

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

REAL CONTACT WITH JESUS.

A Sermon

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“And Jesus said, Somebody hath touched me: for I perceive that virtue is gone out of me.”—Luke viii. 46 *

OUR Lord was very frequently in the midst of a crowd. His preaching was so plain and so forcible that he always attracted a vast company of hearers; and, moreover, the rumour of the loaves and fishes no doubt had something to do with increasing his audiences, while the expectation of beholding a miracle would be sure to add to the numbers of the hangers-on. Our Lord Jesus Christ often found it difficult to move through the streets, because of the masses who pressed upon him. This was encouraging to him as a preacher, and yet how small a residuum of real good came of all the excitement which gathered around his personal ministry! He might have looked upon the great mass, and have said, “What is the chaff to the wheat?” for here it was piled up upon the threshing-floor, heap upon heap; and yet, after his decease, his disciples might have been counted by a few scores, for those who had spiritually received him were but few. Many were called, but few were chosen. Yet, wherever one was blessed, our Saviour took note of it; it touched a chord in his soul. He never could be unaware when virtue had gone out of him to heal a sick one, or when power had gone forth with his ministry to save a sinful one. Of all the crowd that gathered round the Saviour upon the day of which our text speaks, I find nothing said about one of them except this solitary “somebody” who had touched him. The crowd came, and the crowd went; but little is recorded of it all. Just

* Other Sermons in the *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, on the healing of this poor woman, are No. 1,809, “**May I?**” No. 2,018, “**Cured at Last!**” No. 2,019 (a double number), “**She was not Hid;**” and No. 3,020, “**Good Cheer from Grace Received.**”

as the ocean, having advanced to full tide, leaves but little behind it when it retires again to its channel, so the vast multitude around the Saviour left only this one precious deposit,—one “somebody” who had touched him, and had received virtue from him.

Ah, my Master, it may be so again this evening! These Sabbath mornings, and these Sabbath evenings, the crowds come pouring in like a mighty ocean, filling this house, and then they all retire again; only here and there is a “somebody” left weeping for sin, a “somebody” left rejoicing in Christ, a “somebody” who can say, “I have touched the hem of his garment, and I have been made whole.” The whole of my other hearers are not worth the “somebodies.” The many of you are not worth the few, for the many are the pebbles, and the few are the diamonds; the many are the heaps of husks, and the few are the precious grains. May God find them out at this hour, and his shall be all the praise!

Jesus said, “Somebody hath touched me,” from which we observe that, *in the use of means and ordinances, we should never be satisfied unless we get into personal contact with Christ*, so that we touch him, as this woman touched his garment. Secondly, *if we get into such personal contact, we shall have a blessing*: “I perceive that virtue is gone out of me;” and, thirdly, *if we do get a blessing, Christ will know it*; however obscure our case may be, he will know it, and he will have us let others know it; he will speak, and ask such questions as will draw us out, and manifest us to the world.

I. First, then, IN THE USE OF ALL MEANS AND ORDINANCES, LET IT BE OUR CHIEF AIM AND OBJECT TO COME INTO PERSONAL CONTACT WITH THE LORD JESUS CHRIST.

Peter said, “The multitude throng thee, and press thee,” and that is true of the multitude to this very day; but of those who come where Christ is in the assembly of his saints, a large proportion only come because it is their custom to do so. Perhaps they hardly know why they go to a place of worship. They go because they always did go, and they think it wrong not to go. They are just like the doors which swing upon their hinges; they take no interest in what is done, at least only in the exterior parts of the service; into the heart and soul of the business they do not enter, and cannot enter. They are glad if the sermon is rather short, there is so much the less tedium for them. They are glad if they can look around and gaze at the congregation, they find in that something to interest them; but getting near to the Lord Jesus is not the business they come upon. They have not looked at it in that light. They come and they go; they come and they go; and it will be so till, by-and-by, they will come for the last time, and they will find out in the next world that the means of grace were not instituted to be matters of custom, and that to have heard Jesus Christ preached, and to have rejected him, is no trifle, but a solemn thing for which they will have to answer in the presence of the great Judge of all the earth.

