Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

Jesus' Power over Death, Part 1
Scripture: Matthew 9:18-22
Code: 2265

Turn with me in your Bible to the 9th chapter of Matthew. Matthew, chapter 9. We are returning to our study of Matthew. I have long awaited this return, because I love so much the gospel narrative. We stopped over a month ago at verse 17 and we begin again today at verse 18. And verses 18 through 26 are really a unit; and in order for you to understand the story and have it in mind, let me read verses 18 to 26. And we'll spend at least a couple of sessions together going through this tremendous record. Beginning at verse 18, Matthew writes:

"While He spoke these things unto them, behold, there came a certain ruler, and worshiped Him, saying, 'My daughter is even now dead: but come and lay Thy hand upon her, and she shall live.' And Jesus arose, and followed him, and so did His disciples. Behold, a woman, who had been diseased with an issue of blood twelve years, came behind Him, and touched the hem of His garment: For she said within herself, 'If I may but touch His garment, I shall be well.' But Jesus turned about, and when He saw her, He said, 'Daughter, be of good comfort; thy faith hath made thee well.' And the woman was made well from that hour. And when Jesus came into the ruler's house, and saw the musicians and the people making a noise, He said unto them, 'Give place, for the maid is not dead, but sleepeth.' And they laughed Him to scorn. But when the people were put forth, He went in, and took her by the hand, and the maid arose. And the fame of this went abroad into all the land."

I'd like to title this passage very simply, "Jesus' Power over Death." That's what it's all about, the raising of one from the dead; and on the way, the healing of a woman with an issue of blood. And if you read the other gospels, you know that the reason for the healing interlude is to delay Jesus until the little girl is dead, and the funeral has already begun. For the other writers tell us that when he first approached, the man said to Jesus, "My daughter is dying," and by the time He got there, she was already dead and the funeral was in session. So the Lord places this very lovely interlude of the woman with an issue of blood as part of the delay to bring about the resurrection. So we see Jesus' power over death. I think this to be an essential message dealing with a critical theme. We're living in a dying world where all of us face the inevitability of death. We are deteriorating humans in a deteriorating world. Our world is marked by tragedy. Our world is marked by sorrow. Our world is marked by sadness. Our world is marked by death and dying. Since the Fall of man is recorded in Genesis, chapter 3, there has been a curse on the earth. And that curse has sent the earth and all of its inhabitants careening and spiraling into tears and disasters and pain and sickness and death. In fact, we face these things incessantly.

Just this month alone, in the past, say four or five weeks, I know of one dear friend who died of cancer, many other friends who are being consumed by cancer's painful deadly process. I know of a young man who, in his car, killed another little boy of eight years old. I know of a Christian man who was driving a semitruck on the freeway when another man darted in front of him and was embedded in the front end of the semi. I've looked into several caskets in the past month: the cold, stark face of a father and the same of a mother. I've heard the weeping and the sorrow. I know of a young lady with two small children: That young lady is dying from a lung tumor. I've watched a young man emerge from surgery to feel the pain as the anesthetic wore off. I've walked the halls of several hospitals. I've heard the moans and the groans of those filled with pain and disease. I've seen children with leukemia. I talked to a pastor friend on the phone who told me, "Would you please pray, John, for my sixteen-year-old daughter? She's had two open-heart surgeries, and now she's having heart failure, and we almost lost her." I have this month remembered that a year ago a dear wife and mother in our own church died being burned to death. Last Sunday, I met a man slowly going blind and a lady slowly going deaf. I talked to a nine-year-old in the last month who lost his mother to cancer, and last Sunday I prayed with and for a man who is so diseased with a brain tumor that he's in constant pain. That's just a part of it, but that's how it is in this life. That's what sin has done to this world. That's the curse in action.

