

# Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

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THE GREAT PHYSICIAN AND HIS PATIENTS.

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## A Sermon

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“They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick.”—Matthew ix. 12.

THIS was Christ's apology for mingling with publicans and sinners when the Pharisees murmured against him. He triumphantly cleared himself by shewing that according to the fitness of things he was perfectly in order. He was acting according to his official character. A physician should be found where there is work for him to do, and that it is where healing is required. There was evidently none among the Pharisees, if their own opinion of themselves were to hold good, for they were perfectly whole. There was much to do, according to their own admission, among the publicans and sinners, for they were sore sick; therefore our Lord was in his place, and fittingly executing his office when he sought out those who needed him.

I. We shall have no time for a preface this morning, and therefore let us enter at once into the text by observing that **MERCY GRACIOUSLY REGARDS SIN AS A DISEASE.**

Sin is more than a disease. If it were only a sickness, men were to be pitied for suffering it; but the element of the perverse will, of voluntary rebellion and designed offence enters into sin, otherwise it were far less truly sin; and this makes it more than a sickness, and worse than a malady. Let us not think that the picture of disease really does set forth all the heinous nature of sin; it is only a generous way in which Mercy chooses to look at it and to deal with it. As Justice views it, all the plague, and venom, and virus, and contagion in the world would be sweet and harmless, compared with one single evil thought or imagination; but Mercy leniently and graciously chooses, in order that it may have a sort of apology for its operations, under the great plan of salvation, to view sin as a disease. It is justified in such a view, for almost everything that may be said of deadly maladies may be said of sin. Let us come to particulars.

Sin is an *hereditary* disease: we are born with a tendency towards it, nay we are born in it. The taint is in our blood: the very centre of our being feels the infection. Born in sin and shapen in iniquity, in sin did our mothers conceive us, and our offspring in like measure received from

us that original sin which is part of our fallen nature. Every man born into the world bears within him the seeds of sin, in the bias and current of his mind, nor is this to be wondered at, for "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one." "How can he be clean that is born of a woman?"

Sin, like sickness, *is very disabling*. A sick man cannot carry burdens, climb mountains, run in service, walk with perseverance, or leap for joy. The occupations and the pleasures of other men are things from which he is shut out. Even so does sin prevent our serving God. We cannot pray to him: we cannot praise him aright. In every duty we are weak, and for every good we are feeble.—There is not a single moral power of manhood which sin has not stripped of its strength and glory. If we would run in the way of God's commands, then sin has lamed us; if we would grasp God's promises, evil has paralysed us; if we would see into the mysteries of grace, guilt has blinded us; if we would hear the voice of God, transgression has smitten us with deafness; and if our voices would swell the song of cherubim and seraphim, alas, the plague of our heart within has made us dumb. Of all of us in our measure it may be said through sin, "unstable as water, thou shalt not excel." Sin weakens man's nature for all good.

Sin also, like certain diseases, is a *very loathsome* thing. Some diseases are so extremely disgusting that scarcely can their names be mentioned; but, oh, they are sweetness itself when compared with sin. The most putrid poisonous air that ever blew from a fever hospital, never had such foulness in it as dwells in sin. Pest-houses, and lazarettos are clean and safe compared with the haunts of vice. In God's esteem, and in the esteem of all holy minds, the most detestable, obnoxious, dreadful thing in the whole world is moral evil. If that could be got rid of, all other evil would cease to be. This is the mother and nurse of all evil, the egg of all mischief, the fountain of bitterness, the root of misery. Here you have the distilled essence of hell; the "quintessence," as the old divines would say of everything that is unlovely, disreputable, dishonest, impure, abominable—in a word—damnable.

