

The Soul's Malady and Cure

by Thomas Watson

Sin is a soul disease that separates us from God and angels, and we need spiritual physicians to cure us.

Scripture: Psalm 147:3, Isaiah 53:4, Isaiah 55:1, Matthew 9:12, Luke 4:18, Luke 5:31, John 17:12, 1 Timothy 1:15, Hebrews 7:25, 1 John 1:7

Topics: "Sin And Redemption", "Spiritual Healing"

Description

Thomas Watson preaches about the compassionate and skilled Physician, Jesus Christ, who is willing and able to heal sin-sick souls. He emphasizes that Christ came to save sinners, not the righteous, and uses the analogy of Levi's call to follow Jesus to illustrate the immediate response required to follow Christ without hesitation. Watson explains that sin is a soul disease that corrupts every part of the soul, likening it to sickness spreading throughout the body. He highlights the need for humility, fear of sin, and surrender to Christ as the ultimate Healer of our spiritual diseases.

Transcript

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"It is not the healthy who need a doctor -- but the sick." Luke 5:31

The occasion of the words is set down in the context. Levi was called from the receipt of taxes (he was a tax collector); but Christ called him, and there went out power with the Word, such that "Levi left all, rose up, and followed him" (verse 28). Levi did not consult with flesh and blood; he did not say, "How shall I live and maintain my charge? I shall lose many a sweet bit at the tax booth; poverty is likely to be my inheritance. Nay, if I follow Christ, I must espouse persecution." He does not reason thus but, having a call, he hastened away after Christ. He rose up and followed him; and, that he might give Christ a pledge and specimen of his love, he made him a feast. Verse 29: "And Levi made him a great feast in his own house." A better guest he could not invite.

Christ always came with His payment. Levi feasted Christ with his food -- and Christ feasted him with salvation. Well, Christ being at this feast, the Pharisees began to murmur. Verse 30: "Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors?" The Pharisees were offended at Him that He would go in and eat with tax collectors. The tax collectors were counted the worst of sinners, sinners of the deepest dye; yet the

Pharisees were not so much offended at the sins of the tax collectors, as they had a mind to pick a quarrel with Christ. He who was the horn of salvation to some was a rock of offense to these Jews. Others fed on Him; these religious leaders stumbled at Him. They accused Christ for eating with sinners; malice will never lack matter of accusation. Though the devils proclaimed Christ's holiness (Luke 4:34: "Let us alone, I know You who You are, the Holy One of God") -- yet the Pharisees taxed Him for a sinner. See what malice will do; it will make a man speak that which the devil himself will not speak. The devils justified Christ; the Pharisees accused Him. And Christ, who was a Lamb without spot, could not escape the world's censures; no wonder that His people are loaded with the calumnies and censures of the wicked.

But let us examine the matter of the charge they bring against Christ, and see how groundless it was. They indicted Christ for joining in with sinners.

First, Christ did nothing but what was according to His commission. The commission He received from His Father was that He should come to save sinners (1 Timothy 1:15).

Second, Christ went in with sinners not to join with them in their sins -- but to heal them of their sins. To accuse Christ was, as Augustine said, as if the physician should be blamed because he goes among those who are sick of the plague. This groundless accusation Christ overheard, and in the text He gives these envious Pharisees a silencing answer: "It is not the healthy who need a doctor -- but the sick." It is as if Christ had said, "You Pharisees think yourselves righteous people; and that you need no Savior. But these poor tax collectors are sick and ready to die, and I come as a physician to cure them. Therefore do not be angry at a work of mercy; though you will not be healed -- yet do not hinder Me from healing others. Those who are whole do not need a physician -- but those who are sick do."

In the words there are two general parties: The dying patients and the healing Physician. The dying patients are "those who are sick."

DOCTRINE 1: Sin is a soul disease. Isaiah 53:4: "He has borne our griefs." In the Hebrew it is "our sicknesses." Man at first was created in a healthy temper; he had no sickness of soul; he ailed nothing. The soul had its perfect beauty and glory. The eye was clear, the heart pure, and the affections tuned with the finger of God into a most sweet harmony. "God made man upright" (Ecclesiastes 7:29); but Adam, by eating the forbidden fruit, fell sick and would have died forever -- had not God found out a way for his recovery. For the amplification of this doctrine, there are three things to be considered:

In what sense sin is like sickness;

what the diseases of the soul are;

and that sin-sickness is the worst sickness.

A. In what sense is sin likened to sickness?

1. Sin may be compared to sickness, for the manner of its being caught. First, sickness is caught often through carelessness. Some catch cold by leaving off clothes. So when Adam grew careless of God's command and left off the garment of his innocence, he caught a sickness. He could stay no longer in the garden -- but lay bed-ridden. His sin has turned the world, which was a paradise, into a hospital!

Sickness is caught sometimes through excess or intemperance. Excess produces sickness. When our first parents ate of the forbidden tree, they and all their posterity surfeited on it and took sick. The tree of

knowledge had sickness and death under the leaves! It was fair to the eye (Genesis 3:6) but poisonous to the taste. We all grew desperately sick by eating of this tree. Adam's intemperance has brought us to fasting and weeping; and besides that disease at first by propagation, we have added to it by actual perpetration. We have increased our sickness; therefore sinners are said to wax worse and worse (2 Timothy 3:13).

2. Sin may be likened to sickness -- for its nature. Sickness is of a spreading nature; it spreads all over the body; it works into every part -- the head, stomach, and so on; it disorders the whole body. Sin does not rest in one part -- but spreads into all the faculties of the soul and members of the body. Isaiah 1:5-6: "The whole head is sick, the whole heart is faint; from the sole of the foot, even unto the head, there is no soundness in it -- but wounds and bruises, and putrefying sores."

Sin corrupts the understanding. Gregory Nazianzen calls the understanding "the lamp of reason." But this lamp burns dim. Ephesians 4:18: "Having their understanding darkened." Sin has drawn a veil over the understanding; it has cast a mist before our eyes so that we neither know God nor ourselves. Naturally we are only wise to do evil (Jeremiah 4:22). We are witty at sin -- and wise to damn ourselves! The understanding is defiled (1 Corinthians 2:14). We can no more judge spiritual objects until the Spirit of God anoints our eyes -- than a blind man can judge colors. Our understandings are subject to mistakes; we call evil good -- and good evil; we put bitter for sweet -- and sweet for bitter (Isaiah 5:20). A straight stick under water seems crooked. Just so, to a natural understanding the straight line of truth, seems crooked.

The memory is diseased. The memory at first was like a golden cabinet in which divine truths were locked up safely; but now it is like a colander or leaking vessel -- which lets all that is good run out. The memory is like a sifter, which sifts out the flour -- but keeps the husks. So the memory lets saving truths go -- and holds nothing but froth and vanity. Many a man can remember a silly story, when he has forgotten Scripture truth. Thus the memory is diseased. The memory is like a bad stomach -- all the good food is vomited out. So the most precious truths will not stay in the memory -- but are gone again.