Others there are who come to the house of prayer, and try to enter into the service, and do so in a certain fashion; but it is

only self-righteously or professionally. They may come to the Lord's table; perhaps they attend to the ordinance of baptism; they may even join the church. They are baptized, yet not by the Holy Spirit; they take the Lord's supper, but they take not the Lord himself; they eat the bread, but they never eat his flesh; they drink the wine, but they never drink his blood; they have been buried in the pool, but they have never been buried with Christ in baptism, nor have they risen again with him into newness of life. To them, to read, to sing, to kneel, to hear, and so on, are enough. They are content with the shell, but the blessed spiritual kernel, the true marrow and fatness, these they know nothing of. These are the many, go into what church or meeting-house you please. They are in the press around Jesus, but they do not touch him. They come, but they come not into contact with Jesus. They are outward, external hearers only, but there is no inward touching of the blessed person of Christ, no mysterious contact with the ever-blessed Saviour, no stream of life and love flowing from him to them. It is all mechanical religion. Of vital godliness, they know nothing.

But Christ said, "Somebody hath touched me," and that is the soul of the matter. O my hearer, when you are in prayer alone, never be satisfied with having prayed; do not give it up till you have touched Christ in prayer; or, if you have not got to him, at any rate sigh and cry until you do! Do not think you have prayed, but try again. When you come to public worship, I beseech you, rest not satisfied with listening to the sermon, and so on,—as you all do with sufficient attention; to that I bear you witness;—but do not be content unless you get at Christ the Master, and touch him. At all times when you come to the communion table, count it to have been no ordinance of grace to you unless you have gone right through the veil into Christ's own arms, or at least have touched his garment, feeling that the first object, the life and soul of the means of grace, is to touch Jesus Christ himself; and except "somebody" hath touched him, the whole has been a mere dead performance, without life or power.

The woman in our text was not only amongst those who were in the crowd, but she touched Jesus; and therefore, beloved, let me hold her up to your example in some respects, though I would to God that in other respects you might excel her.

Note, first, she felt that it was of no use to be in the crowd, of no use to be in the same street with Christ, or near to the place where Christ was, but *she must get at him; she must touch him*. She touched him, you will notice, *under many difficulties*. There was a great crowd. She was a woman. She was also a woman enfeebled by a disease which had long drained her constitution, and left her more fit to be upon a bed than to be struggling in the seething tumult. Yet, notwithstanding that, so intense was her desire, that she urged on her way, I doubt not with many a bruise, and many an uncouth push, and at last, poor trembler as she was, she got near to the Lord. Beloved, it is not always easy to get at Jesus. It is very easy to kneel down to pray, but not so easy to

reach Christ in prayer. There is a child crying, it is your own, and its noise has often hindered you when you were striving to approach Jesus; or a knock will come at the door when you most wish to be retired. When you are sitting in the house of God, your neighbour in the seat before you may unconsciously distract your attention. It is not easy to draw near to Christ, especially coming as some of you do right away from the counting-house, and from the workshop, with a thousand thoughts and cares about you. You cannot always unload your burden outside, and come in here with your hearts prepared to receive the gospel. Ah! it is a terrible fight sometimes, a real foot-to-foot fight with evil, with temptation, and I know not what. But, beloved, do fight it out, do fight it out; do not let your seasons for prayer be wasted, nor your times for hearing be thrown away; but, like this woman, be resolved, with all your feebleness, that you will lay hold upon Christ. And oh! if you be resolved about it, if you cannot get to him, he will come to you, and sometimes, when you are struggling against unbelieving thoughts, he will turn and say, "Make room for that poor feeble one, that she may come to me, for my desire is to the work of my own hands; let her come to me, and let her desire be granted to her."

Observe, again, that this woman touched Jesus *very secretly*. Perhaps there is a dear sister here who is getting near to Christ at this very moment, and yet her face does not betray her. It is so little contact that she has gained with Christ that the joyous flush, and the sparkle of the eye, which we often see in the child of God, have not yet come to her. She is sitting in yonder obscure corner, or standing in this aisle, but though her touch is secret, it is true. Though she cannot tell another of it, yet it is accomplished. She has touched Jesus. Beloved, that is not always the nearest fellowship with Christ of which we talk the most. Deep waters are still. Nay, I am not sure but what we sometimes get nearer to Christ when we think we are at a distance than we do when we imagine we are near him, for we are not always the best judges of our own spiritual state; and we may be very close to the Master, and yet, for all that, we may be so anxious to get closer that we may feel dissatisfied with the measure of grace which we have already received. To be satisfied with self, is no sign of grace; but to long for more grace, is often a far better evidence of the healthy state of the soul. Friend, if thou canst not come to the table to-night publicly, come to the Master in secret. If thou darest not tell thy wife, or thy child, or thy father, that thou art trusting in Jesus, it need not be told as yet. Thou mayest do it secretly, as he did to whom Jesus said, "When thou wast under the fig-tree, I saw thee." Nathanael retired to the shade that no one might see him; but Jesus saw him, and marked his prayer, and he will see thee in the crowd, and in the dark, and not withhold his blessing.