Like some diseases, sin is *fearfully polluting*. As the leper cannot be tolerated abroad; as the plague-stricken are separated from their fellows, even so sin separates us from communion with God and holy beings. It is not alone *their* unwillingness to associate with us, as *our* horrible unfitness to have fellowship with them. It is dreadful to bear about with us a cancer, which has reached the stage of sickening rottenness; and yet this is not half so terribly disgusting as sin is to the heart of God. God is very gracious, but he cannot endure sin in his presence, and hence to set forth his hatred of it in type and figure he forbade diseased persons to enter his courts, or even to mingle with the camp of his people. For the unclean there was a plain and clear

separation until he had been purified. Sin necessarily shuts us out from God's presence. Into his holy fellowship we must not come, we dare not attempt to come; the fire of his anger would consume us, as it did Nadab and Abihu, if we as sinners should venture near him apart from Christ Jesus. We cannot stand at the altar to officiate as priests before God, though this was the proper lot of manhood, by reason of the leprosy that is on our brow. Our praising God, simple as that might seem, cannot be acceptable in his sight, because of the defilement of our uncircumcised lips. Almighty grace must take away our uncleanness or we cannot worship. Iniquity is a polluting thing. Everything we do and everything we think of grows polluted through our corruption. The unclean person could not touch a vessel, sit on a bed, or come near a garment without defiling it; and our sin has much the same effect. Our prayers have stains in them, our faith is mixed with unbelief, our repentance is not so tender as it should be, our communion is distant and interrupted. We cannot pray without sinning, and there is filth even in our tears. Well was it for Israel that there was an Aaron to bear the sins of their holy things, and blessed is it for us that Jesus takes the sins even of our best works, and casts them into the depths of the sea.

Sin too may be likened to many sicknesses from its being *contagious*. A man cannot be a sinner alone. "One sinner destroyeth much good." The seeds of sin are winged like thistle-down. You may shut up the leper in a lazarus house, but there is no such way of shutting up sin, it *will* get out and spread itself. A man, if he be evil, will make others evil. His children will imitate him; his dependants, feeling his influence, will walk in his footsteps. Even his neighbours cannot look upon his sin without being in some measure infected by it, for "the thought of evil is sin." There is a fierce contagiousness in every form of moral evil; like fire among stubble it spreads most rapidly.

Sin moreover, like many diseases, is very *painful*; and yet, on the other hand, at certain stages it brings on a *deadness*, a numbness of soul preventing pain. The most of men are unconscious of the misery of the fall. They think themselves rich and increased in goods, having need of nothing, when they are naked, and poor and miserable. Sin causes a madness which makes sick souls dream that they are in sound health. They talk as though heaven were their heritage, when they are sitting on the brink of hell. But when sin is really discerned, then it becomes painful. I would sooner suffer—I know not what may be the pangs of some disease, but I feel sure I may say this—I would sooner suffer a complication of all the ills that flesh is heir to, than suffer the plague of a guilty, awakened, enlightened, quickened conscience; for when conscience accuseth a man there is no rest for him either day or night; its little finger is heavier than the loins of all other griefs. When sin

becomes exceeding sinful before the eye, then there is a gloom and a heaviness of spirit which crushes the soul into despair, making life bitter, as Pharaoh did the lives of the children of Israel. Speak of Egyptian darkness, it was bright as noon-day compared with the darkness of a mind borne down with its own guilt. Oh what wretchedness was mine before I laid hold on Christ. There are some who feel not so acutely the agony of conflict with sin, but it was *my* lot to feel a horror of great darkness, verging upon despair, so that had I not soon found a Saviour, my soul had chosen strangling rather than life. Believe me, there is no pain so bitter as the pain of sin, and no curse so heavy as the curse which comes from the black lips of our own iniquities; and yet I would to God that some of you felt it now that ye might not feel it hereafter. I would that this whip would fall upon your backs, that you might be flogged out of your self-righteousness, and made to fly to Jesus Christ and find a shelter there.

The disease of sin is *deep-seated*, and has its throne in the heart. It does not lie in the hand or foot, it is not to be removed by amputation, much less by outward applications; no lancet can reach it, it is impossible to cauterize it. The skill of physicians can often extract the roots of disease, but no skill can ever reach this. It has entered the marrow, the very core and centre of our being, and only the Divine one is able to purge us from it.

“No outward forms can make me clean  
The leprosy lies deep within.”