The will is diseased. The will is the soul's commander-in-chief; it is the master-wheel; but how irregular and disordered it is! The will in the creation was like that golden bridle which Minerva was said to put upon Pegasus, to guide and rule him: it answered to God's will. This was the language of the will in innocence: "I delight to do Your will, O God" (Psalm 40:8). But now it is distempered and disordered; it is like an iron sinew which refuses to yield and bend to God. John 5:40: "You will not come to Me, that you may have life." Wicked men would rather die, than come to their Physician. The Arminians talk of free will -- but the will is sick. What freedom does a palsied man have to walk? The will is a rebel against God. Acts 7:51: "You always resist the Holy Spirit" because the will is diseased.

The affections are sick. First, the affection of desire: a sick man desires that which is hurtful for him; he calls for wine in a fever. So the natural man, being sick, desires that which is bad for him; he has no desire after Christ; he does not hunger and thirst after righteousness, but desires poison. He desires to take his fill of sin; he loves death (Proverbs 8:36).

The affection of grief is sick. A man grieves for lack of an estate -- but not for the lack of God's favor! He grieves to see the plague or cancer in his body -- but not for the plague of his heart!

The affection of joy is sick. Many can rejoice in a wedge of gold -- but not in the cross of Christ. The affections are sick and distempered.

The conscience is diseased. Titus 1:15: "Their mind and conscience is defiled." Conscience is erroneous, binding to that which is sinful (John 16:2). Acts 26:9: "I truly thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus." Conscience can lead out of the right way. Conscience is often silent, and will not tell men of sin; it is a silenced preacher. And conscience is dead (Ephesians 4:19). Conscience is stupefied and senseless; the custom of sinning -- has taken away the sense of sinning.

Thus the sickness of sin has gone over the whole soul, like that cloud which overspread the face of the heavens in 1 Kings 18:45.

3. Sickness debilitates and weakens. A sick man is unfit to walk. So this sickness of sin weakens the soul. Romans 5:6: "When we were without strength, Christ died."

In innocence Adam was, in some sense, like the angels: he could serve God with a winged swiftness and a filial cheerfulness. But sin brought sickness into the soul, and this sickness has cut the lock where his strength lay; he is now disarmed of all ability for serving God. And where grace is wrought, though a Christian is not so heart-sick as before -- yet he is very faint. The saints' prayers do but whisper in God's ears, and if Christ did not pray them over again, God could not hear them. We sin fervently -- but pray faintly. As David said in 2 Samuel 3:39, "I am this day weak, though anointed king." So Christians, though they have the oil of grace poured upon them, and are anointed spiritual kings -- yet they are weak. Sin has made them feeble; they have spiritual shortness of breath, and cannot put forth such strong desires after God as they ought. When we find ourselves dead in duty and our holy affections languishing, we should think thus: "This is my sickness; sin has made me weak!" As Jephthah said to his daughter in Judges 11:35, "Alas, my daughter, you have brought me very low," so may the soul say, "Alas, my sin, you have brought me very low; you have brought me almost to the gates of death."

4. Sickness eclipses the BEAUTY of the body. This I ground on Psalm 39:11: "When You with rebukes do correct man, You make his beauty to consume away like a moth." The moth consumes the beauty of the cloth; so a fit of sickness consumes the beauty of the body. Thus sin is a soul sickness; it has eclipsed the glory and splendor of the soul; it has turned ruddiness into paleness. Of that beauty of grace which once sparkled as gold, it may now be said, "How this gold has become dim!" (Lamentations 4:1). That soul which once had an orient brightness in it, it was more ruddy than rubies; its polishing was of sapphire, the understanding bespangled with knowledge, the will crowned with liberty, the affections like so many seraphim, burning in love to God -- but now, the glory has departed. Sin has turned beauty -- into deformity!

As some faces by sickness are so disfigured and look so ghastly that they can hardly be known -- so the soul of man is by sin so sadly changed (having lost the image of God) that it can hardly be known. Joel 2:31: "The sun shall be turned into darkness." Sin has turned that sun of beauty which shined in the soul -- into a stygian darkness; and where grace is begun to be wrought -- yet the soul's beauty is not quite recovered -- but is like the sun under a cloud.

5. Sickness takes away the TASTE. A sick man does not taste the sweetness in his food. Just so, the sinner, by reason of soul-sickness, has lost his taste for spiritual things. The Word of God is bread to strengthen, and wine to comfort; but the sinner tastes no sweetness in the Word. A child of God who is spiritualized by grace, tastes a savoriness in ordinances. The promise drops as a honeycomb (Psalm 19:10) -- but a natural man is sick and his taste is gone. Since tasting of the forbidden tree, he has lost his taste for spiritual dainties.

6. Sickness takes away the COMFORTS of life. A sick person has no joy of anything; his life is a burden to him. So the sin-sick soul is void of all true comfort, and his laughter is but the pleasing dream of a sick man. He has no true title to comfort; his sin is not pardoned, and for all he knows, he may be in hell before nightfall!

7. Sickness ushers in DEATH; it is the prologue to death. Sickness is, as it were, the chopping of the tree; death is the falling of the tree. So this disease of sin (if not cured in time) brings the second death.

What the DISEASES of the soul are:

Adam, by breaking the box of original righteousness, has filled the soul with diseases. The body is not subject to so many diseases, as the soul. "I cannot reckon them all up" (Psalm 40:12). "Who can understand his errors?" (Psalm 19:12). I shall name some of the worst of these diseases.

Pride is the arrogance of the soul,

lust is the fever of the soul,

error is the gangrene of the soul,

unbelief is the plague of the soul,

hypocrisy is the scurvy of the soul,

hardness of heart is the stone in the soul,

anger is the madness of the soul,

malice is the wolf in the breast,

covetousness is the cancer of the soul,

spiritual sloth is the soul's nausea, and

apostasy is the epilepsy of the soul.

Here are eleven soul-diseases, and when they come to their full height, they are dangerous and most frequently prove mortal.

Why sin is the worst sickness:

To have a body full of plague sores is sad; but to have the soul, which is the more noble part, spotted with sin is far worse:

1. The body may be diseased and yet the conscience be quiet. Isaiah 33:24: "The inhabitant of the land shall not say, I am sick." He should scarcely feel his sickness because sin was pardoned; but when the soul is sick of any reigning lust, the conscience is troubled. Isaiah 57:21: "There is no peace to the wicked." When Spira had abjured his former faith -- his conscience burned as hell, and no spiritual medicine that divines applied could ever allay that inflammation.

2. A man may have bodily diseases -- yet God may love him. Asa was diseased in his feet (2 Kings 15:23) -- yet he was a favorite with God. God's hand may go out against a man -- yet His heart may be towards

him. Diseases are the arrows which God shoots; pestilence is called God's arrow in Psalm 91:5. This arrow (as Gregory Nazianzen said) may be shot from the hand of an indulgent father; but soul-diseases are symptoms of God's anger. As He is a holy God, He cannot but hate sin. "He beholds the proud afar off" (Psalm 138:6). God hates a sinner for his plague-sores. Zechariah 11:8: "My soul loathed them."

