

Mark 5:28

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For she said, If I may touch but his clothes, I shall be whole.

Analysis

For she said, If I may touch but his clothes, I shall be whole. This verse reveals the woman's internal reasoning and faith. 'She said' (ἔλεγεν, elegen) uses imperfect tense indicating repeated self-assurance—she kept telling herself this, strengthening her resolve. 'If I may touch but his clothes' (Ἐὰν ἄψωμαι καν τῶν ἱματίων αὐτοῦ, Ean hapsōmai kan tōn himatiōn autou) shows remarkable faith—she believed contact with Jesus' clothing, not even His person, would suffice. The particle 'but' (καν, kan) emphasizes minimum contact—even just touching His clothes would be enough.

'I shall be whole' (σωθήσομαι, sōthēsomai) uses the verb *sōzō* meaning both physical healing and spiritual salvation—Jesus later uses the same word: 'thy faith hath made thee whole' (v. 34). Her confidence wasn't in magical garments but in Jesus Himself—the clothing merely provided point of contact with Him. This faith contrasts with superstition; she didn't believe the fabric had inherent power but that Jesus' power extended even to what He touched. Her faith, though imperfect in expression, was genuine in its object. Reformed theology distinguishes between strong faith and weak faith—both save when directed toward Christ, though strong faith brings greater assurance and peace. God honors even trembling faith when genuinely placed in Jesus.

Historical Context

First-century Judaism had no concept of 'faith healing' through touching rabbis' garments. This woman's belief was unique and Spirit-inspired, not cultural

tradition. Some pagan religions involved touching sacred objects or garments for healing, but her faith differed fundamentally—she trusted in Jesus' person, not magical properties of fabric. The verb 'be whole' (sōzō) carried both physical and spiritual connotations in Hellenistic Judaism, anticipating Jesus' holistic salvation. Ancient medical practice often involved amulets, charms, and objects believed to have healing properties—the woman's approach might superficially resemble these, but Jesus' response (v. 34) clarifies that her faith in Him, not the touching itself, brought healing. Early church tradition held that this woman was from Caesarea Philippi and later erected a statue honoring Christ (Eusebius, Church History 7.18). Whether historically accurate or legendary, this tradition reflects early Christian understanding that genuine faith produces lasting gratitude and witness.

Related Passages

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. How does the woman's conviction that even touching Jesus' clothes would heal her challenge our expectations about what level of contact with Christ is necessary for transformation?
2. In what ways might we be confusing external religious practices (the 'garment') with genuine faith in Christ Himself (the person wearing the garment)?

Interlinear Text

ἔλεγεν γὰρ ὅτι κἄν τῶν ἴματίων αὐτοῦ ἄψωμαι
she said For If but clothes his I may touch
G3004 G1063 G3754 G2579 G3588 G2440 G846 G680

σωθήσομαι

I shall be whole

G4982

From KJV Study • kjvstudy.org