This woman also came into contact with Christ *under a very deep sense of unworthiness*. I daresay she thought, "If I touch the Great Prophet, it will be a wonder if he does not strike me with some sudden judgment," for she was a woman ceremonially unclean.

She had no right to be in the throng. Had the Levitical law been strictly carried out, I suppose she would have been confined to her house; but there she was wandering about, and she must needs go and touch the holy Saviour. Ah, poor heart! you feel that you are not fit to touch the skirts of the Master's robe, for you are so unworthy. You never felt so undeserving before as you do at this moment. In the recollection of last week and its infirmities, in the remembrance of the present state of your heart, and all its wanderings from God, you feel as if there never was so worthless a sinner in the house of God before. "Is grace for me?" you ask. "Is Christ for me?" Oh, yes, unworthy one! Do not be put off without it. Jesus Christ does not save the worthy, but the unworthy. Your plea must not be righteousness, but guilt. And you, too, child of God, though you are ashamed of yourself, Jesus is not ashamed of you; and though you feel unfit to come, let your unfitness only impel you with the greater earnestness of desire. Let your sense of need make you the more fervent to approach the Lord, who can supply your need.

Thus, you see, the woman came under difficulties, she came secretly, she came as an unworthy one, but still she obtained the blessing.

I have known many staggered with that saying of Paul's, "He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself." Now, understand that this passage does not refer to the unworthiness of those persons who come to the Lord's table; for it does not say, "He that eateth and drinketh *being unworthy*." It is not an adjective; it is an adverb: "He that eateth and drinketh unworthily," that is to say, he who shall come to the outward and visible sign of Christ's presence, and shall eat of the bread in order to obtain money by being a member of the church, knowing himself to be a hypocrite, or who shall do it jestingly, trifling with the ordinance; such a person would be eating and drinking unworthily, and he will be condemned. The sense of the passage is, not "damnation", as our version reads it, but "condemnation." There can be no doubt that members of the church, coming to the Lord's table in an unworthy manner, do receive condemnation. They are condemned for so doing, and the Lord is grieved. If they have any conscience at all, they ought to feel their sin; and if not, they may expect the chastisements of God to visit them. But, O sinner, as to coming to Christ,—which is a very different thing from coming to the Lord's table,—as to coming to Christ, the more unworthy you feel yourself to be, the better! Come, thou filthy one, for Christ can wash thee. Come, thou loathsome one, for Christ can beautify thee. Come utterly ruined and undone, for in Jesus Christ there is the strength and salvation which thy case requires.

Notice, once again, that *this woman touched the Master very tremblingly, and it was only a hurried touch, but still it was a touch of faith*. Oh, beloved, to lay hold on Christ! Be thankful if you do but get near him for a few minutes. "Abide with me," should be your prayer; but oh, if he should only give you a glimpse of

himself, be thankful! Remember that a touch healed the woman. She did not embrace Christ by the hour together. She had but a touch, and she was healed; and oh, may you have a sight of Jesus now, my beloved! Though it be but a glimpse, yet it will gladden and cheer your souls. Perhaps you are waiting on Christ, desiring his company, and while you are turning the matter over in your mind you are asking, "Will he ever shine upon me? Will he ever speak loving words to me? Will he ever let me sit at his feet? Will he ever permit me to lean my head upon his bosom?" Come and try him. Though you should shake like an aspen leaf, yet come. They sometimes come best who come most tremblingly; for, when the creature is lowest, then is the Creator highest; and when, in our own esteem, we are less than nothing and vanity, then is Christ the more fair and lovely in our eyes. One of the best ways of climbing to heaven is on our hands and knees. At any rate, there is no fear of falling when we are in that position, for—

"He that is down need fear no fall."

Let your lowliness of heart, your sense of utter nothingness, instead of disqualifying you, be a sweet medium for leading you to receive more of Christ. The more empty I am, the more room is there for my Master. The more I lack, the more he will give me. The more I feel my sickness, the more shall I adore and bless him when he makes me whole.

