

Gleaners Bible Studies B 2

A STUDY OF MIRACLES - PART 2

Study 1

"Who touched My clothes?"

Read

**Matthew 9: 20-22; Mark 5: 21-34;
Luke 8: 43-48**

This story is actually a miracle within a miracle, for as you read the passage you will have noticed that Jairus had come to Jesus with news of his daughter's illness. It is obvious that he had made his need clear, and from **(Mark 5: 24)** we can see that the Lord had begun the journey to his house. Some people might accuse the Lord of negligence in this matter, for it was after He had taken the time to heal the woman with the issue of blood that the message came to Jairus, **"Your daughter is dead. Why trouble the Teacher any further?" (Mark 5: 35)** Can you imagine Jairus' thoughts as the message came. His twelve-year-old daughter was dead! He might have been justified in thinking he had wasted his time coming to the Lord at all. Like the disciples on the lake, he might even think that the Lord Jesus did not care. Yet we know that the Lord Jesus did care and was in absolute control.

It was not a question of His lack of care, but the timing of His answer to the ruler's request. He could say to Jairus, **"Do not be afraid; only believe." (Mark 5: 36)** Let us always remember this when in life we meet with circumstances which we cannot explain or understand. God's timing is perfect and He has complete control over every event in our lives. Sometimes we are in such a hurry to get a thing done, but at such a time the Lord would say, **"Stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord." (Exodus 14: 13)** or **"Do not be afraid; only believe."**

Now let us look more closely at the incident of the woman who touched the Lord's garment. This miracle wonderfully illustrates for us our Lord's compassion and sympathy with suffering. We read in Luke's account that **"as He went the multitude thronged Him." (Luke 8: 42)** The word translated 'thronged' is very strong. It means that they pressed round Him so as almost to suffocate Him - it was difficult for Him even to breathe! The great majority of this moving mass of people was probably there from sheer curiosity. They were convinced a miracle was about to be performed and they were eager to see it. But there was one person among them with an urgent, deep and earnest purpose hidden in her heart. She was a poor, weak woman, worn out and wasted from the draining effect upon her of a prolonged illness. For twelve years she had sought medical advice from a variety of doctors, and had **'spent all that she had'. (Mark 5: 26)** But to no avail, for she could not be healed by any, but rather grew worse. Can you imagine any situation more depressing than this?

As a last resort, hearing that Jesus was there, she determined to approach Him. She pushed her way through the crowds until she stood behind Him, saying to herself, **"If only I may touch His clothes, I shall be made well." (Mark 5: 28)** So she reached out and touched the hem of His garment and was immediately healed.

In this lesson we are going to study FAITH in relation to the POWER of the Lord Jesus. Although humanly speaking, all had failed, yet this woman believed that she could obtain

healing from Him. She believed that one touch was sufficient to bring immediate blessing.

Here was FAITH BORN from despair.

Constant sickness made her take the opportunity of touching the Lord Jesus as her last and only hope. She was one of a large crowd, all of whom needed the Lord Jesus. Yet that one life, so full of suffering and sadness, was a world in itself. Faith in Christ is born of necessity. Doubtless what she had heard of the Lord Jesus as a healer gave her hope. This is just what **Romans 10: 17** tells us, **"Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God."** But there is a more deadly sickness in the lives of men and woman than even this woman had. And there is no need for us to enquire further into the nature of her illness, for there is enough on the surface of the narrative to show us its significance as a picture of SIN. For twelve long years her physical strength had steadily drained away. She had become weak and wasted by it - a shadow of her former self. How true this is of the sinner. Sin is a wasting disease. In many of its forms it wastes money. In others it wastes health, intellect and time; but worst of all, in all its forms, it wastes the very soul of man.

How often we have seen men and women whose lives, perhaps once so full of promise and potential, have been wasted by the effects of sin, and we are forced to say with sorrow, 'What a waste!' Every effort which they make to break with sin, only seems to make matters worse. This woman had **"spent all she had, and was no better, but rather grew worse."** Hope was almost destroyed, despair had taken over. Then she met the Saviour! Many Christians can look back to the time when this was true of their own experience. In their despair they turned to the only One who could offer hope. As guilty sinners they put their faith and trust in the Saviour, and experienced His almighty cleansing and saving POWER.

