

Mark 5:25-34 Jesus Heals the Woman with the Issue of Blood

A woman who had had a hemorrhage for twelve years, 26 and had endured much at the hands of many physicians, and had spent all that she had and was not helped at all, but instead had become worse—

Today, we're going to read about Jesus healing the woman with the issue of blood, a woman likely anemic due to chronic blood loss, weak and frail. Since her internal bleeding persisted for 12 years and only worsened, she was in a desperate situation. Her condition made it illegal for her to be in a public place for fear of contaminating others. Leviticus 15:25 states, **"When a woman has a discharge of blood for many days at a time other than her monthly period or has a discharge that continues beyond her period, she will be unclean as long as she has the discharge, just as in the days of her period."** She could never enter the Temple, synagogue, or fellowship with others. Her affliction barred her from the social contact, in the Jewish culture of the time. Mark further tells us she had spent all her money on doctors (Mark 5:26), and now she was desperate for relief from the ongoing bleeding. This woman's long and fruitless search for a cure was motivated not only by physical distress but by her social and religious isolation. This poor woman had exhausted her finances, and she probably hadn't slept in a bed for some time; after all, what hotel would accept her in her condition? What friend would allow her to stay at their house? Everything she touched was ceremonially unclean. She would be generally shunned by people since contact with her rendered others unclean.

27 after hearing about Jesus, she came up in the crowd behind Him and touched His cloak.

How scared she must have been as she mingled with the crowd trying to reach Jesus, hoping not to be seen or recognized. The thought crossed her mind that if she could get close enough to Jesus and touch the hem of His garment, she would be healed. Mark tells us that in her desperation and faith, she pushed through the crowd to grasp the tassels of His prayer garment. Having heard reports of the healing power of Jesus, she determined her course of action. Despite her ritual uncleanness she entered the crowd behind him and reached out to his garment. The desire to touch Jesus' clothing is probably tied to the belief that the prayer shawl of a rabbi represented his authority. Mark tells us that in her desperation and faith, she pushed through the crowd to grasp the tassels of His prayer garment. And, so she was putting faith in Jesus' authority to heal.

28 For she had been saying to herself, "If I just touch His garments, I will get well." 29 And immediately the flow of her blood was dried up; and she felt in her body that she was healed of her disease.

Her long search for a cure is contrasted with the completeness and immediacy of the cure she receives through touching Jesus. Notice that the woman had not demanded healing from Jesus, but simply reached out to Him in faith. Some find it remarkable that Jesus does not chide her for her approach, but commends it as an example of true faith. And it's this faith that always gets Jesus' attention. He was not concerned about her making Him ritually unclean. He was interested in ministering to her need. And the lesson here, for us is that we don't have to clean ourselves up to come to Jesus. Once we come to Him, He will do the cleaning through the power of His Holy Spirit. You just reach out to Him in faith, putting your faith in Him. Mark wants us to know that Jesus is less concerned by following correct procedure, or even manners, or even correct understanding of the nature of healing, but is very concerned that this woman has had faith in Him to heal her. It is interesting that the healing was also immediately felt by Jesus. This suggests that this healing perceptibly 'took something out of' Jesus, in a way that's not mentioned elsewhere. It was probably the shock of it. If you've ever unexpectedly received an electric shock of static electricity when you touched something, then you know a little of what it probably felt like. It is written like it's a transfer of healing power from Jesus to the woman by touch, but Mark is careful to mention that many others were jostling Jesus too. The key difference is her great faith in Jesus. And, of course

this deeper connection with Jesus not only gets His attention, but the fact that He notices takes the woman herself by surprise. Jesus knew that “power” had gone forth from him. This unusual expression, which occurs only here in Mark’s Gospel, means “the power of God”. Jesus possesses the power of God as the representative of the Father. Nevertheless, the Father remains in control of his own power. The healing of the woman occurred through God’s free and gracious decision to heal her and honor the woman’s faith.

32 And He looked around to see the woman who had done this. 33 But the woman, fearing and trembling, aware of what had happened to her, came and fell down before Him and told Him the whole truth. 34 And He said to her, “Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace and be cured of your disease.”

Jesus’ question “**Who touched my garments?**” seemed pointless to the disciples, since he had been jostled and touched by a host of individuals. Their impatience with the Lord reflects an awareness that their immediate mission was to assist a girl who was dying, and delay could be fatal. It also betrays that they had no understanding of what had taken place. Jesus could not allow the woman to recede into the crowd, but calls her forth.

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Meanwhile, the woman, who has already begun to make her escape, is obliged to return and own up to her audacity. Her fear may derive not only from her awe in the presence of the miraculous healer and the general embarrassment of the situation, but also from the awareness that in touching Jesus without permission she has made him ritually unclean, but He is not upset with her—very much the contrary.

With fear and trembling the woman acknowledged all that had happened. Her action in making herself known indicates both courage and gratitude, and declared the truth to Jesus.

Jesus’ insistence that the woman identify herself, together with his gentle correction of any erroneous ideas she may have had concerning the power of rabbi’s garments, but rather gives the credit to her faith in Him. This calls attention to the essential aspect of her experience. It was the grasp of her faith rather than her hand on His garments that had secured the healing she sought. Her touch had brought together two elements—faith and Jesus—and that had made it effective. Power had gone forth from Jesus to the woman for the precise reason that she sought healing from him. The woman’s faith that Jesus could make her well expressed an appropriate decision with respect to his person.

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The final words spoken to the woman, “Go in peace,” are a traditional blessing, but here are informed by her entire experience. The peace with which she departed was the profound experience of well-being which is related to salvation from God. When Jesus declares, “**Be whole from your affliction,**” he confirms that her healing was permanent and affirms his active participation with the Father’s will to honor the woman’s faith.

From Mark’s perspective, the entire incident is a call for radical faith.

No one else in the gospels is addressed by Jesus as daughter, and the effect is to offer reassurance. She may now enjoy at last the Shalom, peace, and acceptance which she has longed for. She is well, and can resume her life in Jewish society. After enduring over 12 years of rejection due to her condition, she finally experienced relief. How beautiful it is to experience grace, acceptance, understanding, and joy in the presence of our Savior.