

# The Characters of the Healthy and Sick, in a Spiritual Sense, Considered and Contrasted

by Samuel Davies

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*The sermon contrasts the characteristics of the 'healthy' and 'sick' in a spiritual sense, highlighting the need for a Savior and the difference between those who are unconcerned and insensible of their disease, and those who are deeply affected and anxious about their condition.*

**Scripture:** Matthew 9:12, Mark 2:17, Luke 5:31, Luke 19:10, James 5:16

**Topics:** "Spiritual Health", "Repentance"

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## Description

Samuel Davies preaches about the importance of recognizing our spiritual sickness and the need for Jesus Christ as the divine Physician to heal our souls. He contrasts the attitudes of those who are spiritually healthy, yet unaware of their need for a Savior, with those who are spiritually sick, deeply aware of their sinfulness and eager for healing. Davies emphasizes the necessity of being like the sick souls who eagerly seek Jesus, submit to His prescriptions, and diligently use the means of grace for their recovery, contrasting them with the healthy-hearted sinners who neglect the Physician and remain in their spiritual pride and indifference.

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## Transcript

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"It is not the healthy who need a physician--but those who are sick." Matthew 9:12

There is no article of faith more certain than that Jesus Christ is an all-sufficient and most willing Savior, "able to save to the uttermost, all who come unto God through him," and that "all who come unto him--he will never cast out." Those who entrust their souls in his hands he keeps, and none of them is lost. It is also certain that all the guilty sons of Adam stand in the most absolute need of him: in vain do they look for salvation in any other. Without him, they are undone forever: and without him, their very existence becomes a curse, and their immortality but the duration of their misery. The disease of sin has so deeply infected their souls, that none but this divine Physician can heal them.

Since this is the case, who would not expect that Jesus would be universally the darling of mankind? Who would not expect that as many as are wounded, and just perishing of their wounds--would all earnestly apply to this Physician, and seek relief from him upon any terms? Who would suspect there should be so much as one heart cold and disaffected towards him? Must not all love and desire him, since all need him so extremely, and since he is so completely qualified to be their deliverer?

But, alas! notwithstanding such favorable presumptions from the nature of the thing, it is a most notorious fact that this divine Physician is but little regarded in our dying world. This all-sufficient and willing Savior is generally neglected by perishing sinners. There are thousands among us who have no affectionate thoughts of him, no eager longings after him, they exert no vigorous endeavors to obtain a saving interest in him, nor are they tenderly solicitous about it. They indeed profess his religion, and call themselves Christians after his name: they pay him the compliment of a bended knee, and now and then perform the external duties of religion, and thus have high hopes they shall be saved through him. But as to their hearts and affections, he has no share there: these are reserved for the world, which, in practical estimation, they prefer to him, whatever they profess.

Now whence is this strange and shocking phenomenon in the rational world? Whence is it, that the dying are careless about a Physician? That a Deliverer is neglected by those who are perishing? The true reason we may find in my text, "It is not the healthy who need a physician--but those who are sick." That is, "those who imagine themselves well, however disordered they are in reality, do not feel their need of a physician, and therefore will not apply to him; but those who feel themselves sick, will eagerly apply to him, and put themselves under his care."

This is the answer of Christ to the proud caviling Pharisees, who censured his free conversation with publicans and sinners, at an entertainment which Matthew had prepared for him. The publicans were a sort of tax collectors among the Jews, appointed by the Romans, whose tributaries they then were, to collect the levies or duties imposed by the government. They were generally people of bad morals, and particularly given to rapine and extortion in raising the taxes. On this account they were particularly hated by the Jews, especially by the strict sect of Pharisees. Their very office would have rendered them odious, even though they had behaved well in it; for it was a public badge of the slavery of the Jews to the Romans; which, to a people so proud and so fond of liberty as the Jews, was a mortification they could not patiently bear. The publicans, therefore, were objects of general contempt and abhorrence, as an abandoned sort of men; and the Jews, particularly the rigid and haughty Pharisees, held no conversation with them--but kept them at a distance, as though they had been excommunicated. Hence, says Christ, concerning one excommunicated by the church for incorrigible wickedness, "Let him be to you as an heathen man, and a publican," Matt, 18:17, that is, have no fellowship with him--but treat him as the Jews do the publicans.

The condescending Jesus, who "came to seek and save that which was lost," did not conduct himself towards those poor outcasts, upon the rigid principles of the Pharisees. They held them in such contempt, that they did not labor to instruct and reform them. But Jesus preached to them, conversed with them freely, treated them most condescending and affable, and ingratiating measures to reform them, and called some of them to the honor of being his disciples. Of this number was Matthew, the author of this history; once an abandoned publican, afterwards a disciple, an apostle, and one of the four evangelists, whose immortal writings have diffused the vital savor of the name of Jesus through all ages and countries.