Here was FAITH that BROKE down all BARRIERS.

A crowd of people stood between her need and her healing. Purposefully she pressed forward until her hand stretched out and touched His garment. When we want to find our way to Christ, there will always be hindrances. If these are not people, then often our circumstances, or even our own selves can be obstacles in reaching Him. This story teaches us of that faith which breaks down every barrier. It believes against all odds! Of course, the Lord Jesus knew all about her need and her faith, and He was willing to heal.

Finally, it was FAITH that BROUGHT her healing.

St. Luke, to whom we are indebted for many details in the life of our Lord, says that she **"Came from behind, and touched the border of His garment." (Luke 8: 44)** Have you ever wondered why this was so? Why go to the trouble of bending to touch the hem of His coat, when she could have more easily touched His sleeve or back. There was, undoubtedly an element of superstition mingled with her faith. She believed there was a peculiar sanctity about the border of His coat. If you read **Numbers 15: 37-40** and **Deuteronomy. 22: 12**, you will realise that the hem, or blue fringe, on the border of the Jewish garment, was put there by divine command and served to remind the wearer of the special relationship he had with God. So she touches the hem of His garment. But notice the response of the Lord. Did He hold back His blessing until her doctrine was right? Not a bit! He healed her immediately. He used her imperfect faith to lead her on to something higher - to an intelligent

understanding of what had taken place. How much we can learn from the Lord as we watch Him dealing with men and women!

As a child, I was as puzzled as Peter by the question the Lord asks in **Mark 5: 30** and parallel verses. **“Who touched My clothes?”** But this question was not asked by Him in ignorance, but with the view of bringing to public notice the true facts of the case. Nor must we suppose that the power which cured the woman, went from our Lord against His will. On the contrary, He knew perfectly all her circumstances and He willingly cured her. The purpose of His question was to lead her to a public confession of all that He had done for her before she could slip away into the crowd.

The disciples, knowing nothing of what had taken place, were amazed at what appeared in the circumstances to be a ridiculous question. But it was no ordinary or accidental touch that the Lord was enquiring after. Behind that touch lay a set purpose and a deliberate intention of receiving a supernatural blessing. The poor woman, finding that Jesus knew all about it came, fearing and trembling and fell down before Him, and **“told Him the whole truth”**, or, as Luke puts it, **“declared to Him in the presence of all the people the reason she had touched Him.”** (**Luke 8: 47**) This was what the Lord was seeking, and having obtained that, He said to her with deepest tenderness, **“Daughter, your faith has made you well, go in peace.”** (**Mark 5: 34**) Thus she went away with a double cure - with the fountain of her blood dried up, and with the peace of God in her heart. It is as if He had said, ‘Take thankfully the cure which you have received for the body, but as you go away, enter into the peace which I came to impart to all those who trust in Me.’ What a lovely thought as we close our lesson!

For so it is with us. Not only did we receive forgiveness for our sin when we came to Christ for salvation, but peace with God, too. **Hebrews 4: 15** reminds us too that the Lord Jesus fully understands all our needs and is touched with the feelings of our weaknesses and failings. In this respect, this miracle has a real lesson for us to learn.

Study 2 Food for Five Thousand

Read

**Matthew 14: 13-21; Mark 6: 30-44;
Luke 9: 10-17; John 6: 1-14.**

This is the only miracle which is described by all four Gospel writers, and though their narratives agree in all essential matters, there are minor variations which serve to show that each wrote independently of the others.

We notice first the context of the passage. In Matthew, it follows the record of the death of John the Baptist. He was beheaded at the whim of a cruel woman who had excited the passions of the wicked King Herod. No mercy was shown to this godly man. His head was brought to Salome’s mother, who had requested it on a charger. Then, very sadly, the disciples took John’s body and buried it in a tomb. They came to the Lord in their sorrow and told Him all that had happened. He shared in their sorrow and took them away to a quiet place to rest and recover from their shock. It is good to pause here and realise that we too can always take our problems to the Lord. In a wonderful way He can give us peace and take the strain out of our lives.

