

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

CURED AT LAST!

A Sermon

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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“And a woman having an issue of blood twelve years, which had spent all her living upon physicians, neither could be healed of any, came behind him, and touched the border of his garment : and immediately her issue of blood stanchèd.”—Luke viii. 43, 44.

THOUGH I take Luke's statement as a text, I shall constantly refer to the version of the same story which we find in Mark v. 25 to 29.

Here we have one of the Lord's hidden ones : a case not to be publicly described because of its secret sorrow. We have here a woman of few words and much shamefacedness. Her malady subjected her to grievous penalties according to the ceremonial law. There is a terrible chapter in the Book of Leviticus concerning such a case as hers. She was unclean ; everything that she sat upon, and all who touched it, shared in the defilement. So that, in addition to her continual weakness, she was made to feel herself an outcast, under the ban of the law. This created, no doubt, great loneliness of spirit, and made her wish to hide herself out of sight. In the narrative before us she said not a word until the Saviour drew it out of her, for her own lasting good. She acted very practically and promptly, but she was a silent seeker : she would have preferred to have remained in obscurity, if so it could have been. Some here may belong to the great company of the timid and trembling ones. If courage before others is needed to secure salvation, matters will go hard with them, for they shrink from notice, and are ready to die of shame because of their secret grief. Cowper's hymn describes their inward feelings, when it says of the woman—

“Conceal'd amid the gathering throng
She would have shunn'd thy view,
And if her faith was firm and strong,
Had strong misgivings too.”

Such plants grow in the shade, and shrink from the light of the sun. The nature of their sorrows forces them into solitary self-communion. Oh, that the Lord may heal such at this hour !

The immediate cure of this woman is the more remarkable because it was a wayside miracle. The Saviour was on the road to restore the
No. 2,018.

daughter of Jairus; this woman's healing was an extra of grace, a sort of over-splash of the great fountain of mercy. The cup of our Lord's power was full—full to the brim—and he was bearing it to the house of the ruler of the synagogue; this poor creature did but receive a drop which he spilt on the way. *We* do well if, when going upon some errand of love, we concentrate all our energy upon it, and do it well in the end: but the Saviour could not only perform one great marvel, but he could work another as a sort of by-play incidentally—I had almost said, accidentally, on the road. The episodes of the Lord Jesus are as beautiful as the main run of his life's poem. Oh, that this day, while my sermon may seem meant for one, and distinctly directed to his salvation, it may also, by the power of Jesus, save another not so clearly pointed at! While the word is aimed at one particular character, may the Lord cause the very wind of the gospel shot to overcome another: or, to change the figure for a better one, while we spread the table for some bidden guest, may another hungry soul have grace given him to take his place at the banquet of grace! May those who hide away, and whom, therefore, we are not likely to discover, come forth to Jesus, and touch him, and live!

Let us at once speak of this much-afflicted woman, for she is a typical character. While we describe her conduct and *her* cure, I trust she may serve as a looking-glass in which many tremblers may see themselves. We shall carefully note *what she had done*, and then *what came of it*. This will lead us on to see *what she did at last*, and *what we also should do*. May the Holy Spirit make this a very practical discourse by causing you to follow her till you gain the blessing as she did! The preacher is very weak; and may the Lord, for this very reason, work by him to your salvation.

Consider, therefore, concerning this woman, **WHAT SHE HAD DONE**. She had been literally dying for twelve years. What had she been doing? Had she resigned herself to her fate, or treated her malady as a small matter? Far from it. Her conduct is highly instructive.

First, *she had resolved not to die if a cure could be had*. She was evidently a woman of great determination and hopefulness. She knew that this disease of hers would cause her life to ebb away, and bring her to the grave; but she said within herself, "I will have a struggle for it. If there is a possibility of removing this plague it shall be removed, let it cost me what it may of pain or payment." Oh, what a blessing it would be if unsaved ones here would say each one for himself, "I am a lost soul; but if a lost soul can be saved, I will be saved. I am guilty; but if guilt can be washed away, mine shall be washed away. I have a hard heart, and I know it; but if a heart of stone can be turned into a heart of flesh, I long to have it so, and I will never rest until this gracious work is wrought in me!" Alas, it is not so with many! Indifference is the rule; indifference about their immortal souls! Many are sick with dire spiritual disease, but they make no resolve to have it cured; they trifle with sin, and death, and heaven, and hell.