Is it any wonder that Jesus reacted the way He did when He came to the grave of Lazarus? And the Bible says in the 11th chapter of John, "When Jesus saw her weeping [that is Mary, the sister of Lazarus] and the Jews also weeping, [and came upon, a funeral scene is what He came upon, it says that] He groaned in His Spirit and was troubled." There was a deep pain. There was a hurting, and it wasn't so much because of what had happened to Lazarus, but in the infinity of His mind He could stretch His thinking throughout all the eons of time to gather up all of the consequences of sin and feel the pain that all of it would bring to man. And as a sympathizer beyond anything we can conceive, it hurt Him deeply. It says He wept, and the Jews said, "'Behold, how He loved him!' And some of them said, 'Could not this Man, who opened the eyes of the blind, have caused that this man should not have died?' Jesus therefore groaned again in Himself." It was a deep hurting in Christ, because He could see the power and the pain of sin. God doesn't want it so. That wasn't the plan. All things in the world were created for the good of man and the blessing of man, but man sinned. And so the Old Testament prophets say sin will run its course, and then God will reverse the curse. God will turn it all around.

And we come to the end of Revelation in the next to the last chapter, and we read this: "Behold, God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes. There shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying. Neither shall there be any more pain, for the former things are passed away." And John has this incredible vision of the day when the curse is over. Who can do that? Who can reverse the curse? Who can destroy disease and pain and sorrow, tears of death? The prophets said there would come a Messiah, there would come a Prince, there would come a King, and He would do it. He would have

the power to bring back wholeness to life. Thus, when Jesus came into the world, He demonstrated that power. Though the fulfillment of those prophecies is yet in the future, the One who will fulfill them has sufficiently demonstrated His ability to do so, so that when Jesus came into the world, for all intents and purposes, as you've seen, He banished disease from Palestine. He raised the dead. He forgave sin. All of those things that will be true of the great and glorious coming kingdom, He demonstrated there in His first coming.

The miracles of Jesus were the verification of His power to reverse the curse; the verification of His power to establish the kingdom, for He had said in John, chapter 5, you remember, that He would someday raise from the dead all that were in the graves. And if He's going to do that, He's going to have to demonstrate that He has the power to do that. So miracle upon miracle did He do to verify His power. If you were to follow just the thinking of Matthew, you would see what a tremendously important thing this is for Matthew to indicate. Going back, for example; you don't need to turn to it, if you'll just listen, I think you'll get the flow. Going back to chapter 4, Matthew writes:

"And Jesus went about all Galilee teaching in their synagogues and preaching the good news of the kingdom and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people. And His fame went throughout all Syria, and they brought unto Him all the sick people that were taken with divers diseases and torments: Those who were possessed with demons, those who were epileptic, those who had paralysis, and He healed them."

You follow Matthew a little further, you come to the 8th chapter; and some of you will remember, in the 8th chapter in verse 16 it says, "When the evening was come, they brought unto Him many that were possessed with demons, and He cast out the spirits with His word, and He healed all that were sick, in order that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet." Now, listen, He did not heal them for their own sake only, but that He might demonstrate His power. And He did not heal all of them because they all had faith; not by any stretch of the imagination. He did not heal all of them because they were all worthy. He healed all of them in order that He might show that He could heal all disease, that there was no limit to His capacity. Chapter 9, verse 35: "Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in the synagogues and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people." In chapter 11, verse 5: "The blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them." And so it was that He demonstrated that He was God, the Messiah, the King.

Now, if you've been with us in our study of Matthew, you know that this is Matthew's focus. This is what Matthew wants us to understand—that He's the King. So Matthew has told us about His ancestry. He has the lineage of a king. He has told us about His arrival. He had the birth of a king, a virgin-born son. He told us about His adoration. Other kings bowed to Him. He told us about His anticipation; the Old Testament prophecies fulfilled in His birth. He told us about His royal herald, His

announcer, John the Baptist. He told us about His affirmation, where the Father spoke at His baptism. He told us about His advantage when He conquered Satan in temptation. He told us about His activity of healing and preaching. He told us about His authority in His sermon in chapters 5 through 7; and now he tells us about His authentication, His miracle power. And through chapter 8 and 9, we see the miracles of Jesus; and Matthew gives us three groups of three miracles. In chapter 8, we see the first group of miracles dealt with disease. From chapter 8, verse 23 to chapter 9, verse 17, the second group deal with disorder, both in the physical and spiritual and moral world. And now the third group, and the one we're going to be looking at in days ahead, deals with death. Disease, disorder, and death. This is the climax. Jesus can raise the dead.