Oh, the condescension, the freeness, the efficacy of the grace of Christ! It can make a publican into an apostle! It can make an abhorred outcast into the favorite of heaven, and the companion of angels! What abundant encouragement does this give to the most abandoned sinner among you to turn unto the Lord! Let publicans and sinners despair of mercy and salvation if they continue in their present condition; but if they arise and follow Jesus at his call, and become his humble, teachable disciples, they need not despair; nay, they may rejoice in hope of the glory of God, and be assured they shall be admitted into the kingdom of God--when the self-righteous and religious are shut out.

When Matthew had embraced the call, he made a feast for his new Master, that he might show his respect and gratitude to him, and that he might let his fellow publicans and old companions have an opportunity of conversing with him, and receiving his instructions. How natural is it for a sinner, just brought to love Jesus, to use means to allure others to him, especially his former companions! Having seen his own guilt and danger, he is deeply affected with theirs, and would willingly lead them to that Savior who has given him so gracious a reception. Indeed his sincere endeavors of this kind, though the most substantial and unselfish evidences of friendship, often excite the contempt and ridicule of his former companions; and the more so, as they are generally attended with the imprudent but well-meant blunders of inexperience, and an honest zeal mingled with wild-fire. But at times such a convert is made the instrument of bringing those to be his companions in the way to heaven, who had walked with him in the ways of sin: and this is sufficient encouragement to such of you as have been called, like Matthew, to use your best endeavors with our fellow-sinners. Who knows but we may "save a soul from death, and hide a multitude of sins?" And what a noble, beneficent exploit is this!

The blessed Jesus, who was always ready to embrace every opportunity of doing good, whatever popular odium it might expose him to, cheerfully complies with Matthew's invitation, and mingles with a crowd of publicans at his table. Like a physician--he employs himself in an hospital, among the sick and dying, and not among the healthy and mirthful. The conversation of sinners could not be agreeable to him for itself; but as it gave him opportunity of doing them good, it afforded him a sincere pleasure. To converse with his Father and the holy angels in his native heaven, would have been more pleasing in itself to his holy soul; but if by conversing with sinners in our guilty world, he can but save the perishing creatures, he cheerfully submits to self-denial, and even rejoices in it; just as a compassionate physician, though he has no pleasure in the melancholy haunts of sickness--yet frequents them, that he may relieve the distressed.

The Pharisees now thought they had a good handle to raise popular clamor against Christ, and therefore cavil at these freedoms, as though they had been profane and inconsistent with the character of the Messiah, or even of a prophet. If he claimed this character, they thought it much more befitting in him to keep company with them--than with profligate publicans. Hence to stumble and perplex his disciples, they come to them, and ask, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and 'sinners'?" The disciples were not as yet endowed with that mouth and wisdom which all their enemies could not withstand; and therefore Jesus answers them, and takes upon himself his own defense. "It is not the healthy who need a physician--but those who are sick."

Some suppose, that by the healthy, Christ means those who were really healthy, or who were not so infected with the disease of sin, as to stand in need of him as a physician. And when such people can be found among the sons of men, this exposition will appear more plausible. But since we know that all have sinned, and stand in need of Christ as a Savior, it is much more reasonable, I think, to suppose that, by the healthy, Christ means those who imagined themselves to be healthy, though really languishing with the deadly disease of sin. It seems to me that he here answers the Pharisees upon their own principles,

and proves his conduct to be justifiable, even supposing their high opinion of themselves, and their contemptuous idea of the publicans, to be true; as if he had said, "I come into the world under the character of a physician for sick souls. Such, you will grant, these despised publicans are; and therefore, you must also grant, that these are the people I have to deal with, and these are the most likely to make application to me. But as for yourselves, you think that you are righteous; you think you are not so far gone with the disease of sin as to need a physician sent down from heaven to heal you. Now I will not determine at present, whether this high opinion you have of yourselves is just or not. Be it right or wrong, it is certain, that while you entertain it, you cannot consistently find fault with my conduct. If you are such, I have no business with you, as a physician. I must, therefore, rather choose to converse with these sinners, who now begin to see themselves such, and to be sensible of their need of a physician."

Thus, as I observed, Jesus here vindicates his conduct even upon the principles of the Pharisees themselves. It was not now to his purpose to dispute the high opinion they had of themselves; even that opinion furnished him with a sufficient defense. But, when it was proper, he faithfully exposes their true character, as proud, self-righteous hypocrites, and denounces the most dreadful woes against them!