3. Sickness, at worst, does but separate from the society of friends; but this disease of sin, if not cured, separates from the society of God and angels. The leper was to be shut out of the camp; this leprosy of sin, without the interposition of mercy, shuts men out of the camp of heaven! This is the misery of those who die in their sins: they are allowed neither friend nor physician to come to them; they are excluded from God's favorable presence forever, in whose presence is fullness of joy.

APPLICATION

INFORMATION. See into what a sad condition sin has brought us; it has made us desperately sick. Nay, we die away in our sickness, until we are fetched again with the water of life. Oh, how many sick, bedridden souls there are in the world -- sick from pride, sick from lust. Sin has turned our houses and churches into hospitals; they are full of sick people. What David's enemies said reproachfully of him is true of every natural man. Psalm 41:8: "An evil disease cleaves fast unto him." 1 Kings 8:38: "He has the plague of his own heart!" And even those who are regenerate are cured but in part; they have some remnants of the disease, some ebullitions and stirrings of corruption. Nay, sometimes this evil breaks forth to the scandal of religion, and from this sin-sickness arises all other diseases -- plague, gout, stone, fever. 1 Corinthians 11:29-30: "He who eats and drinks unworthily, eats and drinks damnation to himself; for this cause many are weak and sickly among you."

If sin is a soul-sickness, then how foolish they are who hide their sins; it is folly to hide a disease! Job 31:33, 40: "If I covered my transgression as Adam, by hiding my iniquity in my bosom." The wicked take more care to have sin covered, than cured; if they can but sin in private and not be suspected -- they think all is well. There is a curse belonging to him who sins in a secret place (Deuteronomy 27:15). Hiding and concealing a disease, proves mortal. Proverbs 28:13: "He who covers his sins shall not prosper."

If sin is a soul-sickness, then see what need there is of the ministry. Ministers are physicians under God, to cure sick souls. God has set in His church pastors and teachers (Ephesians 4:11). The ministers are a college of physicians; their work is to find out diseases and apply remedies. This is a hard work; while ministers are curing others, they themselves are near unto death (Philippians 2:30). They find their people sick with various diseases: some have poisoned themselves with error; some are surfeited with the love of the creature; and some have stabbed themselves in the heart with gross sin! Oh, how hard it is to heal all these sick, gangrened souls! Many ministers sooner kill themselves by preaching, than cure their patients; but though the work of the ministry is a laborious work, it is a needful work. While there are sin-sick souls, there will be need for spiritual physicians. How unworthy then they are, who malign and persecute the ministers of God! Oh, unkind world, thus to abuse your physicians. Can there be a greater injury to souls? Would it not be a piece of the highest cruelty and barbarism, if there were a law passed that all physicians should be banished out of the land? And is it not worse to see multitudes of sick souls lie bleeding, and to have their spiritual physicians removed from them, who should under God heal them? This is wrath-procuring sin. 2 Chronicles 36:16: "They misused His prophets, until the wrath of the Lord arose against His people, until there was no remedy."

See what is inscribed in Deuteronomy 33:8, 11: "Smite through the loins of those who rise against him, and of those who hate him, that they rise not again." The Lord will wither that arm which is stretched out against His prophets.

EXHORTATION.

1. If sin is a soul-disease -- then let this serve to HUMBLE us. The Scripture often calls upon us to humility. 1 Peter 5:5: "Be clothed with humility." If anything will humble, this consideration may: sin is a soul-disease. If a woman had a lovely face -- but a cancer in her breast, it would keep her from being proud of her beauty. So Christian, though you are endued with knowledge and morality, which are fair to look upon -- yet remember that you are diseased in your soul; here is a cancer in the breast to humble you! This certainly is one reason why God leaves sin in His own children (for though sin is healed as far as the guilt of it -- yet not as far the pollution of it), that the sight of their sores, may make their plumes of pride fall off! There are two humbling sights: a sight of God's glory and a sight of our soul-diseases.

Uzziah the king had no cause to be proud; for though he had a crown of gold on his head, he had the leprosy on his forehead (2 Chronicles 26:19). Though the saints have their golden graces -- yet they have their leprous spots. Seeing sin has made us vile -- let it make us humble; seeing it has taken away our beauty -- let it take away our pride. Augustine said, "If God did not spare the proud angels, will He spare you, who are but dust and rottenness?" Oh, look upon your spiritual boils and ulcers -- and be humbled. Christians are never more lovely in God's eyes -- than when they are loathsome in their own eyes! Those sins which humble -- shall never damn!

2. If sin is a soul-disease, and the most damnable disease -- then let us be AFRAID of it. Had we diseases in our bodies, a cancer in the lungs or a hectic fever, we would fear lest they should bring death. Oh, fear sin-sickness, lest it bring the second death. You who are a drunkard or a swearer, tremble at your soul-maladies.

I am amazed to see sinners like the leviathan, made without fear. Why do not men fear sin? Why do they not shake with this disease? Surely the reason is stupidity; as they have the fever of sin, so withal a spiritual lethargy. 1 Timothy 4:2: "Having their conscience seared with a hot iron." If a man has an unbelieving heart and a seared conscience, you may as well ring out the death bell; that man's case is desperate indeed!

Another reason for not fearing is presumption. Many imagine that they can lay a fig upon the boil; though they are sick, they think that they can make themselves well. It is but saying a few prayers; it is but a sigh or a tear -- and they shall immediately recover. But is it so easy to be healed of sin? Is it easy to make old Adam bleed to death? Is it easy when the pangs of death are on you, in an instant to have the pangs of the new birth? Oh, take heed of a spiritual lethargy; fear your disease, lest it prove mortal and damnable! Physicians tell of a disease that makes men die laughing. Just so, Satan tickles many with the pleasure of sin -- and they die laughing!

3. If sin is a soul distemper -- then account them your best friends who would reclaim you from your sins. The patient is thankful to the physician who tells him of his disease and uses means to recover him. When ministers tell you in love of your sins, and would reclaim you -- take it well; the worst they intend is to cure you of your sickness. David was glad for a healing reproof. Psalm 141:5: "Let the righteous smite me, it shall be a kindness; and let him reprove me, it shall be an excellent oil which shall not break my head." Ministers are charged by virtue of their office, to reprove (2 Timothy 4:2). They must as well come with

corrosives as healing balms. Titus 1:13: "Rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith." The Greek word is "cuttingly," as a surgeon searches a wound and then lances it, cutting out the gangrened flesh; but it is to restore him to health. So must the ministers of Christ rebuke sharply so that they may help to save their dying patients. Who is angry with the physician for prescribing a bitter remedy? Why should any be angry with Christ's ministers for reproving when, in regard of their office, they are physicians, and in regard of their concerns they are fathers? But how few are those who will take a reproof kindly! Amos 5:10: "They hate him who rebukes in the gate."

Why do men not love a reproof for sin?

