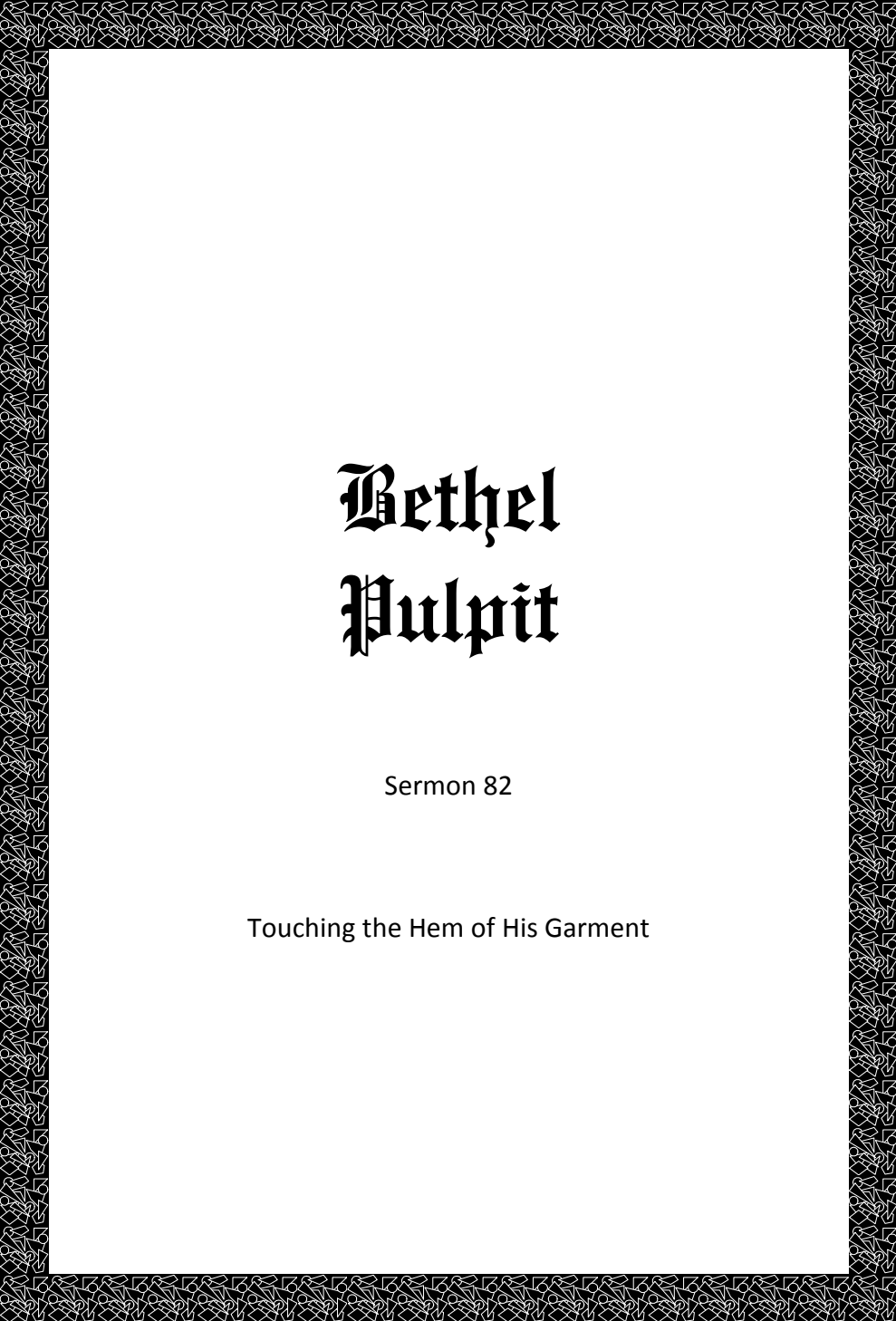




Bethel Pulpit

Sermon 82

Touching the Hem of His Garment

**Sermon preached at Bethel Chapel, Luton,
by Mr. B. A. Ramsbottom,
on Lord's day morning, 16th February, 1992**

Text: *“And, behold, a woman, which was diseased with an issue of blood twelve years, came behind Him, and touched the hem of His garment: for she said within herself, If I may but touch His garment, I shall be whole. But Jesus turned Him about, and when He saw her, He said, Daughter, be of good comfort; thy faith hath made thee whole. And the woman was made whole from that hour” (Matthew 9. 20-22).*

What a wonderful mercy it is that the Lord Jesus is approachable, that the Lord Jesus is accessible, that poor souls with their hard things, their burdens, their cares, their sins, their sorrows, are permitted to draw near to Him, and are welcome to draw near to Him. And very kindly He has said, “And him” – whoever that “him” be, however sinful and vile, however desperate the case – “him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out.”