It is in its own nature wholly *incurable*. “Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots?” If so, then can he that is accustomed to do evil learn to do well. Can a brine fountain send forth sweet waters? Shall the thorn suddenly yield olives? Can the cataract which has been for ever dashing down the steep, reverse its course and return towards the river-head? Shall fire suddenly become gentle and lose its consuming power while the fuel is round about it? Shall the lion of himself eat straw like the ox? Shall the leopard bleat like a lamb? Such changes, being changes of nature, are only to be wrought by divine strength; and so it is not possible for the disease of sin ever to be cured by any human remedies. Man cannot cure himself. He may reform, he may drive the disease inward, and prevent its coming out upon the skin; he may so model, and guide, and restrain himself, that the coarser forms of sin which are condemned among men may not appear in him; but the virus, the essential poison of sin, no man can ever extract from his own heart, nor can another man do it for him. Jehovah Rophi, the healing Lord, must manifest his omnipotent power. The utmost religiousness, the most devout prayers, the greatest possible circumspection, will not avail

to remove the taint of sin, if they spring from an unrenewed heart. The carnal mind is enmity against God, and is not reconciled to God, neither, indeed, can it be.

And so, let us close the story of this sickness of sin, by observing that it is a *mortal* disease. It kills not just now, but it *will* kill ere long. Not merely shall the body die as the result of sin, but the soul must be killed for ever with eternal wrath. O sinner, thou little knowest what thy sin will bring thee to; but if thou wilt read in God's Word, thou shalt discover that it will bring thee to the worm that never dies, and to the fire that never can be quenched. Perhaps to-morrow thou mayest know what a full-blown sin is; perhaps to-morrow, I said—that word may be prophetic to some of you—but if not to-morrow, it is but a matter of time, a few months, more or less, and you will be in torment. Sin, when it is ripened, bringeth forth death and damnation. Oh! thou dost not know what that word “to be damned” means! Thou canst play with it sometimes, and lightly hurl it at thy fellow creatures; but couldst thou only once hear the shriek of a damned soul, couldst thou only once see a spirit cast out from the presence of God into eternal misery, surely it would compel thee to cry, “What must I do to be saved.”

Enough of this: it is clear that there is a very excellent parallel to be drawn between sin and disease. Humbling as it is, yet the fact is nevertheless most certain, that we are all suffering under the disease of sin.

II. But now, secondly, IT PLEASURES DIVINE MERCY TO GIVE TO CHRIST THE CHARACTER OF A PHYSICIAN.

Having deigned to consider sin as a disease, which is a great proof of mercy, it now graciously confers upon Christ the character of a physician. Be it for ever understood that Jesus Christ never came into the world merely to explain what sin is. Moses had for his mission the exposition of sin, Christ has for his mission the eradication of it. We know what sin is through the law: that is as much as the law can do for us. Christ comes, not merely to tell us what it is, but to inform us how it can be removed. Jesus did not come to apologize for sin; Christ never died in order that sin might appear less sinful, that God might be less severe towards sin, or hate it less. God forbid! We never see sin to be so black as when we view its evil as revealed in the sufferings of Jesus, nor is God's wrath ever more intolerable than when we behold it consuming his only-begotten Son. “Behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me, wherewith the Lord hath afflicted me in the day of his fierce anger.” Christ did not come to lay a flattering unction to men's souls, to prevent distress of conscience, to say to them “Peace, Peace!” where there is no peace; no, he came to cure sin, not to film it over;

not to make men forget the disease by drugging them with presumptuous draughts of consolation, but by absolutely removing that which is the cause of their dread and of their fear to make them whole. Christ Jesus did not come in order that you might continue in sin and escape the penalty of it; he did not come to prevent the disease being mortal, but to take the disease itself away. Many people think that when we preach salvation, we mean salvation from going to hell. We do not mean *that*, but we mean a great deal more; we preach salvation *from sin*; we say that Christ is able to save a man; and we mean by that that he is able to save him from sin and to make him holy; to make him a new man. No person has any right to say, "I am saved," while he continues in sin as he did before. How can you be saved from sin while you are living in it? A man that is drowning cannot say he is saved from the water while he is sinking in it; a man that is frost-bitten cannot say, with any truth, that he is saved from the cold while he is stiffened in the wintry blast. No, man, Christ did not come to save thee *in thy sins*, but to save thee *from thy sins*; not to make the disease so that it should not kill thee, but to let it remain in itself mortal, and, nevertheless, to remove it from thee, and thee from it. Christ Jesus came then to heal us from the plague of sin, to touch us with his hand and say, "I will, be thou clean."