One reason is because they are in love with their sins. It is a strange thing that any should love their disease -- but so it is. Proverbs 1:22: "How long, you simple ones, will you love simplicity?" Sin is the poison of the soul -- yet men love it; and he who loves his sin hates a reproof.

Another reason is because sin possesses men with a lunacy (Luke 15:7). People are mad in sin. Jeremiah 50:38: "They are mad on their idols." When sickness grows so violent that men lie raving and are mad, they then quarrel with their physician and say that he comes to kill them. So when sin has grown to a head, and the disease has turned into a frenzy, then men quarrel with those who tell them of their sin, and they are ready to do violence to their physicians. It shows wisdom, to receive a reproof. Proverbs 9:8: "Rebuke a wise man, and he will love you." A wise man would rather drink a sharp remedy -- than die of his disease.

4. If sin is a soul-sickness -- then do not FEED this disease. He who is wise will avoid those things which will increase his disease: If he is feverish, he will avoid wine which would inflame the disease. He will forbear a dish he loves, because it is bad for his disease. Why should men not be as wise for their souls? You who have a drunken lust, do not feed it with wine; you who have a malicious lust, do not feed it with revenge; you who have an unclean lust, make no provision for the flesh (Romans 13:14). He who feeds a disease -- feeds an enemy. Some diseases are starved; starve your sins by fasting and humiliation. Either kill your sin -- or your sin will kill you!

5. If sin is a soul-disease, and worse than any other -- then labor to be SENSIBLE of this disease. There are few who are sensible of their soul-sickness; they think they are well and have no spiritual sicknesses; they are whole and need no physician. It is a bad symptom to hear a sick, dying man say that he is well. The church of Laodicea was a sick patient -- but she thought she was well. Revelation 3:17: "You say I am rich, and have need of nothing." Come to many a man and feel his spiritual pulse, ask him about the state of his soul, and he will say that he has a good heart and does not doubt that he shall be saved.

How can men be so desperately sick in their souls and ready to drop into hell -- and yet think themselves in a very good condition?

1. There is a spiritual cataract upon their eyes; they do not see their sores. Laodicea thought herself rich because she was blind (Revelation 3:17). The god of this world blinds men's eyes so that they can neither see their disease, nor their Physician. Many bless God that their estate is good, not from the knowledge of their happiness -- but from the ignorance of their danger. When Haman's face was covered, he was near execution. Oh, pray with David, "Enlighten my eyes, that I sleep not the sleep of death" (Psalm 13:3).

2. Men who are sick think themselves well -- from the haughtiness of their spirits. Alexander thought himself for a while to be the son of Jupiter, and no less than a god. What an arrogant creature man is!

Though he is sick unto death, he thinks it too much a disparagement to acknowledge a disease. He thinks that either he is not sick, or he can heal himself. If he is poisoned, he runs to the herb, or rather weed, of his own righteousness to cure him.

3. Men who are sick think of themselves as well -- through self-love. He who loves another will not believe any evil report of him. Men are self-lovers (2 Timothy 3:2). Every man is a dove in his own eye, and therefore does not suspect himself of any disease. He will rather question the Scripture's verity -- than his own malady.

4. Self-deceit, and the deceit of the heart appears in hiding the disease; the heart hides sin as Rachel did her father's images (Genesis 31:34). Hazael did not think that he was as sick as he was; he could not imagine that so much wickedness, like a disease, should lie lurking in him. 2 Kings 8:13: "Is your servant a dog that I should do this vile thing?" As the viper has his teeth hidden in his gums -- so that if one should look into his mouth he would think it a harmless creature -- so though there is much corruption in the heart -- yet the heart hides it and draws a veil over so that it is not seen.

The heart holds a false looking-glass before the eye, making a man appear fair, and his estate very good. The heart can deceive with counterfeit grace; hence men are insensible of their spiritual condition, and think themselves well -- when they are sick unto death.

5. Men take up a good opinion of themselves, and imagine their spiritual estate better than it is through mistaken reasoning. Because they enjoy glorious privileges; they were born within the sound of Aaron's bells; they were baptized with holy water; they have been fed with manna from heaven, therefore they hope they are in a good condition. Judges 17:13: "Then Micah said, Now I know the Lord will do me good, seeing I have a Levite as my priest." But alas! This is a mistake; outward privileges do not save. What is any man the better for the ordinances, unless he is the better by the ordinances? A child may die with the breast in its mouth. Many of the Jews perished, though Christ Himself was their preacher.

The other mistake is set down by the apostle in 2 Corinthians 10:12: "They, measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves with others, are not wise." Here is a double error or mistake.

First, they measure themselves by themselves, that is, they see they are not so bad as they were, therefore they judge that their condition is good. A dwarf may be taller than he was -- yet a dwarf still; the patient may be less sick than he was -- yet far from well; a man may be better than he was -- yet not godly.

Second, they compare themselves with others. They see they are not so heinous and profane as others; therefore they think themselves well -- because they are not as sick as others. This is a mistake; one may as well die of a consumption, as the plague. One man may not be as far off heaven as another -- yet he may never enter heaven. One line may not be as crooked as another -- yet not be straight. To the law and to the testimony; the Word of God is the true standard and measure by which we are to judge of the state and temper of our souls.

Oh, let us take heed of this rock -- imagining our condition better than it is; let us take heed of a spiritual apoplexy, to be sick in our souls yet not sensible of this sickness. Why do men talk of a light within them? The light within them by nature is not sufficient to show them the diseases of their souls; this light tells them they are whole and have no need of a Physician.

Oh, what infinite mercy it is -- for a man to be made sensible of sin and, seeing himself sick, to cry out with David in 2 Samuel 12:13, "I have sinned against the Lord." Would it not be a mercy for a person who is demented, to be restored to the use of his reason? So it is for him who is spiritually distempered and in a lethargy -- to come to himself, and see both his wound and his remedy. Until the sinner is sensible of his disease, the medicine of mercy does not belong to him.

6. If sin is a soul sickness, then labor to get this disease healed. If a man had a disease in his body, a pleurisy or a cancer, he would use all the means available, for a cure. The woman in the gospel who had a hemorrhage spent her whole estate upon the physicians (Luke 8:43). Be more earnest to have your soul cured, than your body. Make David's prayer from Psalm 41:4: "Heal my soul, for I have sinned!" Do you have a consumptive body? Pray to God rather to heal the consumption in your soul; go to God first for the cure of your soul. James 5:14: "Is any sick among you? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him." The apostle does not say, "Let him call for the physician," but "the elders," that is, the ministers. Physicians are to be consulted in their due place -- but not in the first place. Most men send first for the physician and then for the minister; which shows they are more desirous and anxious for the recovery of their bodies -- than their souls. But if soul diseases are more dangerous and deadly, then we should prefer the spiritual cure before the bodily one; "Heal my soul, for I have sinned!"