Mark associates the Lord’s withdrawal at this time with the return of the disciples from their preaching tour. They told their Master **“what they had done and what they had taught.”** (**Mark 6: 30**) They had been so busy coming and going that they had not had enough time even to eat. So He draws them aside to have a time of quiet and rest, during which by fellowship with Himself they could be further trained for the work to which He had called them. What a lesson for all those who seek to work

for Him! How often in our busy, noisy, sinful world, we need to go to ‘a place apart’ with Him for rest. (**Matthew 11: 28**)

It was not a quiet place for very long, however. People saw them go and soon multitudes were thronging the Saviour again. How difficult it was for the Lord to get away from them! They needed so much, and He knew this and of course He had so much to give. They must have been a varied crowd, from so many different walks of life. The Lord saw them **“like a sheep not having a shepherd”**. (**Mark 6: 34**) Perhaps they looked weary, aimless and lost. To the Saviour they were people whose lives He had come to save. We read He had compassion on them and began to teach them.

The whole story revolves around HUNGER. After a session of teaching, the day was passing swiftly by, and the disciples wanted to send the people away. No doubt this was common sense, but it did not satisfy the compassionate heart of the Saviour. He will never send hungry people away. He longs to satisfy the emptiness of men and women, (**see Psalm 107: 9**) **“Send them away that they may... buy themselves bread”** (**Mark 6: 36-37**), say the disciples. **“You give them something to eat”**, replies the Lord. How could they? In practical terms, two hundred pennyworth of bread would not feed that crowd. Yet the Lord wanted to see how His disciples would react in this situation. Perhaps He wanted to test them to see how much they had learnt about His power through witnessing former miracles.

From John’s account we learn that Andrew was the only one who came anywhere near a solution. He brought what was AVAILABLE to the Lord. In human terms the result was still impossible, but with the Lord, **all things** are possible. We can learn an important lesson from Andrew here. Perhaps at times we are faced with tasks that seem humanly impossible. Don’t try to work out the situation with human reasoning, but bring whatever is available - however small - to the Lord and leave Him to work the miracles! Then we will see for ourselves the POWER of God working in our own lives.

We can pause here too, to think of the problem of hunger in our world today. Many countries have a vast starvation problem to deal with. There is not enough food to go round; there are too many mouths to feed. This is very sad, especially when we know that food is often wasted. As Christians we need to pray for needy countries, and at the same time see to it that we are not over-indulgent in our own eating habits or wasteful in any way. Yet beneath every material need there lies a deep spiritual need, even in the lives of well-fed, or even over-fed people. This miracle can teach us much about this, **“Man shall not live by bread alone, but man lives by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of the Lord”**. (**Deuteronomy 8: 3**)

We look now at how the Lord Jesus took that which was available and made it SUFFICIENT to meet all the needs that there were. Think about the ratio - five thousand men besides women and children, to five loaves and two small fish. What kind of mathematics was this? Look at it in this way. First, the Lord’s HEART was warm with compassion. Then His HAND was open to meet every need. Notice the orderly, careful way in which He acted. There was to be no rush or panic with everyone grabbing for self. They were all made to sit down in rows. Then notice the reverent way in which He handled the supplies. **“He blessed and broke the loaves.”** Finally, the disciples handed them out. Jesus saw to it that they had a part in His work. Notice each point carefully. This miracle is an object lesson in the CONTROL and COMMAND that the Lord Jesus has over every situation.

As we end today’s study, we can notice the ABUNDANCE of His supply. Twelve baskets full of bits and pieces left over. No thought of waste here! Can you imagine the look on the face of the boy whose lunch provided the feast? Take note here that provision by the Lord Jesus is always abundant. He said that He came to give life - and more abundantly, **John 10: 10; Ephesians 3: 20-21** speaks of the power of God which is **“able to do exceedingly**

abundantly above all that we ask or think". We can take to ourselves this wonderful truth, that, with the Lord Jesus in control of our lives, we can find abundant and lasting satisfaction.