Insensibility has seized upon many, and a proud conceit: they are full of sin, and yet they talk of self-righteousness. They are weak, and can do nothing; yet they boast of their ability. They are not conscious

of their true condition, and hence they have no mind to seek a cure. How should they desire healing when they do not believe that they are diseased? How sad that beneath the ruddy cheek of morality there should lurk the fatal consumption of enmity to God! How horrible to be fair without and leprous within! Are there not many who can talk freely about religion, and seem as if they were right with God, and yet in the secret of their hearts they are the victims of an insincerity, and a want of truth, which fatally undermine the life of their profession. They are not what they seem to be: a secret sin drains away the life-blood of their religion. May the Holy Spirit show every unregenerate person the fatal nature of his soul's disease; for this, I trust, would lead to the making of a firm resolve to find salvation, if salvation is to be had.

No doubt some are held back from such action by the freezing power of despair. They have reached the conclusion that there is no hope for them. The promises of the gospel they regard as the voice of God to others, but as having no cheering word for them. One might suppose that they had searched the book of life, and had made sure that their names were not written there; they act as if their death-warrant had been signed. They cannot believe in the possibility of their becoming partakers of everlasting life. They are under a destroying delusion, which leads them to abandon hope. None are more presumptuous than the despairing. When men have no hope, they soon have no fear. Is not this a dreadful thing? May the Lord save you from such a condition! Despair of God's mercy is an unreasonable thing: if you think you have grounds for it, the lying spirit must have suggested them to you. Holy Scripture contains no justification for hopelessness. No mortal hath a just pretence to perish in despair. Neither the nature of God, nor the gospel of God, nor the Christ of God, warrant despair. Multitudes of texts encourage hope; but no one Scripture, rightly understood, permits a doubt of the mercy of God. "All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men." Jesus, the great Healer, is never baffled by any disease of human nature: he can cast out a legion of devils, and raise the dead. Oh that I could whisper hope into the dull ear of yonder mourner! Oh that I could drop a rousing thought into the sullen heart of the self-condemned! How glad should I be! My poor desponding friend, I would fain see thy chains snapped, thy fetters broken off! Oh that the Spirit of God would cause thee, like this woman, to resolve that if there be healing for thy soul thou wilt have it!

Alas! many have never come to this gracious resolution, because they cherish a vain hope, and are misled by an idle dream. They fancy that salvation will come to them without their seeking it. Certainly, they have no right to expect such a thing. It is true that our Lord is found of them that sought him not; but that is an act of his own sovereignty, and is not a rule for our procedure. The plain directions of the gospel are, "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found; call ye upon him while he is near." How dare they set these gracious words aside? They fancy that they may wake up, one of these fine days, and find themselves saved. Alas! it may more likely happen

to them, as to the rich man in the parable, "In hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments." God grant that none of you may trifle your souls into such misery! Some fancy that in the article of death, they may cry, "God be merciful to me a sinner," and so may leap into salvation. It seems to them a very slight business to be reconciled to God. They imagine that they can be converted just when they will, and so they put it off from day to day, as if it were of no more consequence than going to shop to buy a coat or a gown. Believe me, the Word of God does not set forth the matter in this way. It tells us that even the righteous scarcely are saved, and it rouses us to strive to enter in at the strait gate. God save you from every false confidence which would prevent your being in earnest about the healing of your souls. Spiritually, your case is as desperate as that of the poor woman now before us. May the Lord sweetly constrain you to feel that you must be healed, and that you cannot afford to put off the blessed day! If beneath the firmament of heaven there is healing for a sin-sick soul, seek it till you find it. When the Lord brings you to this resolve by his good Spirit, you will not be far from the kingdom of heaven.