Until we are cured, we are not fit to do God any service. A sick man cannot work; and while the disease of sin is violent, we are not fit for any heavenly employment. We can neither work for God nor work out our salvation. The philosopher defines happiness, as the operation of the mind about virtue. To be working for God is both the end and the perfection of our life. Would we be active in our sphere? Let us labor to have our souls cured. As long as we are diseased with sin, we are lame and bedridden; we are unfit for work. We read indeed of a sinner's works -- but they are dead works (Hebrews 6:1).

If we are not cured, we are cursed; if our spiritual diseases abide on us -- the wrath of God abides on us.

QUESTION. But how shall we get this disease of sin cured? This brings us to the second thing in the text -- the healing Physician: "the whole need not a physician." Whence observe:

DOCTRINE 2: Jesus Christ is a soul Physician. Ministers (as was said before) are physicians whom Christ, in His name, delegates and sends abroad into the world. He said to the apostles, and in them to all His ministers, "Lo, I am with you to the end of the world" (Matthew 28:20). That is, "I am with you to assist and bless you, and to make your ministry healing." But though ministers are physicians -- yet but under-physicians. Jesus Christ is the chief Physician. It is He who teaches us all our remedies, and goes forth with our labors, else the medicine we prescribe would never work. All the ministers under heaven could not do any cure, without the help of this great Physician. To amplify this I shall show:

That Christ is a soul-Physician.

Why He is a soul-Physician.

That He is the only soul-Physician.

How He heals His patients.

That He is the best Physician.

1. Christ is a soul-Physician. It is one of His titles. Exodus 15:26: "I am the Lord who heals you." He is a Physician for the body. He anointed the blind, cleansed the lepers, healed the sick, and raised the dead (Matthew 8:16). It is He who puts virtue into medicine and makes it healing, and He is a physician for the soul. Psalm 147:3: "He heals the broken in heart." We are all as so many impotent, diseased people: one man has a fever, another a palsy, another a cancer; we are under the power of some hereditary corruption. But Christ is a Soul-Physician. He heals these diseases. Therefore in Scripture the Lord Jesus, to set forth His healing virtue, is typified by the brazen serpent (Numbers 21:9). Those who were stung were cured by looking on the brazen serpent. Just so, when the soul is stung by the old serpent, it is cured by that healing under Christ's wings.

Christ is typified by the Good Samaritan. Luke 10:30, 33-34: "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he fell into the hands of robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine." We have wounded ourselves by sin, and the wound would have been incurable had not Christ, that Good Samaritan, poured in His wine and oil.

Christ as a Physician is typified by the trees of the sanctuary. Ezekiel 47:12: "The fruit thereof shall be for food, and the leaf thereof shall be for medicine." Thus the Lord Jesus, that tree of life in paradise, has a curative virtue. He heals our pride, unbelief, and so on. As He feeds our graces, so He heals our corruptions.

2. WHY Christ is a soul-Physician.

First, it is in regard of His call. God the Father called Him to practice medicine. He anointed Him to the work of healing. Luke 4:18: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel. He has sent Me to heal the broken-hearted." Christ came into the world as into a hospital, to heal sin-sick souls. Though this was a glorious work -- yet Christ would not undertake it until He was commissioned by His Father. "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me -- He has sent Me." Christ was anointed and appointed to the work of a soul-Physician.

Jesus Christ undertook this healing work because of the need we were in of a physician. Christ came to be our Physician not because we deserved Him -- but because we needed Him; it was not our merit -- but our misery -- which drew Christ from heaven. Had He not come, we must of necessity have perished and died of our wounds. Our disease was not minor; it had seized on every part. It made us not only sick -- but dead! And such remedies were necessary, as none but Christ could give.

Christ came as a Physician, out of the sweetness of His nature. He is like the Good Samaritan who had compassion on the wounded man (Luke 10:33). A physician may come to the patient only for gain -- not so much to help the patient -- as to help himself; but Christ came purely out of sympathy. There was nothing in us to entice Christ to heal us; for we had no desire for a physician, nor had we anything to pay our physician. As sin made us sick -- so it made us poor. So that Christ came as a Physician not out of hope to receive anything from us -- but was prompted to it out of His own goodness. Hosea 14:4: "I will heal their backslidings, I will love them freely." Love set Christ to work -- not only His Father's commission -- but His own compassion moved Him to His spiritual healing. King David banished the blind and lame out of the city in 2 Samuel 5:8. Christ comes to the blind and lame and cures them. In love and mercy, He comes with healing under His wings.

3. Christ is the ONLY soul-Physician. Acts 4:12: "Neither is there salvation in any other." There is no other soul-physician besides. The papists would have other healers besides Christ. They would make angels their physicians -- but all the angels in heaven cannot heal one sin-sick soul. Indeed, they are described by their wings in Isaiah 6:2 -- but they have no healing under their wings. Papists would heal themselves by their own merits. Adam ate that apple which made him and his posterity sick -- but he could not find any herb in paradise to cure him. Our merits are rather damning -- than healing. To make use of other physicians and medicines is as if the Israelites, in contempt of that brazen serpent which Moses set up, had erected other brazen serpents. Oh, let us take heed of such false physicians.

Indeed, in bodily sickness it is lawful to multiply physicians; when the patient has advised with one physician, he desires to have others joined with him. But the sick soul, if it joins any other physician with Christ, it surely dies.

4. HOW Christ heals His patients. There are four things in Christ, which are healing.

His WORD is healing. Psalm 107:20: "He sent His Word and healed them." His Word in the mouth of His ministers is healing; when the heart is wounded in desertion, Christ creates the lips which speak peace (Isaiah 57:19). The Word written -- is a repository in which God has laid up sovereign oil and balsams to recover sin-sick souls; and the Word preached -- is the pouring out of these oils, and applying them to the sick patient. "He sent His Word and healed them." We look upon the Word as a weak thing. What is the breath of a man to save a soul? But the power of the Lord is present to heal (Luke 5:17). Christ makes use of His Word as a healing medicine; the remedies which his ministers prescribe, He Himself applies. He makes His Word convincing, converting, and comforting.

But the Word does not heal all; to some it is not a healing -- but a killing Word. 2 Corinthians 2:16: "To the one we are a savor of death unto death." Some patients die of their disease. Such people as sin presumptuously die, though they know a thing to be sin (Job 24:13). They are of those who rebel against the light, and this is dangerous. David prayed in Psalm 19, "Keep back Your servant from presumptuous sins." Such people as sin maliciously die. When the disease comes to this head, the patient will die (Hebrews 10:29). But to those who belong to the election of grace, the Word is the healing medicine which Christ uses. "He sent His Word, and healed them."

Christ's WOUNDS are healing. Isaiah 55:5: "With His stripes -- we are healed." Christ made a medicine of His own body and blood. The Physician died to cure the patient! The pelican, when her young ones are bitten by serpents, feeds them with her own blood to recover them. Thus, when we were bitten by the old serpent, then Jesus Christ prescribes His own blood to heal and restore us. The blood of Christ, being the blood of Him who was God as well as man, had infinite merit to appease the holiness of God, and infinite virtue to heal us.

