

The Hem of the Garment
(Excerpted from [Schoolmaster](#))
By Elder David Pyles

One of the peculiar provisions of the law was that all Jews were to have fringes on their garments. These were also called hems or borders. The specific commandment was:

Speak unto the children of Israel, and bid them that they make them fringes in the borders of their garments throughout their generations, and that they put upon the fringe of the borders a ribband of blue: And it shall be unto you for a fringe, that ye may look upon it, and remember all the commandments of the Lord, and do them; and that ye seek not after your own heart and your own eyes, after which ye use to go a whoring: That ye may remember, and do all my commandments, and be holy unto your God. I am the Lord your God, which brought you out of the land of Egypt, to be your God: I am the Lord your God. – Num 15:38-41

Hence, the fringe was to serve as a reminder of their debt of allegiance to God and to His law. The Bible does not explain the ribbon of blue, but the best theory is that blue was used to depict the divine and heavenly. The ribbon could therefore be representative of the fact that the only righteousness God will accept for admission to heaven is the imputed righteousness of the divine and heavenly Messiah. Even accepting this explanation, the general commandment was strange, particularly since it imposed a considerable burden, affecting millions of garments over hundreds of years. However, the motivation for the commandment became manifest approximately 1500 years later when Jesus Christ was walking on an unnamed street in an unnamed city of Israel. The event was of such importance that it was recorded in all of the synoptic gospels (Mt 9:18-22, Mk 5:22-34, Lk 8:40-48).

Jesus was then en route to heal a very sick girl of 12 years of age. The girl actually died before His arrival, but He resurrected her from the dead. There was also at that same time an older woman who had a humiliating infirmity of 12 years. It is perhaps no coincidence that she contracted her infirmity about the same time that the younger girl was born. The ailments of both were purposed to serve to the glory of God. The older woman, believing

that Jesus had power to heal her, resolved that she would quietly approach Him from behind and touch the hem of His garment. She felt that a mere touch would be sufficient.

The woman had multiple reasons for being unimposing and inconspicuous. The first was that Jesus was thronged by multitudes, so capturing His attention seemed nigh impossible. Second, the younger girl's malady would normally be considered of greater importance. Physicians nearly always prioritize the young over the old. The girl was also nigh to death. One would therefore assume that Jesus would be moving with great urgency and that He would be annoyed by any distractions or delays. Next, the woman had already spent her substance on physicians but with no good effects. She therefore had nothing left to pay, and any doctor who would presume to treat her stood nothing to gain apart from a probable blemish on his resume. Finally, her ailment was likely of a humiliating nature.

The plan of the woman worked wonderfully except for her intent to remain inconspicuous. She touched Jesus and was instantly healed, but He halted the throng and asked who it was that touched Him, claiming that He felt "*virtue*" going out from Him. His reaction will be better understood upon considering the symbolic meaning of the hem. It was a symbol of virtue and a reminder of the obligation to be virtuous before the Lord.

The symbolism in the woman's healing was both powerful and beautiful. Though millions of people are under the salvation and care of the Son of God, this does not limit His ability to care for them personally. Being the eternal and omnipotent God, He has no lack of time to attend to their needs and it is never necessary for Him to move with haste. Their needs are no challenge to Him. A mere touch will suffice. He is surely sovereign in the administration of His grace, but His saving power is such that He need not neglect one person in order to save another. Since He is the perfection of love and grace, people with the most humiliating sins and maladies can find healing in Him. He will mercifully take their case when all other physicians have failed. He requires no money and will provide what money can never buy.

The woman of course had to humbly bow to Him while reaching down for the hem of His garment, but in so doing, she became a

legendary beneficiary. On the other hand, her bowing would seem to be of little significance to Him. Whatever honor He receives from men bowing to Him would be comparable to the honor men perceive from the adoration of a mangy, tick-infested dog. Upon considering this, His humility appears even greater than hers.

After witnessing the miracle experienced by this woman, many others undertook to be healed by the same means, and they were accordingly blessed (Mt 14:35-36). The Bible gave little detail about these, but all synoptic gospels told of what happened to the dear woman.

Now God's earlier commandment concerning the hem of the garment had affected millions of garments over many hundreds of years. Countless hours were spent by countless seamstresses in sewing them. This raises the important question: Would God require all this effort over all these years to portend a fleeting moment that happened on a street of Israel many years ago? In my judgment, the answer a man gives to this question will show the depth of his understanding of the word of God. Before answering it, all readers should consider the enormous amount of Bible that was committed to telling the story of what happened in the space of a few hours on one day to one man who died on one mountain. These facts should give firm indication as to the true identity of the man who was on that mountain and who walked that street.

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