“And, behold, a woman” – a woman with a desperate case, a woman who was burdened, a woman who was cast down, a woman in deep sorrow, a woman in grief. “Behold, a woman.” But the Lord Jesus knew all about her long before she touched Him, long before she drew near. “Behold, a woman.” I wonder if there is someone here this morning, cast down, burdened, full of care. “And, behold, a woman.” If perhaps someone inwardly cries out and says, “Lord, that is me. That is me.”

“Behold, a woman.” I just want you to notice the desperate case of this poor woman, the trouble, the sorrow that she was in. We are told that she was diseased with an issue of blood; that is, she was suffering from a haemorrhage. It was an aggravated case. It was not straightforward. It was not simple. It was very complicated. Perhaps some of you feel just like that, that your case is not simple, not straightforward. It is complicated.

First of all, it was an incurable disease. She had spent all that she had. She had been to all the doctors, all the physicians, but instead of growing better, she steadily grew worse. It was an incurable disease. Luke goes into it carefully, and Luke was a doctor himself. But this case

was just incurable. She must have been well near despair, because she had been to one doctor after another, and not to any avail. She realised that instead of growing better, she was growing worse. I wonder if there is someone like that here this morning. You feel your case is incurable. Perhaps you have been seeking for help, seeking for relief for a long time, and if asked to give an honest verdict of your own case, or the trouble you are in this morning, it is this: that it is worse rather than better.

“Behold, a woman.” It was a deep-rooted, long-standing case. We are told that she was diseased with an issue of blood twelve years. It had gone on a long time. Some people have a trouble which is very severe, but soon it ends. Some people have deep soul trouble; it is very deep, but soon it ends. But, “Behold, a woman,” and year after year passed. There was no help. There was no relief. “Behold, a woman.” Now is there someone here this morning and you have been waiting twelve years? With some of you it is twice twelve years. You do not get the help, the relief, the satisfaction that you want. With many of you it is the concerns of your soul and your sins and eternity. With others it is more providential matters, perhaps something in your life, your family, your circumstances, your business, your relationships with other people. She was a disappointed woman. Is there a disappointed woman here this morning? “And, behold, a woman.” It was a very weakening complaint that she had. Daily she grew weaker. “Behold, a woman.” Perhaps as you come today, it is with a painful sense of your weakness, your absolute helplessness, your insufficiency.

“Behold, a woman.” She was very, very poor. She had spent all that she had on physicians, and grew no better, but rather worse. She was absolutely poor. Is there someone here this morning, and you feel that is you? You are very, very poor. You feel impoverished. But perhaps the very worst of all, the very nature of this poor woman’s complaint rendered her ceremonially unclean. The Book of Leviticus specifically mentions this case, and as long as the haemorrhage continued, that person was not allowed to enter into the courts of the Lord’s house. She was cut off from every religious privilege. She was ceremonially unclean. Also, she was cut off from social communion. In a word, she was an outcast. In a word, she was one who was far off. “Behold, a woman.” I wonder if that is perhaps the worst thing with you this morning. You feel that painful sense of your sin, and your uncleanness, and your vileness. You have to stand

afar off. Perhaps you feel you are not even fit to come into the courts of the Lord's house. Perhaps you feel your case separates you from others. It shuts your mouth. You cannot talk to others. "Loathed incurables we stand," says our hymn writer. You feel you are one of the outcasts of Israel.

"And, behold, a woman." Well, she was not too bad for the Lord Jesus to deal with her. What a wonderful mercy that we are not under the law but under the gospel!

"Leprous soul, press through the crowd
In thy foul condition."

