

Sermon preached by Mr. F. L. Gosden at Galeed Chapel, Brighton,
on Wed. Evg., Sept. 7th, 1960

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Text: Mark v. 34.

This narrative of the woman with an issue of blood is well known, and it may be it is well worn as a text, but the great point is, do we know the experience contained in this narrative for ourselves? For you may be sure that this was not written for narrative's sake. It contains rich doctrine and some very gracious instruction. The disease that this woman had was a type of sin:

"Deep are the wounds that sin has made".

And that is not an ordinary experience, to have a running sore, a bleeding issue, a wounded heart. It was one case that was prayed for by Solomon at the Temple, for those who knew their own grief and their own sore. The two parables in this chapter intend the same thing really.

"By what amazing ways

The Lord vouchsafes to explain

The wonders of His sovereign grace

Towards the sons of men!"

And the only interpretation that will be of benefit to us in reading the Word of God is to find ourselves as the character, and to find the experiences traced out in the Word of God to lay parallel with what is going on in our own hearts. It would make the reading of the Word of God very different from a mere superficial reading of the Word only.

But both of these characters were brought to know themselves as sinners, one possessed with devils, and the woman with an issue of blood. She went about trying to find a physician, and got worse rather than better. The mad Gadarene had his dwelling among the tombs. And we shall know something of both these conditions if we are taught of God: "Such were some of you". And men of the world have their dwelling among the tombs. There is nothing but death in this world since the Fall. Its pleasures, profits, and honours are all dead, and men naturally are cutting themselves, destroying themselves with those very things they are occupied with. Some of you may have experienced at the throne of grace, when you have had to kneel with the leper saying, "If Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean", or asked the Lord to cast out unclean spirits or devils, and bring those cases before Him, and ~~say~~ so with the woman with the issue of blood. This issue of blood seems to represent that urgent case where the very life of the soul is ebbing out. You feel the life of your soul is just sinking.

"A certain woman", not every woman; a certain woman. This expression we have frequently in the New Testament. "A certain Samaritan as he journeyed." There are certain people, the Lord knows who they are. "Which had an issue of blood twelve years, and had suffered many things of many physicians, and had spent all she had and was nothing bettered, but rather grew worse;" How many a poor sinner under conviction of sin attempts to find a cure everywhere but where it may be found. Some go to one sect or denomination, or to one minister and another. I remember the time when I did the same foolishly. It is a solemn thing to be brought up to the truth and to depart from it, to forsake the fountain of living waters; but a mercy to be brought back. The prodigal found that leaving his

father's house brought him into beggary, and want, and weakness, and woe. And this is a part of the mercy of God in His dealings, the purposes of His grace.

"A certain woman which had an issue of blood twelve years, but when she heard of Jesus." It was just the same with the mad Gadarene, when he saw Jesus afar off, the manifestation of Christ. Faith cometh by hearing. The woman heard of Jesus, and the man saw Him afar off. I don't know what the condition of your souls may be in experience. It would be a great thing if some poor sinners had their eyes, if but dimly opened to see the Lord Jesus afar off. With respect to the prodigal it is the other way round. The father saw him afar off, and in neither of these cases does it say how far off they were. And that is a good thing, because some poor tried sinner might say, "I am much farther off then they were; but it does not say how far. And yet the Scriptures come down to the uttermost: "He is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God through Him". The Scriptures reach to the ends of the earth.

"But when she heard of Jesus, came in the press behind and touched His garment." Oh this does show how unworthy she felt to be, how unfit was her case to touch Him who is holy, holy, holy! Have you ever felt that under a sense of your pollution and corruption, have a sight and sense of a holy God and of His sacred truth? I have felt it, utterly unfit to go into the pulpit; and yet my friends, where else can we go? And what a sight it is when the blessed Spirit shows us that the whole of the provision in the Gospel, and the nature of the properties and ingredients of that Gospel, are especially for sinners, and the chief of sinners. I have felt and said more than once, that while I feel utterly unfit in myself to touch the holy things of God, I deeply need and desire that those very things will touch me. So that we read in the Scripture both of the Lord touching His people, and of His people touching Him by faith. Oh that He would come near and bring near His righteousness this evening, that some poor sinner with a running issue of blood, or possessed of devils, might have vital contact with God in Christ by the Holy Spirit!

