

Mt 9:12

Preached at Zoar Chapel, Great Alie Street, London, on Thursday evening, July 11, 1844

“They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick.”- Mt 9:12

The way in which the Lord, in the days of His flesh, dealt with cavillers and critics is very remarkable. He did not convert, but confound them. He did not appeal to anything spiritual in them; for they had no spiritual understanding in the things of God; but He silenced them by addressing Himself to their natural consciences.

We have one or two remarkable examples of this nature. On one occasion, for instance, we read, that the “Pharisees took counsel how they might entangle him in his talk. And they sent unto him their disciples with the Herodians, saying Master, we know that thou art true, and teachest the way of God in truth, neither carest thou for any man; for thou regardest not the person of men. Tell us, therefore, What thinkest thou? Is it lawful to give tribute unto Caesar, or not?” Here was a snare laid for His feet, a dilemma in which they thought they had placed Him. Now, suppose He had said, “It was not lawful to pay tribute unto Caesar,” then they would have accused Him to the Roman governor as preaching high treason. And suppose He had said, “It was lawful to pay tribute to Caesar,” then they would have asked, “How He, as a Jew, and professing obedience to the law, could command subservience to a foreign prince? when Moses had expressly commanded, ‘One from among thy brethren shalt thou set king over thee: thou mayest not set a stranger over thee, which is not thy brother.’” De 17:15.

But how did the Lord meet this cavil, and extricate Himself from this dilemma? He asked them to show Him the tribute-money; and when they had brought it unto Him, He said, “Whose is this image and superscription?” They were compelled to answer ‘Caesar’s.’ “Then saith he unto them, Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar’s; and unto God the things that are God’s.” Mt 22:16-21 The very fact of the money, bearing Caesar’s

image and superscription, circulating among them, was an unanswerable proof of their subjection to the Roman yoke, and that therefore it was lawful to pay tribute.

Again, on another occasion [Joh 8:3](#), we read, that “the scribes and Pharisees brought unto him a woman taken in adultery;” and they tried to entangle Him by enquiring what was to be done with her. “Master,” paying Him all due respect, said they, “Moses in the law commanded us that such should be stoned; but what sayest thou?” Here was a dilemma they thought to place the Lord in. Suppose He had said, “The woman ought to be stoned;” then they would have accused Him before the Roman governor of setting up the Jewish in opposition to the Roman law; the power of life and death being in the hands of the Roman governor only. And if He had said, “She ought not to be stoned;” they would have directly asked Him, “How could this be consistent with the law given by Moses?” But how wisely He met this difficulty, and took “the wise in their own craftiness,” by saying, “He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her.” [Joh 8:7](#) By thus appealing to their natural consciences, He caught them in their own net, and overwhelmed them with confusion.

The text, and the verses connected with it, afford another instance of the same nature. “And it came to pass, as Jesus sat at meat in the house, behold, many publicans and sinners came and sat down with him and his disciples. And when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto his disciples, Why eateth your Master with publicans and sinners?” These self-righteous Pharisees were always on the watch to find, if possible, something to condemn the Lord with. And here they professed their pious astonishment, that so holy a man as He claimed to be, could associate with such vile, ungodly wretches. “For do we not judge,” they would insinuate, “of a man by the company that he keeps? And must not a man love and practice sin who keeps company with sinners?” But how did the Lord disentangle Himself from this net that they were seeking to spread for his feet? He met their cavil thus, “They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick.” He appealed to their own sense and reason, and to their natural consciences. It was as though He had said, “Where should a physician be? Is it not with the sick in the hospital? Are not the sick wards his peculiar place and province, and are not diseased patients the very persons he is called to associate with and take care of? Is the physician necessarily contaminated by the disease that he cures? How can he heal the sickness, if he do not visit the sick?” By thus appealing to their reason and conscience, He

silenced and confounded them. Now, this is an example well worthy of our imitation.

We are sometimes thrown into the way of scoffers, and of persons who will cavil even at the great foundation truths of divine revelation. With such persons there is no use attempting to argue the question on spiritual grounds; for they have no spiritual ears to hear, no spiritual eyes to see, no spiritual heart to fall under the power of truth. To do so is to throw pearls before swine. If the Lord enable us, the best way is to appeal to their natural consciences; and, as shortly as possible, without entering into the details of truth, to silence them by putting before them something which they themselves cannot deny.