You see, the woman did really touch Christ, and so I come back to that. Whatever infirmity there was in the touch, it was a real touch of faith. She did reach Christ himself. She did not touch Peter; that would have been of no use to her, any more than it is for the parish priest to tell you that you are regenerate when your life soon proves that you are not. She did not touch John or James; that would have been of no more good to her than it is for you to be touched by a bishop's hands, and to be told that you are confirmed in the faith, when you are not even a believer, and therefore have no faith to be confirmed in. She touched the Master himself; and, I pray you, do not be content unless you can do the same. Put out the hand of faith, and touch Christ. Rest on him. Rely on his atoning sacrifice, his dying love, his rising power, his ascended plea; and as you rest in him, your vital touch, however feeble, will certainly give you the blessing your soul needs.

This brings me to the second part of my discourse, upon which I will say only a little.

II. THE WOMAN IN THE CROWD DID TOUCH JESUS, AND, HAVING DONE SO, SHE RECEIVED VIRTUE FROM HIM.

The healing energy streamed at once through the finger of faith into the woman. In Christ, there is healing for all spiritual diseases. There is a speedy healing, a healing which will not take months nor years, but which is complete in one second. There is in Christ a sufficient healing, though your diseases should be multiplied beyond all bounds. There is in Christ an all-conquering power to drive out every ill. Though, like this woman, you baffle

physicians, and your case is reckoned desperate beyond all parallel, yet a touch of Christ will heal you. What a precious, glorious gospel I have to preach to sinners! If they touch Jesus, no matter though the devil himself were in them, that touch of faith would drive the devil out of them. Though you were like the man into whom there had entered a legion of devils, the word of Jesus would cast them all into the deep, and you would sit at his feet, clothed, and in your right mind. There is no excess or extravagance of sin which the power of Jesus Christ cannot overcome. If thou canst believe, whatever thou mayest have been, thou shalt be saved. If thou canst believe, though thou hast been lying in the scarlet dye till the warp and woof of thy being are ingrained therewith, yet shall the precious blood of Jesus make thee white as snow. Though thou art become black as hell itself, and only fit to be cast into the pit, yet if thou trustest Jesus, that simple faith shall give to thy soul the healing which shall make thee fit to tread the streets of heaven, and to stand before Jehovah-Rophi's face, magnifying the Lord that healeth thee.

And now, child of God, I want you to learn the same lesson. Very likely, when you came in here, you said, "Alas! I feel very dull; my spirituality is at a very low-ebb; the place is hot, and I do not feel prepared to hear; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak; I shall have no holy enjoyment to-day!" Why not? Why, the touch of Jesus could make you live if you were dead, and surely it will stir the life that is in you, though it may seem to you to be expiring! Now, struggle hard, my beloved, to get at Jesus. May the Eternal Spirit come and help you, and may you yet find that your dull, dead times can soon become your best times! Oh, what a blessing it is that God takes the beggar up from the dunghill! He does not raise us when he sees us already up, but when he finds us lying on the dunghill, then he delights to lift us up, and set us among princes. Or ever you are aware, your soul may become like the chariots of Ammi-nadib. Up from the depths of heaviness to the very heights of ecstatic worship you may mount in a single moment if you can but touch Christ crucified. View him yonder, with streaming wounds, with thorn-crowned head, as, in all the majesty of his misery, he expires for you!

"Alas!" say you, "I have a thousand doubts to-night." Ah! but your doubts will soon vanish when you draw nigh to Christ. He never doubts who feels the touch of Christ, at least, not while the touch lasts. For, observe this woman; she felt in her body that she was made whole, and so shall you, if you will only come into contact with the Lord. Do not wait for evidences, but come to Christ for evidences. If you cannot even dream of a good thing in yourselves, come to Jesus Christ as you did at the first. Come to him as if you never had come at all. Come to Jesus as a sinner, and your doubts shall flee away.

"Ay!" saith another, "but my sins come to my remembrance, my sins since conversion." Well, then, return to Jesus, when your guilt seems to return. The fountain is still open, and that fountain, you will remember, is not only open for sinners, but for

saints; for what saith the Scripture? "There shall be a fountain opened for the house of David and for the inhabitants of Jerusalem,"—that is, for you, church-members, for you, believers in Jesus. The fountain is still open. Come, beloved, come to Jesus anew, and whatever be your sins, or doubts, or heaviness, they shall all depart as soon as you can touch your Lord.