Let us next note, that *this woman having made her resolve, adopted the likeliest means she could think of.* Physicians are men set apart on purpose to deal with human maladies, therefore she went to the physicians. What better could she do? Though she failed, yet she did what seemed most likely to succeed. Now, when a soul is resolved to find salvation, it is most fit and proper that it should use every likely means for the finding of salvation. Oh, that they were wise enough to hear the gospel, and to come at once to Jesus; but often they make grave mistakes. This woman went to gentlemen who were supposed to understand the science of medicine. Was it not natural that she should look for help to their superior wisdom? She cannot be blamed for looking to the men of light and leading. Many, in these days, do the same thing. They hear of the new discoveries of professedly cultured men, and hear their talk about the littleness of sin, and the larger hope, and the non-necessity of the new birth. Poor deceived creatures! they find in the long run that nothing comes of it; for the wisdom of man is nothing but pretentious folly. The world by wisdom knows neither God nor his salvation. Many there are who know all the less of saving truth because they know so much of what human fancy has devised, and human search discovered. We cannot blame the woman that, being a simple soul, and anxious for healing, she went to those first who were thought to know most. Let us not, with Christ so near, go roundabout as she did, but let us touch our Lord at once.

No doubt the sufferer also tried men who had diplomas, or were otherwise authorized to act as physicians. How can you blame her for going to those who were in the succession, and had the official stamp? Many sin-sick souls nowadays are, at first, very hopeful that the ordained clergy can benefit them by their duly performed services and duly administered sacraments. At least, good men, eminent in the church, may be looked to for aid; surely these know how to deal with souls! Alas! it is vain to look to men at all, and foolish to depend on

official dignity, or special repute. Some teachers do not know much about their own souls, and therefore know less about the souls of others. Vain is the help of man, be the man who he may. Whatever his popularity, learning, or eloquence, if you seek to him for his prayers, or his teachings, as able to save you, you will certainly seek in vain; as this poor woman did. She is not to be blamed, but to be commended, that she did what seemed best to her, according to her light; but you are warned; go not, therefore, to men.

No doubt she met with some who boasted that they could heal her complaint at once. They began by saying, "You have tried So-and-so, but he is a mere quack; mine is a scientific remedy. You have used a medicine which I could have told you would be worthless; but I have the secret. Put yourself absolutely into my hands, and the thing is done. I have healed many that have been given up by all the faculty. Follow my orders, and you will be restored." Sick persons are so eager to recover that they readily take the bait which is offered them by brazen impudence. An oily tongue and a bland manner, backed with unblushing assurance, are sure to win their way with one who is anxious to gain that which is offered. Ah, me! "All is not gold that glitters;" and all the professions which are made of helping sin-sick souls are not true professions. Many pretenders to new revelations are abroad, but they are physicians of no value. There is no balm in Gilead; there is no physician there: if there had been, the hurt of the daughter of my people had long ago been healed. There is no medicine beneath the sky that can stay the palpitations of a heart which dreads the judgment to come. No earthly surgery can take away the load of sin from the conscience. No hand of priest or presbyter, prophet or philosopher, can cleanse the leprosy of guilt. The finger of God is wanted here. There is one Heal-all, one divine *Catholicon*, and only one. Happy is he that hath received this infallible balm from Jehovah Rophi—the Lord that healeth. Yet we marvel not that when souls are pressed down with a sense of guilt, they try anything and everything which offers even a faint hope of relief. I could wish that all my hearers had an intense zeal to find salvation; for even if it led them into passing mistakes, yet, under God's blessing, they would find their way out of them, and end by glorifying the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, which never fails.

This woman, in the next place, having resolved not to die if cure could be had, and having adopted the likeliest means, persevered in the use of those means. No doubt she tried many, and even opposite, remedies. One doctor said, "You had better go to the warm baths of the lake of Tiberias; such bathing will be comforting and helpful." She grew worse at the warm bath, and went to another physician, who said, "You were wrongly treated; you need bracing up in the cold baths of the Jordan." Thus she went from vanity to vanity, to find both of them useless. An eminent practitioner assured her that she needed an internal remedy, and he alone could give her an infallible receipt. This, however, was of no use to her; and she went to another, who said that an external application should be tried, such as Isaiah's lump of figs. What perseverance that woman must have had! I am not going to say anything about our doctors nowadays, no doubt they

