

A SINGULAR BUT NEEDFUL QUESTION NO. 955

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, OCTOBER 16, 1870
BY C. H. SPURGEON
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON

*“Wilt thou be made whole?”
John 5:6*

JESUS spoke to the impotent man who had been afflicted for thirty-eight years, and inquired of him, “Wilt thou be made whole?” It seems a very strange question to ask. Who would not be made whole? Would the poor man have been lying at the pool if he had not been anxious for healing? Must there not have been in the very look of his face, as he gazed upon the Savior, an answer to that question, superseding all necessity of putting it?

Yet as our Lord spoke no superfluous words, it may be that He perceived that the paralysis of the man's body had to a very painful degree benumbed his mind and brought on a paralysis of his will. He had hoped till his heart was sick, he had waited till despondency had dried up his spirits, and now it had almost come to this, that he scarcely cared whether he was made whole or not. The bow had been bent so long that all its elasticity was destroyed. He had hungered till appetite itself was gone. He was now listless, with an indifference made up of sullen repining at his disappointments and blank hopelessness for the future.

The Savior touched a chord which needed to vibrate when He inquired as to his will. He aroused by that question a dormant faculty, whose vigorous exercise, it may be, was one of the first essentials to a cure. “Wilt thou be made whole?” was the inquiry of a profound investigation, the scientific probe of a great physician, the resurrection from the grave of a great master power of manhood.

Now, in the matter of preaching the Gospel today, it may seem almost an impertinent question for me to put to each one of you gathered here who as yet are not saved, “Wilt thou be made whole?” “Surely,” you will reply, “everyone desires salvation.” Believe me, I am not quite so certain as you are of the truth of that statement.

“But our being here,” says one, “our having been here so long, and our attentive listening to the Gospel, go to prove that we are willing enough to be made whole if we could but discover where health is to be found, and what is that balm of Gilead of which so much is said.” And yet I should not wonder if there are many here who through having waited long are beginning to be paralyzed in their once earnest desires. And others who having been long here and never having been very anxious, at last have come to occupy these pews as a mere matter of custom, and have no hearty will towards the wholeness of soul which the Good Physician is always prepared to give to those who seek His help.

I am persuaded that instead of the question being an unnecessary one, it is in every congregation one of the first to be pressed upon the hearer's attention. To get a truthful answer to this inquiry from the inmost soul of every hearer is my object now, believing that it will be a very healthful thing to you, even if you are honestly compelled to give a negative answer. It will at least expose the condition of the heart to itself, and that may be helpful towards something better.

As God may help me, I shall labor to press upon you very earnestly this question this morning, O unsaved man or woman, “Wilt thou be made whole?”

I. This question is needful to be put, in the first place, because IT IS A QUESTION NOT ALWAYS UNDERSTOOD.

It is not the same as this question, “Wilt thou be saved from going to hell?” Everyone answers “Ay,” to that. “Wilt thou be saved so as to go to heaven?” At once, without deliberation, everyone says, “Yes.”

For the harps of gold, for the songs of blessedness, for the eternity of immortality, we have all a heart and a strong desire, but that you see is not the question. Heaven and its joys come out of what is proposed in our question, as a result, as a consequence, but that is not the matter in hand just now.

We are not now saying to the thief, “Will you have your imprisonment remitted?” we are putting it to him in another shape, “Are you willing to be made an honest man?” We are not now saying to the murderer, “Are you anxious to escape the gallows?” we know his reply. The question we are putting to him is, “Wilt thou be made righteous, upright, kind, forgiving, so as to give up all this evil of thine?”

It is not, “Art thou willing to sit at the festival of mercy, and eat and drink as those do who are in health?” but “Art thou thyself willing to be made spiritually healthful, to pass through those divine processes by which the foul disease of sin may be cast out, and the healthiness of sanctified manhood may be restored to thee?”

To help you to know what that question means, let me remind you that there never were but two men who were whole, perfectly whole. And those may be called the two Adams, the first and the second Adam. These both showed us in their own persons what a man would be if he were whole.

The first Adam in the garden—we should all be willing to be in paradise with him, we should all be delighted to walk beneath those never-withering boughs, and gather ever-luscious fruits without toil, without suffering, without disease, without death. We all should be glad enough to welcome the return of the primeval gladness of Eden, but that is not the question. It is should we be willing to be made mentally and morally what Adam was before his sin brought disease into manhood?

And what was Adam? Why, he was a man who knew his God, knew many things besides, but mainly and chiefly knew his God. Whose delight was to walk with God, to commune with Him, to speak with Him as a man speaketh with his friend, until he fell he was one whose will was submitted to the will of his Creator, anxious and desirous not to violate that will, but in all things to do what his Lord should bid him.

