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Our Pulpit.

The Wonderful Cure.

SERMON PREACHED BY

Rev. C. H. Spurgeon.

'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 stanch'd.'—Luke 8: 43, 44.

Though I take Luke's statement for a text, I shall constantly refer to the version of the same story which we find in Mark 5: 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 shamedness. 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. 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 daughter of Jairus; this woman's healing was an example 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. The episodes of the Lord Jesus are as beautiful as the main run of His life's poem.

I. 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! 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.

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.

God save you from every false confidence which would prevent your being in earnest about the healing of your souls!

Let us next note that this woman, having made her resolve, adopted the likeliest means she could think of. 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. Let us not, with Christ so near, go roundabout as the woman did, but let us touch our Lord at once.

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 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 marvelous 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 the 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.

Have you been to *Doctor Ceremony*? He is, at this time, the fashionable doctor. Has he told you that you must attend to form 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. *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 these quarters. 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. 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 labor 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. 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 good 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 sinks 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, and sacrament-taking do not help you one bit.

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, oh soul, thou hast not come to Jesus, and after all thy goings elsewhere thou art nothing bettered.

We read of this woman that, though she suffered much, she was nothing better, but rather grew worse. 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 your 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 shewel 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.

III. This brings to our notice, thirdly, what she did at last. Weaker and weaker had she become, and her purse had become lighter and lighter. She heard 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,' said 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!

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. Not only was this the simplest and easiest thing for the poor afflicted one, but certainly it was the *preest and most gracious*. There was not a penny to pay. It is so this morning, dear hearer. Come and receive grace freely. Come empty-handed, and receive! This is the only effectual thing. Touch Jesus and salvation is yours at once. Simple as faith is, it is never-failing. 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. 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. Yield to the sacred impulse which is just now operating upon you. Do not say, 'To-morrow may be more convenient.' Oh, my friend, you have an opportunity now by God's great grace. 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!

Put not the day of grace from you. By the living God I do implore you, trust the living Redeemer. The simple trust of your heart will stay the death which now works in you. Lord, give that trust for Jesus' sake! Amen.

A CONVINCING ARGUMENT.

Dr. Vincent says that he never denounces people for playing at cards, dancing and theatre-going, because they are not absolute, but relative wrong. But he leaves the adoption of these amusements to the judgment of the young people in this way: 'I draw a picture of Rev. Dr. John Hall, Bishop Matthew Simpson and D. L. Moody sitting down together and shuffling cards for an evening, dancing themselves red with half-dressed women, or going to the theatre. They always seem shocked at the mere mention of such conduct by such christians. But I ask them if they don't want as good place in heaven as a bishop shall have. And then I tell them that, if they can approve of these amusements in church leaders, then of course they may ask the leaders to approve the same in them; otherwise, not.' It is a good putting of the issue.

'THE MOST WONDERFUL THING.'

Said an Indian chief to his people, on his return from a visit to Washington, when asked, 'Tell us what was the most wonderful thing you saw,' replied, 'I saw the Great Father, meaning the President of the United States, and that was wonderful.' Then after some length of silence, the bronze-faced forestman, with sadness in his eye and pathos in his voice, answered farther, 'When I was in the great churches and heard the great organ, and all the palefaces stood up, and

said, 'The Lord is in his holy temple Let all the earth keep silence,' I thought, 'The palefaces have had this religion all these four hundred years and did not give it to us; and now it is late.' That is the most wonderful thing I saw.' And his people said, 'That is, indeed, most wonderful! Now it is late. It is indeed noon.'

How often these last lingering words seem to possess us like a human inspiration, impelling us to more consecrated service for the blessed Master in Indian mission work.

A BEAUTIFUL INCIDENT.

The noble missionary Moffat tells a beautiful story. He says: In one of my early journeys I came, with my companions, to a heathen village on the banks of the Orange river. We had traveled far, and were hungry, thirsty and fatigued; but the people of the village rather roughly directed us to halt at a distance. We asked for water but they would not supply it. I offered the three or four buttons left on my jacket for a little milk; but was refused. We had the prospect of another hungry night, at a distance from water, though within sight of the river. When twilight grew on, a woman approached from the height beyond which the village lay. She bore on her head a bundle of wood, and had a vessel of milk in her hand. The latter, without opening her lips, she handed to us, laid down the wood, and returned to the village. A second time she approached with a cooking vessel on her head, and a leg of mutton in one hand and water in the other. She sat down without saying a word, prepared the fire, and put on the meat. We asked her again and again who she was. She remained silent until we affectionately entreated her to give a reason for such unlooked-for kindness to strangers. Then the tears stole down her sable cheeks, and she replied: I love Him whose you are, and surely it is my duty to give you a cup of cold water in His name. My heart is full, therefore I can't speak the joy I feel at seeing you in this out-of-the-world place. On learning a little of her history, and that she was a solitary light burning in a dark place, I asked her how she kept up the light of God in her soul in the entire absence of the communion of saints. She drew from her bosom a copy of the Dutch New Testament, which she had received from Mr. Helm when in his school some years before. This, said she, is the fountain whence I drink; this the oil that makes my lamp burn. I looked on the precious relic printed by the British and Foreign Bible Society, and the reader may conceive my joy while we mingled our prayers and sympathies together at the throne of the Heavenly Father.

UNCLAIMED GOLD.

The manager of a San Francisco express office recently said to a reporter: You would be surprised to see what stacks of gold coin and gold dust remain here unclaimed for. When we have kept it long enough we send the gold dust to the mint and get it coined, and then credit it to the unknown. Years ago an old fellow living up on the John Day River, in Oregon, sent us a big bag of gold. We stowed it away till the bag looked like a relic of the middle ages, and would scarcely hold together. Then we sent the bag of dust and nuggets over to the mint and got it transferred into eight thousand dollars. Eight years after, an old, bedraggled fellow walked in and said he guessed he had some money here. We asked him his name, and when he gave it we told him yes, he had, and asked him why he hadn't called long ago. Well, he said he had sent it down in advance of his coming himself, and when he got there he didn't need it, and he went to Australia, and finally around the world, and had only just now got back. We asked him why he hadn't taken it to the bank, saying that he could have got a good many thousand dollars interest on it by this time. Yes, he said he knew that, but the blanked banks might break, and he thought he would just leave it where it was.

Nothing is intolerable that is necessary. Now, God hath bound thy trouble upon thee by his special providence, and with a design to try thee, and with purpose to reward and crown thee. These cords thou canst not break, and therefore lie down gently, and suffer the hand of God to do what he please.

The living Christ is one thing, the clothes that he left lying in the sepulchre are quite another.