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Mark 5:24-34 “The Touch that Transforms”

Intro. Ever since sin entered the world, humanity has been facing great problems. Sometimes we face a health problem that has no cure. Many people suffer from sickness and disease. You may be facing a broken relationship that seems impossible to reconcile. You may be facing a financial crisis that is too great for you to handle. Of course, death is something we can't avoid. We may delay death, but we can't defeat it. What problem are you facing today that seems too great to handle?

Well in our text today we read about a woman who had a great & prolonged problem. According to v.25, she “had a flow of blood for twelve years.” It was either a slow hemorrhage that was almost constant, or it occurred periodically during the 12 years she suffered from this condition. Either way, it made impossible for her to feel strong and healthy, and at this particular moment she was again suffering as a result of loss of blood.

Added to her physical problem was the fact that she was looked down upon by society. Her condition was such that it made her ceremonially “unclean” (Lev. 15:19ff). Also, the word “affliction” in v.29 literally refers to a whip or scourge. The Jews commonly referred to sickness as a chastisement from God. One can only imagine the guilt and emotional pressure that sapped her strength day after day. What a burden she carried!

In the next verse we read that no one could help her. Oh, they tried, but Mark reports that she “had suffered many things from many physicians.” She tried one doctor after another, one kind of remedy after another, and yet it was all in vain. In fact, instead of getting better, she only “grew worse.” Adding to her misery was the fact that “she had spent all that she had” on these unsuccessful medical treatments. The main problem was not with her doctors. She simply had a condition that no one could cure (Lk. 8:43)

I think many can identify with this woman. You feel her pain. Perhaps you are suffering from an incurable ailment, and you have tried many doctors & treatments, but the problem is still there, but your financial well-being is worse off. Or someone offers to help you with some other problem that you are facing, and after it is all said & done, you still have the same problem, but now you are worse off financially. You may also feel that people view you as a social outcast, just because you seem to have a problem that makes you different from others.

Well I have good news for you today. My text of Scripture today tells how you can overcome that problem that seems impossible. If you have tried everything else, is it time that you turn to the Lord. Here is what you need to do. First of all:

I. LEARN ABOUT JESUS

According to v.27, this woman in our story overcame her problem only “when she heard about Jesus¹....” Why was it important that she hear about Jesus? Well Romans 10:17 says, “So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” We know from the Word of God

¹ The definite article appears before the name "Jesus," marking Him out as a particular Jesus. After all, the name "Jesus" or "Joshua" was very common in Palestine. The use of the article here points to the fact that our Lord's fame had spread so that He was known as The Jesus.

that we are saved by faith (Eph. 2:8-9), and that without faith it is impossible to please God (Heb. 11:6). And the first step in obtaining faith is to hear the Word of God, and hear about Jesus, who is the focus of the Word of God.

What was it that she learned about Jesus from these eyewitness reports? What can you learn about Jesus from the eyewitness accounts of the Bible? Well from her example I believe we should:

A. Learn about His Power - She no doubt heard that He had healed many others. He had healed the leper. He had caused the blind to see, and the lame to walk.

How was Jesus able to heal these people? He had to have great power to do what was viewed as impossible. In fact, right here in v.30 of our text we read that Jesus could actually feel² His healing power flowing from Himself to the woman in our story.

If you have a problem that is too great for you to handle, you need to learn about Jesus. He can do the impossible, for He is the Son of God.

B. Learn about His Compassion - She also probably heard of His great compassion & sympathy toward the sick & hurting.

The woman in our story learned of the compassion of Jesus, not only from the reports of others, but also from her own experience. After she touched the hem of His garment, vv.30 & 32 indicates that He turned around, and keep looking³ for the one who touched Him. I can imagine that at some point He fixed His eyes upon her. Then we read in v.33 that “the woman, fearing and trembling, knowing what had happened to her, came and fell down before Him and told Him the whole truth.” When she told Him “the whole truth,” she not only acknowledged that she had touched His garment, but she also told Him the whole truth about her terrible suffering for 12 long years. When He heard her story, Jesus did not rebuke her, but instead responded with tenderness & affection. In v.34 He addressed her as “daughter.” What she had heard from others she found to be so true! Jesus is loving and compassionate. He has a heart of sympathy for those who are hurting.

