**VOLUME 8; CHAPTER 18 - THE PREACHING OF G. CAMPBELL MORGAN**

**THE TOUCH OFFAITH by G. CAMPBELL MORGAN**

*Who is it that touched Me?*

*Luke 8:45*

IN THIS NARRATIVE WE HAVE AN ILLUSTRATION IN THE CONCRETE of Christ's relation to the crowds, and in the particular question which constitutes the text a revelation of that principle of discrimination which was always manifest in His attitude toward the multitudes that gathered round about Him.

It was a strange question from the standpoint of the disciples who were close to Him on that memorable occasion, and from the standpoint of the multitudes who observed. It was not only a strange question, to them it must have seemed absurd. "Who touched Me?" Peter, spokesman of the rest, said to Him in effect, Lord, how sayest Thou, Who touched Me? Everyone is touching Thee who can get near enough to do so. The multitudes press Thee and crowd upon Thee. In the last half an hour it may be that a hundred people have touched Thee! But He said, Nay, someone touched Me differently, for I perceive - and I like the Authorized Version, although the Revised may be more literal - virtue has gone out of Me. I perceive that virtue - in the old and gracious sense of the word in our English language - has gone out of Me. Who did it? Who touched Me? A hundred men have touched Me within half an hour, but someone has touched Me differently!

Let us look at the picture. I do not know among the pictures of the New Testament another that makes a more powerful appeal to me than does this. At this time Our Lord was conducting an itinerant ministry, passing from place to place, consenting to receive the necessaries of His physical life by the ministration of a company of women of substance who loved Him and followed Him. Luke tells us in this chapter that Jesus went about through cities and villages preaching and bringing the good tidings of the Kingdom of God, and with Him were the twelve and certain women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities, "Mary of Magdala, Joanna the wife of Chuza Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others, which ministered unto them of their substance." This is the only account we have of that fact; it is the only place where some of the women are named. A little company of women, whom He had healed and helped physically, mentally, and spiritually, were now responding to His ministry by supplying His daily needs. So He was passing from place to place, exercising His great ministry of teaching, preaching, and healing, these accompanying Him as He went.

Among other places, He had just been to the country of the Gerasenes, and on the very shores of their country had given an evidence of the meaning of His ministry by casting out the evil spirits from a man who had been the pest of the entire neighborhood, and at the same moment had rebuked their unholy traffic by destroying their swine. They had made a protest, and had besought Him to leave them. There is infinite pathos in the declaration that He entered into a ship, and crossed the sea. Now on the other side of the waters He took up His work again, and that wonderful declaration is made: "And as Jesus returned, the multitude welcomed Him; for they were all waiting for Him." As he proceeded on His way two wonderful things happened, the stories of which are so interwoven that we cannot deal with the one without considering the other, for there are values in the one which belong to the other. These two things were the healing of the child of Jairus and the healing of this woman, the woman who touched Him.

Let us see the picture. Our Lord was passing on His way. The multitudes were following Him. Sometimes, while reading this story and others, I like to sit down and allow myself to attempt to picture the actual scene. I attempt to look into the faces of the crowd, to watch the different expressions on their faces. Strong men jostle each other to get near the Teacher, to get one glance into His eyes. In all probability, mothers lift their children that the little ones may look just once at Him Whose fame has gone so far afield. For the most part reverently, men and women following after Him, interested men and women, attracted multitudes, were prepared to welcome Him, not merely from the standpoint of idle curiosity, but because of their real interest in Him. They went after Him as He traveled, eager that if He should say something they might hear it, desiring supremely to see Him work some wonder, that they might observe it. He Himself was the center of attraction.

Then I see approaching Him a man, a ruler of the synagogue. If I had the artistic sense I would like to paint the picture of Jairus. On his face sits a terrible shadow. Back in his home is a child, his little daughter, twelve years old; and she lies dying. To that nothing can be added, nothing need be added in the case of those who have ever known anything of the experience in their own lives. Look at Jairus; notice the agony, and anxiety and earnestness in his face. He has asked the Lord to come and heal the child ere it be too late. With an immediate response the Master walked along the highway toward the house of Jairus. If I could paint that picture I would. It is one of the great pictures of the New Testament. If I were painting it as a picture, this procession toward the house of Jairus, I would place Jairus a little ahead of Jesus, walking with eagerness, desiring by any means to hurry Christ to his house. At the center of all the thronging crowd we see the one figure, regal, beautiful, dignified, full of tenderness, the Christ Himself.