are the most learned and skilful that can be: but in earlier times surgery was murderous, and medicines were poisonous. Many of the prescriptions of those days are sickening, and yet ridiculous. I read yesterday a prescription, of our Saviour's time, warranted to cure many diseases, which consisted of grasshopper's eggs. These were supposed to exercise a marvellous influence, but they are no longer in the list of medicines. The tooth of a fox was said to possess special powers; but I noticed that one of the chief drugs of all, the most expensive, but the surest in its action, was a nail from the finger of a man who had been hanged. It was important that he should have been hanged: another finger-nail might have had no efficacy. Poor creatures were made to suffer most painfully by cruel medicines, which were far worse than the disease. As for surgical operations, if they had been designed to kill, they were certainly admirably arranged for their purpose. The wonder is that for twelve years poor human nature could stand out, not against the disease, but against the doctors. Brethren, the case is much the same spiritually. How many under their burden of sin go first to one, and then to another; practise this, and agonize after that, and pine for the other, perseveringly, and still without avail! Travel as fast as you may in a wrong direction, you will not reach the place you seek. Vain are all things save Jesus our Lord.

Have you been to Doctor Ceremony? He is, at this time, the fashionable doctor. Has he told you that you must attend to forms and rules? Has he prescribed you so many prayers, and so many services? Ah! many go to him, and they persevere in a round of religious observances, but these yield no lasting ease to the conscience. Have you tried Doctor Morality? He has a large practice, and is a fine old Jewish physician. "Be good in outward character," says he, "and it will work inwardly, and cleanse the heart." A great many persons are supposed to have been cured by him and by his assistant, Doctor Civility, who is nearly as clever as his master: but I have it on good evidence that neither of them apart, nor even the two together, could ever deal with an inward disease. Do what you may, your own doings will not stanch the wounds of a bleeding heart. Doctor Mortification has also a select practice; but men are not saved by denying themselves until they first deny their self-righteousness. Doctor Excitement has many patients, but his cures seldom outlive the set of sun. Doctor Feeling is much sought after by tender spirits; these try to feel sorrow and remorse; but, indeed, the way of cure does not lie in that quarter. Let everything be done that can be done apart from our blessed Lord Jesus Christ, and the sick soul will be nothing bettered. You may try human remedies for the space of a lifetime, but sin will remain in power, guilt will cling to the conscience, and the heart will abide as hard as ever.

But this woman not only thus tried the most likely means and persevered in the use of them, but *she also spent all her substance over it.* That was perhaps the chief thing in ancient surgery!—this golden ointment which did good to the physician, whatever became of the patient. The most important point was to pay the doctor. This woman's living was wasting away as well as her life. She continued

to pay, and to pay, and to pay; but she received no benefit from it all; say, rather, that she suffered more than she would have done had she kept her gold. Thus do men waste their thought, their care, their prayer, their agony over that which is as nothing: they spend their money for that which is not bread. At last she came to her last shekel. In the end there was an end to her means; but so long as the silver lasted, she lavished it out of the bag. What would not a man give to be saved? I never wonder that dying men give their estates to priests in the hope that they can save their souls. If gold could purchase pardon, who would withhold it? Health of body, if it could be purchased with gold, would be cheap at any price; but health of soul, holiness of character, acceptance with God, assurance of heaven—these would be cheap if we counted out worlds as poor men pay down their pence for bread. There are men so mean that they would not part with a pound for a place in Paradise; but if these once knew their true condition, they would alter their minds. The price of wisdom is above rubies. If we had mines of gold, we might profitably barter them for the salvation of our souls.

Beloved, you see where this woman was. She was in downright, desperate earnest to have her mortal malady healed, and so she spared neither her labour nor her living. In this we may wisely imitate her.

II. We have seen what the woman had done; now let us think of WHAT HAD COME OF IT. We are told that she had suffered many things of many physicians. That was her sole reward for trusting and spending: she had not been relieved, much less healed; but *she had suffered*. She had endured much additional suffering through seeking a cure. That is the case with you who have not come to Christ, but, being under a sense of sin, have sought relief apart from him. All that you do apart from Jesus, in order to win salvation, will only cause you increased suffering. You have tried to save yourself by prayers; your prayers have turned your thoughts upon your sin and its punishment, and thus you have become more wretched than before. You have attended to ceremonies, and if you have used them sincerely, they have wrought in you a solemn sense of the holiness of God, and of your own distance from him; and this, though very proper, has only increased your sorrow. You have been trying to feel good, and to do good, that so you may be good; but the very effort has made you feel how far off you are from the goodness you so much desire. Your self-denial has excited cravings after evil, and your mortifications have given new life to your pride. Efforts after salvation made in your own strength act like the struggles of a drowning man, which sink the more surely. As the fruit of your desperate efforts, you have suffered all the more. In the end, I trust this may work for your good, but up till now it has served no healing purpose: you are now at death's door, and all your praying, weeping, church-going, chapel-going, and sacrament-taking, do not help you one bit.