When a physician presents himself, one of the first enquiries is, "Is he a regular practitioner? Has he a right to practise? Has he a diploma?" Very properly, the law requires that a man shall not be allowed to hack our bodies and poison us with drugs at his own pleasure without having at least a show of knowing what he is at. It has been tartly said that "a doctor is a man who pours drugs, of which he knows little, into a body of which he knows still less." I fear that is often the case. Still a diploma is the best safeguard mortals have devised. Christ has the best authority for practising as a Physician. He has a divine diploma. Would you like to see his diploma? I will read you a few words of it: it comes from the highest authority, not from the College of Physicians, but from the God of Physicians. Here are the words of it in the sixty-first chapter of Isaiah. "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek. He hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted." He has a diploma for binding up broken hearts. I should not like to trust myself to a physician who was a mere self-dubbed doctor, who could not show any authorization; I must have him know as much as a man can know, little as I believe that will probably be. He must have a diploma; it must be signed and sealed too, and be in a regular manner, for few sensible men will risk their lives with ignorant quacks. Now Jesus Christ has his diploma and there it is—God hath sent him to bind up the broken-hearted. The next thing you want in a physician is *education*; you want to know that he is thoroughly qualified; he must have walked the hospitals. And certainly our Lord Jesus Christ has done so. What form of disease did he not meet with? When he was here among men it pleased God to let the devil loose, in order that there might be more than usual venom in the veins of poor diseased manhood; and Christ met the devil at his darkest hour and fought with the great enemy when he had full liberty to do his worst with

him. Jesus did indeed enter into the woes of men. Walked the hospital! Why the whole world was an infirmary, and Christ the one only physician, going from couch to couch, healing the sons of men.

Something more be it observed, may be said of him, he is experimentally as well as by education qualified in the healing art. I have heard of a celebrated physician that he was wont to try the effect of his medicines upon himself. This has been done in our Master's case. There is not a single disease which he does not know experimentally, for he himself took our sicknesses and infirmities. He was tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin. He knows his patient's case by having passed through the case himself. There is no brokenness of heart, there is no grief of soul which Jesus Christ has not himself participated in; and though you may say he knows not sin in its infection, yet he knows sin in its imputation, and is, by having suffered all its penalties, perfectly well acquainted with it.

One likes a physician, too, who has a *wide practice*. One does not care for a man's merely understanding his tools; we like to know whether he has used them, and whether he has been successful in his art. Blessed be the name of the beloved Physician! he has the widest imaginable practice. These eighteen hundred years he has been healing sin-sick souls—what am I saying?—these six thousand years he has been “mighty to save;” for before he bodily gave himself to the cross, the virtue of the medicine of his own blood had begun to operate upon the sons of men. O souls, ye may see in heaven the multitudes whom he has healed. There, before the eternal throne, you may view the myriads who have been delivered from all sorts of diseases through the power and virtue of his touch. You need not fear to trust yourselves in his hands, for even the hem of his garment healeth our diseases.

To sum up the virtues of this Physician in a very few words: His cures are very *speedy*—there is life in a look at him; his cures are *radical*—he strikes at the very centre of the disease, and hence his cures are very *sure* and certain. He never fails, and *the disease never returns*. There is no relapse where Christ heals; no fear that one of his patients should be but patched up for a season, he makes a new man of him: a new heart also does he give him, and a right spirit does he put within him. He is a physician, one of a thousand, because he is well-skilled in *all* diseases. Physicians generally have some *specialité*. They may know a little about almost all our pains and ills, but there is usually one disease which they have studied the most carefully, one part of the human frame whose anatomy is as well-known to them as the rooms and cupboards of their own house. Jesus Christ has made the whole of human nature his *specialité*. He is as much at home with one sinner as with another sinner, and never yet did he meet with an out-of-the-way case that was out of the way to him. He has had extraordinary complications of strange diseases to deal with, but he has known exactly in one moment, with one glance of his eye, how to treat the patient. He is the only universal doctor ‘at home’ in every case; the medicine he gives is a catholic one; it heals in every instance, never failing. *His medicine is himself!* If there be a smart caused by it, it is borne upon his own back. “By his stripes we are healed.” “His flesh is meat

indeed; his blood is drink indeed:" he himself casts out the disease from poor dying men. We do but trust him, and sin dies: we love him, and grace lives; we wait for him, and grace is strengthened; we see him, as we soon shall, and grace is perfected for ever. O blessed physician for this desperate disease!