Study 3

Healing an Outcast

Read

Matthew 15: 21-28;
Mark 7: 24-30

This miracle, in order of time, comes shortly after the feeding of the five thousand. It was performed by our Lord while He was in the region which bordered on the territory of Tyre and Sidon, (**Mark 7: 24**), to which He had retired for a while.

Matters in Galilee had reached a critical point. Herod, the murderer of John the Baptist, was beginning to enquire after Jesus, presumably with no good intention. (**Matthew 14: 1-12**). The vast majority of people, dazzled by the wonder of His miracles, and hoping at this time for the restoration of Israel, were all for taking Him by force and making Him their king, (**John 6: 15**). The Pharisees and Scribes, writhing under His withering exposure of their hypocrisy, were seeking an occasion for His destruction. So it is possible that for these reasons, plus the fact that He sought much-needed rest, Jesus went at this time to the extreme northwestern boundary of the land, where it touched the edge of Phoenicia.

It is obvious from the Bible readings, that the Lord did not want His movements known. His was a busy life, full of demands and pressures and we tend to forget that although He was the Son of God, He was a true man, and as such His very active life often left Him tired and weary. So Mark tells us, "**He entered a house and wanted no one to know it.**" But just as the sun inevitably reveals its presence by the very light that it gives, so the Lord Jesus "**could not be hidden**". There was that about His character, appearance and work, which, wherever He went, attracted attention and recognition and drew to Him all who were in distress.

It will be useful if, in this study, you look at both the Gospel writers' accounts, side by side. There are several additions in Matthew which are interesting. The woman who came to the Lord was a Syrophenician, or, as Matthew puts it, 'a Canaanite woman'. She was a Gentile and came from the border countries. She was in desperate need because of her little daughter who was possessed by an unclean spirit. Here again we have the presence of demon-possession. The gospel records constantly remind us of the power of Satan. Remember; too, in your studies, that Matthew's gospel was written particularly with the Jewish reader in mind, and he always stresses those aspects of the Lord's life which are for the Jew first. Indeed the New Testament principle with regard to the Gospel message is "**for the Jew first**". (**Romans 1: 16**)

This Gentile woman then, was in a truly desperate **SITUATION** for her daughter was in a very bad way. She must have heard reports of Jesus and His wonderful works of healing, for she came to the house where He was with a very earnest appeal for His help. Living, as she did, just over the frontier of the land of Israel, she would have gleaned some knowledge of those ancient prophecies on which the Jews founded their faith, that a Messiah was to come. Certainly she recognised Jesus for who He was, for she cried, "**Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David.**" (**Matthew 15: 22**) - a cry straight from the heart.

Yet we notice her cry was received by the Lord in absolute **SILENCE**. Indeed if you read Matthew's account carefully, (**15: 22-25**), it seems that Jesus must have actually ignored her and left the house, for her entreaties were then transferred to the disciples. But she was not going to be shaken off easily. Her cries were so loud and earnest that the disciples became annoyed and asked the Lord to send her away. The Lord's

reply, "**I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel**", (**Matthew 15: 24**) comes as a further rebuff and we are perhaps puzzled and amazed by His attitude towards her. It seems so uncharacteristic doesn't it?

I am glad that events were as they are recorded. It gives opportunity to show us just what real, persistent **FAITH** can achieve. To a less determined person a snub such as this might have appeared as the death-blow to their hopes; yet it only increased her earnestness. She fell at His feet and worshipped Him, saying, "**Lord, help me**". Surely He will respond now! For the first time He does address her directly, but again, in a style totally unlike Him, and positively discouraging to her. He tells her, in picture language, that the children's bread should not be given to dogs. Tragic, yet true! The bread of life that Christ brought was first for His own nation, the Jews. '**He came to His own**.' (**John 1: 11**) the first appeal of the Saviour was to Israel, the nation from which He came. How different it would have been for them if they had received Him.