But the words of the text have a much higher sense than a mere appeal to natural conscience or human reason. They contain a gospel truth, far deeper and higher than reason can comprehend, and one that will last as long as the world endures. “They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick.”

We find, in the text, two characters spoken of, and these put in a distinct opposition to, and contrast with, each other the “whole,” and the “sick.” And as the two characters are distinct in themselves, so their case is distinct also; the case of the one being that he “needs not,” and the case of the other that he needs “a physician.” And thus, if the Lord enable me by His blessed Spirit experimentally to trace out this evening who are “the whole,” and who are “the sick;” and shew why the one “needs not,” and why the other needs “a physician,” it may be for our profit, and may also, if God so grant, be to His own glory.

I.-Let us look, then, at the character pointed out in the text by the expression, “the whole.” I need scarcely say, that the word naturally means a person healthy, strong, and vigorous; one untainted by sickness or disease; one in all the enjoyment of robust health, without any constitutional ailment or bodily affliction. Now it is a truth, naturally, that such persons, “need not a physician.” They are not in circumstances to require such aid; their vigorous health, their robust constitution, their freedom from all disease, give them perfect liberty to dispense with the services of medical skill. From this comparison we may easily gather who are “the whole,” in a spiritual sense. Those who have never received any wound in their conscience, who have

never felt sick unto death, who have never groaned and suffered under the disease of sin.

But who are these hearty and healthy people? All men in a state of unregeneracy; all in whose hearts the Spirit of God has not begun His quickening work. These are called “whole,” not as really and actually free from taint or infection; for in the sight of God they are one mass of disease; but they are called “whole” in the text, because they feel and know nothing, spiritually and experimentally, of sickness. They are not healthy in the sight of God, but in their own sight; for “their eyes stand out with fatness,” and they are not “plagued with sickness like other men.” [Ps 73:5,7](#)

If we look a little more closely at these characters, we shall find them divided into two grand classes: those dead in sin, and those dead in a profession. As never plagued with the sickness of sin, both of these characters may be said to be “whole.”

Look, for instance, at men generally; say, those you have daily to associate with, whose conscience God has not touched with His finger. Is there any sigh, any cry, any groan, any sorrow for sin ever manifested by them? Are they not light, trifling, and frivolous; or, if staid and sober, altogether buried in the things of time and sense? Do you ever witness anything in them that shews they have the least concern for their immortal souls? Are they not evidently dead in sin -so dead as not to have one thought for the future, one solemn feeling of eternity? And is there not a large class of professors, who are as dead in formality as the others in transgression, though they may have a name to live? But what is the grand distinguishing mark of both? Is it not that they are “whole?” They have never felt any inward sickness or running sore; they have never been wounded by the arrows of God shot into their conscience; they have never had the ill-conditioned ulcers and deep abscesses of human nature laid open by the keen dissecting knife of the great Anatomist; nor have they ever been brought down to sigh and groan under a body of sin and death. “Their strength is firm.” Their “face is covered with fatness, and the collops of fat are on their flanks;” their “breasts are full of milk, and their bones are moistened with marrow.” [Ps 73:4; Job 15:27; 21:24](#)

Now, however heady, high-minded, presumptuous persons may despise the groans and sighs of God’s sin-sick people, and the feeling acquaintance that each rightly- taught man has with his own sore, and his own grief; or whatever ridicule may be poured out upon the trials which God’s children

experience when the internal plague of corruption is felt, it is a solemn truth, in spite of all contempt or ridicule, that “the whole need not a physician.” And it is equally true, let them speak of Christ as much as they may, that there can be no spiritual communion with the great Physician, Jehovah-rophi, unless there be some inward wound or sickness of soul felt, so as to make them desire healing from His blessed hands. “The whole need not a physician;” they want no visits from Jesus, no smile from His loving countenance, no balm from His tender hands, no cure from His gracious lips. They may know from the Bible that there is such a Person as Christ, just as a healthy man may know that some celebrated physician lives in such a street; but as to any personal application to Him, any sighing at His gracious footstool, any shewing before Him their sickness, any laying down their broken bones or bruised consciences at His door, they can know nothing of it, because they are “whole.” Still less can they know the efficacy of His balmy blood sprinkled on their conscience; still less the spiritual experience contained in those words, “He maketh sore, and bindeth up; he woundeth, and his hands make whole” [Job 5:18](#); “Who healeth all thy diseases.” [Ps 103:3](#) And how can those who despise or ridicule all experience, know any thing spiritually of Jesus? For they are “whole;” and being “whole” they “need not a physician.” Now you that make a profession, do look at this matter; it concerns your immortal souls. Did you ever feel sickness of heart and wounds in your conscience? Did you ever groan under the felt malady of sin? Did you ever apply to, and tell out your wants before the great Physician? Did you ever look to and hang upon His balmy blood as cleansing from all sin? And have you ever felt His hands dealing gently with you, binding up your wounds, and pouring into them the healing wine and oil of gospel grace?