He was placed in the garden to till the ground, to keep and dress the garden, and all that he did with joy. He was a whole, a sound man. His whole enjoyment consisted in his God. It was his one object as a living creature to do the will of Him that made him. He knew nothing of rioting and drunkenness. For him there were no lascivious songs or wanton deeds. The flash of debauchery and the glitter of profligacy were far from him. He was pure, upright, chaste, and obedient.

How would you like to be made like him, sinner, you who are doing your own will, you who have sought out many inventions, you who find happiness in this sin and the other filthiness, would you be willing to come back and find your happiness in your God, and henceforth serve Him and none beside?

Ah! perhaps you say blindly, “Yes,” and it is possible you know not what you say. If the truth were more clearly before you, you would obstinately refuse to be made whole. Life would under such an aspect seem to you tame, joyless, and slavish. Without the fire of lust, the excitement of drink, the laughter of folly, and the pomp of pride, what would existence be to many? To them our ideal of sound manhood is but another name for bondage and misery.

Take the other instance of a man who was whole. It was Jesus, the second Adam. Dwelling here among the sons of men, not in a paradise, but in the midst of obloquy, temptation, and suffering, yet was He a whole, sound man. Sickneses He took upon Himself, as to His body, and our sins were reckoned to Him as our substitute, but in Him was no sin. The prince of this world searched Him through and through, but could find no unsoundness in Him.

The perfection of our Savior’s manhood consisted in this—that He was “holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners.” He was holy, that is, in its root, the same thing as “whole.” He was a complete, perfect, uninjured, untainted man. He was whole towards His God. It was His meat and drink to do the will of God that sent Him.

Jesus as man was man as God would have man, perfectly conformed to His right position. He was as He came from the Maker’s hand, without blot, without loss, without excrescence of evil, and without the absence of any good thing. He was whole and holy. Hence he was harmless, never inflicting ill on others

in word or deed. Undefined, never affected by the influences that surrounded Him so as to become false to His God or unkind to man. Undefined, though blasphemy passed through or by His ear, yet it never polluted His heart. Though He saw the lust and wickedness of man carried to its climax, yet He Himself shook off the viper into the fire, and remained without spot and blameless.

He was also separate from sinners, not drawing around Him a Pharisaic cordon, and saying, "Stand by, for I am holier than thou," but eating with them, and yet separate from them, and never more separate than when His benignant hand touched them, and when He entered most deeply into sympathy with them in their sorrows. He was separate by His own mental elevation, moral superiority, and spiritual grandeur.

Now, would you wish to be like Jesus? There is the question. Probably if you were, it would involve in you much of His experience. You would be laughed at, you would be scoffed, you too would be persecuted, and unless providence restrained your foe you also might be brought to death. But taking Christ for all and all, would you be willing to be made like Him, to have torn away from yourself much real evil which you now admire, and to have implanted in you much real good, which perhaps at this moment you do not appreciate? Would you be willing now to be made whole?

I can imagine that you say, "I want to be like Jesus, I anxiously desire it," and yet permit me gently and affectionately to whisper in your ear that if you knew what I meant, if you knew what Jesus was, I am not so sure that your will would very vehemently incline that way. I am afraid that many a struggle, and many a rebellion, would arise in your heart if the process were being carried on towards making you whole as Jesus Christ was whole.

Still further to illustrate the meaning of the question, "Wilt thou be made whole?" let me remind you that when a man is whole, complete, and what a man should be, there are certain evil propensities which are expelled, and certain moral qualities which he is sure to possess. For instance, if a man be made whole before God, he is made honest before men. No man can be said to be whole while he is still guilty of injustice in his trading, in his thinking, in his conversation, or in his actions towards his neighbors.

Sinner, you have been in the habit of perpetrating in your business much that would not stand the tests of God's all-searching eye. You often say in your trading things that are not true, you excuse them by the assertion that others do the same. I am not here to listen to your excuse, but I am about to ask you earnestly, "Wilt thou be made whole?"

Are you desirous to be made from this time a thoroughly, strictly, punctiliously honest man? No more lying puffs, no more exaggerations, no more overreaching, and taking of advantage. Come now, what think you of this state of things? Why, there are some who could not carry on their business at this rate. "The trade is rotten, and if you do not fall into its practices you cannot make a living. The district is low and beggarly, and none can thrive in it but cheats. We would have to shut up the shop if we were perfectly honest."

"Why," cries one, "I should be eaten up alive in this age of competition. I cannot believe that we are to be so excessively conscientious." I see how it is, you do not want to be made whole.

He who is quite whole becomes in all respects a sober man. "Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man; but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man." And "the kingdom of God standeth not in meats or drinks," yet still both in meat and drink men do frequently sin, and especially in the sin of drunkenness.

Now I suppose there is no drunkard but what at least, when he is sober, anxiously desires to be saved. But drunkard, understand the question, it is not this—wouldst thou go to heaven? but this—wouldst thou give up thy drunkenness, and no longer delight thyself in those cups of excess? Now what sayest thou? Would you from this moment have done with all this rioting and wantonness, and cast them all away?