III. And now the last point is,—and I will not detain you long upon it,—IF SOMEBODY SHALL TOUCH JESUS, THE LORD WILL KNOW IT.

I do not know your names; a great number of you are perfect strangers to me. It matters nothing; your name is "somebody", and Christ will know you. You are a total stranger, perhaps, to everybody in this place; but if you get a blessing, there will be two who will know it, you will, and Christ will. Oh! if you should look to Jesus this day, it may not be registered in our church-book, and we may not hear of it; but still it will be registered in the courts of heaven, and they will set all the bells of the New Jerusalem a-ringing, and all the harps of angels will take a fresh lease of music as soon as they know that you are born again.

" With joy the Father doth approve
The fruit of his eternal love;
The Son with joy looks down and sees
The purchase of his agonies.

" The Spirit takes delight to view
The holy soul he formed anew;
And saints and angels join to sing
The growing empire of their King."

"Somebody!" I do not know the woman's name; I do not know who the man is, but—"Somebody!"—God's electing love rests on thee, Christ's redeeming blood was shed for thee, the Spirit has wrought an effectual work in thee, or thou wouldst not have touched Jesus; and all this Jesus knows.

It is a consoling thought that Christ not only knows the great children in the family, but he also knows the little ones. This truth stands fast, "The Lord knoweth them that are his," whether they are only brought to know him now, or whether they have known him for fifty years. "The Lord knoweth them that are his," and if I am a part of Christ's body, I may be but the foot, but the Lord knows the foot; and the head and the heart in heaven feel acutely when the foot on earth is bruised. If you have touched Jesus, I tell you that, amidst the glories of angels, and the everlasting hallelujahs of all the blood-bought souls around his throne, he has found time to hear your sigh, to receive your faith, and to give you an answer of peace. All the way from heaven to earth there has rushed a mighty stream of healing virtue, which has come from Christ to you. Since you have touched him, the healing virtue has touched you.

Now, as Jesus knows of your salvation, he wishes other people to know of it, and that is why he has put it into my heart to say, "Somebody has touched the Lord." * Where is that somebody?

Somebody, where are you? Somebody, where are you? You have touched Christ, though with a feeble finger, and you are saved. Let us know it. It is due to us to let us know. You cannot guess what joy it gives us when we hear of sick ones being healed by our Master. Some of you, perhaps, have known the Lord for months, and you have not yet come forward to make an avowal of it; we beg you to do so. You may come forward tremblingly, as this woman did; you may perhaps say, "I do not know what I should tell you." Well, you must tell us what she told the Lord; she told him all the truth. We do not want to hear anything else. We do not desire any sham experience. We do not want you to manufacture feelings like somebody else's that you have read of in a book. Come and tell us what you have felt. We shall not ask you to tell us what you have not felt, or what you do not know. But, if you have touched Christ, and you have been healed, I ask it, and I think I may ask it as your duty, as well as a favour to us, to come and tell us what the Lord hath done for your soul.

And you, believers, when you come to the Lord's table, if you draw near to Christ, and have a sweet season, tell it to your brethren. Just as when Benjamin's brethren went down to Egypt to buy corn, they left Benjamin at home, but they took a sack for Benjamin, so you ought always to take a word home for the sick wife at home, or the child who cannot come out. Take home food for those of the family who cannot come for it. God grant that you may always have something sweet to tell of what you have experimentally known of precious truth, for while the sermon may have been sweet in itself, it comes with a double power when you can add, "and there was a savour about it which I enjoyed, and which made my heart leap for joy"!

Whoever you may be, my dear friend, though you may be nothing but a poor "somebody", yet if you have touched Christ, tell others about it, in order that they may come and touch him, too; and the Lord bless you, for Christ's sake! Amen.

Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.*

JOHN III. 1—21.

Let us once more read together part of this blessed soul-saving chapter. I suppose that more souls have been saved through the reading of this chapter than through almost any other portion of Holy Writ.

Verses 1, 2. *There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews: the same came to Jesus by night,*

He could not have come at a better time; the business of the day was over, and all was quiet.

2. *And said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him.*

It is always well to go as far as you can in your avowal of belief in Christ. Nicodemus confessed what he knew to be true, and he drew from it the thoroughly accurate conclusion that Christ must be a teacher come from God because of the miracles which he wrought. Dear hearer, if thou dost

* This Exposition belongs to Sermon No. 3,121, "The Necessity of Regeneration," but there was no space available for it there.