"This Man receiveth sinners." The gospel is for sinners; the Lord Jesus is a Saviour for sinners; His precious blood atoned for sinners.

"And, behold, a woman." Now there we have her in all her desperate case, her deep sorrow. "Behold, a woman." And perhaps some of you here this morning, inwardly you have to cry out and say, "Lord, that is me. Lord, have mercy upon me."

"Behold, a woman." But "when she heard of Jesus, (she) came." That is a beautiful word, isn't it? "When she had heard of Jesus, (she) came." The first time she heard of this dear Man, this dear Saviour, of His mercy, and love, and kindness, and compassion, and of His divine, almighty power, the miracles He performed, His wonderful ability, "when she had heard of Jesus, (she) came." She believed that the Lord Jesus was able to deal with her case. Bad as it was, long standing as it was, though no one else could touch it, she believed that the Lord Jesus could, and she had a sweet hope that He would. That is the venture of faith. She set out on the venture of faith.

"Why art thou afraid to come?
Why afraid to tell thy case?
He will not pronounce thy doom;
Smiles are seated on His face."

"Behold, a woman." "When she had heard of Jesus, (she) came." So it is today under the gospel. Sinners quickened into life, sinners wrought upon by the Spirit of God, sinners feeling their vileness, unworthiness and guilt, sinners needing forgiveness, needing cleansing, sinners longing to be prepared for heaven, and they hear of Jesus. Do you

hear of Jesus? Is it a divine, harmonious sound? Is it attractive to you? The name of Jesus, the Person of Jesus, the merits of Jesus, the salvation of Jesus – does it draw your heart out in prayer? Does it cause you to go after Him, to renounce everything else to go after Him?

“When she had heard of Jesus, (she) came.” And what did she find? Well, as she sought to come, she found that the multitude thronged Him. She found there was a great crowd impeding her way. In other words, it was hard, almost impossible, to come anywhere near where the Lord Jesus was. “Behold, a woman.” And beloved friends, if you are that woman, and you hear of Jesus, and you would come, depend on this, that you will find a crowd in your way. You will find so many obstacles, you will find so much to impede: things without, things within, Satan to stop you, unbelief, the hardness of your heart, prayerlessness, so many temptations, so many impediments, so many hindrances, the thought that He may not receive you, that it is not for you, that your case is too bad, that you are too great a sinner, or on the other hand, that you do not feel your sins sufficiently, or a whisper that you might not be among the chosen, or you are not coming the right way, or you do not possess faith, or your repentance is not satisfactory, or your heart is too hard.

“If unto Jesus thou art bound,
A crowd about Him will be found,
Of unbelieving fears.”

“When she had heard of Jesus, (she) came.” “Behold, a woman.” But there was everything to stop her, everything to turn her back. Beloved friends, don’t be surprised if you find it just like that, if everything, everyone, seems to be against you. But what did she do? She pressed through the crowd and touched the hem of His garment. “For she said within herself, If I may but touch His garment, I shall be whole.”

“Leptous soul, press through the crowd
In thy foul condition.”

You will have to press through the crowd. Look, beloved friends, she did not turn round and go back home. She did not give it all up. Let us be clear, because of the very nature of her illness, she must have been very, very weak. You know what it is like, some of you; you are perhaps in the centre of Luton and there is such a crowd of people, and if you are going

the opposite way to the crowd, it is hard work. And she was an invalid. She was so weak. But she pressed through the crowd and touched the hem of His garment. And beloved friends, if your religion is real, so will you.

Now there were two things. The first was this: her case was so desperate that it drove her on. Is there anybody here with an urgent, pressing case, that will not let you turn round and go back home? You will have to press through the crowd to touch the hem of His garment. The urgency of her case, the desperate nature of her case, forced her through the crowd. “I will not let Thee go, except Thou bless me.” Do you know what it is for prayer to be forced out of you, squeezed out of you? The second thing was this: there was a secret, unseen power that pulled her through the crowd, that drew her through the crowd. Unbeknown to her, the Lord Jesus knew all about her. “Behold, a woman.” Her name was recorded in heaven from all eternity. She was loved with an everlasting love. The Lord Jesus knew all about her. There was that unseen, secret power that was pulling her through, drawing her on. “No man can come to Me, except the Father which hath sent Me draw him.” You think in your weakness, and helplessness, and unworthiness, with this great crowd impeding your way, however can I get through? O that secret power, that unseen power, that pulls you through, that draws you on! “Draw me, we will run after Thee.” And, you see, that divine power is all-sufficient to pull you, to draw you right through the crowd.