There has been this peculiarly poignant pang about it all, that you are *nothing bettered*. Cheerily did you hope, but cruelly are you disappointed. You cried, "I have it this time," but the bubble vanished as you grasped it. The evil of your nature, when repressed in one

place, broke out in another. You dealt with the symptoms of your disease, but you did not cut off the root of the mischief: it only showed itself in another form, but it never went away. You gave up one sin only to fall into another: you watched at the front entrance, and the thief stole in at the back door. Up till now, O soul, thou hast not come to Jesus, and after all thy goings elsewhere, thou art nothing bettered!

And now, perhaps, this morning you are saying, "What can I do? What shall I do?" I will tell you. You can do nothing except what this woman ultimately did, of which I will speak by-and-by. You are now brought to this extremity—that you are without strength, without merit, without power, and you must look out of yourself to another, who has strength and merit, and can save you. God grant that you may look to that glorious One before this service is over!

We read of this woman, that though she suffered much, she was nothing better, but *rather grew worse*. No better after twelve years of medicine? She went to the Egyptian doctor, and he promised her health in three months. She was worse. She tried the Syrian doctor: he was a man who had great knowledge of the occult sciences, and was not ashamed to practise enchantments. She was bitterly disappointed to find herself decidedly weaker. Then she heard of a Greek practitioner, who would cure her, heigh presto! in a trice. She paid her remaining money, but she still went backward. She bought disappointment very dearly. Friend, is this your condition? You are anxious to be right, and, therefore, you are earnest in every effort to save yourself; but still you are nothing bettered. You climb a treadmill, and are no higher after all your climbing. You drift down the river with one tide, and you float up again when it turns. Night after night you pull up in the same old creek that you started from. Oh, pitiful condition! Getting grey, too: becoming quite the old gentleman; and yet no nearer eternal life than when, as a lad, you used to attend the house of God, and wish to become a child of God. Nothing bettered? No; she grew worse? Fresh mischief had developed: other diseases fed upon her weakness; she was more emaciated, more lifeless than ever. Sad result of so much perseverance! And is not that the case with some of you who are in earnest, but are not enlightened? You are working, and growing poorer as you work. There is not about you so much as there used to be of good feeling, or sincere desire, or prayerfulness, or love for the Bible, or care to hear the gospel. You are becoming more careless, more dubious than you once were. You have lost much of you former sensitiveness. You are doing certain things now that would have startled you years ago, and you are leaving certain matters undone which once you would have thought essential. Evidently you are caught in the current, and are nearing the cataract. The Lord deliver you!

This is a sad, sad case! As a climax of it all, the heroine of our story had now *spent all that she had*. She could not go now to the Egyptian doctor, or to the Syrian doctor, or to the Hebrew doctor, or to the Roman doctor, or to the Greek doctor. No; now she must do without their flattering unction in the future. As for those famous medicines which raised her hopes, she can buy no more of such costly

inventions. This was, perhaps, her bitterest grief: but let me whisper it in your ear—this was the best thing that had yet happened to her; and I am praying that it may happen to some of you. At the bottom of your purse I trust you will find wisdom. When we come to the end of self we come to the beginning of Christ. That last shekel binds us to the pretenders, but absolute bankruptcy sets us free to go to him who heals diseases without money and without price. Glad enough am I when I meet with a man who is starved out of self-sufficiency. Welcome, brother! Now you are ready for Jesus. When all your own virtue has gone out of you, then shall you seek and find that virtue which goeth out of him.

III. This brings to our notice, in the third place, WHAT THIS WOMAN DID AT LAST. Weaker and weaker had she become, and her purse had become lighter and lighter. She hears of Jesus of Nazareth, a man sent of God who is healing sick folk of all sorts. She hears attentively; she puts the stories together that she hears; she believes them; they have the likeness of truth about them. "Oh," says she, "there is yet another opportunity for me. I will get in the crowd, and if I can only touch the bit of blue which he wears as the border of his garment, I shall be made whole." Splendid faith! It was thought much of in her own day, and we may still more highly prize it now that faith has grown so rare.