This is the balm of Gilead, which recovers a soul which is sick even unto death. This balm of Gilead, as naturalists say, is a juice which a little shrub, being cut with glass, weeps out. This was anciently of very precious esteem; the savor of it was odoriferous, the virtue of it sovereign; it would cure ulcers and the stinging of serpents. This balm may be an emblem of Christ's blood; it has a most sovereign virtue in it. It heals the ulcer of sin and the stinging of temptation; it merits for us justification (Romans 5:9). Oh, how precious this balm of Gilead is! By this blood we enter into heaven.

Christ's SPIRIT is healing. The blood of Christ heals the guilt of sin; the Spirit of Christ heals the pollution of sin. The Spirit is compared to oil; it is called the anointing of the Spirit in Isaiah 61, to show the healing

virtue of the Spirit. Christ by His Spirit heals the rebellion of the will, the stone of the heart; though sin is not fully removed, it is subdued.

Christ's ROD is healing. Christ never wounds but to heal; the rod of affliction is to recover the sick patient. David's bones were broken -- so that his soul might be healed. God uses affliction as the surgeon does his lance, to let out the venom and corruption of the soul, and make way for a cure.

QUESTION. But if Christ is a Physician, why are not all healed?

ANSWER 1. Because all do not know they are sick. They do not see the sores and ulcers in their souls. And will Christ cure those who see no need of Him? Many ignorant people thank God that they have good hearts; but that heart can no more be good which lacks grace, than that body can be sound which lacks health.

ANSWER 2. All are not healed because they love their sickness. Psalm 52:3: "You love evil." Many men hug their disease. Augustine said that, before his conversion, he prayed against sin -- but his heart whispered, "Not yet, Lord." He was loath to leave his sin too soon.

How many love their disease more than their Physician! While sin is loved, Christ's medicines are loathed.

ANSWER 3. All are not healed because they do not look for a Physician. If they have any bodily distemper upon them, they immediately send for the physician. Yet their souls are sick -- but they will not go to their Physician, Christ. John 5:40: "You will not come unto Me that you may have life." Christ takes it as an undervaluing of Him -- that we will not send for Him. Some send for Christ when it is too late; when other physicians have given them over and there is no hope of life, then they cry to Christ to save them. But Christ refuses such patients as make use of Him only for a shift. You who scorn Christ in time of health -- Christ may despise you in the time of sickness!

ANSWER 4. All are not healed because they would be self-healers. They would make their duties their saviors. The papists would be their own physicians; their daily sacrifice of the mass is a blasphemy against Christ's priestly office. But Christ will have the honor of the cure, or He will never heal us; not our tears -- but His blood saves.

ANSWER 5. All are not healed because they do not take the medicine which Christ prescribes for them. They would be cured -- but they are loath to take the curing medicines. Christ prescribes them to drink the bitter potion of repentance and to take the pill of mortification -- but they cannot do this; they would rather die than take these! If the patient refuses to take the course the physician prescribes, it is no wonder that he is not healed.

Professors -- you have had many prescriptions to take; have you taken them? Ask your conscience. There are many hearers of the Word who, like foolish patients, send to the doctor for medicines -- but when they have it, they put it up in the cupboard -- but do not take it. It is probable you have not taken the prescription which the gospel prescribes, because the Word has no operation on your hearts. You are as proud, as earthly, and as malicious as ever!

ANSWER 6. All are not healed, because they have no confidence in the Physician. It is observable that when Christ came to work any cure, He first put this question, "Do you believe that I am able to do this?" (Matthew 9:28). This undoes many. "Oh," says the sinner, "there is no mercy for me. Christ cannot heal me." Take heed, your unbelief is worse than all your other diseases. Did not Christ pray for those who

crucified Him? "Father, forgive them." Some of those were saved, who had a hand in shedding His blood (Acts 2:36-37). Why then do you say Christ cannot heal you? Unbelief dishonors Christ; it hinders from a cure; it closes the orifice of Christ's wounds; it staunches His blood. Millions die of their disease, because they do not believe in the Physician.

5. Christ is the BEST Physician. That I may set forth the praise and honor of Jesus Christ, I shall show you wherein He excels other physicians; no physician is like Christ.

He is the most SKILLFUL Physician. There is no disease too hard for Him. Psalm 103:3: "Who heals all your diseases." The pool of Bethesda might be an emblem of Christ's blood (John 5:5). Whoever first after the troubling of the water stepped in, was made whole of whatever disease he had. There are certain diseases that physicians cannot cure, such as a consumption in the lungs, some kinds of obstructions and gangrenes. Some diseases are the reproach of physicians. But there is no disease which can oppose Christ's skill. He can cure the gangrene of sin -- even when it comes to the heart. He healed Mary Magdalene, an unchaste sinner. He healed Paul, who breathed out threatenings against the church, insomuch that Paul stands and wonders at the cure: "But I obtained mercy!" literally, "I was bemedied!" (1 Timothy 1:13).

Christ heals head distempers and heart distempers, which may keep poor trembling souls from despair. "Oh," says the sinner, "never was any so diseased as I!" But look up to your Physician, Christ, who has healing under His wings. He can melt a heart of stone, and wash away black sins in the crimson of His blood! There are no desperate cases with Christ. He has those salves, oils, and balsams which can cure the worst diseases.

Indeed, there is one disease which Christ does not heal, namely, the sin against the Holy Spirit. There is no healing of this disease; not but that Christ could cure this -- but the sinner himself will not be cured. The king may pardon a traitor -- but if he will obstinately refuse the pardon, he must die. The sin against the Holy Spirit is unpardonable because the sinner will have no pardon. He scorns Christ's blood and despises His Spirit; therefore this sin has no sacrifice (Hebrews 10:26, 29).

Christ is the best Physician because he cures the BETTER part, the soul. Other physicians can cure the liver or spleen -- but Christ cures the heart. They can cure the blood when it is tainted -- but Christ cures the conscience when it is defiled. Hebrews 9:14: "How much more shall the blood of Christ purge your conscience from dead works?" Galen and Hippocrates might cure kidney-stones -- but Christ cures heart-stones. He is the best physician who cures the most excellent part. The soul is immortal and angelic. Man was made in the image of God (Genesis 1:27), not in regard of his body -- but his soul. Now if the soul is so divine and noble, then the cure of the soul far exceeds the cure of the body.

Christ is the best Physician, for He causes us to FEEL our disease. The disease of sin, though it is most damnable -- yet is least discernible. Many a man is sin-sick -- but the devil has given him such stupefying drug, that he sleeps the sleep of death, and all the thunders of the Word cannot awaken him. But the Lord Jesus, this blessed Physician, awakens the soul out of its lethargy, and then it is in a hopeful way of recovery. The jailor was never so near a cure as when he cried out, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" (Acts 16:30).

Christ shows more LOVE to His patients than any other physician. This appears so in that long journey He took from heaven to earth. It appears so in that He comes to His patients without being sent for. The sick send for their physicians, and use many entreaties; but Christ comes unsent for. Isaiah 65:1: "I was found

by those who did not seek Me." He meets us with mercy. He entreats us to be healed. If Christ had not first come to us, and, with the good Samaritan, poured in wine and oil, we would have died of our wounds.

