

Lesson 12: “More Clothing Imagery”

The “good news” about Jesus “the Saviour of the world” had thrilled her heart. “She had heard of Jesus” (Mark 5:27). “She came to the seaside where He was teaching” (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 343). The Saviour knew of this woman far in advance of their encounter in the midst of the throng. “He came near where she was” (ibid.). She felt this was her opportune moment to connect with the “Great Physician.”

“She said, If I may *touch* but His clothes, I shall be whole” (Mark 5:28). Christ had a shared identification with her in His humanity. He sympathized with the woman in her diseased condition. He incorporated the woman into His endless divine life and overwhelmed her illness. For her to touch His clothes was an act of identification with Christ. It was not some sort of superstitious connection with garments that magically healed her. For her this touch meant a heart-union with the Saviour that would effect wholeness not only physically, but mentally and spiritually.

Instantaneously the hemorrhage ceased. Death had been reversed by the Saviour’s life-giving virtue.

All the people around Jesus wanted to be associated with Him. They had “a nominal faith” in “the Saviour of the world” (DA 347).

Her faith was no craven fear motivated by a self-centered insecurity. Genuine faith does manifest a healthy “fear”--reverence--which is motivated by *agape*. It was gratitude arising from a diseased and rebellious heart that had now been fully reconciled to the Saviour. She “told him all the truth” about her own case (Mark 5:33). Her confession of the truth about her life was in agreement with God’s assessment. She manifested true repentance and a changed life (Mark 5:33; DA 347).

He said to Mary Magdalene: “Go in peace,” “thy faith hath saved thee” (Luke 7:50). “Faith is really identification with Him, at-one with Him, abiding in Him.” [1] When Jesus said to the healed woman, “Go in peace” (Mark 5:34), He removed her sins and restored her alienated heart to God which alone brings the peace. This is what is meant by His words to Mary Magdalene, “And He said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven” (Luke 7:48). Anyone who truly recognizes her sins are forgiven knows that peace with God has come. Hostilities have ceased.

The 1888 message of righteousness by faith was a heart-reconciling identification with the Crucified One who ministers as our High Priest in the heavenly sanctuary. This is the beginning of the latter rain (*Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 363). The woman healed by Jesus was a singular example of one such individual restored to wholeness.

Why did Jesus die on His cross? The popular answer is He died as a vicarious substitute for our sins. Now we can go free. Wonderful!

During the American Civil War you could hire a substitute to fight and die in your place. Your hired vicarious substitute would suffer and die while his family would mourn. You could go on with your life because of your substitute.

It's something like that with the conventional wisdom regarding the sacrificial atonement. Jesus died instead of you. But it's a childish way of thinking because the heart remains self-centered.

The Bible teaches "a *shared* substitution where you *personally identify* with" Christ. [2] "I am crucified with Christ" (Gal. 2:20). "If One died for all, then all died" (2 Cor. 5:14). It is identification with Christ which transforms all our personal sufferings from being self-"pity parties" into "the sufferings of Christ [which] abound in us" (2 Cor. 1:5). "We are brought into sympathy with Christ through the fellowship of His sufferings" (*Steps to Christ*, p. 79).

The Great Physician loves the corporate church. He gives her a wedding garment to put on. She must "make herself ready" by identifying with Christ--"not my will, but thy will be done." It's a heart-sympathy with His diagnoses of her pathetic lukewarmness and self-satisfied arrogance of her garments and understanding of righteousness by faith.

She learns the lessons of the failures of church history. She understands her rejection of the Groom in the 1888 history was a moral fall. "Leaving the first love is represented as a spiritual fall. ... In every church in our land, there is needed confession, repentance, and reconversion. The disappointment of Christ is beyond description" (*Review and Herald*, Dec. 15, 1904). The "robe of Christ's righteousness" becomes something more. It is now the "wedding garment" of His mature *agape*. She comprehends "the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; [of] the love of Christ, ... filled with all the fullness of God" (Eph. 3:18, 19).

"You identify with Christ by entering in to His experiences all the way through His life, even up to His cross. And in that final point of identity your soul is welded to His soul as by a white hot flame of shared experience. 'I am crucified with Christ,' says Paul; and

‘God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of Christ’ (Gal. 2:20; 6:14). Christ’s point of self-humiliation becomes yours. You kneel with Him in Gethsemane; you join His prayer, ‘Not as I will, but as Thou wilt’; you yield your arms to be nailed to the bars ‘with Him’; you endure the taunts and abuse of the leaders and the people ‘in Him’; you cry tears with Him, ‘Why hast Thou forsaken Me?’”

“You are no longer a thoughtless child, for you are sentient now, you taste the bitter cup He drank ‘with Him.’ On His cross, He died the death of the sinner; He died as an AIDS victim, a cancer victim; He is on Death Row; ‘as He hangs on the cross, bleeding, battered, powerless and forsaken, the last thing He looks like is God. Indeed, He scarcely looks human,’ says one thoughtful writer. He is ‘made to be sin for us, who knew no sin’ (2 Cor. 5:21). You join the royal family by identifying with Him there.” [3]

--Paul E. Penno