I might perhaps render the matter plainer by a familiar illustration. Suppose a man of learning in company with two people: the one really ignorant--but highly conceited of his knowledge, and consequently unteachable; the other ignorant too--but sensible of it, and therefore desirous of instruction: suppose he should turn from the self-conceited creature, and carry on conversation with the other, who was likely to profit by it; and suppose the former should resent it, and say, "If he were indeed a scholar, as he pretends to be--then he would not be fond of the society of such an ignorant dunce--but would rather choose me for a companion." How properly might a teacher reply, "Oh! you are a wise man; and have no need of my instruction; and, therefore, as a teacher, I have no business with you; but this poor, ignorant creature is sensible of his lack of instruction; and, therefore, it is most fit I should converse with him." Such a reply has a peculiar pungency and mortifying force in it; and such Jesus used in the case before us.

To give a fuller view of this text, and to adapt it to practical purposes, I intend to describe the CHARACTERS of those who are healthy--and of those who are sick, in the senses here intended:

There are none of the sons of men who are really HEALTHY. Their souls are all diseased; for all have sinned, and there are none righteous, no, not one! And perhaps there are none upon earth so proud, and so ignorant of themselves, as to affirm in so many words, that they are healthy; that is, "perfectly righteous." Therefore, by the healthy, cannot be meant either those who are really free from all sin; or those who imagine themselves entirely free from it. It does not appear that even the proud Pharisees were capable of flattering themselves so far.

But by the healthy, are meant those who are indeed guilty, depraved sinners, and who are ready to make a superficial confession in words that they are sinners--but continue secure and impenitent, insensible of their guilt, their corruption, their danger, and their need of a Savior. That is, those who are really sick and dangerously ill--and yet are as easy, as unapprehensive of danger, as careless about applying to the physician, as if nothing ailed them. The disease is of a lethargic nature, and stupefies the unhappy creatures, so that they are not sensible of it. It renders them delirious, so that they think themselves well--when the symptoms of death are strong upon them.

What multitudes of such may we see in the world! The Word of God pronounces them dangerously ill; their friends may see the most deadly symptoms upon them--but alas! They are stupidly insensible of their own

case. Jesus, the divine Physician, warns them of their danger, offers them his help, and prescribes to them the infallible means of recovery; but they disregard his warnings, neglect his gracious offer, and refuse to submit to his prescriptions. This is the general character of those who are healthy, in the sense of my text.

By the SICK, are meant those who, like the former, are really guilty, corrupt sinners, in extreme need of a Savior--and who readily confess they are such. But here lies the difference, they are not only such in reality, and they not only acknowledge that they are such--but they are deeply sensible of it, they are tenderly affected with their case! Their temper and conduct, their thoughts of themselves and of Jesus Christ, their designs and endeavors, are such as are natural to a soul sensibly sick of sin--and such as bear a resemblance to those of a person sick in body, and using all means for a recovery.

It is the characteristic of this class of sinners; not that they are less holy, or in more danger, than others; but that they are more sensible of their condition, and more solicitous and laborious about deliverance. They feel themselves disordered; they put themselves under the care of Jesus, the only Physician of souls; they submit to his prescriptions, and use all means for their recovery to soundness of mind, from the deadly disease of sin! This is the general character of the sick, in the sense of my text; but it is necessary I should descend to particulars.

The particular characters of the healthy and the sick, in contrast, are such as these:

1. He who is healthy has never had a clear affecting sight and sense of sin; but he who is sick is fully convicted, and deeply sensible of it.

The HEALTHY one has only a general, superficial, unaffecting conviction, that he is 'a sinner': that he has not been as good as he should have been; that his heart is somewhat disordered; and especially that he has been guilty of sundry bad actions. But, alas; he neither sees his sinfulness in its full extent, nor is suitably affected with that little of it which he sees. He does not clearly see the entire and universal corruption of his heart, and the numberless principles and seeds of sin that are there. He does not clearly see the blindness of his mind as to divine things. He does not clearly see the secret disaffection of his heart towards God and holiness. He does not clearly see the carnality of his mind, and his lukewarmness and formality in the duties of religion. He may have a transient glance, a superficial view of these things; but he has not a deep, settled conviction of them: nor is he suitably affected with what he knows of his own sinfulness.

It does not appear to him such a mighty matter to have such a disordered heart towards God, to have dropped a forbidden word now and then, or to have committed a few bad actions; few, I say, for so they appear to him, though repeated times and ways beyond number. SIN appears to him a trifling peccadillo, a small evil, and he has a thousand excuses to make for it. Hence he is as easy, as careless, as presumptuous in his hopes, as if he believed he did not really deserve punishment from a righteous God, and therefore was in no danger. Though the leprosy of sin spreads ever so wide, and breaks out into ever so many putrid and mortifying sores--yet he is easy and secure, and insensible of the disease! Thus, like a man in health, he is unconcerned, and neither apprehends himself sick, nor uses the least means for his recovery!