“For she said within herself, if I may but touch His garment, I shall be whole.” There was reality. She had a real case. There was something she wanted. She could not be satisfied apart from coming right where Jesus is. She wanted the vital nearness. She wanted the contact. She wanted something to flow from this almighty Jesus, to deal with her case, to meet her need. Beloved, have you a religion like that this morning? You cannot be satisfied with generalities. Is there one here this morning: “If I may but touch His garment, I shall be whole”?

And so she *did* press through the crowd, and she *did* touch the hem of His garment. She came behind Him – humility. She did not want to be seen. She did not want to be noticed. Neither will you. You will know what it is spiritually to come behind Him. But it is this: that vital contact, that reality, for your case to be met. She *did* touch the hem of His

garment. “For she said within herself, If I may but touch His garment, I shall be whole.”

Now she got what she wanted. She was not disappointed. She received the blessing. And she was satisfied. Then she wanted to slip back home as unnoticed as the way she had come. The Lord Jesus will not have that, beloved friends. “If these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out.” If you have touched the hem of His garment, the Lord Jesus will not let you slip away unnoticed. He will have you bear testimony, however weak and helpless you feel you are, bear testimony to what the Lord has done. She knew it; she felt it in her very heart. But she would have crept away just as unnoticed as she had come.

“Jesus said, Who touched Me?” Well, the disciples were bewildered. They said, “Master, the multitude throng Thee and press Thee, and sayest Thou, Who touched Me? And Jesus said, Somebody hath touched Me.” O the Lord Jesus knows when you come creeping behind. The Lord Jesus knows when you touch the hem of His garment, those of you who have come with a case, a sigh, a groan this morning. You are not unnoticed by the Son of God. You do not think that, do you? He understands those sighs, those longings, those groans. “Who touched Me?” This great crowd was thronging round Him, and it is something like that when a congregation meets for worship. “The multitude throng Thee.” We can say that of our gatherings on the Sabbath. We can say that this morning. “The multitude throng Thee.” This congregation is like that multitude. “The multitude throng Thee.” And literally many of them were touching Him. “Somebody hath touched Me: for I perceive that virtue is gone out of Me.” Now if the multitude throngs the Lord Jesus this morning, is there going to be one person pressing through the crowd, touching the hem of His garment, receiving the blessing. This same Jesus, now risen, exalted, glorified, a real Man, true almighty God, is present here this morning, though unseen, just as much as in Matthew 9. Do you believe it, that the Lord Jesus is here? “Master, the multitude throng Thee.” “Behold, a woman.” Is there one person going to press through the crowd to touch the hem of His garment and receive the blessing?

“For she said within herself, If I may but touch His garment I shall be whole.” O that heavenly virtue, that divine strength, that grace, that flows from the dear Saviour of sinners to those poor souls who are enabled

to touch Him by faith! That is what you want, the contact, the union, the communion, something flowing from Christ to you. It is this:

“Lo! glad I come; and Thou, blest Lamb,
O take me to Thee as I am;
Nothing but sin I Thee can give;
Nothing but love may I receive.”

“If I may but touch His garment, I shall be whole.” “Who touched Me?” The Lord Jesus would not allow her to steal away unnoticed. “The woman fearing and trembling, knowing what was done in her, came and fell down before Him, and told Him all.” The Lord Jesus will have His people bear witness to what He has done for them. “But Jesus turned Him about, and when He saw her, He said, Daughter be of good comfort; thy faith hath made thee whole. And the woman was made whole from that hour.” It was a good blessing that she received. I think I am right in saying this, that this was the only person in all the gospels whom the Lord Jesus called daughter. O may some of you longing, praying, fearing ones hear the Lord Jesus this morning calling you daughter. That is, giving you the assurance of relationship. That is, giving you the assurance of His love. “Daughter.” “And now, My daughter, fear not; I will do to thee all that thou requirest.”

