

The Saviour's Touch

by H. A. Ironside

There are six beautiful word-pictures, all emphasizing in different ways the effect of the touch of the hand of the Lord Jesus, that I desire to dwell upon.

The first one is found in the Gospel of Luke, chapter 7, reading from verse 11 through verse 15:

"And it came to pass the day after, that he went into a city called Nain; and many of his disciples went with him, and much people. Now when he came nigh to the gate of the city, behold, there was a dead man carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow: and much people of the city was with her. And when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her, and said unto her, Weep not. And he came and touched the bier: and they that bare him stood still. And he said, Young man, I say unto thee, Arise. And he that was dead sat up, and began to speak. And he delivered him to his mother."

The life-giving touch of Jesus! This young man, literally dead, pictures, untold thousands of young men and young women throughout this and other lands today who are just as truly dead toward God and dead to all things spiritual as he was dead physically to the things of this world, But our Lord Jesus Christ who brought life to the dead when He was here on earth, who touched that bier and then spoke the word of life that restored that young man to his mother, is still working in the same wonderful way. You remember He has said, "The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live." We Christians were once dead in trespasses and in sins, but Jesus came and put forth His hand and touched us in our dead condition. He spoke the word of life, and that word we heard even when we were dead, and it brought us to life, and today we can rejoice that we have life in Christ.

It is not very flattering to men and women, to tell them that they are spiritually dead, when most of them feel that they are so thoroughly alive, but you remember we read in the second

chapter of the Epistle to the Ephesians, verse one: "You hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins: wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world." This young man could not walk. He was utterly dead as to the body. But there are thousands all about us who are dead, and yet they are walking about. They are dead to God; they have no thought of pleasing Him; they have never known the power of God in their lives. Some of them are very religious, but religion and salvation are quite different. They do not know Christ, and the Scripture says, "He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life." But, thank God, He came to bring life, and "today if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts" but "believe and your soul shall live."

I like to think of the blessed Lord moving about among people and, unseen, waiting for anyone anxious to know Him, anyone anxious to find life, and being ready to put forth His hand in grace, for the touch of His hand and the word of His voice give life. I ran across this verse in a newspaper column, a strange place to find something so precious:

"The hands of Christ seem very frail,
For they were broken by a nail;
But only they reach heaven at last
Whom those frail, broken hands hold fast."

Those hands were broken on Calvary when He hung there, a bleeding victim between earth and heaven, giving His life for us, and now those hands placed in blessing upon those who look to Him give life — life to all who believe.

Now, let us notice a second picture. It is in Matthew's Gospel, chapter 8. It illustrates the touch of cleansing. We read in verses 1 to 3:

"When he was come down from the mountain, great multitudes followed him. And, behold, there came a leper and worshipped him, saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean. And Jesus put forth his hand, and touched him, saying, I will; be thou clean. And immediately his leprosy was cleansed."

It is not only true that men are dead in sins and need life. It is also true that they are responsible beings before God and have been rendered utterly unclean by sin. Leprosy is God's awful

picture of sin — that terrible disease which may be working in the system for a long time before it is manifested outwardly. A man is not a leper because he has certain ugly sores somewhere upon his body. He has those sores because he is a leper. And a man is not a sinner simply because he does wrong, because he sins against God and his fellow man. A man does wrong things because he is a sinner. He is constitutionally a sinner. And just as leprosy makes a man utterly unclean, so that he has to be put away from the company of his fellows, so sin makes a man so utterly unclean that he cannot have any place in the city of God, for "there shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth." One might cry, "How, then, can I ever enter that city? What possible hope is there for me?"

"Tell me what to do to be pure
In the sight of all-seeing eyes.
Tell me, is there no thorough cure,
No escape from the sins I despise?
Will my Saviour only pass by,
Only show how faulty I've been?
Will He not attend to my cry?
May I not this moment be clean?"

Yes, there is cleansing for all in the precious blood of Christ. There is cleansing in the touch of His hand. The leper came fearful and yet hopeful, too, crying, "Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean." And Jesus immediately replied, "I will; be thou clean," and He touched him and the leprosy departed from him. If any other man had touched that leper, that man himself would have become unclean and would have had to go to the priest and present himself for cleansing. But when Jesus touched the leper, instead of being defiled by the uncleanness of that poor, wretched man, His touch gave life and healing and cleansing. Thank God, today He is still the healing Christ, the cleansing Christ. You who have been living away from Him — do you feel utterly unclean and unfit for God's presence? Look up to the blessed Lord, then, as that leper did, and let your heart cry, "Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean"; and He will answer. He will say to you as He said to him, "I will; be thou clean," for His touch is the touch of cleansing.

A third picture is found in the same Gospel, in the seventeenth chapter. The disciples were on the mountain with the Lord Jesus

Christ. They were in the presence of His glory. He was transfigured before them:

"His face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light. And, behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elias talking with him.

"Then answered Peter, and said unto Jesus, Lord, it is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias. While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him. And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their face, and were sore afraid. And Jesus came and touched them, and said, Arise, and be not afraid. And when they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no man, save Jesus only" (vs. 2-8).

