

Research: Healing of the Woman with an Issue of Blood

Matthew 9: 20-22

Witnessed by a mostly male crowd and recorded in the three synoptic gospels written by men (Matthew, Mark, and Luke), this healing was very significant. It made a huge impression on those who observed this healing.

20And, behold, a woman, which was diseased with an issue of blood twelve years, came behind him, and touched the hem of his garment:

“The story of the healing of the woman with a hemorrhage is sandwiched between the report of Jairus’ daughter’s illness and Jesus’ action in raising her to life. The precise nature of the woman’s ailment is not stated. Probably some sort of uterine disease caused the bleeding that had persisted for twelve years” (*EBC* 8.661).

“The woman’s illness would make her ritually unclean and in consequence everything she touched would be unclean” (*AB Mark* 285).

The illness that this woman manifested was a hemorrhaging of the blood and was considered incurable. For a Jew, any visible or concealed flow of blood caused the person to be seriously restricted in religious and social life. She had been an outcast for twelve years. All physical contact with her was strictly prohibited; for all those years, she had probably not even been embraced. It could be that this was her time of menopause, contrasting with the twelve-year-old girl, who may have been just coming into her time of womanhood and beginning menstruation.

“All her substance had been spent on physicians and their medicines and now, having grown weaker and worse through the years, she was also destitute” (Sergio 31).

The appearance was that the medical profession, science, and theology had given up on her.

21For she said within herself, If I may but touch his garment, I shall be whole.

“The reports the woman had heard about Jesus’ healings and her belief that he could help her led her to come to him. But her faith seemed to be mixed with a measure of superstition. She apparently shared the belief, common in her day, that the power of a person was transmitted to his clothes” (*EBC* 8.661).

Perhaps she had heard of Jesus, heard of his healing work in the surrounding countryside. She might have seen the crowd gather around him when he stepped out of the boat from the country of Gadara. There was a superstition that if one could just “touch the tassels, the holiest part” of a holy man’s shawl, one could receive something of him. This woman was determined to make her way to where Jesus was walking, even though it meant brushing up against a hostile throng. Even if they frowned at, ignored, or ostracized her, she persisted and reached her destination.

What qualities of thought did the woman embody to approach Jesus for healing, especially in this male-dominated crowd? Didn’t she have to exhibit intense faith? Expectancy? Hope? Humility? It took such courage for her to get close to the Christ, to walk through the pushing and shoving curiosity seekers. Her thought was “if I may but touch his clothes, I shall be whole.” It was a silent, mental touch that reached out for help, and Jesus felt it. And instantly, she was made whole.

“She did not want to hear him speak, much less speak to him, and she knew that, according to Mosaic law, she was ritually unclean and anyone or anything she touched would become unclean also. She risked severe punishment if anyone in the crowd discovered that while she suffered from a flow of blood, whether natural or due to illness, she had allowed herself to touch a man, or had been touched by him” (Sergio 32).

22. . .And he said unto her, Daughter, be of good comfort: thy faith hath made thee whole;

And the woman was made whole from that hour.

Daughter is *thygater* in Greek and means daughter of God; acceptable to God; rejoicing in God’s peculiar care and protection (Thayer 2364).

In front of everyone, he broke the Mosaic law that said he could not be touched by a woman while she was bleeding, causing him to become ritually unclean. He spoke aloud to her in public, which was also taboo. She knew the risk of touching him while in her present state, and the severe punishment that might come down upon her if she was caught. But with a penetrating look filled with compassion, Jesus says to her, “Daughter, be of good comfort. . .”

Jesus’ words are very powerful.

Ps. 107:20

He sent his word, and healed them, and delivered them from their destructions.

Hymn 298 (lines 1 and 2)

Saw ye my Saviour? Heard ye the glad sound?
Felt ye the power of the Word?

The woman's mental quality of faith was what was needed in this healing. *Faith* in Greek is *pistis*. It is the conviction of the truth of something; the conviction that God exists and is the creator and ruler of all things, the provider and bestower of eternal salvation through Christ; a strong conviction that Jesus is the Messiah (Strong 4102).

Whole is *sozo* and means to keep safe and sound from danger or destruction (Strong 4982). *Wholeness* means to be undivided, unfragmented, not divided.

"Go in *peace*" is *eirene*, a state of tranquility, harmony, concord, security, prosperity, well-being under God's rule (Thayer 1515).

To be whole is *hygies* or to make a man sound in body, to make one whole, restore him to health; metaphorically to keep someone from deviating from the truth (Strong 5198).

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