Now, I am sure of this, if you have walked in this path, you will never ridicule the experience of God’s people, stigmatize it as “corruption,” and heap upon it all the contempt which enmity can devise. You will never despise the groans of God’s people, if you were ever in the same situation, or if your soul ever passed through a similar experience.

Let me illustrate this by appealing to your natural feeling. Suppose that some years back you had gone through some operation, say, the amputation of a limb; and as you pass by the hospital, in which you yourself once had been, you were to hear the piercing shriek of some poor sufferer stretched on the operating table: would you ridicule and laugh at his cries? Would you not remember that you yourself once lay there in agony? Or, suppose that the Lord had afflicted you in times past with insanity, and afterwards mercifully

delivered you from the asylum. But should you pass by St. Luke's, and hear the ravings and shoutings of some unhappy inmate, would you laugh and jeer, or would you pity and sympathize? So spiritually, if a man has ever known an inward wound made in his conscience by the entrance of the two-edged sword, and afterwards enjoyed health and cure, will he pour contempt on those who are walking in the same path in which he himself once travelled? Depend upon it, when a man ridicules and despises the afflictions of God's people, it is a bad sign, a black mark against him; it strongly looks as though he had never himself passed through the same experience, and had never known similar exercises.

II. But let us leave these persons, and come to something more suitable to God's living family; and that is, to look a little at the character spoken of under the term "sick." "The whole need not a physician, but they that be "sick."

1. No one, as I before observed, knows anything spiritually and experimentally of soul sickness, until God the Spirit quickens him from a death in sin. Then for the first time a wound is made in his conscience by an arrow shot from the bow of the Almighty. Now spiritually, as well as naturally, when a man is groaning and languishing under a wound, will he not anxiously desire a surgeon to bind it up? Let a man meet with what is called an accident; let him fall from a ladder, or be run over by a carriage. Will not the bystanders gather together in a moment, and take him off to a hospital? And even the poor man himself, if he retain his senses, is glad to be taken thither as soon as possible. But what has made the labourer, who just before was standing careless upon the scaffold, now all pale and trembling upon a shutter, crying to be taken to the surgeon? Is it not the broken rib or fractured limb that in a moment has produced the change? So spiritually, there was a time when the vessel of mercy ridiculed spiritual things, cared for neither heaven nor hell, nor had one pang of concern about his immortal state; but the wound came, the bones were broken, distress of mind followed, and the soul pined and languished away, fearing the "second death." But no sooner was this felt, than a Physician was wanted, one able and willing to heal. At first, perhaps, through ignorance, he looked out and sought after "physicians of no value," running hither and thither for ease, and not seeking only to the Lord. But, sooner or later, being baffled in all his attempts to find relief from human help, he is brought to apply to "Jehovah that healeth thee" [Ex 15:26](#); and finds there is "balm in Gilead," and a "physician there."

2. But the Lord's people are not merely wounded by the arrows of God sticking in their conscience; they have also to be led into the deep depravity of their fallen nature, the desperate wickedness of their evil heart. We may class spiritual patients under two heads; those that are wounded and need the surgeon, and those that are sick and need the physician. And generally speaking, we need the first before the second, and have to go to the surgery before we go to the dispensary. Thus usually, we know but little of our dreadful depravity, when the Lord first takes us in hand; the fountains of the great deep are not then broken up; the desperate unbelief, enmity, rebellion, perverseness, pride, hypocrisy, uncleanness, and all the other vile corruptions of our heart are not at first opened up and brought to light. But as the Lord leads the soul on, He opens up by degrees the desperate corruption and depravity of our nature, and unfolds the hidden evils of our heart, which before were covered from our view. It is with us as it was with the Prophet. The Lord led him into one chamber after another; and when his astonishment increased at what he saw there, He said unto him, "Turn thee yet again, and thou shalt see greater abominations than these." [Eze 8:15](#) But as the Lord leads us into a knowledge of our depravity, He makes us to feel sick at heart, and thus we come into the state of feeling described by the prophet Isaiah: "The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores." [Isa 1:5-6](#) And as we are led into a knowledge of our sinfulness, and groan under it, we feel more and more a burden of shame and sorrow on account of it; and the more deeply and daily that this is felt, the more deeply and daily do we find our need of the great Physician.