Now, in this section, you have three miracles then. The first one actually has a miracle in a miracle, but there are three separate miracles. The first, raising the dead; second, giving sight to the blind; the third, speech to the dumb. Now, the last two may seem less marvelous than resurrection, and you may ask the question as to why Matthew would include giving sight and giving speech in a section that speaks of His power over death. And I'm not sure I can be dogmatic about the answer to that, except it seems to me a wonderful illustration of Jesus' resurrection power. First, He raises the whole person from the dead, and then He shows how it is that He can raise the whole by showing you how He can give life to the dead parts. He who can give sight to dead eyes and give speech to a dead tongue can also raise the dead, for that's only the sum of the parts. So He has power over that which is dead.

Can Jesus overcome death? What a message that is. G. B. Hardy, the Canadian scientist, one time said, "When I looked at religion, I said I have two questions. Question No. 1: Has anybody ever conquered death? Question No. 2: If they did, did they make a way for me to conquer, too?" He said, "I checked the tomb of Buddha, and it was occupied; and I checked the tomb of Confucius, and it was occupied; and I checked the tomb of Mohammed, and it was occupied; and I came to the tomb of Jesus, and it was [What?] empty. And I said, 'There is One who conquered death.' And I asked the second question, 'Did He make a way for me to do it?' And I opened the Bible, and He said, 'Because I live [What?], ye shall live also.'" That's the question: "Jesus, can You conquer death? Are You the One who can reverse the curse? Do You, as it says in Revelation 1, hold in Your hand the keys of death and hell? If You are that One, show us, demonstrate it." The same Jesus who stood at the grave of Lazarus and groaned, who wept with Mary, was the same Jesus who said to Martha, "I am the resurrection and the life. He that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?" Yes, Jesus has power over death, and nowhere more clearly will you see it than Him raising this dead girl in this situation.

Now, let's just get a few basic notes out of the way as we approach the text. It has a miracle within a miracle, but the miracle inside the miracle of resurrection, that is, the one dealing with the issue of blood, is really part of the resurrection miracle, for it provides the delay that is necessary for the death to occur and to make the resurrection as dramatic as possible. So you really have a miracle within a

miracle; and if I may sort of trade on that thought, I'd like to give you a sermon within a sermon, and I'd like you to understand the miracle and the power of Christ. But at the same time, I want you to see, as we flow through these two marvelous things that happen here, I want you to see, not only the story of what happened, but a sermon within a sermon. I want you to see how Jesus dealt with people, because nowhere is it more wonderfully seen than here. All of His tenderness, all of His sensitivity, all of His gentleness, all of His openness, all that He is in loving-kindness is here, and all of His power is here, and all of His dynamic is here, and all of the wonder of His majesty is here. And you really get a marvelous glimpse of how he dealt with people and it becomes a pattern for us in dealing with them, too. So mark that as we flow through.

Now, I'm going to use the outline based upon how Jesus dealt with people to lead us through this tremendous account. As I look at this in the very beginning, I see, first of all, that in dealing with people, Jesus was accessible. He was accessible. Verse 18, "While He spoke these things unto them, behold, there came a certain ruler." Now, stop there. "While He spoke these things." What things? "Unto them." Unto whom? We have to ask those questions, don't we? Who's He talking to about what? You remember what was going on here? He had cast the demons out of the maniac of Gadara and sent them into a herd of swine. He had calmed the sea and the wind, and you can believe that that word spread rather rapidly. In fact, when He came back to Capernaum, that little village on the very northernmost point of the Sea of Galilee where Peter lived—when He came back to that village after these incredible incidents in Gadara, He was staying in Peter's house—and the disciples of John the Baptist came and said, "Why aren't you fasting? Why are all of you disciples and the Lord eating like this? Why aren't you fasting? Why don't you fulfill the prescribed fasts?"