Oh! what multitudes of such are among us! They will confess themselves 'sinners', with as little concern as if they were quite free from sin, or as if they thought there was little or no danger in it.

But is it so with the poor SICK sinner! Oh! no! He sees, he feels that his whole head is sick, and his whole heart faint, and that from the crown of the head, even unto the sole of the foot, there are nothing but wounds, bruises, and putrefying sores! He feels the plague of a hard, senseless heart, and the secret springs of wickedness within him. He feels that sin has enfeebled all his powers, and that he is no more able to exert them in pious endeavors, than a sick man is to employ himself in active life. Oh! into what a consternation is the sinner struck, when he is awakened out of his lethargic security, and his eyes are opened to see himself in a just light! He had flattered himself that he had a good constitution of soul, and that little or nothing ailed him; but now he is surprised to see the strong symptoms of spiritual death upon himself!

Suppose some of you, who have come here today vigorous and healthy, should suddenly discover the spots of a plague broken out all over you, how would it strike you with surprise and horror! Such is the surprise and horror of the awakened sinner; thus is he alarmed and amazed! So clear are his views of his entire and universal depravity, and imminent danger--that he is utterly astonished he was so stupid as never to discover it before. Now, also, he has a deep sense of the evil of sin: he not only sees himself universally disordered--but he sees, he feels the disorder to be deadly! Sin now appears to him--to be the greatest evil upon earth, or even in hell. Oh! how worthy of the severest vengeance from a righteous God! Oh! how contrary to the divine purity! Oh! how base, how ungrateful a violation of the most strong and endearing obligations! Oh! how destructive to the soul, not only according to the penalty of the divine law--but in its own native tendency!

During the progress of the Christian life, he feels himself recovering a little, though very slowly, while he follows the prescriptions of his divine Physician, and receives healing influences from him. He feels his enfeebled soul gathering a little strength; his vitiated taste gradually corrected; and the welcome symptoms of returning health; but oh! he is sensibly sick still. The cure is not complete in this world; but the remains of his old disorder hang upon him all his life, and he is subject to many dangerous relapses, in which it gathers new strength--and he is afraid it is incurable!

2. Those who are healthy are generally easy and secure, and unapprehensive of danger; but the sick soul is alarmed and anxious--and cannot be easy, until it perceives some appearances of recovery. He who is healthy, is benumbed with a stupid insensibility; but he who is sick--is in pain from the disease of sin, which he sensibly feels. The one can walk about merry and thoughtless, with a hard, depraved heart within him; the other is perpetually uneasy, and, like a sick man, has no taste for anything while he feels such a heart within him. If the healthy one is anxious--it is with some worldly care; if the sick one is anxious--it is chiefly for the recovery of his dying soul.

The healthy one can give himself up to business, or pleasure, or idleness, as a man in health, and at ease; the SICK one is apprehensive that his soul is in great danger; and, like a sick man, gives up his eager pursuits, until he sees whether he is likely to recover. He is alarmed with the deadly consequences of sin, as it exposes him to the wrath of God, the loss of heaven, and all the miseries of the infernal world. But this is not all that distresses him; he considers sin, in itself, as a loathsome disease, and is pained with its present effects upon him. As a sick man is not only alarmed at the consequence of his disease, namely, death--but considers it as a present pain, and as depriving him of the present comforts of life; so the sick soul feels sin to be a loathsome, painful disease, which now deprives it of the exalted pleasures of religion, and renders it incapable of serving its God with vigor and life.

This indisposition of soul for the exercises of piety, is, in itself, a constant uneasiness to him who is spiritually sick. How strongly does Paul represent the case, when he cries out, "Oh! wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death!" Romans 7:24. The image seems to be that of a living man walking about with a rotten, nauseous carcass tied fast to him, which oppresses him, and he cannot, with all his efforts, cast it off; but it lies heavy upon him wherever he goes--which constrains him to cry out, "Oh! who shall deliver me from this dead body?" This is the character of the soul sick of sin.

But he who is HEALTHY has little or no uneasiness upon this account. If he is alarmed at all, it is with the consequence of sin; his slavish soul fears nothing but the punishment. As for the disease itself, it is so far from giving him uneasiness, that he is in love with it! It affords him sensations of pleasure, rather than of pain--and he rather dreads a recovery, than the continuance of the disorder! Sin has intoxicated him to such a degree, that holiness, which is the health of the soul--is disagreeable to him, and he would rather continue languishing, than recover!