"When she had heard of Jesus." Her hearing was the hearing of faith. Faith was mixed with what she heard. She was not a forgetful hearer, and therefore we have this admonition in the Scriptures: "Take heed what ye hear, and take heed how ye hear; for to him that hath shall be given, but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he seemeth to have". It will be a terrible thing to come to the end and our religion to have been but a seeming religion, just on the appearance, an outside show. "But when she heard that Jesus." Well, we have heard of Him, read about Him: "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not". Multitudes heard about Him in the days of His flesh, but "to as many as received Him". That is the great point. Have you that inward, blessed, mysterious faculty faith, which alone can receive the Lord Jesus? In hearing of Him, do you ever find your heart opened to receive Him? Is there some connection made between who and what He is in the Gospel, and your deep needs as a poor lost sinner? "As many as received Him." To receive Him is to come to Him. To come to Him and receive Him is to believe in Him by faith. Oh He makes Himself known, makes Himself real to His dear people.

"When she heard of Jesus, came." She came. It is faith that comes. The Lord Jesus was drawing her with the cords of love and the bands of a man. He knew all about her when she was going to other physicians. He allowed her to get worse rather than better. Oh how mysterious are His ways! I have said before, and it is a blessed consideration with respect to Joseph and his brethren. He dealt with them very harshly, very unkindly apparently, kept sending them back and giving instructions that were most painful to them and their old father, seemed to put them to much pain and trouble. But oh how his heart did yearn over them, and everything that Joseph did to his brethren and required of them, compelled them to come back to him. And perhaps you can look in your own experiences and see that is just how the Lord has dealt with you. It appeared as though Joseph would drive them away, but instead he continually brought them back until he manifested who he was, and the provision that he had for them.

"When she heard of Jesus, came in the press behind." Yes, this was humility. She felt her sinnership and unworthiness, as did Ruth when she said in all honesty, "I am not like unto one of thy handmaidens". A poor sinner will always come behind in the press to the Lord Jesus, but He sees and recognizes such and loves them. "And touched His garment, for she said, If I may touch but His clothes, I shall be whole." She must have had much teaching, and that very quickly, for it was only lately that she sought to other physicians; but she heard of Jesus. Oh what a mercy it is to have an ear of faith, and for our hearings to be by the Holy Spirit to move us toward Him! It is very solemn if we never move toward Jesus, if the Gospel leaves us just where it finds us. It would have left her where it found her, only she had a case, she was dying, her life's blood was ebbing out. Nobody will ever come to Jesus unless they have a case, and whatever case we have, it will be a cross, a sorrow, a grief, a burden.

"Came in the press behind and touched His garment." We have just such another case in that dear woman which was a sinner. The Lord loved sinners. He used to seek out sinners. It upset the Pharisees. But she came behind Him and washed His feet with her tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. So she was behind Him and washed His feet. Oh it is wonderful to be brought to the feet of the Lord Jesus! You won't go ahead, you won't be the first, you won't obtrude yourself upon His presence irreverently. But she came behind Him and touched His garment.

But she had faith to believe that that touch would make her whole. Do you believe that? Has this narrative any meaning to you in your own soul? It is contact. If we never have contact in our souls by faith with an exalted glorified Redeemer, we shall never receive any virtue from Him. And some of you may feel just that. Nothing different from contact with Him can bring anything into your poor soul. But to have contact will bring into your soul His life, all that He is. He will be the Light of life in your heart. You will receive from Him all wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. Oh it is great to touch Him by faith! You will know it when you do.