III. I cannot, however, tarry longer on that point, but come to the third, which is the main one that I am driving at; namely, **THAT NEED IS THAT ALONE WHICH MOVES OUR GRACIOUS PHYSICIAN TO COME TO OUR AID.**

He says, "They that are whole need not a physician," and you will see the natural conclusion from his line of reasoning is, "I do not go to the whole, because they do not need me; I go to the sick because they do need me; the reason why I go anywhere is because I am needed." I believe, dear friends, though doubtless there are some exceptions, that if you were to take the medical profession through, you would perceive larger-heartedness, and more humanity there than almost anywhere; and you would find that there is scarcely a physician, certainly none known to me, who would, if he had two urgent cases to consider, make any distinction between the two, except that he would give his first attention to the sufferer who needed him most. Of course if the matters are both trivial, common sense allows a man to select that which will best remunerate him for his skill, but in imminently dangerous cases, necessity decides. The true physician is born with a physician's heart, and feels for the woes of his fellow men; and, though a man has obtained a diploma, he is no physician, and ought not to practise if his soul is not in his work, and his heart full of benevolence to the afflicted.

The true physician having a sympathy and an intense desire to be of service, if there be two persons requiring him, would say, "*This* is in the more imminent danger, I shall go there first." Now what is most certainly only fair to acknowledge concerning human physicians, we must admit with a far greater cogency concerning the great physician of souls. If there were two sinners both perishing, and Christ were not able to save at the same moment more than one, he would go to that one first which needed him most. This is his rule. He acts according to sovereignty, but that sovereignty is under the control of his own infinite mercy, and if he hears a cry from two hearts to-day, if he should give any preference, the preference would be given to that which was the cry of the most lost, the most abject, the most needy sinner. Now think this over and you will see that it is true, and most consolatory. What was it made Christ a physician at all? Was it not because men were sick with sin? Suppose they had been perfect, would Christ have ever been a Saviour if men had not been lost? Brethren, it would have been a work of supererogation; it would have been a folly, a monstrous folly, on his part, to undertake an office which was not required of him. It is *sin* which makes room for his work as a Saviour. I say it—you will understand me—he is only a Saviour because there are sinners, and his Saviourship is based upon our sinfulness. He takes that position because he is wanted. Again, what was the main thought which was upon him when he was compounding his great medicine? What was it made him shed great drops of blood?

Was it human guilt, or human merit, think you? Why guilt, and guilt alone. What made him give his back to the scourgers, and his cheeks to the smiters? What made him stretch his arms to the cross and give his feet to the nails? What made him bear the unsufferable wrath of Almighty God? Was it man's goodness? Why you cannot think of such a thing; it was human vileness, villany, degradation, iniquity, which made such sufferings as these all needful. As I see then Christ in his great surgery, compounding the Almighty medicine which is to expel the disease from the veins of humanity, I see him every moment thinking of sin! sin! sin! Man's sin makes him die.

And now that he is in heaven, beloved, what is it that Christ is thinking of there? "He maketh intercession"—what for? For the righteous? If they were self-righteous, perfectly righteous, they would not need intercession from him. "He maketh intercession for the transgressors." He is exalted on high—what for? To reward the good? Nay, verily, but to give repentance and remission of sins—evidently to those who have no repentance and whose sins have need to be forgiven. Up in heaven, Christ still has his eye upon sinners—sinners are the jewels whom he seeks. Where, again, was Jesus Christ when he was on earth? Did he not spend the most of his time among sinners? Was he not always dealing out healing to the sick, life to the dead, and so on? You might ask again, on the other hand, to whom is the gospel sent? What is it? "This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." That is the gospel—"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; he that believeth not shall be damned;" so that those who are bidden to believe are evidently those who deserve to be damned. Need, need, need alone quickens the physician's footsteps, bringing Jesus from the throne of glory to the cross, and in his spiritual power, bringing him every day from the throne of his Father down to broken-hearted heavy-laden souls.