And with that in mind, we come to verse 18. "While He was speaking these things, [in answer to the scribes and Pharisees and the disciples of John the Baptist] there came a certain ruler." If I may stretch your thinking a little bit, this speaks to me of Jesus' accessibility. People could get to Him. I mean, He was there. There was no ivory tower. He's not a religious guru who was eighteen feet up with lilies all around Him. He's not at arm's length. He doesn't live in a monastery. There's no hierarchy. You don't go to the third vice president and have him pass it up the line. He moved among the people. He was God in the world of men. And, you see, that is the essence of the incarnation: "That God," John 1 says, “pitched His tent with men." He was in the streets. He was in the villages. He walked the dusty roads. He was in the synagogues. He was in the homes, because it was all He had, to stay in a home. He didn't have His own. He bumped into people in the temple ground. He was accessible.

One day, a lot of parents came—in Matthew 19—and they brought a lot of little children, and they kind of pushed their little children up, because they wanted Jesus to touch them. The disciples said, "Send those kids away." Jesus said, "No, permit the little children to come unto Me, for such is the kingdom." He gathered the little ones. He was accessible to adults, to little children. I mean everywhere He moved, He moved in a crowd. On one occasion, He said, He said, "I have

compassion on the multitude, for they have been with me three days." Can you imagine? Do you think they asked Him questions when they got next to Him? Would you? Do you think they brought Him all their problems? Would you? I mean, if you knew there was One who had all the answers. He was counseling. He was healing. He was teaching. He was in the midst of people—Can you imagine?—for three solid days; and He said, "I have compassion on them."

Imagine the conversations, the endless needs, the endless questions. He even, on occasion, had to retreat to the Mount of Olives to have some solitude to talk with the Father; and there were times when He was even caused to say to someone, "Don't tell people about this miracle," because of the pressure that would come as a result. And there He was, the Master of the world, the Creator of the universe, the King of kings, and the Lord of lords, and there He is walking the rolling hills of Galilee, little children running in and around, and people stopping Him, and talking. There He is in the villages, and by the sand, and the shore, and in a boat on the water, and in the crowded streets of Jerusalem, and always, always surrounded by people. He was accessible. You know what that tells me? That tells me that God is accessible. Isn't that good? Because this is God displaying Himself; He was accessible to the crowds.

And on the occasion of this particular time, two people are in the crowd. One is a ruler; the other, a sick lady. One is kind of up and in. The other is definitely down and out. One was wealthy and one was poor. Can you imagine the assortment there would've been in a crowd like that? The Pharisees were trying to trip Him and trick Him, condemn Him; and the people who were just trying to analyze Him, and then all the hurting people, all the people who were sick, all the people who had anxieties, all the people who were beggars, who were poor, who were outcasts, who were slaves, who were captives. All of the hurting people were there, as well, trying to have all their needs met. It thrills me that He's accessible to the crowds; that you can get to Him. But let me take it a second step. Jesus was not only accessible—and if I can kind of just change the word a little—He was also available; and, by that, I'm not so concerned with the crowd as the individual. He was not only accessible in that you could get to Him, He was available in that He would come to you. That's a marvelous reality; that Jesus was sensitive to who was in that crowd, and He would move to that person with real availability. I'm not thinking so much of the crowd, as I said. I'm just thinking of the individual.

Well, let's look back at verse 18 and see what happens. "While He spoke these things, behold, there came a certain ruler." "Behold," he says. I mean, that means *look at that*. I mean, this is a startling, shocking, amazing thing, very remarkable. What's so remarkable? Well, this man was a ruler. Mark adds, "He was one of the rulers of the synagogue." And Luke says, "He was *rosh ha keneseth*," which means he was the chief elder of the synagogue; and his name was Jairus. You know what this man was? He was number one representative of the religious establishment in Capernaum. He's the chief elder, not in the temple of Jerusalem, but in the synagogue in Capernaum.