My friends, you can easily distinguish between sickness and health of body; and you are very ready to do it. And will you not inquire what state your souls are in? whether they are sensible of their sickness, and in a way of recovery? or whether they are stupefied, or made delirious by the disorder, insensible of their danger, and unsolicitous about their recovery? I beg you to examine yourselves in these particulars.

3. Those who are healthy--are unwilling to apply to a physician, or to follow his prescriptions; but to the sick--a physician is most welcome, and they will submit to his directions, however self-denying and mortifying. This is the point my text has particularly in view, and therefore we must take particular notice of it.

They that are in HEALTH have no regard to a physician, as such; they neither send for him, nor will they accept of his help, even if offered gratis. They look upon the best of medicines with neglect, as of no use or importance to them: the prescriptions proper to the sick they hear with indifference, as not being their particular concern.

Thus it is with thousands, who imagine themselves to be healthy in soul. The Lord Jesus exhibits himself to men under the character of a physician; the gospel makes a free offer of his assistance to all sick souls who will freely accept it. And what reception does he generally meet with? Why, multitudes neglect him, as though they had no need of him. They may indeed pay him the compliment of professing his religion, because it happened to be the religion of their fathers and their country--but they have no eager desires after him; they are not in earnest and laborious to obtain his assistance; they do not invite him with the most affectionate entreaties to undertake their case; they do not beg and cry for relief from him, like blind Bartimeus, Mark 10:47, "Jesus, son of David, have mercy on me!"

In short, whatever regard they may profess for him, they are not deeply sensible of their absolute need of him! They are not feelingly affected towards him, as towards a being with whom they have the greatest personal concern, a concern of the utmost importance: and the reason is, they are healthy in their own apprehensions. Or if they feel some qualms of conscience, some fits of painful remorse, they soon "heal their own hurt slightly, crying, 'Peace, peace!' when there is no peace!" They make a medicine of their own prayers, tears, repentance, and religious endeavors, and with this they hope to heal themselves! Thus Jesus is neglected; they give him the name of a Savior; but in reality--they look to themselves for a cure!

How is the gospel that makes the offer of relief from this heavenly Physician, generally received in the world? Alas! it is neglected, as the offer of superfluous help! It is heard with that indifference with which

men in health attend to the prescriptions of a physician to the sick--in which they have no immediate concern. Friends, is this neglected gospel the only effectual mean for healing your dying souls? Then why this stupidity and inattention with which it is heard? Then why the general neglect with which it is treated? Oh! how sadly affecting is it to see a dying world rejecting the only restorative that can heal their disease, and preserve their lives! But alas! thus it is all around us!

Again, Jesus prescribes to men the only means of their recovery. Particularly, he enjoins them no more to drink poison! That is, no more to indulge themselves in SIN, which is, in its own nature, the most deadly poison to the soul! And what can be more reasonable than this? Yet this is what a stupid world principally objects against, and multitudes rather die than submit to it! A disordered, empoisoned constitution of soul--is to them the most agreeable!

This divine Physician likewise requires them to use the means of grace instituted in the gospel: to meditate upon their condition, and obtain a deep sense of their disorder; to read and hear the Word with solemn attention and self-application; to pray with frequency and importunity. These are his prescriptions to all who would recover under his hands. But how few observe them in earnest! What a general neglect of the means of grace prevails in our country, or what a careless attendance upon them! which is equally pernicious!

Christ also enjoins them to submit to him as their Physician, to no longer flatter themselves that they can heal themselves by means within their own power--but to apply his blood as the only healing balm to their wounded souls. But, alas! they disregard this grand prescription; they will not submit to him; but, like an obstinate patient--will have their own way, though eternal death should be the consequence!

But this is not the case of the sinner spiritually SICK: he will do anything, he will submit to anything, if it may but save him from the mortal disease of sin! How ardently does he long after Jesus! With what cheerfulness does he put himself under his care! With what joy and gratitude does he hear the offer of free salvation in the gospel! And how dear is the gospel to his heart on this account! With what eager, wishful eyes--does he look upon his Physician! How does he delight to feel himself under the operation of his hand! to feel him probe his wounds, and then apply the balm of his blood! With what anxiety does he observe the symptoms, and inquire whether he is upon the recovery or not!

And oh! with what pleasure does he discover the signs of returning health! to feel a little eager appetite for spiritual food! to feel a little spiritual life in pious exercises! to feel himself able to run in the way of God's commandments! to feel the principles of sin weakened within him! How sweet is this!

How willingly does he submit to the prescriptions of his Physician, and attend upon the means of grace, however disagreeable to a carnal mind! He makes the Word of God the rule of his regimen, and would not indulge himself in anything which that sacred dispensatory forbids. He guards against relapses, and keeps out of the way of temptation, as far as possible, lest his frail constitution should be hurt. The society of sinners is like the company of people infected with a contagious disease which he is in danger of catching, and therefore he avoids it as cautiously as he can!