But the beauty of this story lies in the **DETERMINATION** of this woman to get a blessing at all costs. She believed that Jesus had what she needed, and she refused to be repulsed. There is a pathos about her reply which touches the heart. In effect she said, 'True, Lord, I know that I have not the claims of the children, and I do not ask to sit at table with them; but your power and goodness are so great that my request is just like a crumb that falls from one of their hands, which can be eaten up, unhindered, by a little dog under their table.' Thus, from what seemed like a rebuff, Jesus reveals the strength of her faith, and it must have brought great joy to the Saviour's heart, as He replied, "**O woman, great is your FAITH - let it be to you as you desire.**" (**Matthew 15: 28**) The woman went away satisfied and blessed.

We can learn a great truth from this miracle. Look again at **John 1: 11-12**. "**His own did not receive Him**". The nation of Israel, with all its privileges, crucified the Saviour. "**But as many as received Him, to them he gave the right to become the children of God, even to those who BELIEVE in His name.**" No one is outside the reach of God's love. If you read **Ephesians 2: 11-22**, you will find that the Church, God's building, is made up of both Jew and Gentile who believe in the Lord Jesus. And they are brought into God's family through Christ's blood, shed on the cross. This is very wonderful indeed.

But we can also learn a lesson here about prayer. The Lord Jesus sometimes will test our faith by His treatment of our prayers. His delays to grant our requests are often His tests to see whether we really are in earnest about that for which we ask. Had this woman failed to stand this trial, in all probability she would have gone away unblessed. But she had a persistent faith. Faith does not give up hope or effort. It works on in patience and perseverance, and if our prayer-life is like this it will strengthen our spiritual character.

Study 4

Sight for the Blind

Read

Matthew 20: 29-34; Mark 10: 46-52;
Luke 18: 35-43

Our last study of miracles concerns a blind man - Bartimaeus. It is strange that so many people involved in the miracle stories are not named. Yet when we mention Bartimaeus, most people know who he was. In terms of the recorded miracles of healing, this is the last before the events of the Cross. It comes just before the final public ministry of the Lord Jesus In Jerusalem. The Lord was making His way to Jerusalem and He knew that the end of His mission was very near. It will be a great help to you if, when reading of this event, you bear the context in mind. This miracle has a special significance regarding the condition

of the people in general. They were absolutely blind to the meaning of the mission of the Saviour. They misunderstood Him and misjudged all that He did. They refused to believe His words and discredited His works. They said His miracles were inspired by Satan. Finally, they were to crucify Him as the climax of their blindness and folly. Bartimaeus needed physical sight; but many of the people who watched the Lord go to Calvary were spiritually blind because they failed to see that He was the Christ, the Son of God. Think of this as you study the miracle.

A blind beggar by the roadside in Palestine was not an unusual sight. There were so many who sat in the dust of the roadside. For many of them, the very dust in which they sat to beg was the cause of their blindness. Others, like the man in **John 9**, were born blind - a hopeless existence indeed.

We have studied the methods used by the Lord Jesus in working various miracles, and these have given us many different truths relative to His power. What can we learn from Bartimaeus? Well, first we notice Mark's expression, "**when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth...**" (**Mark 10: 47**) Can you imagine Bartimaeus saying something like this to himself, 'Jesus of Nazareth. . . this must be the one about whom I have heard such wonderful things! I have heard that He has made the dumb to speak, the deaf to hear; healed lepers and even raised the dead. They have told me too, how He has opened the eyes of the blind, and that I should try and get to Him, for He could heal me. How often I have prayed that He might come this way, and now He is here! This is the opportunity of my life. Oh God! Help me to use it well!'

So we hear HIS CRY, "Jesus, Son of David have mercy on me." Notice that he uses the same name for the Lord that the Syrophenician woman did, "**Son of David**". He heard that Jesus was passing by, so he cries with great urgency; a loud, persistent cry. People tried to quieten him - they felt he was a nuisance. Sheer desperation gave urgency to his plea - "**Have mercy on me!**" Only God knows the true need of our lives and He is always ready to hear our desperate cries. When even our closest friends may not have time to listen to our troubles, we can always come to the Lord Jesus. "**Call upon Me in the day of trouble, I will deliver you, and you shall glorify Me**". (**Psalms 50: 15**) Do you, like Bartimaeus did, make full use of the opportunities afforded you?