The Lord Jesus Christ is still compassionate. If you are suffering today as a result of living in a sinful, fallen world, then know this: Christ cares for you. He is not indifferent to your suffering.

So the first step in overcoming an impossible problem is to learn about Jesus, who can do the impossible. He has the power, and He cares. That means that you need to come to church & learn about Jesus in Sunday School & church services. You need to read the Bible on your own. Learn all you can about Jesus. Then, you need to take the next step:

II. HAVE FAITH IN JESUS

It is very clear from this text of Scripture that this woman was saved from her affliction by faith in Christ. Jesus specifically said to her in v.34, “your faith has made you well.”

² I say that based on the Greek word translated “knowing” (*epignosko*), which means “to know by experience.” Another form of the same word (*ginosko*) is translated “felt” in v.29. He knew by personal experience that healing power flowed from Himself to the woman, and thus He felt the power flow. Also, the prefixed preposition *epi* is perfective in meaning, intensifying the already existing idea in the verb.

³ The imperfect tense indicates that He kept looking, probably until His eyes fixed upon her.

Even so, if you are going to be saved from sin & death, or if you are going to overcome that great problem in your life, you need to have faith in Jesus Christ. He has the power to save you from sin & death. He has the power to move mountains. He has the power to meet that need in your life.

I want to impress upon you the importance of faith. No grace is so important to the Christian's own soul. By faith we are saved. By faith we live, for we walk by faith and not by sight. By faith we stand. By faith we overcome. By faith we have peace. By faith we enter into rest. We should often ask ourselves, "Is my faith true & genuine?"

Now notice with me a few truths about faith. First:

A. Have a Great Faith – We see her great faith in v.28, when she said⁴, "If only I may touch His clothes, I shall be made well." She did not say, "I might be made well." She said, "I shall be made well." What faith! Furthermore, she believed a mere touch of the clothing of Jesus would result in her healing. There was unquestionable confidence in Christ's power to heal.

Some criticize her faith, saying it was mixed with too much superstition. Indeed, people today attach too much faith in physical means to conferring blessing. Do you think that the bread & fruit of the vine from the Lord's Supper table will actually bring forgiveness of sin? Do you think that the waters of baptism alone will wash away your sins? Do you think that a 2" square piece of cloth that you receive in the mail from some preacher will bring healing? Do you think that by clinging to a crucifix or prayer beads that your prayers will have more effectiveness with God? The answer should be a resounding "No."

However, I don't think such superstition was driving her faith in this case. First of all, because of the chronic discharge of blood, she was unclean according to Levitical Law. Anything she touched was also considered unclean. She did not feel she could fall & cling to His feet, begging for healing (see v.22). She did not feel she could approach Him, and take Jesus by the hand and ask for mercy. In her circumstances she felt that she should just quietly approach Him from behind & touch no more than His garment, and that would be sufficient to draw healing power from Him. Perhaps such limited contact would not be wrong in her case.

So because of her great faith in the power of Jesus, she was made well. Do you want to have great faith? Then don't focus on mustering up your faith. Focus on the proper object of faith, Jesus Christ. You see, the greater the object of your faith, the greater your faith will be. She had a great faith because of the reports she had heard about the greatness of Jesus.

I want to make another application. She believed that something as small as a touch of our Lord's garment would result in her healing. Even so, you should believe that something as small as a simple prayer to Christ can result in the saving of your soul. Something as small as a simple prayer can result in some other need being met in your life.