All the Lord's dealings with our souls are that He may exalt His dear Son in our hearts, that we may have all the shame, and Jesus all the glory; and therefore, all this deep and daily discovery of our depravity is eventually to bring greater glory to the Son of God. The deeper we sink into shame and guilt, under the knowledge of the depravity of our nature, the more do we seek unto, feel the power, and prize the love, blood, grace, and preciousness of the Lord Jesus. Every fresh discovery of our vile nature, when the Lord is pleased to bring the savour of Jesus' name, like the ointment poured forth, into the conscience, serves only instrumentally to increase our faith and affection towards Him; and thus the deeper we sink in self, the higher the Lord Jesus rises in our soul's admiration and adoration.

3. But to make us more and more dependent upon Jesus, the Lord, by His teachings, leads us usually into a knowledge of our backsliding and idolatrous

nature. And O, what a backsliding and idolatrous heart do we carry in our bosom, and how perpetually does it make us sigh and groan! Is there anything too vile for our depraved nature not to lust after? Is there anything too base which our hearts will not imagine? Are there any puddles, which, if God left us to ourselves, we should not grovel in? As we are brought more to feel the workings of this base backsliding heart, and have the burden of it more laid upon our conscience, the more sick are we at heart, and the more is the disease felt to be in the very vitals. We sigh and groan because we are so vile: for we would be far otherwise. In our right mind, we would be in the fear of the Lord all the day long, and would never do a single thing inconsistent with the precepts of the gospel; we would never say a word that the Lord would disapprove of; would always walk in faith, hope, and love; and would continually be spiritual and heavenly-minded. But alas, this is what we cannot attain unto. Our eye is caught by every passing vanity, our carnal minds rove after forbidden things, and our vile heart will still commit villainy. And as the conscience is made tender and if it be not so, the fear of God is not there, and as the soul is led into a deeper acquaintance with the spirituality of God's character and the purity of His nature, and as a deeper and clearer knowledge of Jesus in all His covenant relationship is gained, the more it is felt to be an evil and bitter thing to depart from "the Fountain of living waters."

Some people seem to think many allowances ought to be made. "They have business," they say, "to attend to, and their daily occupations to follow; and they are sure they could not transact their business if their hearts were not in it, nor carry on the necessary dealings in trade, or pursue their worldly calling, if their minds were not fully in them." They argue that they could not be bustling trades-men, nor faithful servants, were their hearts in heaven. But do they never feel guilt, and never groan and cry because they are thus buried in the world? Is there no gathering up of their heart's affections heavenward sometimes from their business? The merchant in his countinghouse, the tradesman behind the counter, or the servant at his work-have they no secret, solemn moments when their hearts go up after Jesus? Are there no inward sighs and groans to the Lord, that He would bless, keep, and water their soul from time to time by the dew of His Spirit? Or can your hearts be buried in the world well nigh all your waking hours? Can you be as carnal and as thoughtless as the servants of Satan who are engaged in the same occupation with yourself? and never be cut to the quick at your carnality, never pour out one sigh, nor groan out your trouble before God?

I believe, from soul experience, that a backsliding heart and an idolatrous nature, is one of the greatest troubles a child of God can have. All his worldly trials, heavy as they may be, are light compared to this. That he should daily, and sometimes hourly, seek pleasure and gratification in the things of time and sense; and should perpetually turn away from all things spiritual and heavenly, gives him more trouble than all his other trials put together. But what good comes out of all this soul exercise? What spiritual profit springs from a sense of our diseased nature and depraved appetite? Such need the Physician. And the deeper they sink into soul sickness, and the more sensible they are of the plague of their hearts, the more do they prize and want to realize the healing remedies which this great and good Physician has to bestow.