Suddenly the procession was arrested because the Master stood and said: "Who touched Me?" Then the protest of the disciples was heard, "Master, the multitudes press Thee and crush Thee." But, said Jesus, someone has touched Me, for I perceive that power has gone out of me. So far, no one knew what had happened except the Master and one other. Then in the hush and the constraint, and amid the almost amused glances of the people who thought it was a foolish question, a woman was seen moving round, until she knelt in front of Him, and there she told Him all the truth. Bending over her, and looking straight into that woman's eyes, He used to her the only particularly tender epithet that He is ever recorded as having addressed to a woman, "Daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace."

And where was Jairus while this was taking place? Waiting, eager, anxious, if I know him, and I think I do. I think I know him by actual sympathy with his breaking heart. I think he was almost rebellious because the Lord had halted. Yet I think that when that woman had told her story of how by touching she had been healed, there was a song in the heart of Jairus, new light on the shadowed pathway, a new hope breaking in his soul, for that was a new evidence of the power of the One Whose aid he had come to seek.

Then they moved a little farther forward, and there come messengers from the house of Jairus, who said: Do not worry the Rabbi, the child is dead. In a moment another voice sounded in his ears, the voice of Jesus, saying: "Fear not, believe only; thy child shall be made whole." Arrived at the house, He said: "She is not dead but sleepeth"; and they laughed Him to scorn. He put them all out. It is the only proper treatment for such people! Besides Himself, He kept in that room three disciples the father and the mother, six of them; and the dead child made seven. Then bending over her, He said - and I am going to take liberty with the translation, and try to express some of the poetry of the Aramaic in our English tongue, not "Maiden, arise" - that is altogether too formal a translation - but "Talitha cumi," that is, "Little lamb, arise." The beautiful eyelids quivered, and the eyes surely looked first at His face. Then He gave her back to her father and mother, and went on His way.

Now, in the atmosphere created by these stories I ask you to fasten your attention on this question of Jesus, so startling, strange, uncalled for, absurd in the hearing of the men who listened to it, "Who touched Me?" There are three things I want to suggest concerning that question. First, it was selective; it separated. Second, it was a revealing question, one that resulted in a revelation, and ultimately in a confession. Finally, in the case of the woman it was causative; it brought her to a new relationship with Christ, in advance of that which had been established when she touched Him.

I say in the first place that the question was selective. It revealed the fact that in that crowd all the multitudes were not on the same footing, that someone had reached Him in a way that others had not reached Him. It was a question revealing, on the part of Our Lord, discernment, discrimination, division. "Who touched Me?" A hundred men have touched Thee! Nay, one soul has touched Me! Everyone is jostling Thee! But someone has got near to Me! But surely they were all near. No, they were far away, though brushing by Him; removed to infinite distances, though looking right into His eyes. Someone has touched Me! It was a selective question, dividing the crowd, and putting some one person in separation from the crowd, revealing the fact that some one person in that curious, jostling, interested, reverently kindly multitude stood on an entirely different footing from the rest. "Who touched me?"

The question, therefore, was revealing in the sense that it reveals the fact that there is a contact which makes demands on Christ, and there is a contact which makes no demands on Him. It reveals that men may come very near to Him, and yet never be near to Him; that men may look into His eyes, and never see Him; catch all the accents of His voice, but never hear Him; jostle His garments, be familiar with the sacraments of His house, observe all the externalities of worship, and yet never make contact with Himself. It reveals the fact, therefore, on the other hand, that there is a contact which, if once made, He must answer. Without the uttering of a word, virtue will pass from Him to the person who makes that contact. I had nearly said - and I will say it, though I have to amend it - without volition on His part. I amend it by saying without apparent volition on His part; not without volition, for did He not know she was near Him, did He not know, was He not prepared for her approach? Surely, yes. He needed not that any man should tell Him what was in man, for He knew all men. He knew the crowds intimately and particularly, and knew every individual life in the crowds. A crowd was never a mob to Jesus. It was always a company of individual souls. There was no need for Him to turn to find her. He knew she was there. His question was not a question asked that he might discover who it was, but that He might bring her yet nearer to Himself; and that He might create a value for another breaking heart, the heart of Jairus. He knew, He knew she was coming; and in that moment when she made contact with Him, far more quickly than the lightning's flash, virtue, power, health, healing, strength passed from Him to her, and all that canceled her limitation and restored to her everything that she had lost.

What, then, was the contact? This question is answered best by a little careful examination of the story, and a little careful observation of the woman. Mark her condition. The story, as Luke tells it in medical terms, reveals a fact, which expressed in the terms of the Hebrew economy, may thus be stated: On account of the peculiar form of physical disease from which she was suffering she was excommunicated from the temple, not allowed to mingle with the worshipers. By that selfsame law she was divorced from her husband, not allowed to live with him. By that same law she was ostracized from society, and in appalling loneliness she had lived for twelve years. It is quite easy to say all this; but let imagination help us to understand it. Twelve years of a disease that had weakened her day by day, until all her physical powers were feeble. Twelve years shut out from the fellowship of the saints as they went up to the house of God. Twelve years shut away from the comradeships of home and the fellowship of her husband. Twelve years shut out from all the circle of her friends and acquaintances. Twelve years of suffering and weakness. Twelve years in which she had done all she knew for healing; for Luke tells us she "had spent all her living upon physicians, and could not be healed of any," or, as writes Mark, who held no brief for doctors, "She had suffered many things of many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was nothing bettered, but rather grew worse."

