of extraordinary works that Jesus has performed testifies to His identity. It is not about us; it really is all about Jesus.
 - a. We must remember that not all “faith” has the same object (1 John 4:1) and purpose (John 4:21). Not all faith saves a sinner from their sins (John 2:23-25). Displaying “faith” in Jesus at this time in His earthly ministry was a demonstration of trusting in Him for His claims (Matthew 9:28)—believing who He says He is and believing in what He can do. This was to prepare people to trust in Him absolutely (John 14:1) and His ultimate work yet to be revealed—*the cross*. Read and meditate on Hebrews 11:6. Discuss how this constitutes the most basic call of God in the Old Testament and likewise in the ministry of Jesus (as in this passage). Do you believe in Him as He reveals Himself? Do you trust in Him as God? Do you believe that nothing is impossible with Him? How does this affect you?

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- b. Should we assume that those in the Gospel narratives who displayed “faith” in Jesus were displaying what we are called to through the gospel for salvation (Romans 10:9)? Read and discuss what the following passages teach us concerning the disciples’ understanding of the cross and the gospel of substitution during the ministry of Jesus on earth: Mark 9:31-32; Luke 9:43-45; 18:31-33; John 12:16; 13:7.

- c. But how then are we to understand Jesus’ commendation, “Your faith has made you well” (22)? Does this faith model what we are called to through the gospel for salvation? What elements of gospel faith are missing? What does 1 Corinthians 15:17 teach us about the role of faith and the role of Christ’s death, burial, and resurrection as these relate to our salvation? Why, then, does Jesus commend this woman for her “faith”?

2. **CLEANNESS** — Both the woman with an issue of blood and the little girl who has died were ceremonially unclean. Priests could not touch them. Prophets would not touch them. Read Isaiah 6:5 and discuss how even the greatest prophet and the holiest priest is unclean before God. The issue with defilement doesn’t seem to be a concern of Jesus’. What does this say about Him? What about the importance of ritual purity that God Himself ordained?

3. **DESPERATION** — One point of application can be drawn from the principle in this passage of desperation. One thing is for sure, every character in this scene (except Jesus) is deeply desperate. We may also see the likeness of sin in their physical conditions. Sin and desperation go together—realized or not.

- a. For the woman with a hemorrhage, her condition isolated her. This may remind us of sin. Sin separates us from God and often one another. Sin increasingly drives us into isolation. Most people don’t like to be around proud, complaining, grumpy, hateful, abusive, and slanderous people. We are even instructed to be careful about with whom we spend our time (1

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Corinthians 15:33) and that “a little leaven leavens the whole lump” (1 Corinthians 5:6). But what is the gospel solution to this problem of separation?

- b. In the picture of desperation, we should see *hopelessness*. Desperately hopeless is exactly what sinners are apart from grace. As Matthew Henry writes, “Dead souls are not raised to spiritual life, unless Christ *take them by the hand*: it is done in the *day of his power*. He helps us up, or we lie still.” We may tend to despair over the problems in life. We may feel hopeless in relational problems, over an illness or injury, or over a sin that we cannot seem to overcome. The key to each of these is turning to Christ. Though our circumstances may not change, we will. The problem is that most people do not see themselves as desperate for Jesus. Do you? Sin is not apprehended to be as weighty as a twelve-year hemorrhage—*yet is massively weightier!* Without sensing your own desperate need for Jesus to bring an end to your darkness and usher in resurrection life, you will not come to Him. And this is not limited to a one-time turning point. Every Christian remains desperate for Jesus. Read John 6:68-69. How should we think of long-term physical ailments and even physical death in comparison to sin? If this scene highlights desperation, it is only to magnify Christ’s grace. What was Jesus doing when the ruler inquired of Him? What was the nature and characteristic of Jesus’ response? What does this speak about the character of Jesus? There is nothing that can make you so unclean, so unworthy that Jesus can’t and won’t touch you with His healing, saving, life giving character. How does the character of Jesus from this passage minister to you in your current circumstances?

4. **LIFE** — Jesus is the light of a new dawn, come to be to us the touch of God, to bring an end to our darkness, and to be and to bring the beginning of new life. God has come in Jesus Christ to touch us, save us, heal us, change us, raise us, give us new life, eternal and abundant—not to make much of us, but to make much of Him!

- a. Discuss how the passage speaks to the touch of God bringing an end of the one and the beginning of the other.

- b. Jesus raised a twelve year old girl from death not by prayer, like the prophets of old, but directly. His emphasis to the mourning crowd was that (with His presence and power) death is

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reduced to “sleep”! Jesus effectively places a new meaning upon death. In Matthew 9:24, Jesus is not making a medical diagnosis; He is making a claim about Himself and the hope that is in Him. Discuss how this miraculous scene points to the glory of Christ, His own mission and gospel. How does this relate to the metaphor suggested, that He is the glory of a new dawn? Read the following passages and discuss how through the gospel of Jesus, death is considered by Christians euphemistically as “sleep”: Daniel 12:2; Matthew 27:52; John 11:11-15; Acts 7:60; 1 Corinthians 15:18, 20, 51; 1 Thessalonians 4:13–14.