4. But there is, after all, one class only of persons that this great Physician admits as patients. In this metropolis, you know, there are hospitals for different diseases; and a man afflicted with one disease must not go to an infirmary intended for another. The consumptive patient must go to the hospital for diseases of the chest; the man suffering from typhus fever must be taken to the fever hospital: and the sufferer from inflamed eyes must go to the Ophthalmic institution. So spiritually, the Lord's Hospital, "Christ's Hospital," if I may use the expression without irreverence, is only for incurables; and till every other hospital refuses us admission, or turns us out as hopeless cases, the Lord does not admit us as patients. It is like a man with a fever going for admittance to the consumptive hospital. They would say, "You are not the patient for us; persons with your disease are not admitted here." So spiritually, the Lord's dispensary is only for incurables, whom every other hospital rejects; and as long as we, like Asa, seek to other physicians, we are not admitted into His sick wards.

Look at the woman who had spent all her living upon physicians, and got worse instead of better. Was it not her incurable disease that instrumentally caused her to seek and find health and cure from the hem of Jesus' garment? And it is the Lord's purpose to bring all His people into the same spot of being incurable by human power or help. We may illustrate this, by supposing there were in this city a hospital for incurables. If a patient came for admittance who was not very ill, the physician would say to him, "You are not bad enough for admittance here; you are not sufficiently ill; we may make an out-door patient of you; but at present there is no room for you. When the disease lays greater hold upon you, then we can admit you." And so spiritually, as long as a man has only a trifling ailment, is only slightly wounded, and the disease is

not deeply spread, there is no admission for him to the benefits of Christ's blood.

Look at the leper under the law. [Le 13](#) Had he not to go before the priest, whose province it was to examine "the rising, the scab, or bright spot?" And was not this one of the marks of leprosy, that it "spread much abroad in the skin," and "in sight was deeper than the skin?" But the priest was not to receive him immediately as a leper: he was to shut him up seven days, and wait till it was a clear case of leprosy, which was known by its deepening and spreading. The leprosy was an incurable disease. So experimentally, till the disease of sin gets so desperate as to be past the help of all human skill, past our own healing, and all healing from others, we cannot seek unto, and I am sure we cannot find, the great Physician. A great part, an important part of the Spirit's work, is to bring men into this state; for we read, "The Lord killeth, and maketh alive; he bringeth down to the grave, and bringeth up." [1Sa 2:6-7](#) And what is "to kill," and "bring down to the grave," but to render a man incurable? Not that God is the author of sin; God forbid. He does not work sin in us, but discovers it as already there; and shews us what we are, by bringing light and life into the conscience; so that in His light we see, and in His life we feel, and groan over the malady of sin thus made manifest.

Now many of God's people are on the way to this free hospital; but they are not admissible yet; not deeply sunk enough into the disease yet; it has not yet laid hold of their vitals, not yet spread its deep roots into their conscience. Like the first commencement of a cancer, or of a consumption, the symptoms may be discoverable, but the disease has as yet not spread into the whole constitution. But like the two fatal diseases I have named, the felt malady of sin will spread and extend until the soul becomes incurable: and the more this is seen and experienced, the more urgently will a man seek, and the sooner will he find, the great Physician. But O, how nature shrinks from this! What a death-blow it would be for a patient in a decline to be told that he is not bad enough yet for the consumptive hospital. The physician might say, "I see the symptoms; I mark the hectic flush, the labouring breath, the hacking cough; but you are not bad enough yet: a few weeks or months will make you admissible" What a death-blow to him. But if according to the common phrase, "you must be worse before you are better," the remedies used at this point were to be the means of healing the patient, instead of its being a death-blow from the physician, it would be the first buddings of a hope of cure.

O how the soul shrinks from going more deeply into the felt malady of sin! The little it has known of it has made it so sick and faint, that it dreads its spreading more and more, and becoming more and more incurable. But if the more deeply we sink into a knowledge of the disease the more we prize and value the great Physician, then may we not say, “Welcome disease, welcome pain, welcome sickness, if it be but the preparation for us to receive Jesus in all His fulness and covenant characters.” But this is a way quite contrary to sense and reason, and utterly distinct from anything which nature would suggest as true or desirable. We cannot think that the way to make us prize Jesus is to get deeper and deeper into the filth and guilt of discovered sin, and that we must lie in our blood, that the Lord may come down to us, and spread His skirt over us, enter into covenant with us, and call us His. [Eze 16:8](#)

This great Physician has His eye upon all His patients and sees in whom the malady is just beginning, in whom it is progressing, and in whom it is fast reaching the incurable point, and only waiting for Him to stretch forth His hand to cure. The patient often knows not the nature of his own disease; but the great Physician has His eyes on every one of His patients; on those who are just feeling their sickness, and on those who are dying without His healing balm. The first He deepens, and the latter He cures. But O, how tenderly does He deal with every class of His patients! And even if He deepens the wounds of some, however painful, it is for their profit; for “Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him.” [Ps 103:13](#)

III.-But what are His remedies? For this great Physician must suit the remedy to the malady.