Let those who think their souls healthy and vigorous, boast of their strength, and what mighty things they can do in religion; but as for him--he feels his weakness; he feels he can do nothing aright--but just as he receives daily strength from Christ. He feels himself every day troubled with some disorder or another; yes, with a whole tangle of diseases! Therefore he is daily sensible of his need of the Physician, and makes daily application to him. He does not begrudge to take time from his other affairs, and, as it were, to

keep his chamber a while, that he may use means for the recovery of his soul. For, oh! if he loses his soul--then what would the whole world profit him? In short, the sick sinner is a tender, delicate, frail creature, entirely subject to the prescriptions of Christ, and every day using Christ's means; anxious for his recovery, and willing to submit to anything that may promote it. This is the man in our Christ-despising world, who gives Jesus a most willing and welcome reception, and embraces his gospel, as containing all his salvation and all his desire.

Oh! that there were many such in our world! for this man is in a hopeful way of recovery. This world is a vast hospital, full of dying souls! Jesus descends from heaven, and enters among them, offering them health and eternal life, if they will but submit to his directions, which are as easy as possible. Repentance, indeed, and some other bitter ingredients, are included in a religion for sinners; and how can it be otherwise, since these are necessary for their recovery, in the very nature of things? Besides, even these are sweet, when taken in the pill of a Savior's dying love; and many a soul has found more noble pleasure in sincere sorrow for sin, than ever they found in the commission of it!

But after all--the generality of people die in their sins, amidst the full means of their recovery: and the great reason is, they will not be convinced of their danger, nor be persuaded to apply to the Physician. Oh! how tragic and affecting a case this! And what may render it the more so to us is--that it is the case of some of us! Yes, my friends, though I am unwilling to harbor one hard thought of any of you--yet I cannot avoid concluding that there are some, I am afraid many, souls in this assembly--who are not sensible of their dangerous disease, and their need of Christ as a Physician, and therefore are in danger of perishing without him! Sin, like a strong dose of opium, has stupefied you, and you feel easy and quiet, as if nothing ailed you, when the symptoms of death are strong upon you!

We can weep and lament over the sick-bed of a dying friend, and we even drop our tears after him into the grave. But shall we drop no tears this day over dying souls, that are so numerous among us!

What renders the case more sadly affecting is, that they perish by their own willful obstinacy, under the hands of an all-healing Physician! "Oh that my head were waters, and my eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night over the slain of the daughters of my people!" You secure and healthy-hearted sinners, must it not shock you to think that Jesus Christ, the only Physician--gives you up? You see, in my text, he looks upon you as people that he has no business with. He had rather converse with publicans and sinners than with you, as having more hopes of success among them.

Let publicans and sinners take the hint, and be encouraged to apply to Jesus. Come, you profligates and harlots, drunkards, swearers, whoremongers, come, sinners of the most abandoned characters, apply to this Physician! He is willing to heal you: he offers you healing. "Will you be made whole?" is his question to you this day. He is perfectly able, able to save to the uttermost, however inveterate your disease may be! If the children of the kingdom shut themselves out: if self-righteous Pharisees reject this Physician, and die in their sin--you 'sinners' may certainly come in; put yourselves under his care, submit to his prescriptions, and you shall yet live, and be restored to perfect health and eternal life! As vile as you are--you are very proper materials for the temple of God!

If you are sensibly sick, it should not discourage you from entering yourselves into Christ's hospital, and putting yourselves into his care; nay, this should even encourage you. Your being sick of sin is a necessary qualification to render you his patients--those who are such, he loves to converse with; and they are the only ones who are recovered by him. Therefore, this day give yourselves up to him as his

willing patients. Cry to him to undertake your case: "Heal me, O Lord--and I shall be healed!" Submit to his prescriptions, and follow his directions, and you shall live forever!

I shall CONCLUDE my subject, by answering some questions that may arise in your minds on this topic.

What is the reason that the world around us lies dead in such a carnal security? Why is it there is so much sin in the world--and so little fear of punishment? Why is it that men will entertain such hopes of heaven--upon such slight evidences; or rather with the full evidence of the Word of God against them? Alas! the reason is, they are healthy in their own imagination: they think themselves well, and therefore apprehend no danger--but lie in a dead, inactive slumber!

What is the reason why so many neglect the means of grace in public and private? Why is it that there are so many prayerless families and prayerless closets among us? Why is the Bible thrown aside in some families, as a piece of useless lumber? Why is the house of God so thinly frequented in many places, and the table of the Lord almost deserted? Why is Christian conversation so unfashionable? And why do we hear so few inquiries from sinners--as to what they shall do to be saved? The reason is, they imagine themselves well; and, therefore, it is no wonder they neglect the means of recovery! They think they have no more to do with them--than people in health with physician and his remedies. The only method to bring them to use those means in earnest, is to make them sensible of their dangerous disease. And oh! that their ministers may use all proper means with them for this end, and that divine grace may render them effectual!