Now, synagogues were ruled by elders. They were the spiritual leaders. They had the administration of the place. They were to coordinate and make sure everything was conducted properly, all the public worship. They were men of great influence; and out of their group, they would have a lot of elders. They would elect someone to be the head man, who would preside, who would supervise, who would appoint the, the preacher and the one who prayed and the one who read out of the law; and they were responsible to administrate the whole synagogue. And here's the number one guy. This is the epitome of the religious establishment: and for all intents and purposes, if you know anything about the gospels, you know that the religious establishment was dead set against Christ. They fought Him tooth and nail, all the way through His life. And this guy was looked at as the epitome of that, and he may even have been a Pharisee. We don't know, but he had a lot of peer pressure to be a faithful Jewish traditional religionist, and he comes to Jesus. Now, you might expect him to come and say, "Now, sir, I am the chief elder of the synagogue. I'd like to speak to You. Could we please have a private conversation?" That's not what he did. He didn't protect himself at all. It's amazing. Look at verse 18. "He came, and he worshiped Him." Now that word in the Greek, *to worship*, means to prostrate oneself before someone and either kiss his feet, kiss the hem of his garment, or kiss the ground in front of him. Now this is a heretical person, this Jesus; and the Pharisees are after Him; and the religious establishment is after Him; and this guy does what you only did in that culture to a deity, someone who was divine, someone who was holy in an *unhuman* way...or some king who had stated that he was, indeed, divine. You didn't do this to human beings unless they were in some sense supernatural.

I think it's wonderful that Matthew loves to use the word worship. He uses it thirteen times, because it fits a king, doesn't it? The man worshiped. But whatever made this guy do that? How could you ever get somebody to do that? Like him? Tell you. Very easy. Verse 18. You know what he said to Him? "My daughter's dead. My daughter is dead." Now, Matthew's account is brief. Luke's is larger, and Mark's is larger; and the other gospel writers tell us that the first time the man spoke to Jesus, he said, "My daughter is dying." And later on, he was informed that she was dead and he told Jesus she was dead. Matthew just condenses it all, leaving out some of the preliminaries; and, at this point, Matthew just says, "Now she's dead. My daughter's dead." And the other writers tell us that the little girl was twelve years old; and twelve years and one day in the Jewish culture meant that you were a woman. For a man it was thirteen years and one day, and that's why you have bar mitzvah. We've known all along that women were ahead of us, haven't we? Twelve years and one day. She'd just reached the flowering of womanhood. She had just bloomed. Twelve years of sunshine had turned to the shadow of death. You know why he came? He didn't care about social pressure. He didn't care about prestige. He didn't care about religious establishment. His daughter was dead, and there were no resources within his system to deal with that; and I believe that God had already been working on his heart; because his faith is incredible. He says, "Come and lay Your hand on her, and she will live." There's not a taint of doubt in that, is there? He swallowed his pride. He turned his back on social pressure. He said goodbye to the religious establishment, and he came to Jesus, and he fell flat on his face and probably kissed His feet. Said, "My daughter's dead."

Now let me tell you two things about this man. Number one: He had a deep need; and that's why people come to Christ. You don't have a need, you're not going to come. Recently, I had a man say to me, "I have no need of Christ." Well, if you don't have any need of Christ, you're not going to come; and we should pray that you should have need of Him. We should pray that you would be in a deep need, that you would know pain, that you would know desperation, that you would know the loss of all your resources that would drive you to Christ. It's apparent to me that the man in his mind probably already believed in the power of Christ. He probably was overawed by Christ; but maybe up until this point, he had been somewhat hesitant; but now, when his daughter was dying and now dead, he came in desperation. His motive wasn't totally pure. He didn't come just because of the wonder of Jesus Christ. He didn't come just because he had some great love for Christ. He came because he was hurting, and he was hurting deeply, and he knew a pain that he'd never experienced in his life. There was a hurting that was like— not like anything else, and there was no alleviation. This was so final. His heart was literally crushed. It's the people with need that come, and that's why the gospel is preached with reception to the poor and the sick and the weak and the ignoble and the captives and the prisoners. So he came and—even though his faith was inadequate, his motive was a little bit selfish— Jesus was available.

I talked about His need. Let me talk about his faith for a minute. That's the second thing that made him come. He really did believe that Jesus had the power to do this; and that is a marvelous faith. Do you know that if you go back to chapter 8, for example, there was a centurion who said his servant was home sick of the paralysis. You remember that? And the servant said, "If You speak a Word, my servant will be healed," and Jesus said, "I have not seen so great faith anywhere in Israel." This man had the great enough faith to believe that Jesus could heal his servant with a word. If that's the greatest faith he'd seen in Israel, what kind of faith is it to believe that Jesus could put a hand on a dead person and raise him from the dead when it had never been done? This is surpassing that. The man has marvelous faith. It's even better than Martha's faith. Martha said to Jesus, "Oh, if You'd only been here when he was sick, You could have done something; and now he's dead, and it's too late." She didn't even believe in resurrection power. I believe this man had the faith to be redeemed. And I believe before the day was out, he entered the kingdom of God.