B. Have an Active Faith – You see, true faith results in action. Or as James 2:20 says, "faith without works is dead." Since she believed that touching Jesus' garment would result in her healing, she acted upon her faith. So we read in the last of v.27, "she came behind Him in the crowd and touched His garment." Matthew & Luke add the fact that she actually touched the hem of His garment, perhaps nothing more than one of the 4 wool tassels that Jews typically wore of their outer robe to remind them of the law of God. Naturally the quickest and easiest way to bring oneself into physical contact with a garment without being noticed was to come from behind. Perhaps Jesus would not even know that she touched him, especially in such a large

⁴ The verb "said" is imperfect. She kept saying as she pressed through the crowd, either to herself or to others.

crowd. The main point is the fact that she not only believed with her head, but she acted upon her belief with her hand.

Even so, you need to make sure that you have the kind of faith that acts, that works. In fact, someone said, “Show me your actions, and I will show you what you really believe.” Have you put your faith in Jesus as Savior? Then did you pray & ask Christ into your heart. Have you followed Him in baptism? Are you living in obedience to Him on a daily basis? Be sure you have an active faith, or your faith is not real.

Now if you have true faith in Christ, we also see from our text that:

C. You Will Have a Great Result – Because of her faith in Jesus, she was healed. V.29 says, “Immediately the fountain of her blood was dried up, and she felt in her body that she was healed of the affliction.” No sooner did she touch our Lord’s clothes than she was healed. The thing that she had sought in vain for twelve years was done in a moment. The blood flow ceased, & health and vigor were surging once again through every part of her body. Furthermore, the cure was complete & permanent. Not only did Christ stop the stream of the blood flow, but “the fountain” that was the source of it. Furthermore, the word “healed” is in the perfect tense, signifying action that has lasting results. Notice also that “she felt in her body that she was healed.” The word translated “felt” is literally “knew” (*ginosko*), but the word means “to know by experience.” She was conscious of the fact that the flow had stopped. This makes me think she had a bloody discharge. The fact that she was healed suddenly dawned upon her. What a moment of joy it was for her!

Not only did she have an instant & complete healing, but she also obtained peace by faith. Jesus said in the last of v.34, “Go in peace, and be healed of your affliction.” Faith for the healing of the body will easily move toward faith for the saving of the soul. Jesus literally said, “Go into (*eis*) peace,” contemplating the new door just opened to her. When she was afflicted with the chronic bloody discharge, she believed that God was punishing her for her sin, but now she could go forth with the smile of God upon her. Now she experiences wholeness of both body & soul.

For some of you here today, your greatest need is not for healing. Your greatest need is not a financial miracle. Your greatest need is to be saved from sin & death. So I want you to know that Jesus died for your sins on the cross. He rose again the third day & conquered death. If you trust in Him, you will be forgiven as instantly as this woman was healed. Though you have sought peace for your soul for years, in a moment you can have peace with God.

So having learned about Jesus and after you have put your faith in Him, the next step is to:

III. CONFESS WHAT CHRIST HAS DONE FOR YOU

Jesus would not allow this woman to quietly receive her healing & then walk away unnoticed. So notice what we read in v.30, “And Jesus, immediately knowing in Himself that power had gone out of Him, turned around in the crowd and said, ‘Who touched My clothes?’” Why did Jesus ask that question? Certainly, it was not to gain information. Jesus’ divine nature was omniscient. He knew who had touched Him. Now even though Jesus would often avoid notoriety from those whom He had healed, here He insisted that this woman step forward to confess that she had been healed. Why was that? To be sure, she had “believed with her heart.” But she had not as yet “confessed with her mouth” (Rom. 10:9).

Well, she did step forward to confess what had happened. We read in v.33, “But the woman, fearing and trembling, knowing what had happened to her, came and fell down before Him and told Him the whole truth.” Her conscience must have told her that the true answer to Christ’s question must be given.

Has Christ saved your soul? Then you should confess Him before men. Romans 10:9 says, “that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.” Then, you should be baptized, confessing that you have died to sin, and you have been raised to follow Christ in newness of life.