Now look at this woman again, thin, emaciated, worn, weary! She heard that Jesus was coming her way. What did she know of Him? Ah, I cannot tell. All I can surmise from the story is that she had heard of Him, that the news of Him had reached her in her weakness and in her suffering; that she had heard how He had healed the sick and given back strength to those weak and infirm. Now the moment had come when He was actually coming by her, coming her way. I never can quite understand how she reached Him at all. It is very difficult even for a strong man to get through a crowd. Yet, somehow, that woman made her way through the crowd.

Now, I pray you, observe her. Was this faith which moved her firm, strong, absolute, settled? I do not think so. What, then, was it? It was a profound sense of need, an acquaintance with a testimony that told of His power; it was hope springing in her heart that perhaps He could help even her. Then it was faith, the outcome of hope, hope based on testimony; but principally it was faith expressing itself in a venture. She found her way through the crowd, and there hung the tassel on His garment, that cord of blue, according to the ancient economy. I see her struggling to reach Him; at last she is near enough to stretch out her hand; and it was not a passing touch she gave; she clutched it, grasped it!

This was an act growing out of need; it was an act inspired by testimony heard; it was the result of hope springing anew within the heart; it was an act of faith inspired by testimony, hope; it was faith venturing to make an appeal, the appeal of a touch. Call it superstition if you will; and the answer of the Lord in power, and the words spoken to her presently, are of infinite value, and become more impressive, the more we see that the act of the woman was not the act of a reasoned and argumentative and logical faith. It was a venture in an hour of great need.

That is the contact that Christ always answers. I have of set purpose attempted to put the event in the light of its simplicity. I do not think that woman came to Him with profound and strong conviction. Hers was a great agony, a great need, a simple willingness to believe a testimony spoken by others, expressed in a determination to make the final venture. So surreptitiously, hidden away, she clutched at His garment. That is the contact that He answers, that is the attitude to which He is compelled, by virtue of what He is in Himself, to make an immediate response. Need, agony, without logic and without reason, but in answer to testimony and to hope, making a venture - to that He responds, and the virtue passes from Him to the seeker, and heals.

Writing of this story, and contrasting the crowds that pressed Jesus with the woman who touched Him, Augustine said, "Flesh presses, faith touches." How true the words still are. Flesh presses; that which is merely of human interest and human curiosity, presses Him; but faith reaches Him, touches Him; and, believe me, this Lord of hope and glory still knows the difference between the jostle of a curious crowd and the touch of a weak and frail and appealing soul. Not the healthy, robust, self-complacent, satisfied, curious jostle of a crowd draws anything out of Him; but the weak, frail, agonized, almost hopeless and yet venturing, touch of a hidden woman is answered by a flow of virtue and a rush of power, and the healing and the health for which the soul is waiting.

But the question in itself was not only selective, and revelatory to us of the difference between the press of the flesh and the touch of faith. The question in the case of the woman was causative. She hoped to get her healing and quietly depart. She hoped to touch, and get her blessing, and quietly to slip away, with no one knowing. How many people hope to do that! But this woman was not permitted to do so. She must come from behind and stand in front. She must come from that attitude of hiding into the open. It was necessary that if she had received a benefit she should confess the Lord, not in order that He might find out who touched Him, not in order ultimately that the crowd might discover why He halted, but that she might come in front and confess Him.