And the Lord even throws in another little miracle that's really kind of marvelous. Jesus is in the big crowd, and another miracle happens, and Jesus isn't even involved in the miracle. It's involuntary. He says, "I felt power go out of Me." And then He looks around and says, "Who is that?" God did that to delay the whole move down to the house, to make sure the girl was dead. How did Jesus respond to his need and his faith? Verse 19. I love this. The Greek says Jesus *up and followed him*. Up and followed him. He didn't say, "Well, you know, I've got this very important meeting here with all this multitude and certainly don't know how I'm going to slip away. I mean, there's lots of sick folks." He up and followed him.

Sometimes the Lord does want us to meet the individual need. Philip was holding those great meetings, and there were mobs of people coming, you know. Great revival, people being saved, and Philip was preaching everywhere. Now, I don't know whether the Lord just picked him up against his will or not, but the, but the Bible says in Acts, "The Lord took Philip," *wshhhhh-pbbbt*, and dropped him in Gaza. Said, "I've got a person I want you to meet," and here comes a eunuch riding in his chariot, and he leads him to Christ. And then when it was all over, the Lord picked him right back up and flew him via the Holy Spirit right back to where he was before he came. There are times when there is a tremendous need in an individual's life. Jesus: ever sensitive to that. What does it say in John 6:37? "Him that cometh unto Me, I will in no wise [What?] cast out." He's accessible to the crowd. He's available to the individual. Can I indulge your thinking one more point, this morning anyway, and say that Jesus was also touchable? Not only accessible and available, but we're getting closer now.

Look at verse 20: Jesus went now with Jairus. And so did the disciples: verse 19. And Mark and Luke tell us so did the multitudes. So this mass of humanity now starts moving toward Jairus' house, and there's a big crush and a big crowd pressing around Him, and the questions are going on, and the, the whole thing that always went on. "And behold, [again, again, *startling, shocking, amazing*] a woman who had been diseased with an issue of blood for twelve years came behind Him and [You won't believe this.] she touched Him." You say, "Is that bad?"

Well, women basically didn't go around touching men; and the word *touch* doesn't mean to just touch. It means *to grab*. It is the same word used in John 20, you remember, where Mary wanted to reach out. It says that she touched Jesus, and He said, "Don't touch Me. I've not yet ascended to My Father." What she did was hold onto Him; and He said, "You can't hang onto Me. I've got to go back to Heaven and send the Holy Spirit. You can't keep me here." And this woman reached out and grabbed on and clutched.

You say, "Well, was that wrong?" Well, she had a problem, you see. She had been "diseased with an issue of blood for twelve years." Twelve-year-old girl and a woman with an issue of blood for twelve years. Jairus had a little girl. Gave him twelve years of sunshine. This lady had known twelve years of shadow. Twelve years of laughter. Twelve years of tears. An interruption that becomes an opportunity. Now what is it to have an issue of blood? Well, basically, for twelve years, this woman could not stop bleeding, perhaps due to a fibroid tumor in the womb, something that would be readily treated today by surgery. But she was perpetually unclean, unable to deal with this. Luke says, "She could not be cured." Incurable. Mark says, "She spent all her money on doctors and was worse." Luke wouldn't say that because he was a doctor. From the Jewish point of view, you couldn't imagine anything worse than being a woman with an issue of blood. It was humiliating, beyond anything, perhaps, except leprosy. For example, very commonly in Palestine, this issue of blood existed; and the Talmud, the Jewish codification of law, gave eleven different cures for it that you were to try.