Next we have HIS CALL. One thing is said about the Lord here that is interesting, "**He stood still**". (**verse 49**) There, in the middle of the Eastern highway, Jesus stopped in His course to listen to the cry of a blind beggar and to call him to Himself. Notice the message they give to him, "**Be of good cheer. Rise, He is calling you**". (**verse 49**) The call of the Lord Jesus is always important. He calls us to come to Him. (**Matthew 11: 28**) He calls us to follow Him, and He calls us to serve Him. In the New Testament you will find many other thoughts associated with the call of the Lord to Christians. And when He calls we must obey!

See now HIS CURE. I am glad that in the details of this miracle we are told that Bartimaeus cast away his garments and sprang up to come to the Lord. (**Mark 10: 50**) Every hindrance had to be cast aside, and he showed real eagerness in coming to Christ. Be careful that in dealing with Christ and the blessings He has to offer, that you are not slack or apathetic in your attitude. Indifference and carelessness rob many a Christian of the blessings that Christ longs to give. They are like garments that get in the way, impeding progress. Notice how the Lord dealt with Bartimaeus. "**What do you want Me to do for you?**" This wasn't an unnecessary question, for here again, the Lord wanted to hear his need expressed by his own lips. "**Lord ... my sight:**" That was it - that was all he needed. So again faith found its reward as he received that for which he asked. As Christians, the Holy Spirit enables us to see and understand many things which are hidden

from the people of the world. When you have opportunity, read **1 Corinthians 2** and see how wonderfully the Holy Spirit can reveal spiritual blessings to those who belong to Christ.

Finally, HIS COMMITMENT. "He followed Jesus on the road". (**Mark 10: 52**) What a fitting conclusion to the study of our miracles. Undoubtedly Bartimaeus' life was never the same again. Jesus had given him his sight and he wanted to follow Him. All those who have known the power of the Lord Jesus in their lives should recognise His right to have complete control. Are you a committed Christian! The Lord Jesus has bought you with His own blood. Are you ready to follow Him! We conclude our lessons with this CHALLENGE. Does Jesus Christ come first in your life and experience and are you following His way and His word? To do so is to follow a pathway of blessing.

Questions

Study 1

"WHO TOUCHED MY CLOTHES?"

1. What can we learn from today's lesson about God's timing when dealing with the circumstances of our lives? .
2. In what way is this woman's illness a picture of SIN?
3. What can we learn about FAITH from this lesson?
4. Why did the Lord ask, "**Who touched My clothes?**" when so many people were pressing against Him?
5. What comment can you make so far in your study of the miracles about the way in which the Lord dealt with men and women?

Study 2

FOOD FOR FIVE THOUSAND

1. What lesson can we learn from the context of this miracle, as set by Matthew and Mark?
2. In what light did the Saviour see the mass of people that day?
3. What have you learnt from today's lesson about the character of the Lord Jesus?
4. What lesson can we learn from Andrew?
5. Why is it important that Christians should hand over the control of their lives to the Lord Jesus?

Study 3

HEALING AN OUTCAST

1. Why had Jesus withdrawn Himself from the public eye at this time?
2. a) What is the New Testament principle regarding the Gospel message?
b) How does Matthew in particular support this?
3. What was so uncharacteristic about the Lord's dealings with this woman?
4. What did His treatment of her reveal about the nature of her faith?
5. What can we learn about prayer from this narrative?

Study 4

SIGHT FOR THE BLIND

1. In what way was Bartimaeus a picture of the spiritual state of the nation of Israel?
2. What can we learn from Bartimaeus' reaction to the news that Jesus was passing by?
3. Name three important things the Lord calls us to do.
4. What can we learn from **Mark 10: 50** about what our attitude should be when coming to Christ?
5. What has been the most challenging lesson that you have learnt in your study of the miracles?