

A Theological Assessment of *θεραπεία* (Healing) of the Woman with the Issue of Blood in Luke 8:43-48 in the Nigerian Setting

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Abstract

Health is wellness and wholeness, while illness is imbalance and can result in pain and suffering. Consequently, achieving complete health means being healed of physical illness and being freed from any form of societal limitation such as poverty and psychological pain. Further, those who are healthy must experience physical wholeness and the absence of pain. Nevertheless, it is difficult to define health as there is “no consensus on what constitutes ‘complete health.’” The study focuses on the healing of the woman with the issue of blood in Luke 8:43-48 and its relevance in the Nigerian socio-religious setting and seeks to assess the compatibility of modern healing practices in Nigeria and healing mandate of Jesus Christ to preach and heal the sick. Through the use of hermeneutical and exegetical approaches, this study seeks to explore and assess the compatibility of healing in the Bible and modern healing practices in Nigerian society. Through the use of descriptive surveys and the interview technique, this study concludes that healing is seen as the act of divine intervention. The study concludes that healing results in salvation and recommends that the church must submit itself to the healing model as demonstrated in Luke's Gospel.

Keywords: *θεραπεία* (Therapeia), Healing, Healing Miracle, Salvation, Sickness

Introduction

The search for good health is a universal need that offers a fundamental foundation for the enjoyment of the blessings of life. In Western cultures, health is a cultural ideal as well as a personal aspiration that drives the need for healthcare as well as the development of alternative healing therapies and programs. But in addition to this cultural foundation for health and healing, it is more profoundly rooted in the salvation through the biblical message found in the Old and New Testaments, most specifically in the writings of Jesus Christ. The dimensions of health can range from physical strength, mental health, spiritual health, to social health. All these are profoundly linked to salvation through their theological frameworks, in spite of their inconformity with more universally recognized definitions by the World Health Organization or scientific definitions. Indeed, in Jesus' ministry, it can be noted that often it is the individual's faith that is the decisive factor in the healing process. This is because most instances of healing done by Jesus indicated that healing could very well occur through the individual's own personal faith.

A very apt example is found in the healing of the woman suffering from the issue of blood where healing came about through only the touch of Jesus' garment that symbolized a profound manifestation of strong faith (Alana, 2020: 92). This is the case in the given situation, which is the obvious demonstration of the difference which usually exists in the process of healing, whereby the natural process of healing is related to the body, while the process of spiritual healing is related to the person as a whole. The truth of the matter is that the process of healing is related to the body, the mind, and the spirit and can be carried out through natural and spiritual processes, which in any case represent the power of God as it relates to the creation process. According to Abogunrin (2018), many women experienced the miraculous touch of Jesus as depicted in the New Testament.

Exegesis of Woman with the Issue of Blood in Luke 8:43-48

The story of the woman with the flow of blood is found in all three Synoptics, that is, Matthew, Mark, and Luke, and thus it is evident that it holds immense value and is authentic. It is quite difficult to accept that the early Christian community would have invented the story of the woman receiving Jesus' public acknowledgment. Jesus gives the woman the title of "daughter" in all three Synoptics, which is an affectionate title filled with compassion, reiterating the woman's place within God's covenantal community and restoring her to her rightful place. Matthew and Luke give more details about the edge of Jesus' garment being touched, while it is his garment that is touched in Mark (Alana, 2020: 59-62). In the later manuscripts of Mark, this is found, but mostly it is considered to be an insertion from the influence of Matthew and Luke. Where the attribute was absent in some manuscripts of Matthew and Luke, it was considered the impact of omission and simplification by scribes (Wieland, 2014: 100). However, the condition of the woman did not change as a result of the efforts by medical experts, and she was ritually impure, as indicated in Lev. 15:27 LXX. Whatever she touched was rendered impure. She took a big risk in forcing her way through the crowd in order to touch Jesus' robe, as she went against social and religious norms (Dairo, 2018: 73).

It is believed by most scholars that due to Luke's incorporation of early traditions, which in most cases were linked to Peter, this incident is historical (Caird, 2014: 34). The intensity of her faith is clear; she believed that even if she touched Jesus' clothes, it would perform wonders on her (Sabin, 2023: 321-325). However, her personal faith soon became public. She openly professed her faith in Jesus in front of the crowd, and Jesus, in return, blessed her for her faithfulness by saying, "Daughter, your faith has made you whole (Luke 8:47). Go in peace." Not only did this prove her bodily cure, but she was made whole (Alana 2020: 98). Jesus' question to her, "Who touched me?" (Luke 8:45), gave her an opportunity to have her faith made public, turning her personal testimony into a public lesson. The final command to "go in peace" makes it clear that her cure is not only bodily but encompasses her whole (Dilley 2021: 59-62). The woman represented the marginalized societies. The woman was impoverished due to her illness; however, she believed that she could have been cured, but it was only a touch away (Wolfensohn, 2022: 26).

The gesture of touching the hem of the robe of Jesus is the gesture of role reversal, where the powerless drew strength from the powerful. This gesture broke the barriers of society and the notion that the power of salvation from God would be accessible through faith (Dube, 2020: 82). The woman, at the invitation of Jesus, came out, knelt, and confessed her action in the presence of everyone (verse 47). Her faith is manifested by her actions of reaching out and touching the robe of Jesus, as well as her reflective and bold plan of action. This situation also illustrates the fact that it is not contrary to the will of God to go against the norms of society. Despite her being classified as unclean, as defined by the laws and tradition of the Jews, she was able to overcome the cultural and religious differences in a very positive way, which ended in her getting healed (Dube, 2001: 112). This woman lost the prospect of getting married, economic support, and adequate medical attention due to her constant bleeding. Her physicians, be they competent or dishonest, failed her, and she became poor (Bloomberg, 2019: 55).

