

Mark 5:26

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And had suffered many things of many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was nothing bettered, but rather grew worse,

Analysis

And had suffered many things of many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was nothing bettered, but rather grew worse. Mark provides detailed description of the woman's failed attempts at healing, emphasizing her desperation and Christ's singular sufficiency. 'Suffered many things' (πολλὰ παθοῦσα, polla pathousa) indicates painful, invasive treatments—ancient medicine often involved harsh remedies: bloodletting, cauterization, folk potions with toxic ingredients. 'Of many physicians' (ὑπὸ πολλῶν ἰατρῶν, hypo pollōn iatrōn) shows she exhausted all available medical options, consulting multiple doctors without success.

'Spent all that she had' (δαπανήσασα τὰ παρ' αὐτῆς πάντα, dapanēsasa ta par' autēs panta) reveals complete financial devastation—medical expenses consumed her entire resources. 'Nothing bettered, but rather grew worse' (μηδὲν ὡφεληθεῖσα ἀλλὰ μᾶλλον εἰς τὸ χεῖρον ἐλθοῦσα, mēden ophelētheisa alla mallon eis to cheiron elthousa) describes deterioration despite treatment. This progression—suffering, poverty, worsening—paints a picture of complete human inability to solve her problem. Her condition parallels humanity's spiritual state: all human effort to achieve righteousness fails; self-help, religion, and good works cannot cure sin's disease; we grow worse under law's demands (Romans 7:9-11). Only Christ can heal what human effort cannot fix.

Historical Context

The Talmud records various remedies for female hemorrhaging, many bizarre and ineffective: drinking wine mixed with powdered herbs, carrying specific objects as amulets, or eating unusual substances. Physicians in the Roman world ranged from skilled practitioners (Galen, Hippocratic tradition) to charlatans selling useless remedies. Without regulation or licensing, desperate people often fell prey to ineffective treatments. The financial exploitation was common—physicians charged according to patients' ability to pay, often bankrupting families. Luke (a physician himself) records this more diplomatically: she 'could not be healed of any' (Luke 8:43), omitting Mark's harsh critique of medical failure. The woman's situation exemplifies first-century healthcare's limitations, where chronic conditions often remained incurable despite great expense. Her story encouraged early Christians facing illness: when human medicine fails, divine healing remains available through faith in Christ.

Related Passages

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. How does this woman's exhausting pursuit of failed remedies illustrate humanity's futile attempts to achieve righteousness through self-effort or religious works?
2. What 'physicians'—false teachers, worldly philosophies, or self-help solutions—have you turned to for healing before seeking Christ as the ultimate physician?

Interlinear Text

καὶ πολλῶν παθοῦσα ὑπὸ πολλῶν ἰατρῶν καὶ
And many had suffered of many physicians And
G2532 G4183 G3958 G5259 G4183 G2395 G2532

δαπανήσασα τὰ παρ' ἔαυτῆς πάντα καὶ μηδὲν
had spent had that she all And nothing
G1159 G3588 G3844 G1438 G3956 G2532 G3367

ἀφεληθεῖσα ἀλλὰ μᾶλλον εἰς τὸ χεῖρον ἐλθοῦσα
bettered but rather worse G5501 grew
G5623 G235 G3123 G1519 G3588 G2064

Additional Cross-References

Jeremiah 8:22 (Parallel theme): Is there no balm in Gilead; is there no physician there? why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered?

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