This Physician lets Himself bleed -- to cure His patient! Isaiah 53:5: "But He was wounded for our transgressions." Through His wounds -- we may see His great love.

Our repulses and unkindnesses do not drive Christ away from us. Physicians, if provoked by their patients, go away in a rage and will come no more. We abuse our Physician and thrust Him away; we bolt out our Physician -- yet Christ will not forsake us -- but comes again and applies His sovereign oils and balsams. Isaiah 65:2: "I have spread out My hands all the day unto a rebellious people." Christ puts up with wrongs and incivilities, and is resolved to go through with the cure. Oh, the love of this heavenly Physician!

Christ Himself drank that bitter cup which we should have drunk, and by His taking the potion we are healed and saved.

Thus Christ has shown more love than any physician ever did to the patient.

Christ is the CHEAPEST Physician. Sickness is not only a consumption to the body -- but the purse! (Luke 8:43). Physicians charge fees -- but Jesus Christ gives us our medicine freely. He takes no fee. Isaiah 55:1: "Come without money and without price." He desires us to bring nothing to Him but broken hearts; and when He has cured us, He desires us to bestow nothing upon Him but our love -- and one would think that was very reasonable.

Christ heals with more EASE than any other. Other physicians apply pills, potions, or remedies. Christ cures with more ease. Christ made the devil go out with a word spoken (Mark 9:25). So when the soul is spiritually possessed, Christ can heal with a word, nay, He can cure with a look. When Peter had fallen into a relapse, Christ looked on Peter -- and he wept. Christ's look melted Peter into repentance; it was a healing look. If Christ but casts a look upon the soul, He can recover it. Therefore David prayed to have a look from God in Psalm 119:132: "Look upon me -- and be merciful unto me."

Christ is the most TENDER-HEARTED Physician. He has ended His passion -- yet not His compassion. How He pities sick souls! He is not more full of skill, than of sympathy, Hosea 11:8: "My heart is turned within Me." Christ shows His compassion in that He proportions His medicine to the strength of the patient. If medicine is too sharp for the constitution, it endangers the life. Christ gives such gentle medicine as works kindly and savingly. Though He will bruise sinners -- yet He will not break the bruised reed. Oh, the mercy of Christ to poor souls, who feel themselves heart-sick with sin! He holds their head and heart when they are fainting. He brings the cordials of His promises to keep the sick patient from fainting away.

Christians, you perhaps may have hard thoughts of your Physician, Christ, and think that He is cruel and intends to destroy you. But, oh, the workings of His heart towards humble, broken-hearted sinners! Psalm 147:3: "He heals the broken in heart, and binds up their wounds." Every groan of the patient -- goes to the heart of this Physician!

Physicians often prescribe medicine which is harmful to the patient. Sometimes they cannot find the cause of the disease; and sometimes they may give that which is harmful. Or if they do find the cause, they may give that which is good for one thing -- but bad for another. When the liver and spleen are both distempered, the medicine which helps the liver, may hurt the spleen. But Christ always prescribes that medicine which is suitable, and withal He blesses it. If the disease of the soul is pride, He humbles it with

affliction. God turned Nebuchadnezzar to eat grass like an animal -- to cure him of his arrogance. If the disease of the soul is sloth, Christ applies some awakening Scriptures (Matthew 12:11; Luke 13:24; 1 Peter 4:18). If the disease is the stone of the heart, Christ uses proper medicines. Sometimes the terrors of the law, sometimes mercies, and sometimes He dissolves the stone in His own blood! If the soul is faint through unbelief, Christ brings some Scripture cordial to revive it. Matthew 12:20: "A bruised reed He will not break." Isaiah 57:16: "I will not contend forever, neither will I be always angry; for the spirit should fail before me, and the souls which I have made." Thus the Lord Jesus always prescribes that medicine which is proper for the disease, and shall work effectually for the cure.

Christ NEVER FAILS to succeed. Physicians may have skill -- but not always success; patients often die under their hands. But Christ never undertakes to heal any, but He makes a certain cure. John 17:12: "Those whom You gave Me, I have kept, and none of them is lost." Judas was not given to Christ to be healed; but never any who was given to Christ, has ever miscarried.

QUESTION. How shall I know then that I am given to Christ to be cured?

ANSWER. Is it with you as with a sick patient, who sees himself dying without a physician. Are you undone without Christ? Do you perceive yourself as bleeding to death without the balm of Gilead? Then you are one of Christ's sick patients, and you shall never miscarry under His hands. How can any of those be lost, whom Christ undertakes to cure? As He pours in the balsam of His blood, so He pours out the perfume of His prayers for them. John 17:11: "Holy Father, keep through Your own name, those whom You have given Me." Satan could never upbraid Christ with this, that any of His sick patients were lost.

Other physicians can only cure those who are sick -- but Christ cures those who are DEAD! Ephesians 2:1: "You has he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins." A sinner has all the signs of death on him: the pulse of his affections does not beat; he is without breath; he does not breathe after holiness. He is dead -- but Christ is a Physician for the dead! Of every one whom Christ cures, it may be said, "He was dead -- and is alive again" (Luke 15:32).

Christ cures not only our diseases -- but our DEFORMITIES. The physician can make the sick man well; but if he is deformed he cannot make him lovely. Christ gives not only health -- but beauty. Sin has made us ugly and misshapen. Christ's medicines do not only take away our sickness -- but our spots. He not only makes us whole -- but lovely. Hosea 14:4: "I will heal their backslidings." Verse 6: "His beauty shall he as the olive-tree." Jesus Christ never thinks that He has fully healed us, until He has drawn His own beautiful image upon us! Song of Solomon 2:13: "Arise, my lovely one," lovely with justification, lovely with sanctification. Christ not only heals -- but adorns. He is called the Sun of Righteousness in Malachi 4:2, not only because of the healing under His wings -- but because of those rays of beauty which He puts upon the soul (Revelation 12:1).

Last, Christ is the most bountiful Physician. Other patients enrich their physicians -- but here the Physician enriches the patient! Christ advances all His patients. He not only cures them -- but crowns them! (Revelation 2:10). Christ not only raises from the bed -- but to the throne! He gives the sick man not only health -- but heaven!

Good news this day -- there is balm in Gilead! There is a Physician to heal sin-sick souls! The angels that fell had no physician sent to them; we have. There are but few in the world to whom Christ is revealed; those who have the gold of the Indies, lack the blood of the Lamb. But the Sun of Righteousness is risen in our hemisphere with healing in His wings. If a man were poisoned, what a comfort it would be to him to

hear that there was an herb in the garden which could heal him! If he had a gangrene in his body, and were given up by all his doctors, how glad he would be to hear of a physician who could cure him! O sinner, you are full of deadly cancer -- you have a gangrened soul. But there is a Physician who can recover you. There is hope! Though there is an old serpent to sting us with his temptations -- yet there is a brazen serpent to heal us with His blood.