“When He saw her, He said, Daughter, be of good comfort.” Sometimes when you are in trouble, people will come, even worldly people, and they will seek to comfort you. They are very kind but they cannot really help. They cannot understand. They cannot touch your case. But when the Lord Jesus says, “Be of good comfort,” it is this: your case is dealt with, your infirmity is healed, your sin is forgiven, your guilty soul is cleansed. “Daughter, be of good comfort.” That word of divine authority. “Be of good comfort; thy faith hath made thee whole.”

Now over the years this has troubled me, the Lord Jesus saying, “Thy faith hath made thee whole,” especially when we feel our faith is so weak. How can faith make whole? Let us be very clear, each of us. It does not mean there is any merit in faith. It does not mean there was a reward, as if her faith paid for it. Faith always brings an empty hand. Faith always says,

“Nothing in my hand I bring;
Simply to Thy cross I cling.”

But I take it the point here is this: in all her weakness, unworthiness, helplessness, the desperate nature of her case, hoping against hope, all her trust was in the Lord Jesus. That is what receives the blessing. O can you say, “Thou art all my help and trust”? It is trusting in Jesus only, trusting in His person, His merit, His precious blood. It is the Lord Jesus, the ground, the foundation, the object of your trust. As Bunyan learnt: did any ever trust in the Lord and were put to shame? “Trust in Him at all times; ye people, pour out your hearts before Him: God is a Refuge for us.” “Daughter, be of good comfort; thy faith hath made thee whole.” O it is this, those who are enabled to trust in the Lord Jesus will never be confounded.

“Trust in His efficacious blood,
Nor fear thy banishment from God,
Since Jesus died for thee.”

“Behold, a woman.” And may some of you here this morning hear this word of love and mercy and divine authority: “Daughter, be of good comfort; thy faith hath made thee whole. And the woman was made whole from that hour.” She did not have a period of convalescence. It was a perfect cure. Her infirmity did not come back. It was not that next week she was as bad as she had been before, that she had to be re-admitted. “The woman was made whole from that hour.” “The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin” – past, present and to come.

“The woman was made whole from that hour.” Now beloved friends, this was a miracle, wasn’t it, and a miracle of love and mercy? O these miracles of the Lord Jesus, what clear evidences they are that He is true, almighty God! What a witness, a proof they were to His Messiahship! But His miracles were miracles of kindness, compassion, mercy, love. Of course, we do have the miracle like the cursing of the barren fig tree, but that was not with a human being; but apart from that, the miracles of the Lord Jesus were miracles of love, mercy, kindness, compassion. And the point with you and me this morning is this: this same Jesus, “the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever,” His kindness, His compassion, His mercy, His understanding are the same. His power, His gracious ability are the same. “He is able also to save them to the

uttermost that come unto God by Him” – an almighty Saviour. You think of the various maladies there are. It sometimes seems to me that for every natural ailment or malady we have there is a spiritual counterpart. Some suffer from heart disease, a hard heart. Some suffer from breathlessness; they do not feel there is much prayer. Some have bad legs; they do not stand very securely, do not walk very well. You can see the spiritual counterpart, and the Lord Jesus understands them all, and is graciously able to deal with them.

“Daughter, be of good comfort; thy faith hath made thee whole. And the woman was made whole from that hour.” In closing, beloved friends, have you noticed that in this chapter, or perhaps more particularly in the chapter we read which gave this account (Mark 5), there are three people. You cannot think of three more different people: the mad Gadarene, Jairus, a ruler among the people, and the woman with the issue of blood. And we read of all these three that they were found at Jesus’ feet: the mad Gadarene, Jairus, the woman with the issue of blood. You could not find three more different people in the Bible. What had they in common? They all had a hard case that no one could deal with but the Lord Jesus. It was because of that, that they knew that He could deal with it, they had a sweet hope that He would, that they were found at Jesus’ feet. If you are taught by grace, if your religion is real, whoever you are, whatever you are, that is the place where you will be brought: to Jesus’ feet, confessing your sin, seeking mercy, begging the Lord to help you. And you will remain there at His feet in love and adoration, gratitude, praise. “Daughter, be of good comfort; thy faith hath made thee whole.”