She did. "Straightway the fountain of blood was dried up, and she felt in her body that she was healed of that plague." Now

spiritually this is to receive the forgiveness of sins, and you would know it. It may be that is a blessing which some of you covet. Anything less than that will leave us short. If you have received any blessing at all, you will never be left without the blessing of pardon. You already possess it, though you have not the assurance of it. I feel persuaded of this, that the Lord will do nothing for any soul except those that He will do everything for, and if you have received one blessing, you will receive all. And in the forgiveness of sins there is not a grace nor a blessing that is lacking. It is a wonderful blessing. It contains in it a complete Gospel. It contains the whole of the mercies of Christ. It contains all His unsearchable riches. It contains all the benefits of His life and death. We cannot express the value of divine pardon. I would not let you rest short of it, those of you who fear His great name and hope that you have received something from Him from time to time, that you have a hope in His mercy. Press on toward this mark, the forgiveness of sins.

"And straightway the fountain of her blood was dried up, and she felt in her body that she was healed of that plague." And Jesus immediately knowing in Himself." So there were two that knew it. The woman felt in her body that she was healed, and Jesus immediately knew in Himself that virtue had gone out. This is a wonderful truth. It is not limited to the days when He was here on earth. He exercises from heaven His same power: "All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth". He is the same great High Priest above, an Advocate with God. He still communicates by His Spirit those virtues, and favours, and communications from Himself that are the life of the church and the life of every poor sinner. Yes, He is the Head. And although He is Almighty God, yet with respect to His church He is incomplete until the last member of His mystical body is with Him in heaven. And as the natural head communicates every movement and sensation to the body, so spiritually all the life of our souls, of our affections, our hearts, our wills are all brought into exercise by the Lord Jesus Christ.

So that she knew and felt in her body that she was healed of that plague, and Jesus immediately knowing in Himself that virtue had gone out of Him. There are those two things, and in a lesser or greater measure it will be necessary for those two things to be in our experience, as a people here. For the Lord does use the ministry, His Spirit uses the ministry to make that contact between Christ and the church. Sometimes your soul will be on such a stretch after communion with Him, and feel such a need to receive everything from Him, that you will join with the church and pray, "Oh that Thou wouldest rend the heavens and come down". Well, to my mind this is the exercise, the life of faith in the soul living upon the Son of God, and that is what constitutes real pilgrims. It is a wonderful thing to have a living soul that must live upon and from a living Christ, one to whom this world has been made a dead place, one to whom the Gospel has been made the land of the living. And at times you will feel, if you receive virtue from Christ in the Gospel, that your very soul is a land of the living, and that is by virtue of, and flows from, contact with Him. Have not some of you felt it under the preaching of the Gospel when that fruitful land which

flows with milk and honey is unfolded before you? You have so beheld the glory of Christ in the Gospel as to be changed into the same image from glory to glory. In my very little measure I have known what that has been and lost sight of everybody else in the chapel. Yes, felt the Gospel flow into my heart so that my very soul was like the land of the living, and Christ was precious. This is the virtue which one gets by a touch by faith of the Son of God.

"And Jesus immediately knowing in Himself that virtue had gone out of Him turned about Him in the press." A wonderful thing when He turns! And this is nothing fanciful. We have it in another way, another case. The blind man, when the Lord Jesus came to where he was, stood still. He knew just where to stand still. When He came to the tree in which Zaccheus had climbed, He stood still and looked up. He knows just where to come, what pew to go along, where to stand still: "And He turned". Have you ever felt Him turn? You see there was a considerable congregation evidently there. "He turned about in the press and said, Who touched My clothes?" "And the disciples said unto Him, Thou seest the multitude thronging Thee, and sayest Thou, Who touched Me? And He looked round about to see her that had done this thing." It was a special touch. There was no need for Him to look round about to find her. He knew her, but He took that method. Sometimes He takes that way when a poor sinner is reading the Word of God, shows Himself through the lattices of the Word, looks through the verses, the texts, lights it up and brings it suitably to your case. It would be wonderful if He turned in this congregation to see some poor sinner behind in the press with a case, a wounded conscience, or possessed of devils, or been brought to know that they are blind, or some leper pressing through the crowd in their foul condition, and the Lord turns to recognize those that seek Him, need Him, love Him. He knows where they are.