1. One remedy, then, and that perhaps the only one, may be to take off a diseased limb. We may have a scrofulous knee; and the only remedy is, to take the limb off to keep us from dying. You may have some corruption, some lust, some besetting sin, that, like a diseased limb, is gradually draining away your spiritual health, and making such havoc with your constitution, that you must die, unless the limb be amputated, unless the idol be removed. It may be even your money, or good name, or something which you hold near and dear, and can no more willingly part with than your leg or your arm; and yet it must be amputated that your life may be saved. The skilful operator, we know, in a hospital will not spare the patient for his crying; nay his very tenderness directs him to make a deeper incision, and to wield the knife with a firmer hand. So this great Physician, in proportion to His skill and tenderness, will

amputate with a firmer hand the diseased limb which is draining away our spiritual strength.

2. Or, as a part of His office as the Physician of the soul, He may have to handle our sores. How we shrink, naturally, when the surgeon puts his hand on a tender spot, and presses it to ascertain where the disease lies; and so, when the Lord puts His finger on some sore place in the conscience, some backsliding, some inconsistency, committed perhaps years ago, -how the soul winces from the touch! And, I believe, could I thoroughly ransack the conscience of each living soul before me, there would be something of which you were deeply ashamed before God, some secret sin, past or present, which when the Lord puts His finger on it, and brings it under the light of His countenance, makes you wince under the pressure of His hand. But it is needful to have it pressed, that it may be probed, in order to be thoroughly healed. How often is it with God's people, as the Lord complains, by the Prophet, "They have healed the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly." [Jer 6:14](#) Sin has been passed over and thought little of; but the Lord, sooner or later, laying His hand on the conscience, brings it to light, and makes the soul feel the guilt and shame of it, before He manifestly pardons it.

3. But this great Physician has balm also to apply, as well as limbs to amputate, and wounds to press. What balm is this? It is that "blood which cleanseth from all sin." "Behold," He says, "I will bring it health and cure, and I will cure them, and will reveal unto them the abundance of peace and truth." [Jer 33:6](#) This is the "blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel;" which is the only God-appointed remedy for a guilty conscience; as the Holy Ghost testifies, "For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: how much more shall the blood of Christ, who, through the eternal Spirit, offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" The Lord will not suffer His people to rest upon any other remedy than this. There are many who rest in doctrines, or church membership, or consistency of life, or zealous exertions for what they consider truth; but the Lord will never let any of His own children rest upon anything save, an experimental knowledge of "the blood of sprinkling," the precious blood of the Son of God. And if a man can rest upon anything else but this, it shews that God the Spirit has not yet taught him either his malady, or the only remedy provided for sin-sick souls.

Those, then, “that are sick” need a Physician. It is not with them a matter of speculation. I might read in the “Court Guide” the names and residences of all the physicians in the metropolis; but that would not profit me if I were labouring under disease. So men may read in the Bible of the offices and titles of Christ, of the healing virtue of His blood, the justifying power of His righteousness, and the saving efficacy of His intercession; but it is applying to and receiving benefit from His healing hands which can alone endear Him to us as the great Physician. A man may pass by a chemist’s shop, and see the bottles of medicine in the window, may read the labels, and even theoretically know their use; but having recourse to the remedies will alone profit one in sick circumstances, or afflicted with bodily disease. And so spiritually: whenever soul sickness is opened up in our conscience, and whenever the malady is felt and groaned under, there will be a needing of the great Physician. Who and what Jesus is will be no barren speculation then. His Person will not be a mere doctrine floating in the brain; His blood will not be a mere theory, His righteousness merely an article of creed, and His dying love but a stone in a sound Calvinistic arch. There will be something deeper, something more abiding, something more powerful than names, notions, and theories to the sin-sick soul; and the more it needs the Physician, the more it will apply to Him.

This blessed Physician heals “without money and without price;” He never demands a fee for His wondrous cures; nor did He ever turn away one that lay languishing at His door, that felt his sickness, or pined at His feet after a manifestation of His healing blood applied to his conscience with almighty power. All His covenant characters, all the sympathizing tenderness of His bosom, all His almighty power, all His everlasting love, all that He is and has as God-Man, are all enlisted on behalf of His poor and needy family.