Now you may feel like this woman. She was “fearing and trembling” as she stepped forward in front of the crowd to confess what He had done for her. Yet we also see how she found the strength to do so. V.33 says, “knowing what had happened to her, came and fell down before Him and told Him the whole truth.” Only after her healing did she find courage to step forward and confess. In a moment she was changed from timidity to courage.

Don’t worry about the supposed difficulty of coming down front, confessing Christ, and being baptized. First, believe in Christ; become born again, and if your faith was genuine, you will find new strength to confess Christ and be baptized.

I want to share several reasons why *we* should confess what Christ has done for us, after we have put our faith in Him:

A. Because You Should Give Glory to Christ – Had this woman been healed without confessing it, no one would have known of this great miracle. Christ would not have been glorified. But because she confessed what had happened to her, this miracle was recorded in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, & Luke.

Even so, when you put your faith in Jesus & He does something for you, confess it before others. Give glory to Christ for what He has done for your soul. When we give glory to Christ, then others will be attracted to Him. Others will be won to faith in Him. No doubt some people in that crowd heard her words and trusted in the Savior.

We need to complete the circle mentioned in Ps. 50:15: “Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify me.” When blessings descend from heaven, they must be returned to heaven in the form of praise & thanksgiving by those who received them. Thus the circle is completed.

B. Because You Need to Be Obedient – If Christ has saved you, or done something else for you, then you should respond with obedience. And as He insisted that this women confess Him, even so He insists that we confess Him before men. It is a matter of obedience. If we are ashamed of Jesus in front of other people, He will one day be ashamed of us in front of His Father and the angels (Mark 8:38; Luke 12:8-9).

Faith unacknowledged is like a plant in the dark. It is apt to become pale and sickly, and bear no bright blossoms or sweet fruit.

Likewise, apart from a public confessing of Christ, your faith will either be weak & sickly, or it will be proven to be not real.

C. Because Others Want to Encourage Your Faith - After her confession, Christ had the opportunity to be to her something more than a Healer: He wanted to be her Savior as He sent her on her way with a benediction of peace (v.34). He called her “daughter” to affirm that she now had a personal relationship with Him. This also gave Him the opportunity to instruct her. It

was not really His garment that brought healing. Rather, Jesus said in v.34 that “your faith has made you well.”

If Christ has saved your soul, confess Him before the church, that we may better minister to you. We can greet you and call you “brother” or “sister,” for you will become a part of the family of God.

Conclusion: There were many people in the crowd that day who were following Jesus. But only one person was saved from her affliction. That’s because, while others may have followed due to curiosity, she followed Christ out of dire need, & she put her faith in Christ.

Do you have a burden today? Do you seek comfort today? Do you need forgiveness today? Do you have a need today that has been unmet for months, or even years? You may have looked for help in many places and people and even things. But you should do what this woman did. You need to learn about Jesus. You need to come to Jesus! Though you are in a crowd today, He will focus His attention on you. He can save your soul. He can give peace to your soul. He can meet the needs of your life. Then put your faith in Him. God honors faith in His Son Jesus Christ. Faith is the hand that receives the miracle from God. Finally, in response to what the Lord has done for you, be ready & willing to confess what Christ has done, & give glory to Him. Do it today. Don’t let Jesus pass you by.

Sources: William Hendriksen, *New Testament Commentary: Mark* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1975); Alexander Maclaren (1 or 3 sermons), *Expositions of Holy Scripture*, Vol. 8 (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1977 reprint); J. Vernon McGee, *Thru The Bible*, Vol. 4 (Pasadena, CA: Thru The Bible Radio, 1983); Larry Pierce, *Online Bible* [CD-ROM] (Ontario: Timnathserah Inc., 1996); J.C. Ryle (1816-1900), *Mark: Expository Thoughts on the Gospels* (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 1993); Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Diligent: Mark* (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1987); Kenneth S. Wuest’s *Word Studies From the Greek New Testament*, Vol. 1, Mark (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1950). Other sources listed in the footnotes. Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from *The New King James Version* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1982).

For further study, see sources on parallel Gospel accounts: Matthew 9:20-22; Luke 8:43-48.

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