Some of them were like tonics and herbal things and astringents and, I don't know whether they were effective or not; but you'd go through all of those; and then a whole lot of them were superstitious. For example, I'll give you just a couple illustrations of the many. One was that you had to carry the ashes of an ostrich egg in a linen bag in the summer and transfer them to a cotton bag in the winter. Another, which is far worse, was that you had to carry around on your person a barleycorn that had been found in the dung of a white she-ass. Now, that's really strange. Now, these were the kind of superstitious things that were done to try to deal with this kind of a problem. But the horror of the disease was because of what was stated in Leviticus 15:25. Listen as I read it. This is the law of God given to Israel:

"If a woman have an issue of blood many days out of the time of her separation, or if it run beyond the time of her separation, all the days of the issue of her uncleanness shall be as the days of her separation; she shall be unclean. Every bed whereon she lieth all the days of her issue shall be unto her as a bed of her separation; and whatsoever she sitteth upon shall be unclean, as the uncleanness of her separation. And whosoever toucheth these things shall be unclean, and shall wash his clothes and bathe himself in water, and be unclean until evening."

What Leviticus said was, "This is an unclean woman with an issue of blood. Every bed she touches is unclean. Everything she sits on is unclean. Everything she wears is unclean, and every person who touches her is unclean." Therefore, she was excommunicated from the synagogue. She was divorced by her husband. She was ostracized from all human relationships. For twelve years this dear woman lived in utter isolation, to say nothing of the medical things complicated by this problem. Never able to go to the temple. Never able to go to the synagogue. No longer able to meet with her husband or her family. Sad lady, and she touched Jesus. Why? Same two reasons: She had a deep need, and she believed. She had a deep need. I mean she lost all the sense of propriety. There was a desperation there. People say, "You know, I'd like to come to Christ, but I'm certainly not going to go down there and go in that room." That's fine. You just aren't desperate enough. When you get to the desperate point, if the door's not open, you'll knock it down. There's a certain desperation. This woman was there; and it says she touched the hem of His garment.

Now, in the Old Testament, in Numbers 15:37-41, and Deuteronomy 22:12, the Jews were told that they were to mark their garments with a zizith. It's the Hebrew word. Basically, it's translated in the Old Testament *fringe*. *Kraspedon* is the Greek word, and it really means *a tassel*. And they did this: they wove blue thread through their garment; and they had four tassels of kind of a blue color, a bright blue color on their garment; and those tassels were woven in a certain configuration with certain kinds of thread, seven times around and eight times, and there were, there was the significance of various numbers. But the sum total, without going into detail, was that the threads were put together to represent the word of God, faithfulness, loyalty to the word of God, and holiness unto the Lord. So that every time a Jew went anywhere, the world knew that he belonged to God. And every time he took his clothes off or put his clothes on, he saw those things and it was a reminder to

him. We have some of that today. Some people have a little cross, maybe, that they wear, or sign of a fish; and every time you put that on or you look at it, maybe you're reminded who you belong to. That's what that was for them.

Of course, it was the sign then of being holy unto the Lord; and in Matthew 23:5, it says, "The Pharisees made theirs very big." See, the bigger your tassel, the more holy you were, they thought. And you might be interested to know that in times in Europe when the Jews have been persecuted, they have still worn them, but they've worn them on their undergarments; and in contemporary times today, you'll find them still on the prayer shawl of an orthodox Jew; little blue tassels.

In the back of the Lord, they probably kind of swung a little bit as He moved through the crowd; and this lady, it says, and this is really interesting, verse 21. Look at it. It says, "She kept on [in the Greek, *she kept on*] saying in herself, 'If I may but touch His garment, I shall be well.'" She kept saying it over and over as she struggled through and finally grabbed that tassel. You know what happened when she grabbed it? Instantly, she was healed. And it says, "The Lord felt power pass from Him." It was involuntary, because everything He did, He did according to the will and power of the Father, right? He wasn't even involved in it. And then He said, "Who touched Me?" Before He knew in His humanness who, she was healed.

If you put the whole account together, the healing came first, instantly as she grabbed on; and you know what happened? This crowd and this moving to Jairus' house, and all of a sudden, when that woman grabs that tassel, the frame freezes and everything gets out of focus; and you see just two people: that woman and Jesus. And the other gospels tell us He said, "Who touched Me?" And the disciples said, "Are you kidding? Who touched You? People are clawing at You all over the place. Look at them all over the..." "No," He said, "there was a special one. I felt power go out of Me. Who was that?"