If Christ is a Physician, then let us make use of this Physician for our diseased souls. Luke 4:40: "When the sun was setting, all those who were sick with divers diseases were brought unto Him, and He laid His hands on everyone of them and healed them." You who have neglected a Physician all this while, now when the sun of the gospel and the sun of your life are setting, bring your sick souls to Christ to be cured. Christ complains that though men are sick even to death -- yet they will not come or send for the Physician. John 5:40: "You will not come to Me that you might have life." In bodily diseases the physician is the first one who is sent for; in soul diseases the Physician is the last one who is sent for.

Objections Answered

But there may be many sad objections that poor souls make as to why they do not come to Christ, their soul-Physician.

OBJECTION 1. Alas, I am discouraged to go to Christ to cure me -- because of my unworthiness. I am just like the centurion who sent for Christ about his sick servant in Luke 7:6: "Lord, do not trouble Yourself, for I am not worthy that You should enter under my roof." Christ was coming to heal his servant -- but the centurion would have staved off Christ from coming. "I am not worthy." So many a trembling soul says, "Christ is a Physician -- but who am I that Christ should come under my roof or heal me? I am unworthy of mercy." Just as Mephibosheth said to King David in 2 Samuel 9:8, "What is Your servant, that You should look upon such a dead dog as I am?"

ANSWER. Now to such as have their hearts broken with a sense of their unworthiness, and are discouraged from coming to Christ to heal them, let me say these five things by way of reply:

1. Who did Christ shed His blood for -- but such as are unworthy? 1 Timothy 1:15: "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners." Christ came into the world as into a hospital, among a company of lame, bed-ridden souls.

2. Though we are not legally worthy, we may be evangelically worthy. It is part of our worthiness -- to see our unworthiness. Isaiah 41:14: "Fear not, you worm Jacob." You may be a worm in your own eyes -- yet a dove in God's eyes.

3. Though we are unworthy -- yet Christ is worthy. We do not deserve a cure -- but Christ has merited mercy for us. He has a store of blood, to supply our lack of tears.

4. Who was ever saved, because he was worthy? What man could ever plead this title, "Lord Jesus, heal me because I am worthy?" What worthiness was in Paul before his conversion? What worthiness was there in Mary Magdalene, out of whom seven devils were cast? But free grace pitied and healed them. God does not find us worthy -- but makes us worthy.

5. If we never come to Christ to be healed until we are worthy, we must never come. And let me tell you, this talking of worthiness savors of pride; we would have something of our own to offer. Had we such preparations and self-excellencies, then we think Christ should accept us, and we might come and be

healed. This is to pay our Physician a fee to be healed. Oh, do not let the sense of unworthiness discourage you. Go to Christ to be healed. "Arise, He calls you!" (Mark 10:49).

OBJECTION 2. But I fear I am not within Christ's commission. I am not of the number that shall be saved; and then, though Christ is a Physician, I shall not be healed.

ANSWER 1. We must take heed of drawing desperate conclusions against ourselves; it is high presumption for us to make ourselves wiser than the angels. All the angels in heaven are not able to resolve the question of who are elect and who are reprobates.

ANSWER 2. You who say that you are not within Christ's commission, read over Christ's commission and see who it is He comes to heal. Luke 4:18: "He has sent me to heal the broken-hearted." Has God touched your heart with remorse? Do you lay to heart your gospel unkindnesses? Do you weep more out of love for Christ than out of fear of hell? Then you are a brokenhearted sinner, and are within Christ's commission. A bleeding Christ will heal a broken heart!

OBJECTION 3. But my sins are so many that surely I shall never be healed. I am sick with many diseases at once.

ANSWER. You have the more need of a Physician. One would think that was a strange speech of Peter to Christ in Luke 5:8: "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man," Should it not rather be, "Lord, come near me"? Is it a good argument to say to a physician, "I am diseased, therefore depart from me"? No, rather, "Come and heal me!" Our sins should serve to humble us -- not to beat us away from Christ. I tell you if we had no diseases, Christ would have no work to do in the world.

OBJECTION 4. But my disease is inflamed and grown to a paroxysm; my sin is greatly heightened.

ANSWER. The plaster of Christ's blood -- is broader than your sore! 1 John 1:7: "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin." The blood of the Lamb takes away the poison of the serpent. All diseases are alike to Christ's blood. He can cure the greatest sin as well as the least. Have you a bloody issue of sin running? The issue of blood in Christ's side can heal you!

OBJECTION 5. But mine is an old inveterate disease -- and I fear it is incurable.

ANSWER. Though your disease is chronic -- Christ can heal it. Christ does not say, "If this disease had been found in time, it might have been cured." He is good at old sores. The thief on the cross had an old festering disease -- but Christ cured it; it was well for him that His Physician was so near. Zaccheus, an old sinner, a tax collector, had wronged many a man in his time -- but Christ cured him. Christ sometimes grafts His grace upon an old stock. We read that Christ cured at sunset (Luke 4:40). He heals some sinners at the sunset of their lives.

OBJECTION 6. But after I have been healed, my disease has broken out again. I have relapsed into the same sin, and therefore I fear there is no healing for me.

ANSWER. It is rare that the Lord leaves His children to these relapses, though through the suspension of grace and the prevalency of temptation, it is possible they might fall back into sin. These sins of relapse are sad. It was an aggravation of Solomon's offense that he sinned after the Lord had appeared to him twice (1 Kings 11:9). These sins after healing, open the mouth of conscience to accuse, and stop the mouth of God's Spirit which should speak peace. These sins exclude from the comfort of the promise; it is

as it were sequestered. But if the soul is deeply humbled, if the relapsing sinner is a repenting sinner, let him not cast away the anchor of hope -- but have recourse to his soul-Physician.

Jesus Christ can cure a relapse. He healed David's and Peter's relapse. 1 John 2:1: "If any man sins, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous." Christ appears in the court, as the Advocate for the client. As He poured out His blood upon the brazen altar of the cross, so He pours out His prayers at the golden altar in heaven. Hebrews 7:25: "He ever lives to make intercession for us." In the golden work of intercession, Christ presents the merits of His blood to His Father -- and so obtains our pardon. He applies the virtue of His blood to us -- and so works our cure. Therefore, do not be discouraged from going to your physician; though your disease has broken out again -- yet Christ has fresh sprinklings of His blood for you. He can cure any relapse!

OBJECTION 7. But there is no healing for me. I fear I have sinned the sin against the Holy Spirit.

ANSWER 1. The fear of sinning it is a sign that you have not sinned it. Why do you think that you have sinned the sin against the Holy Spirit? Every grieving of the Spirit of God, is not that fatal sin. We grieve the Spirit when we sin against His illumination. The Spirit being grieved may depart for a time, and carry away all its honey out of the hive, leaving the soul in darkness (Isaiah 50:10). But every grieving of the Spirit is not the sin against the Holy Spirit. When a child of God has sinned, his heart smites hi

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