This was one time while our blessed Lord was here on earth that the glorious deity enshrined within His humanity shone out through His very body, and He became radiant before His disciples. As they saw Him there with Moses and Elias, they were thrilled. They did not know what to do. It was such a remarkable thing! And Peter, who was always blundering, always anxious to do something and so often doing the wrong thing, always anxious to say something and so frequently saying the things he should not say — Peter looked up and said, "Lord, let us build three tabernacles here; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias." It was as though he would put the representative of the law and the representative of the prophets on a level with the Lord Jesus Christ. God the Father would not have that. A cloud shut out the two Old Testament men, and the voice of the Father was heard saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased: hear ye him." The disciples were so stirred and they were so awed as they heard that voice coming from the cloud that they fell upon their faces in fear. They felt they were too close to God, I think, to be comfortable, and they were filled with dread; but Jesus put forth His hand and touched them and said, "Arise, and be not afraid." And He lifted them up and they stood before Him in joy and confidence.

How often we, too, are filled with fear as we contemplate the ways of God. There are so many things that we cannot understand. We sometimes look forward to the future with dread,

or the present hour is filled with fear; but the Lord Jesus is here with every one of His own — here to put forth His hand, to say, "Be not afraid." It is the touch of assurance. Are you trembling in fear? Perhaps circumstances have come into your lives that seem literally to overwhelm you. How many breaking hearts there are! How many homes broken by death! How many others have answered the call to the colors, and parents and dear ones are asking, "Will they ever come back?" and their hearts are filled with fear. If you only know the Lord Jesus Christ, you have One with you who can make up for everything else, and He reaches forth and puts His hand on your troubled head and says, "Fear not; be not afraid." Trust Him, No matter how dark the clouds may be above, be assured of this: "All things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."

But now a fourth picture, and this one in the ninth chapter of Matthew's Gospel. This is the actual scene that was before the mind of the hymn writer, though he used it as given in another Gospel, when he wrote the hymn, "Jesus of Nazareth Passeth By." We read in verses 27 through 30:

"And when Jesus departed thence, two blind men followed him, crying, and saying, Thou son of David, have mercy on us. And when he was come into the house, the blind men came to him: and Jesus saith unto them, Believe ye that I am able to do this? They said unto him, Yea, Lord. Then touched he their eyes, saying, According to your faith be it unto you. And their eyes were opened; and Jesus straitly charged them, saying, See that no man know it."

Another thing that sin does for us: it blinds our eyes. You know our eyes are really in our hearts when it comes to spiritual things. We read of the unsaved that their hearts are blinded and their understanding is darkened. They cannot see; they cannot understand. But Jesus comes to open blind eyes, and how many there are who could testify that when they were blind, blind to the things of God, blind to the things of eternity, they met with Him! They heard that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by, and they came to Him as these blind men came, crying, "Lord, that we might receive our sight," and He touched their eyes and they were able to see. Some of us remember when we had eyes for the things of the world but no eyes whatever for the things of

God "till grace our blinded eyes received, Christ's loveliness to see." Have you known the touch of the Saviour's hand upon your eyes, opening your eyes and giving you to see spiritual realities?

A fifth picture is found in the Gospel according to Luke, chapter 22, and this I think of as the corrective touch, for sometimes you know it is in the hand of the Lord that has to put right some of the things that we put wrong. Jesus had risen from His knees in the garden of sorrow and had gone to find that His disciples were still sleeping.

"And while he yet spake, behold a multitude, and he that was called Judas, one of the twelve, went before them, and drew near unto Jesus to kiss him. But Jesus said unto him, Judas, betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss? When they which were about him saw what would follow, they said unto him, Lord, shall we smite with the sword? And one of them smote the servant of the high priest, and cut off his right ear. And Jesus answered and said, Suffer ye thus far. And he touched his ear, and healed him" (vs. 47-51).

This man was one of His enemies, but the heart of the Lord Jesus went out to Him in compassion. Peter had made the same mistake that so many other servants of Christ make. We want to help men, to bring blessing to them; we want them to hear the word of God, and yet we go about things in such a crude way. We cut off their ears and yet expect them to hear us. I cannot imagine Peter going to that man and asking him if he had put his trust in the Lord Jesus Christ as his Saviour. I think Malchus would look at him and say, "You come to talk to me about that! You, the man who cut off my ear!"

We are often like that, and we hurt our own testimony. But our blessed, understanding Lord often corrects our failures; and so here you have the corrective touch. He reached forth His hand and touched the ear of Malchus and healed him in a moment. What a wonderful thing it is to realize that, after all, the final word is not with the servants of Christ but with the Master of the servants. He so often overrules our failures and our blunders and brings blessing out of that which otherwise would be a means of sorrow and disappointment.

Our last picture is found in Matthew's Gospel, chapter 8, verses 14 and 15:

"And when Jesus was come into Peter's house, he saw his wife's mother laid, and sick of a fever. And he touched her hand, and the fever left her: and she arose, and ministered unto them."

I think of this as the quieting touch. You know the restlessness of fever. I can imagine Peter's wife's mother there, tossing about upon that couch, so troubled, so distressed, probably with a terrible ache in her head and her nerves all upset and the fever burning in her body. Jesus came, and they said, "Mother is sick. Will you go in and see her?" and Jesus went in, and there she lay — troubled, distressed, tossing about. Jesus touched her hand and the fever left her.

Everything becomes quiet and restful when you feel the touch of His hand. Sometimes we Christians are just like Peter's wife's mother. We, too, become so feverish and so overwrought and so upset, and we get worried and anxious and perplexed, and instead of improving things, it only makes them worse. But when Jesus Himself comes, when you feel the touch of His hand, then all the distressing circumstances seem to disappear. "He touched her hand and the fever left her."

Do you know this blessed Saviour? Do you know the One of the life-giving touch and the touch of cleansing and assurance and the illuminating touch and the corrective touch and the restful, quieting touch? Do you know Him? He has said, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." If you have never come to Him before, won't you turn to Him now?

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