You are languishing, say, under sickness of soul, and feel the plague of a wretched heart, a depraved nature, a vile body of sin and death, and a corrupt imagination. You are afflicted with every disease. You have palsy, to weaken all your powers; you have consumption, to drain up your very vitals; you have fever, quickening your pulse after evil and inflaming your base lusts; you have lethargy, so that you cannot move forward a step in the Lord’s way. Your heart is diseased; your appetite depraved; your knees are faint; and your hands hang down. In fact, there is scarcely a disease known to the physician, of which we have not spiritually the anti-type in our vile nature; with this striking difference, that we do not usually suffer in our body from more than one disease at a time, but in our soul from all. But, you say, your malady is

such as none but yourself have experienced. Yet does it not say, “The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint?” and surely that includes every disease; for if the whole “head” and “heart,” all the intellectual powers of the one, and all the feelings and affections of the other, are sick and faint, that surely must include all.

Why should you, then, perish from your diseases? Is it for want of power in the great Physician? Is it for want of will? Does not He combine in Himself these two qualifications? “O,” say you, “I believe He has the power, for my conscience has received the truth, that He is God as well as man; but I dare not say He has the will.” He has the will, for He has made you willing to be cured; and if you are willing to be cured, you are one of His people; for this is one of their characters, “Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power.” [Ps 110:3](#) Well then, He has both power and will, and has in the exercise of both, healed thousands of diseases and thousands of patients, and never turned away one that came unto Him. Then, why despair, sin-sick soul? “Because my heart is so corrupt,” you reply; “because my imagination is so depraved, my will so rebellious, my affections so earthly, and my nature such a sink of sin.” It is so; far deeper than you or I can know, far worse than you or I can feel. It is so. But shall that be a reason why you should die in your sickness? It is rather the very reason why you should hope.

Now, if you were “whole;” if you had no sickness; no pain, no ailment, no languishing, no pining away, no nightly groans, no daily sighs, you would not want a Physician; you would be whole-hearted, and could do without Jesus. This is your very mercy, that you feel your sickness and disease; and that it is incurable by all that you have yet done, or think of doing. This very incurability is the very reason that makes you a fit patient for this great Physician. The Lord sees in all His people this incurability; His eye is upon them all for good; His heart overflows with love and compassion; and, if I may use the expression, He tenderly desires to stretch out His hand to heal.

Let me ask you two questions. Search the records of the New Testament. Look at the acts of Jesus.

1. Did you ever know a patient to be sent away uncured?
2. Did you ever know any saved but an incurable? Did not the Lord give eyes to some that were born blind? Were not they incurable? Did He not unstop the ears and loose the tongue of those who were deaf and dumb? Were they

not incurable? Did He not heal the woman of her disease that had suffered so many years? Was not she incurable? Did He not heal the man at the pool of Bethesda? Was not he incurable? Did He not heal the ten lepers? And were not they incurable? Can you find any disease which He healed that was not incurable? If they were not incurable, would not His power have fallen short in point of manifestation? Would not His numerous enemies have said, it was all collusion or deception?

And can you find that He anywhere said to those diseased sufferers that cast themselves at His feet, that they were first to do something for themselves, and begin the cure which He would then complete? Or can you find that any were sent away, without being made perfectly whole? He healed all their maladies in a moment, by one glance of His eye, one touch of His hand. Has His power ceased? Does not the same compassionate heart beat in His bosom? Is He not, still “mighty to save?” “God over all, blessed for ever?” [Ro 9:5](#) And will He disappoint any poor soul now whom He has made to feel his own sickness and his own sore? He cannot do it; He would deny Himself if He did; and “He cannot deny Himself,” for “He abideth faithful.”

But how many of God’s poor needy children have many years of sickness to pass over their head before they feel the balm of His atoning blood on their conscience! And why is this? That they may become more incurable if I may use such an expression and sink deeper and deeper into the sense and feeling that they cannot cure, comfort, bless, or save their own souls. And when they at length are brought here, the Lord will appear for them, that they may know His power, and that He alone may have all the glory. Thus, while he sends away all the “whole,” and does not vouchsafe them a look, He bestows His compassion and love on those that are “sick.” And all to redound to the glory of Jehovah, who, as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, three Persons in one undivided Godhead, deserves the praise, adoration, and thanksgiving of His redeemed and justified church now and for ever.