Regarding her social context, she was on the outskirts of society, like the Gerasene demoniac, who was also counted as one of the dead (v. 27). Though her touch was considered defiling, it was a gesture of her faith, despite the risk (Morris, 2019: 17). The brief ceasing of her bleeding signified the cure of her physical illness but was insufficient by far. The significance of her gesture is brought out by a reduplication of the verb "ἅπτομαι" ("to touch") in verses 44-47. Regarding her ritualistic context, her touch could be termed as defiling to Jesus. However, Jesus interpreted it as "the moment when the power of God flowed from me" (Ryle, 2017: 77). Jesus was rejected by the crowd in relation to any touch by them as a deliberate gesture (verses 44-45), what mattered was whether she was going to stay in the background in fear or come out in her faith. The disciples did not understand what was happening around them. "Master" was how Peter referred to Jesus, which signified respect and authority but did not signify any comprehension of his mission as yet. "Power" in Jesus' words again has its linkages to Luke 5:17-19, where "the Spirit of God acts through Jesus" (Boobyer, 2018: 56-60). There is no intimation of "magical power" here but of God's power through Jesus Christ. The words of Jesus: "Power has gone out from me" (Luke 8:46) bring out Jesus's divine power and his consciousness of it.

The trembling in the woman's hands, her need to hide herself, and finally, her confession reveal humility and the stigma that comes with marginalization (Ryrie, 2022: 100). It is not only that the woman showed initiative by reaching out to touch Jesus, but it is also that she was bold enough to confess before the crowd that is remarkable. The woman's testimony not only told the story, but it also explained it, and it showed the depth of her belief and that it was instantaneous healing (Dairo, 2018: 73). It was not until she made her confession that Jesus proclaimed that she was completely healed. While she was physically restored in private among the crowds, it was socially that she needed restoration. Jesus responded to that need by giving her a message of verification of her testimony, addressing her as 'daughter,' and restoring her to where she belonged within God's family. To be counted among them was no longer based on heritage (3:7-9), but on belief. The pronouncement of healing by Jesus removed any doubt regarding her status and restored her honor within the world (Dilley 2021: 59-62.).

Healing in the Christ Apostolic Church, Nigeria

Most people are drawn to the African Indigenous Churches because of illness, especially in the Christ Apostolic Church, and there are testimonies from members about the divine healings that take place. In some cases, people are brought to the C.A.C. when medical or traditional methods of healing fail. The church sets aside special days, specifically Wednesdays and Fridays, to concentrate on healings, but in most churches, healings take place on a daily basis. In some cases, people who need healings are allowed to remain in the church premises, such as in Pastorium, while the healing takes place. There are "faith homes" in some of the churches that act as spiritual clinics and maternity. According to Cassey (2024), "the C.A.C does not rely on Western medicine and healing through rituals such as green water and banana leaves. Rather, healing is performed through spiritual means."

This healing takes the form of confession of sins, because of the belief in the possibility of illnesses being caused by the believer's own sins or spiritual attacks. Laying of hands, drinking or washing in sanctified water, anointing in olive oil, and fervent praying were the healing modalities (Achebe, 2019: 60). This praying takes the form of fervent appeals such as: "In the name of Jesus, sickness, come out of this body!" Jesus' blood or power or "Ni Agbara Eje Jesu" can then easily come in. "Sanctified water can also serve as a protective shield against evil or being poisoned." Olasebikan (2023), observes thus: "the forceful style of praying seems at times to constitute an attempt to force God's hand. Yet some people feel that Christians should not reject medical assistance; the C.A.C insists on divine healing because it is biblically true and insists that faith alone can achieve healing."

Conclusion

Miracles are a representation of God's intervention that transcends the laws of nature. Healing miracles performed by Jesus, his disciples, and even today are not limited to a particular group of people; instead, they are available to all. Miracles, both in a biblical context as well as in a contemporary Nigerian scenario, have always had a great impact on conversions, the growth of the church, as well as the change that occurs within society. Miracles are a very valuable means of evangelism; however, miracles should never become the central theme of revivals as well as meetings for worship (Nineham, 2015:116). The central aim always is soul healing that brings

everlasting peace as well as a reconnection with God, which is the real source of miracles. Jesus' miracles, like all real miracles, represent God's power and are never the product of human effort or human capability. There is a possibility that people may become the object of idol worship if miracles become the central theme; therefore, all Christians and church leaders must never forget that their central aim is to seek God's kingdom above all things (Howard, 2017: 362-367).

Recommendations

- a. The healing ministry must maintain its prominent position within the proclamation of the Gospel and a strong emphasis must be placed by the Church upon the practice of healing as modeled by Jesus Christ.
- b. Financial resources should be invested in the mission hospitals to make them effective. The Church should set a moral standard and should play a leading role in making healthcare accessible to everybody, just as the missionaries had done in the past.
- c. The government should focus on upgrading current health facilities to meet the health needs of the people while building new health facilities based on what people want.

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