Note well *she resolved to trust in Jesus in sheer despair of doing anything else.* My dear friend, I do not know where you are sitting this morning in this great congregation—I almost wish I did, that I might come up to you and say to you personally, "Try Jesus Christ, trust him, and see whether he will not save you. Every other door is evidently shut; why not enter by Christ the door? There is no other life-buoy; lay hold on this! Say with our versifier—

"I can but perish if I go;
I am resolved to try;
For if I stay away, I know
I must for ever die."

Exercise the courage which is born of desperation. May God the Holy Spirit help you now to thrust forth your finger, and get into touch with Jesus! Say, "Yes, I freely accept Christ. By God's grace, I will have him to be my only hope. I will have him now." Be driven to Jesus by force of circumstances. Since there is no other port, O weather-beaten barque, make for this one! Wanderer, here is a refuge! Turn in hither, for there is no other shelter.

After all, *this was the simplest and easiest thing that she could do.* Touch Jesus. Put out thy finger, and touch the hem of his garment. The prescriptions she had purchased were long; but this was short enough. The operations performed upon her had been intricate; but this was simplicity itself. The suffering she had endured had complicated her case; but this was as plain as a pikestaff. "Touch with your finger the hem of his garment: that is all." O my hearer, you have tried many things, great things, and hard things, and painful things: why not try this simple matter of faith? Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved. Trust Jesus to cleanse you,

and he will do it. Put yourself into your Saviour's hands once for all, and he will save you.

Not only was this the simplest and easiest thing for the poor afflicted one, but certainly *it was the freest and most gracious*. There was not a penny to pay. Nobody stood at the door of the consulting-room to take her guinea; and the good physician did not even give a hint that he expected a reward. The gifts of Jesus are free as the air. He healed this believing woman in the open street, in the midst of the crowd. She had felt that if she could but get into the throng, she would, by hook or by crook, get near enough to reach the hem of his garment, and then she would be healed. It is so this morning, dear hearer. Come, and receive grace freely. Bring no good works, no good words, no good feelings, no good resolves, as the price of pardon; come with an empty hand, and touch the Lord by faith. The good things which you desire, Jesus will give you as the result of his cure; but they cannot be the cause or the price of it. Accept his mercy as the gift of his love! Come empty handed, and receive! Come undeserving, and be favoured! Only come into contact with Jesus, who is the fountain of life and health, and you shall be saved.

This was the quietest thing for her to do. She said nothing. She did not cry aloud like the blind men. She did not ask friends to look on, and see her make her venture. She kept her own counsel, and pushed into the press. In absolute silence, she took a stolen touch of the Lord's robe. O my hearer, you can be saved in silence. You have no need to speak to any person of your acquaintance, not even to mother or father. At this moment, while in the pew, believe and live. Nobody will know that you now are touching the Lord. In after days you will own your faith, but in the act itself you will be alone and unseen. Believe on Jesus. Trust yourself with him. Have done with all other confidences, and say, "He is all my salvation." Take Jesus at once, if not with a hand's grasp, yet with a finger's touch. O you poor, timid, bashful creature, touch the Lord! Trust in his power to save. Do not let me tell you to do it in vain, but do it at once. May God's Spirit cause you to accept Jesus now!

This is the only effectual thing. Touch Jesus, and salvation is yours at once. Simple as faith is, it is never-failing. A touch of the fringe of the Saviour's garment sufficed: in a moment she felt in her body that she was healed of that plague. "It is twelve years ago," she said to herself, "since I felt like a living woman. I have been sinking in a constant death all this while, but now I feel my strength come back to me." Blessed be the name of the great Healer! She was exceeding glad. Tremble she did, lest it should turn out to be too good to be true; but she was most surely healed. O my dear hearer, do trust my Lord, for he will surely do for you that which none other can achieve. Leave feeling and working, and try faith in Jesus. May the Holy Spirit lead you to do so at once!