What is the reason that the means of grace are attended upon by others, with so much formality and indifference? Why is it, that there are so many lukewarm, spiritless prayers, and solemn mockeries of the great God? Why is it, that there are so many wandering eyes and wandering hearts in the heavenly exercise of praise, and in hearing the most solemn and affecting truths? Why is it that all the religion of many is nothing but a dull round of insipid, lifeless formalities? Alas! the same reason returns--they are healthy in their own conceit--and have no need for the physician of souls. And how can they, while they flatter themselves with this imagination, use those means in earnest, which are intended for the recovery of the sick? The sick will use them in earnest; but to others they are mere customary formalities.

Would you know the reason why the blessed Jesus, the most glorious and benevolent person who ever appeared in our world--is so generally neglected? Oh! Would you know why his love forgotten by those very creatures for whom he shed his blood? Would you know why there are not more longings and cries for him? Would you know why the Savior, an almighty and complete Savior--is so little sought after by perishing sinners? Would you know why he is of so little importance among them? Would you know why comes it to pass, that he may continue for months, for years, for scores of years, offering salvation to them, entreating, commanding, and persuading them to accept it, and warning them of the dreadful ruin they will bring upon themselves by rejecting it? Would you know why is it that, after all this--that he is despised and rejected by men, and that but very few will give him suitable entertainment? Would you know why there is this shocking conduct in reasonable creatures? Oh! it is the same old reason still: they do not feel themselves dangerously ill; and how, then, can they be solicitous about the only physician of sin-sick souls?

What is the reason that the gospel, which reveals and offers life and salvation to the world--meets with so cold a reception? Why does the way of salvation therein revealed--not spread transport and praise over all the earth? Why does the song of the angels--not sound from every human tongue, Glory to God in the

highest for peace proclaimed on earth, and good will towards men? Why does the Christian world in general practically despise that religion which they profess? Oh! it is because they are healthy in their own imaginations, though dying by thousands all over the world. It is because they are not sensible of their need of the gospel and its blessings. Oh! if they were but once sensible how dangerously ill they are--they would soon change their opinion!

Let me bring this matter still nearer home. Why is it that the gospel, even with all the disadvantages which attend it from my unskillful lips, does not meet with a more affectionate welcome among you? There are many, I am afraid, who regularly or occasionally attend here to hear the gospel, who yet despise it in their hearts, or do not affectionately embrace it. And what is the reason of this? May I not venture to affirm, that the gospel has been dear to some, who have sat under no better ministry? Must not this be the reason--that there are multitudes of healthy-hearted sinners, even among us, who mingle among us in the same assembly, and hear the gospel from the same lips! Multitudes who are insensible of their disease, and consequently of their need of a physician! Oh! inquire whether this is not the true reason why the gospel meets with such a cold reception among us!

Would you know why so many fools make a mock of sin? Would you know why they can go on impenitent in it, apprehending little or no danger from it? Would you know why they are every day singing, and every day merry, thoughtless, and mirthful? Would you know why they can love and delight in sin, which God hates, and which he has threatened with such heavy vengeance? Alas! the reason is--they imagine that they are healthy! They do not look upon sin as a deadly disease which requires a divine cure--but as their health which ought to be nourished.

This is the disease under which our country now languishes. It is this disease that enfeebles our councils and undertakings; but who suspects that this has any bad influence in the case? Who endeavors the cure of this, as the most effectual cure for a languishing, bleeding country?

What is the reason that men are cautious of coming near a house infected with a contagious sickness, and that duty itself can hardly constrain them to enter--but that they can venture their souls without cause into ensnaring company, and within the sphere of temptation? Why is it, that, for the recovery of their mortal bodies, they will submit to the most self-denying regimen, take the most bitter and nauseous medicines, and be at great pains and expense--while for their souls they will take no pains, use no means, deny themselves in no gratifications? What is the reason of this? Oh! it is the same reason still--they do not feel the least sickness of their souls--but imagine they have a firm, invulnerable constitution, incapable of infection in the most contagious places, and that it will recover by its native strength, without extrinsic help.

Would you know why there is so much spiritual pride and vanity in the world? Would you know why there are so many religious vain boasters, who imagine they can turn to God when they please, in their own strength, and who pretend they can perform such great things in religion, whenever they are disposed to make the attempt? Oh! it is because they do not know that they are sick: they do not feel themselves enfeebled by sin and disabled from doing anything truly good.