She had faith, didn't she? She said, "If I can just touch that thing." You say, "Well, it's not exactly a perfected mature thing." No, it's almost like superstition, isn't it? It's almost kind of magical. Say, "Well, the Lord certainly isn't going to respond to that." Listen, faith as the grain of a mustard seed would move a mountain. The Lord will take, the Lord will take an inadequate faith like the man's that is somewhat selfish, and He'll take an inadequate faith like the lady's that is somewhat superstitious, and He'll move it from there to the saving faith. He couldn't let that lady go or the, or all she would've remembered maybe was the superstition. He had to pull her into the fullness of a relationship. I don't really believe she was healed by her faith. I think she was healed by the sovereignty of God. God chose to heal her. Jesus just said He'd felt power go out of Him. Jesus healed multitudes of people that had no faith. You say, "Well, it says here her faith made her well." Oh, that's different. Say, "What do you mean, different?" You ready for this? Says, "Her faith made her well," and it doesn't use the word for *healing*, *iaomai*, the normal word for *healing*. You know what it used? *Sodzo*: The word means *to be saved*. Her faith has what? Saved her.

Jesus did miracles everywhere, healed everybody of everything, but saved only those who had faith. He healed those without faith. Certainly, the servant of the centurion didn't have any faith, we saw earlier. No, what I see here is the use of a unique word; and by the way, Matthew, Mark, and Luke all use that word *sodzo*, which means *to be saved*. I think there's a redemptive element in her faith. Oh, she wanted to just grab on; and it was kind of a, kind of a superstitious thing, in a way. Jesus wouldn't leave it at that. He drew her out, and He saved her. The ruler had an inadequate motive; it was selfish. And she had an inadequate faith; it was superstition. And yet, Jesus redeemed them both. It's kind of like the man who said, "Lord, I believe. Help thou my [What? my] unbelief." Take me where I am with my little faith and move me to saving faith. See, Jesus always knew the difference between the jostling of the fickle mob and the grasping of the faithful soul. He knew the difference; and He sensed it when she touched Him. Jesus is accessible. Isn't that great? He is available. He's touchable. Been saying this morning:

All your anxiety, all your care,
Bring to the mercy seat—leave it there;
Never a burden He cannot bear.

Isn't that right? Takes you where you are. There's a lot more to this story. I didn't hardly get started. But I can't think of a better place to stop for today than to remind you that Jesus is accessible and available and touchable. But there are two things, listen carefully, that'll bring you to Him: One is a deep need, a sense of desperation over your condition; and the second is great faith. Do you believe? Have you looked at your life, and you see that it's less than what it ought to be, and you want to reach out? See somebody transform it. Listen to these words:

Like her, dear Lord, I, too, would come,
Sick, sin-stained, amid the crowd alone.
I dare not tell to all their ears
The longings which are to Thee known.
Help, help, gracious Lord, no eye but Thine
Can graze the hills of bygone years.
All human aid is vain, but Thou
Canst heal my wounds and dry my tears.
Oh, God, if only I may touch
Thy saving virtue soul to soul,
Then come what may, let all men know
That Jesus Christ has made me whole.

You could touch Him. He's available. He's accessible. He's God moving in this world, alive, to touch your life. Let's bow in prayer.

Oh, our Father, how thankful we are: that You came into this world; that you pitched your tent with men; that you aren't the god of the deists that wound it up and went away, and it's all disintegrating; that someday the curse will be reversed. Someday there'll be no more pain and sorrow and disease and tears and death. And, Lord, thank You for demonstrating that. Thank You for Your power to raise us, and thank You for what we've learned about how You work with people. That You're a God that we can come to, a God who comes to us, a God who can be touched with the feelings of our infirmities; who cares, who's sensitive, who loves, has compassion. Those of us who have sensed our deep need have come to You with faith and been redeemed; and we pray for those gathered here in this place who have those needs unmet, who sense the pain, the hurt, that haven't yet moved toward You. May there be such a sense of desperation that there's no other way to turn. May You take their simple faith and bring it to the bloom of saving faith. Lord, make us thankful. As we heard earlier in the song, we know You died, and we know You rose. May we tell others, who need to know, that You're available to them, to give to them life, abundant and eternal. We pray these things in Christ's name. Amen.

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