

Mark 5:25

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And a certain woman, which had an issue of blood twelve years,

Analysis

And a certain woman, which had an issue of blood twelve years. Mark introduces the second interwoven healing narrative with detailed medical description. 'Issue of blood' (ῥύσει αἵματος, rhysei haimatos) indicates chronic hemorrhaging, likely menstrual disorder causing continuous bleeding. The duration 'twelve years' (δώδεκα ἔτη, dōdeka etē) emphasizes prolonged suffering—this woman's entire adult life consumed by this condition. According to Levitical law (Leviticus 15:25-27), this condition rendered her ceremonially unclean, socially isolated, and unable to participate in worship or normal relationships.

The theological significance is profound: ceremonial uncleanness symbolized humanity's sin-separation from God. This woman lived in enforced isolation for twelve years—unable to touch family, attend synagogue, or approach God's presence. Her condition pictures humanity's spiritual plight: chronic, humanly incurable, socially isolating, and barring access to God. Christ's willingness to be touched by her and His healing power demonstrate that He came not for the ritually pure but for outcasts and sinners. Reformed theology emphasizes that Christ became ritually 'unclean' (bearing our sin, 2 Corinthians 5:21) to make us clean, reversing the contamination principle—His purity overcomes our impurity rather than being defiled by it.

Historical Context

Levitical purity laws (Leviticus 15) governed daily life in first-century Judaism. A woman with chronic bleeding was perpetually unclean—anything she sat on, anyone she touched became unclean requiring ritual cleansing. This created profound social isolation: no physical contact with family, exclusion from religious gatherings, and probable divorce (husbands could divorce wives for such conditions). The twelve-year duration suggests this began around puberty, meaning she never experienced normal adult relationships. Ancient medical understanding was limited—treatments often involved folk remedies, dietary restrictions, or attempts to cauterize bleeding. Physicians could charge exorbitant fees with little success (v. 26). The economic drain combined with social ostracism created desperate circumstances. Her touching Jesus' garment risked public exposure and rebuke, demonstrating her faith overcame fear. Early church fathers saw her healing as symbol of the church (formerly unclean Gentiles) being cleansed through Christ.

Related Passages

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. How does this woman's twelve-year isolation due to ritual uncleanness illustrate sin's separating effect and Christ's power to restore both physical and spiritual wholeness?
2. What chronic spiritual 'hemorrhaging'—ongoing sin patterns, doubts, or wounds—have you tried unsuccessfully to heal before bringing them to Christ?

Interlinear Text

καὶ	γυνή	τις	οὗσα	ἐν	ρύσει	αἵματος	ἔτη
And	woman	a certain	<small>G5607</small>	which had an	issue	of blood	years
<small>G2532</small>	<small>G1135</small>	<small>G5100</small>		<small>G1722</small>	<small>G4511</small>	<small>G129</small>	<small>G2094</small>

δώδεκα
twelve
G1427

Additional Cross-References

Luke 13:11 (Parallel theme): And, behold, there was a woman which had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, and was bowed together, and could in no wise lift up herself.

Acts 4:22 (Parallel theme): For the man was above forty years old, on whom this miracle of healing was shewed.