Now, this is very plain talking, and you all receive it, but still the most of people do not understand it. A minister, when he had done preaching in a country village, said to a farm-labourer who had been listening to him, "Do you think Jesus Christ died to save *good* people, or *bad* people?" "Well, sir," said the man, "I should say he died to save good people." "But did he die to save bad people?" "No, sir; no, certainly not, sir." "Well, then, what will become of you and me?" "Well, sir, I do not know. I dare say you be pretty good, sir; and I try to be as good as I can." That is just the common doctrine; and after all, though we think it has died out among us, that is the religion of ninety-nine English people out of every hundred who know nothing of divine grace: we are to be as good as we can; we are to go to church or to chapel, and do all that we can, and then Jesus Christ died for us, and we shall be saved. Whereas the gospel is, that he did not do anything at all for people who can rely on themselves, but gave himself for lost and ruined ones. He did not come into the world to save self-righteous people; on their own showing, they do not want to be saved. He comes because we need him, and therefore he comes only to those who need him; and if we do not need him, and are such good respectable people, we must find our own way

to heaven. Need, need alone, is that which quickens the physician's footsteps.

IV. We therefore come to another point, upon which we shall not stay many minutes. It follows, therefore, and the text positively asserts it, that THE WHOLE—THAT THOSE WHO HAVE NO GREAT NEED—NO NEED AT ALL—WILL BE UNAIDED BY CHRIST.

Of course they ought to be left alone. No physician in his senses thinks of sending a prescription, no surgeon thinks of sending his bottles and his boxes of pills to people who profess to be perfectly well. The prescription would be put into the fire and the physic thrown in the streets—the man himself would reckon it to be a gross insult. Christ did not come into the world merely to insult humanity. If humanity be the fine thing it thinks it is, then let it exalt itself as it may, and let it go on with the health it thinks it possesses; let it work out its own salvation if it will allow that even this is required. To send a physician to those who are whole is an insult to the physician too. He knocks at the door, "Who is ill here?" is the first question. "Nobody, we are all well, thank you, sir: we are all well, we thank God: we are not as other men are down the street there, we have no fever, the small-pox never comes here, we never catch the scarlatina, we have nothing of the kind, sir; we are glad to see you—glad to see you, but we have nothing the matter with us." The physician would find at once that he had been hoaxed in being asked there. And that truly is the treatment Jesus Christ gets from a great many people. You hear them say, "Lord have mercy upon us, *miserable* sinners"—dressed in satin and all sorts of furbelows, and as good people as you would find in all the parish; and if you come to question them, they are not "*miserable* sinners" at all. I would like to chalk "*miserable* sinners" on their backs and see whether they could bear it. It is the same with you—you come here, and if I pray about sinners, there are some of you who say, "Yes, yes, we are sinners;" and yet if I came round and said, "Now let us take the ten commandments—have you broken them?" I daresay there are some here who would say, "Really I do not know that I have in particular done anything wrong; I do not feel that I have erred very remarkably." No, the fact is you insult Christ by sending to him when you are not ill, and it is nothing better than impertinence, though you think it to be a compliment. The whole have no need of a physician: there is no need for a physician's skill. "Why," saith the doctor, as he looks round upon all his store of knowledge, "what is the good of this?—a fool is as good as I am to a man who is not ill. If you were sick, I would try to do my best, but as there is nothing the matter with you, there is no room for me." You may fetch any crossing-sweeper, and he will be of as much use to you as the best physician, when you are not ill. So if you do not confess yourselves really to be sinners, Jesus will have no preciousness in your eyes, he will be but an ordinary person. If you are not sick, there is no likelihood of gratitude. Men will not thank a physician for doing nothing. You will never be thankful to Christ for saving you, if you do not feel that you want saving. Then again, there will be no honour to him. Suppose you went to heaven, and entered there in the same self-righteous frame of mind as you are in now, what would you say? "Well done I." There would be no honour to Christ, no glory to Jesus.

A man must have a deep and conscious need of Christ, or else he cannot illuminate the throne of Christ with glory by his praise, when he shall enter heaven.

Now methinks there is some sweet music in what I have been saying to those of you who do need, though it must sound like a mockery to those of you who think you do not need it.