You have seen some in a delirium, who imagined they were well, able to go about, and perform their usual business, when in the meantime they were under the power of a deadly disease, and the symptoms of death perhaps then upon them. Just so it is with these ostentatious boasters; and could you but cure their delirium, and make them sensible of their disorders--they would soon feel and confess themselves poor, weak, languishing creatures, unable to do anything--but just as they receive strength from God.

Would you know why so many hate faithful preaching, and resent it if any means are used for their recovery? It is because they imagine themselves well; and such do not like to be teased with the importunities of a physician, nor to have disagreeable medicines forced upon them. Oh! were they but sensible of their condition--they would willingly submit to the bitter prescriptions!

Would you know where you should begin your religion; or what is the grand preparative for your embracing the gospel in such a manner as to be saved by it? To this interesting inquiry you may easily infer an answer from what has been said. Begin your religion in a deep sense of sin; let your soul wound be probed to the quick, in order to a thorough cure, otherwise it would be but slightly skinned over, and it will again break out, and prove more dangerous than ever. Labor to get a deep sense of your disease--for only then you will so give yourselves up to the physician, that he may apply to you what he thinks proper, and make an effectual cure.

Some of you perhaps have wondered why you see poor mourning creatures here and there--who cannot live as you do--thoughtless, careless, and unaffected. You ascribe it perhaps to melancholy, to preciseness, to hypocrisy, or an affection of singularity. But I will tell you the true reason. They are sick--whereas you imagine yourselves well; and you cannot wonder that the sick and the healthy should behave in a different manner. Why do they not neglect Jesus Christ as you do? Oh! it is because they are sick, heart-sick, and therefore must long and cry for a physician! Why do they not indulge themselves in sin as you do? Is it because they are sick of it! They see it to be a deadly poison, and they cannot be easy while they feel it working through their frame.

Why do they use the means of grace with so much earnestness? Why do they pray, and hear, and attend upon every religious ordinance with so much zeal and solicitude? Why can they not, like you, attend upon them in a careless, formal way, or entirely neglect them? Oh! the reason is, they are sick, heart-sick, and they are using these means for their recovery! And did you view yourselves in the same just light, you would use them too! Yes, you would be as strict, as earnest, as laborious as any of them!

Why do they not, like you, abandon themselves, and devote all their time to some worldly pursuit? Oh! it is because they are sick, and must take time for the use of means for their recovery, whatever else they must omit. Why are they so much afraid of temptation, and keep out of its way? It is because they are afraid of a relapse, and that sin, their old disease, will renew its strength! Why are they so often filled with doubts, and fears, and anxious perplexities? Oh! it is because they feel the symptoms of the disorder--and they know not whether they are in a way of recovery or not. When they are satisfied in this point, then they can rejoice, and that with a joy more noble than you are capable of.

And poor, sick souls--be of good cheer; you shall yet be healed! Yes, there is balm in Gilead; there is a physician there! Jesus can heal you; and, blessed be his name, he is as willing as he is able. Continue steadfast in the use of the means appointed for your recovery, and he will make them efficacious. Yes, these sick souls of yours shall yet be as healthy and vigorous as an angel; and you shall before long be advanced to the region of immortal health, where the inhabitants no more say, "I am sick"; where you shall breathe a pure, healthful air, agreeable to your delicate constitutions, and be vigorous and lively forever!

Do not think much of it, that a disease so inveterate and mortal, should be painful and difficult in the cure. The operation will not last long; and if it does but succeed, the pain and self-denial will be infinitely more than compensated!

The deep sense of your disorder is often discouraging to you. Oh! you are afraid it will at last prove mortal. But this very thing ought to encourage you. Those people whom I cannot speak one comfortable word to, are not of your character; they are the secure, healthy-hearted sinners. But for you there is strong consolation; so strong that it may bear down all your fears before it. The sense of your disorder qualifies you for the Physician, and renders you proper objects of his never-failing care. The poor, the maimed, the halt, the blind, the broken-hearted, are the character of the people that he has to do with, and who are recovering under his hands. And are not these your characters? They are, indeed, humbling and mortifying; but, oh! they are encouraging, as they prepare you for Christ's healing care!

But as for you, healthy-hearted sinners, I must pronounce you to be lost and dead souls! Jesus himself has declared, that he has no business with such as you. And if he casts you off--oh! what other physician can you employ! Alas! you will die in your sins! Die in your sins! Oh! dreadful! better to die in a ditch, or a dungeon--than die in your sins! Therefore now labor to be sensible of your disorder, while it is curable; for all who are not healed in this life--are given up as incurable forever! Now apply to Christ as a Physician, for he is willing to undertake your cure!

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