

Mark 5:27

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

When she had heard of Jesus, came in the press behind, and touched his garment.

Analysis

When she had heard of Jesus, came in the press behind, and touched his garment. This verse describes the woman's faith-filled approach to Jesus. 'When she had heard of Jesus' (ἀκούσασα περὶ τοῦ Ἰησοῦ, akousasa peri tou Iēsou) indicates that reports of Jesus' healing power reached her despite her isolation. Faith comes by hearing (Romans 10:17)—the gospel reports about Jesus ignited hope in her desperate heart. 'Came in the press behind' (ἐλθοῦσα ἐν τῷ ὄχλῳ ὀπισθεν, elthousa en tō ochlō opisthen) shows her navigating through the crowd despite her ritual uncleanness making such contact forbidden.

Her approach 'behind' Jesus demonstrates both faith and fear—faith to approach at all, fear of public exposure given her condition. 'Touched his garment' (ἥψατο τοῦ ἱματίου αὐτοῦ, hēpsato tou himatiou autou) was an act of tremendous faith and social courage. According to Levitical law, her touch contaminated anyone/anything contacted. She risked public rebuke, yet her faith overcame fear. This stealthy approach contrasts with Jairus's public petition (v. 22-23), showing Christ welcomes both bold and timid faith. Reformed theology emphasizes that even weak faith in the right object (Christ) brings salvation, while strong faith in wrong objects brings nothing. Her touch demonstrated active faith—not passive hope but determined action based on confidence in Jesus' power.

Historical Context

Numbers 15:37-41 commanded Israelite men to wear tassels (tzitzit) on garment corners as reminders of God's commandments. These tassels, including a blue cord, were visible markers of Jewish identity and covenant faithfulness. The woman likely touched one of these tassels, hence 'the hem of his garment' (Matthew 9:20). The crowd's density in narrow Palestinian streets made physical contact nearly inevitable, yet her touch was deliberate and faith-filled, distinguishing it from accidental jostling. Her action violated purity laws—her uncleanness should have contaminated Jesus. In typical purity system logic, contact with clean objects defiles them. Christ reversed this—His holiness cleansed rather than being defiled. Early church fathers saw symbolic significance: touching Christ's humanity (the garment) provided access to His divinity (the healing power). This foreshadowed sacramental theology—outward means (baptism, communion) conveying inward grace.

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. How does this woman's bold approach despite ritual prohibition challenge fears or shame that prevent you from coming to Christ for healing?
2. What does her willingness to risk public exposure reveal about the relationship between desperate need and authentic faith?

Interlinear Text

ἀκούσασα	περὶ	τοῦ	Ἰησοῦ	ἐλθοῦσα	ἐν	τῷ	ὄχλῳ
When she had heard	of	G3588	Jesus	came	in	G3588	the press
G191	G4012		G2424	G2064	G1722		G3793
ὀπισθεν	ἥψατο	τοῦ	ἱματίου	αὐτοῦ·			
behind	and touched	G3588	garment	his			
G3693	G680		G2440	G846			

Additional Cross-References

Acts 19:12 (Parallel theme): So that from his body were brought unto the sick handkerchiefs or aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out of them.

Matthew 14:36 (Parallel theme): And besought him that they might only touch the hem of his garment: and as many as touched were made perfectly whole.

Acts 5:15 (Parallel theme): Insomuch that they brought forth the sick into the streets, and laid them on beds and couches, that at the least the shadow of Peter passing by might overshadow some of them.

Mark 6:56 (Parallel theme): And whithersoever he entered, into villages, or cities, or country, they laid the sick in the streets, and besought him that they might touch if it were but the border of his garment: and as many as touched him were made whole.