

Mark 5:36

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

As soon as Jesus heard the word that was spoken, he saith unto the ruler of the synagogue, Be not afraid, only believe.

Analysis

This verse captures Jesus' response to devastating news—Jairus' daughter had died while Jesus delayed to heal the woman with the issue of blood (Mark 5:25-34). The phrase "As soon as Jesus heard" (εὐθὺς ὁ Ἰησοῦς ἀκούσας, euthus ho Iēsous akousas) indicates immediate response without hesitation or doubt. Jesus interrupts the messengers' implicit counsel of resignation with two contrasting commands: "Be not afraid" (μὴ φοβοῦ, mē phobou) addresses Jairus' natural terror at his daughter's death, and "only believe" (μόνον πίστευε, monon pisteue) calls for exclusive trust in Jesus despite hopeless circumstances. The present imperative tense of both commands indicates continuous action—keep not fearing, keep believing. The juxtaposition reveals that fear and faith are incompatible—where faith reigns, fear must yield. The word "only" (monon) is emphatic—nothing else matters now except trust in Jesus' power and compassion. This command to believe in the face of death's finality requires supernatural faith that transcends human reason. Reformed theology emphasizes that saving faith isn't optimistic positive thinking but grounded confidence in Christ's character and promises, even when circumstances contradict hope. Faith trusts God's goodness and power when evidence suggests abandonment and defeat.

Historical Context

Jairus was a synagogue ruler (ἀρχισυνάγωγος, archisynagōgos), a position of significant religious and social authority. His public appeal to Jesus (falling at His feet, Mark 5:22) demonstrated desperate faith and willingness to risk reputation.

The delay caused by the woman's healing (vv. 25-34) must have agonized Jairus—every moment counted with his dying daughter. When messengers announced her death, hope seemed extinguished. First-century Jewish understanding held that the soul remained near the body for three days after death, but immediate death was still considered final and irreversible. Jesus' command to "believe" in such circumstances was extraordinary—requiring faith in Jesus' power over death itself. The subsequent raising of Jairus' daughter (vv. 40-42) demonstrated that no situation is beyond Jesus' restorative power. This miracle, along with the widow of Nain's son (Luke 7:11-15) and Lazarus (John 11), foreshadowed Jesus' own resurrection and the final resurrection of all believers. Early Christians facing persecution, imprisonment, and martyrdom drew courage from this command—faith in Christ transcends even death's threat.

Related Passages

1 John 4:8 — God is love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. What circumstances in your life tempt you toward fear rather than faith in Christ's power and goodness?
2. How does Jesus' power over death demonstrated in this account provide grounds for trusting Him in seemingly hopeless situations today?

Interlinear Text

ο δὲ Ἰησοῦς εὐθέως ἀκούσας τὸν λόγον
G3588 As soon as Jesus G2112 heard G3588 the word
G1161 G2424 G191 G3056

λαλούμενον λέγει τῷ ἀρχισυναγώγῳ Μὴ φοβοῦ
that was spoken he saith G3588 unto the ruler of the synagogue not Be
G2980 G3004 G752 G3361 G5399

μόνον πίστευε
only believe
G3440 G4100

Additional Cross-References

Luke 8:50 (Faith): But when Jesus heard it, he answered him, saying, Fear not: believe only, and she shall be made whole.

Mark 9:23 (Faith): Jesus said unto him, If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth.

Mark 5:34 (Faith): And he said unto her, Daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace, and be whole of thy plague.

John 11:40 (Faith): Jesus saith unto her, Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?

Matthew 17:20 (Faith): And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you.

2 Chronicles 20:20 (Faith): And they rose early in the morning, and went forth into the wilderness of Tekoa: and as they went forth, Jehoshaphat stood and said, Hear me, O Judah, and ye inhabitants of Jerusalem; Believe in the LORD your God, so shall ye be established; believe his prophets, so shall ye prosper.