"He looked round about to see her that had done this thing. But the woman fearing and trembling." In the Gospel according to Luke it is added, "When she could not be hid". "But the woman fearing and trembling, knowing what was done in her, came and fell down before Him and told Him all the truth." She could not be hid, and the Lord Jesus intended that she should not. That is why He took that method and turned round to look for her, and asked the multitude, Who touched Me? It would be a great thing if He made manifest those who were seeking Him and needed Him.

"The woman fearing and trembling." Oh this was the tender fear of God! She knew what was done in her, she could not be hid. She would have done if she could. What she wanted to do was to get that touch and the healing, and go away and nobody know anything about it; but the Lord saw that she should not do that. It was for His honour and glory that He made her manifest. It would be a great thing if the Lord should turn by His Holy Spirit, even through the feeble ministry, and for substance to say, "Somebody has touched Me; virtue is gone out of Me. Who was it that touched Me?"

And it does not appear here that the Lord pointed to the woman and said, "It was you". "But the woman fearing and trembling came and fell down before Him and told Him all the truth." Now what a blessed experience that is; the love of Christ constrained her. Her disease draws her to Him. I believe it is true what we sing:

"Few, if any, come to Jesus,
Till reduced to self-despair".

"And He said unto her, Daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace and be healed of thy plague." It is not intended that the grace of faith made her whole at all. Faith will not make anybody whole. But it was what faith saw and believed in and received from the Lord Jesus, who is the Object of faith. And there is nothing but faith can receive Him, or touch Him, or receive virtue and life from Him. Well might Paul say to the Corinthians, "Examine yourselves, whether you are in the faith". And it would be well for us to examine ourselves as we read the Scriptures, almost every account in every chapter. This woman was in the faith. The Lord told her so: "Thy faith hath made thee whole". There may have been many of that multitude that thronged and saw Him who were not in the faith. Many touched Him, but they got nothing from Him. Are we in the faith, that faith which believes that God is, that Christ is the Son of the living God? Have you that faith that believes that, if He will, He can make you clean? Do you believe that His precious blood is infinitely sufficient to take out the deepest stain of your sin, and blot them out as a thick cloud? Do you believe that His righteousness, which is to full perfection, should justify you freely? It is a great thing to believe in the Lord Jesus by faith so as to come to Him and to cleave to Him.

So that it would seem that she made a profession of her faith when she came and fell down and told Him all the truth. He said unto her, "Daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole"; that is, what her faith had received from Him, what her faith saw to be in the Gospel. And how it does show the necessity for the teaching of the Holy Spirit in convincing of sin, of the completeness of the wreckage and ruin that we have in the Fall, and yet to see by faith that Jesus is infinitely greater, and come boldly to the throne of grace to obtain this mercy that the woman obtained, and to find the grace that she found, invincible grace.

"And He said unto her." Yes, the Lord Himself speaks. "Thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace." This is the peace of God which passeth all understanding. It was not a natural peace. Whatever trouble she had in her circumstances or in her home would make no difference to this peace.

"Sweet the moments, rich in blessing,
Which before the cross I spend."

It was Calvary's peace. It was the peace of having guilt removed, sin pardoned. It was the peace of justification: "Wherefore being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God". My friends, when you get this peace and healing in your soul, it brings heaven, and it will give a good hope of heaven.

"Go in peace, and be whole of thy plague." And that is what some of you want. But it is good advice in our hymn:

"Seek, my soul, no other healing,
But from Jesus' balmy blood".

Well, it will make Him precious, and there will be times upon your bed of a night when you will long to be taken out of self. I don't mean now, to die. Very blessed when that is the case. But to be translated and transformed from all that you are in yourself to the

image of the Lord Jesus. For about two minutes walking up the street to-day, I had such an unspeakable desire come into my heart to be holy, and I will tell you what it did. It showed me how unholy I am. But I asked the Lord to accomplish in me what is in the 36th of Ezekiel, verses 25-28. Well, it would be a mercy if the Lord should answer the prayers of those who are pressing toward Him with a case.

"Urge thy case through all unfitness;
Sue it out, spurning doubt;
The Holy Ghost thy witness".