IV. And now, poor convicted sinner! here comes the driving home of the nail. DO THOU AS THIS WOMAN DID. Ask nobody about it, but do it. She did not go to Peter, James, and John, and say, "Good sirs, advise me." She did not beg from them an introduction to Jesus, but she went of her own accord, and tried for herself

the virtue of a touch. You have had advising enough; now come to real work. There is too much tendency to console ourselves by conversations with godly men: let us get away from them, and speak to their Master. Talks in the enquiry-room, and chats with Christian neighbours, are all very well; but one touch of Jesus will be infinitely better. I do not blame you for seeking religious advice: this may be a half-way house to call at, but do not make it the terminus. Press on till, by personal faith, you have laid hold on Jesus. Do not tell anybody what you are about to do; wait till it is done. Another day you will be happy to tell the minister and God's people of what the Lord has done for you; but for the present, quietly believe in the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world.

Do not even ask yourself about it. If this poor woman had consulted with herself, she might never have ventured so near the holy One of God. So clearly shut out from society by the law of her people and her God, if she had given the matter a second thought, she might have abandoned the idea. Blessed was the impetuosity which thrust her into the crowd, and kept her head above the throng, and her face towards the Lord in the centre of the press. She did not so much reason as dare. Do not ask yourself anything about it; but do it. Believe, and have done with it. Stop not to parley with your own unbelief, nor answer your rising doubts and fears; but at once, upon the instant, put out your finger, touch the hem of his garment, and see what will come of it. God help you to do so while I am speaking!

Yield to the sacred impulse which is just now operating upon you. Do not say, "To-morrow may be more convenient." In this woman's case, there was the Lord before her; she longed to be healed at once, and so, come what may, into the crowd she plunged. She was so enfeebled, that one wonders how she managed to get near him; but possibly the crowd took her off her feet and carried her onward, as often happens in a rush. However, there was her chance, and she seized it. There was the fringe of the Lord's mantle; out went her finger: it was all done. O my friend, you have an opportunity now, by God's great grace, for you are in his house of prayer. Jesus of Nazareth passeth by at this moment. He who speaks to you is not trying to say pretty things, but he is pining to win your soul for Jesus. Oh, how I wish I could lead you to that saving touch! The Spirit of God can do it. May he now move you to cry—"I will believe in the appointed sacrifice, and trust my soul with Jesus"! Have you done so? You are saved. "He that believeth in him hath everlasting life."

"Oh, but I tremble so!" So did she whom Jesus healed. Her hand shook, but she touched him all the same for that. I think I see her quivering finger. Poor emaciated woman, with pale and bloodless cheeks! What a taper finger was that which she held out, and how it quivered! However much the finger of your faith may tremble, if it does but touch the hem of the Lord's garment, virtue will flow from him to you. The power is not in the finger which touches, but in the divine Saviour who is touched. So long as there is a contact established between you and the almighty power of Jesus, his power will travel along

your trembling finger, and bring healing to your heart. A telegraph wire may shake with the wind, and yet convey the electric current, and so may a trembling faith convey salvation from Jesus. A strong faith, which rests anywhere but in Jesus, is a delusion; but a weak faith, which rests alone on Jesus, brings sure salvation. Out with your finger! Dear soul, out with your finger! Do not go away till you have touched the Lord by a believing prayer or hope. Holy Spirit, do not suffer any to quit the Tabernacle until, by a believing desire, or trust, or confidence of some sort, they have established a contact between themselves and Jesus, and have felt the virtue enter them for their instant healing. O Lord, save this people! Why do you come, Sunday after Sunday, in such crowds? and why must I stand here and bleed my heart away in love to your souls? Is the sole result to be that I help you to spend an hour-and-a-half in a sort of religious amusement? What a waste it is of my labour, and of your time, unless some gracious work is done! O sirs, if you are not brought to Christ, my preaching will prove a curse to you! It appals me to think that the preaching of the gospel will be a savour of death unto you unless it brings you life. Put not the day of grace from you. By the living God, I do implore you, trust the living Redeemer. As I shall meet you all, face to face, before the judgment-seat of Christ, I do implore and beseech you, put out the finger of faith, and trust the Lord Jesus, who is so fully worthy to be trusted. The simple trust of your heart will stay the death which now works in you. Lord, give that trust, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Mark v. 21—43.

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