V. To conclude, it follows then, that **THOSE WHO ARE SICK SHALL BE HELPED BY JESUS.** Let the question go round these galleries and this area this morning, "Am I sick? Am I sinful? Then I have a need of Jesus, and need is the only thing that will bring Jesus to me?" "Oh!" says one, "but I am so very sinful." Then you have a very great need, and there is room for very great power on the Saviour's part, and that display of grace shall give him very great glory. Sinner, believe on him, that he can save thee; trust him to save thee and let not thy great sin keep thee back. "Oh but I have so many sins!" Then again thou hast the greater need, and as it is need that brings the doctor, so thy many needs will be so many knocks at his door, so many rings at his bell; he will come the faster only plead earnestly every one of these thy sins, and ask him to have pity upon thee. "Yes," say you "but I have been so long sick." Then your case is a very bad one, and there is the more need of his care. He healed the woman that had been thirty-six years disabled, and if you have been thirty-six years—ay, if it be eighty years, he is still able to heal, and your need—let us keep to that—your need is your only plea. You have evidently a very strong plea, for you have a very great need. "Ah," says another, "but I have relapsed since I thought I was healed—I have backslidden." Now there is a special promise given to that form of sickness, "I will heal their backsliding." He does not specially say "I will heal their drunkenness and so on," but here is a special promise for a special case. Now you want him. This is a great sin, this backsliding. Go to him—ask him the rather to come to you. "Yes," says another, "but I cannot feel my sin as I would." This only proves how much you need the Lord Jesus, since you have not even that form of fitness which lies in a deep sense of need; you cannot even feel, for you have the stone in the heart. Oh make this a plea with him. Say "Jesus I want thee more than anybody else, for there are some who have a little health; they can feel they are diseased, but I have not even that. I want thee, oh I want thee more than any." Perhaps you will say "But I cannot believe on him as I would." Then add *that* also to your other sins, confess your unbelief, tell him you have great need of him to give you faith; and go to him, and oh may he help you to believe that he is able to forgive this sin also. "Well," says one, "but I grow worse the more I think about these things." I am glad of it, dear friend, this growing worse is a part of the cure. Suppose you should keep on growing worse, if you should get to feel yourself as black as the devil and as damned as a lost soul, yet still while you are in this world the great physician can heal you, and you have still this great plea, that you want him, you want him. "Oh," says one, "I cannot see how I can plead my need as the only thing." My dear friend, what would you plead, suppose you were publicly begging. If I had to turn to the trade of a beggar, believe me, I would not wear this black coat, or, if I

did, I would take care to have it pretty well riddled with holes; because the great thing you have to do when you plead in the street, is to convince the passers-by that you are in need. Some lean wretched-looking fellows have faces which are worth a fortune to them—their cheeks white with consumption—their bodies thin and lean as with starvation—with scarce a handful of rags on them, they squat down in some corner and write on a paper “I am starving,” and as you pass them you cannot help it, your hand goes into your pocket—“Here is a case of destitution,” you say—and you give them relief. Imitate these vagabonds in all but their deception. Use their logic, the rational argument, that need is a beggar’s best plea. You *are* destitute, you *are* starving; spread your case before God. The best case you can make out in order to prevail with God, is a *bad* one. Let it be as bad as it can be and I venture to say the worst is the best. Do not be apologising, attempting to make your sins less than they are; tell him you are a wretch undone without his sovereign grace, and there guilty and vile, and self-aborred, fall flat before him, say, “Lord Jesus, if thou wantest some one to heal; I am just the man. If thou wantest a case that can be blazoned abroad and that will make the public ears ring and ring again with the praise of thy all-healing medicine, I am thy man, Lord. If thou wantest one full of sores and wounds and putrifying disease like Job upon a dunghill; if thou wantest one that is very far gone, that is rotten through and through, Lord, I am thy man.” O think you, sinner, he is just your Saviour, for while he loves to meet with such cases as yours, you should rejoice to meet with such a Saviour as he is; and all you are asked to do is to believe that he can save you and to trust him to do it. If you knew him you would believe him. He loves to save. He can save the vilest. Trust him then, and may the Spirit of God so lead you to understand him, that you can rely upon him, and, if you do, he will say, “Sinner, thy sins be forgiven thee, be of good cheer, go on thy way rejoicing.” May God bless these words, for Christ’s sake. Amen.

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