Now notice carefully what happened. First, that confession brought to the woman a yet deeper blessing. She told Him in the hearing of the crowds, and I think there was a great hush over them as she spoke, how she had come, and how she was healed. Then He looked at her, and He said, "Daughter." Oh, after all, what a faulty thing preaching is! I cannot say that as it ought to be said, and I am almost afraid to try. Put yourself in her place - not weak any longer, but strong, for when He heals He heals. He never plays at healing, this Lord of ours. But though healed, she was still excommunicate, with no right of entry to synagogue or temple; still divorced, for even if there would be restoration presently to home and husband, it was not yet accomplished. Still ostracized from society, and likely to remain ostracized, because she had lost all her property. But He said, "Daughter." Then what do you think she cared about anything else? What did it matter now? She was excommunicate from temple, shut out from home, ostracized from friends; but He said, "Daughter"; He had adopted her, and by the sweet word of ineffable tenderness had brought her to His heart and had given her His own heart. "Daughter!" There is an old Roman legend - very foolish many of them are, and very beautiful some of them - that this was Veronica, the woman who, by the by, in the hour of His dying, was the only one who ministered to Him. It is only a legend, but if it is not true, it might be. He said, "Daughter;" and heaven dawned, all the shadows melted, and new life began. Not merely had He adopted her as His daughter in order that she might be benefited, but He had admitted her to fellowship with Himself in fullest grace. Just before this, according to Luke, He had said, Who is My mother, and who are My brethren and My sisters? They that do the will of My Father in heaven: "My mother and My brethren are these which hear the word of God, and do it." Now He added another word, "Daughter." Do you observe the profounder, more glorious blessing that came to the woman when she ceased her attempt to remain in hiding and confessed Him? For her own sake it was necessary that she should no longer be content with gaining the blessing which the fringe of His garments diffused, but should pass to the front, look into His eyes, and come into personal and eternal fellowship with Him as He said to her, "Daughter … go in peace."

But there was another reason why she should make her confession. I hinted at it just now, and will do no more than return to the matter in a brief word. Look again at Jairus. I think I know something of what was passing through his mind. He was surely saying within himself, Why does He wait? My girlie is dying! He will be too late! My girlie is twelve years of age; my home has been full of sunshine for twelve years. Her laughter and tears have made rainbow radiance in my home for twelve years; and she is dying! What is that woman saying? Twelve years of shadow, why that woman has been ill just as long as my child has been with me! She has been under the shadows all the time I have been in the sunshine. What is this the woman says? Her shadows have gone and the sunshine has come back to her! Then if He could heal her, and help her when she does but touch the border of His garment, let us get Him on, and home. For the strengthening of Jairus' faith she must confess.

Yet is not the final word the highest? Not only for deeper blessing she must confess, not only for the strengthening of Jairus' faith; but surely also, and supremely, for the honor and glory of the Lord Himself. It was fit that she should confess Him. In that jostling, curious crowd were men lurking, already planning and plotting for His murder. It was surely fit that the voice of one who had been healed should be raised to confess Him. For His sake then. And so the question caused deeper blessing for the sufferer, strengthened the faith of Jairus, and ultimately glorified the Lord Himself.

So the story itself preaches if the preacher fails. You say, That is a very old story. No, not so very old. It is as new as this wonderful morning. Ere I pronounce the benediction it is all being repeated. We here are interested in Jesus Christ I think I am safe in saying that. We all feel we would like to be near to Him, for there is something in the very name that calls us to higher things. There is always a beauty in the story of Jesus, even though it be told for envy; it is ever a victorious story; even though Christ be preached for very strife, Paul must rejoice. We have gathered this morning, a part of the great crowd around Christ, reverent, interested, But His question is this: "Who touched Me?" I cannot answer it. He knows who touched Him. We may have been in His immediate presence, and never near Him, even this morning. But someone has touched Him. Some broken heart, some weary soul, some bruised man or tired woman has touched Him, has ventured, and already is feeling the force of the virtue that heals. You were in entire despair half an hour ago. You are going to make another venture. You had almost given up the strife after righteousness when you entered this building, but now you are going to begin again. I cannot interfere, only to say to you that the Lord asks that if you have received the benefit you will confess Him.

"Who touched Me?" Did you? Did you touch Him, brother mine, sister mine, hidden away in the crowd? Do you feel the thrill of the virtue? Has the glory of a new vision broken upon you? Then, in the name of the Lord and Master, confess Him. Or to gather the philosophy of the New Testament story and utter it in the splendid language of the old psalmist, "Let the redeemed of the Lord say so, whom He hath redeemed from the hand of the adversary." I call you who have received the virtue to confess Him for your own sake. Do not be satisfied with the blessing so received. Confess Him; looking into His own face, avow yourself His own and His follower and listen for the voice that speaks some word more beautiful in its music, more powerful in its values, than any other blessing you have ever received. I call you to confess because of some Jairus hiding in the crowd, anxious, stricken, and smitten. Do you know how you can prove Christ to him and save him? By telling what Christ has done for you.

Finally, and this is the last argument, not for your sake alone, not principally for the sake of helping other men, but for His own glory and honor, and that you may stand by His side, one committed to Him, confess Him.

Brethren, of the things I have spoken this is the sum:

No fable old, nor mythic lore,

No dream of bards and seers,

No dead fact stranded on the shore

Of the oblivious years.

But warm, sweet, tender, even yet

A present help is He;

And faith has still its Olivet,

And love its Galilee.

The healing of His seamless dress

Is by our beds of pain;

We touch Him in life's throng and press,

And we are whole again.