Perhaps in the morning some would say, "Yes," when the eyes are red, and the woe of excess is on them. But how about the eventide when the merry company surrounds the man, and the wine sparkles in the cup, would he then be made whole, and renounce that which ruins his body and his soul? Ah! no.

Many say, "Ay, I would be made whole," but they do not mean it, and the dog that returns to its vomit, and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire.

To be made whole involves in a man the production of universal truthfulness. Now, there are persons who cannot brook to speak the truth. To them two must always be twenty. To their eyesight the faults of any neighbor are crimes, and the virtues of any, except their especial favorites, are always tinged with vice. Naturally they have a malicious judgment towards others, they are envious of anything that is honorable in their fellow man.

Now, what sayest thou, sir? Are you willing to be made whole, and from this hour to speak nothing but the truth towards God and towards man? I am afraid many a tongue that is glib now would have little to say if it said nought but truth, and many a man might and would, if he were honest enough to say it, refuse the benediction of being made perfectly truthful.

So in the matter of forgiveness. A man who is made whole can forgive even to seventy times seven. When you cannot forgive an injury, it is because your soul is sick. When a wrong is resented strongly, you are ill for the moment, when it is resisted constantly you have a chronic disease upon you.

Some persons are so far from wishing to know how to forgive, that they would almost pray that they might live and die to gratify the passion of revenge. They would follow the man who has done them an injury through this world and the other too, and be damned with him if they might have the satisfaction of seeing him amidst the flames. Sweet is revenge to many men, and it is useless for a man to say, "I would be made whole," while he still cultivates malice, and bears ill-will towards his fellow man.

I might thus pass over one after another of the virtues and the vices, and show that my text is not quite such a simple question after all as some people think. There are some men who are afflicted with a miserly, grasping disposition. If they were whole they would be generous, they would be kind to the poor, they would be ready to give of their substance to the Lord's work. But would they be made whole if it were left to their choice this morning?

Ah, no. They think generosity to be weakness, and charity sheer folly. What is the good of having money and giving it away? Say they. "What can be the good of getting it but to hold it? and he is the wise man who can hold it fastest and part with as little of it as may be." The man does not want to be made whole, sir.

He counts his paralyzed hand and ossified heart to be the marks of health. He reckons himself to be the only mentally healthy man about, though his narrow-mindedness and soul-starvation are visible to all. He is a very skeleton and an anatomy of sickness, and yet he believes himself to be the paragon of health.

Those who admire their failings have evidently no wish to be free from them. "What a beautiful cataract I have in my eye," says one, "What a precious carbuncle decorates my limb," says another. "What a delightful bend this is in my leg," says a third. "What a comely hump adorns my back," says another. Men speak not thus concerning their bodily diseases, or we would think them mad, but they often glory in their shame, and rejoice in their iniquities.

Whenever you meet with a man who has a fault which he mentally elevates into a virtue, you have a man who would not wish to be made whole, and who would scorn the physician's visit if he waited at his door. And such persons are common in every street.

Let me also remark, if a man be made whole there are not only moral virtues which will abound in him, but spiritual graces. For a man who is whole is sound in spirit as well as in outward character. What then, would happen to a man if he were made whole in his spirit? I reply, first, You see that Pharisee there, he is thanking God that he is quite as good as he should be, and a great deal better than most people.

Now, if that man is ever made whole, he will say, "God be merciful to me a sinner," but if I were to ask him whether he would like to change places with the publican, he would reply, "Why should I? He is a degraded and debased wretch, the language which he uses is very appropriate for him, I am glad he

uses it. It would be very degrading to me to make the same confession as he does, and I do not intend doing it.” The man does not want to be made whole, he thinks he is whole already.

He that is made whole becomes a self-renouncing man. Paul was whole when he said, “Not having my own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.” When he counted his own righteousness to be but dung that he might win Christ and be found in Him, he was a whole man.

Sickly men think their own righteousness good enough, and wrap themselves in it, and stick a little sham jewelry of ceremony and outward form thereon, and then conclude that they are right enough for heaven. They are in such a fever of pride that they rave about their fancied godness, while real goodness they call cant and hypocrisy.

He that is whole spiritually is a man of habitual prayer. He is accustomed to feel constant gratitude, and so to exhibit continual praise. He is a man of abiding consecration, whatsoever he does he does it unto God, seeking God’s glory in it. His mind is fixed upon things unseen and eternal. His heart is not enslaved by the things that are seen, for he knows that they are vanity.

Now, if we were to appeal to many, and they fully knew what we meant by it, and say, “Wouldst thou be made whole? Would you from this hour become a prayerful man, a praiseful man, a holy man, a God-serving man?”

I believe that the mass even of our congregations, if they spoke honestly, would say, “No, we do not want to be made whole. We would like to go to heaven, but we do not want this. We desire to escape from hell, but we do not wish to practice all this Puritanic precision which you call holiness. No. We would enjoy ourselves with sinners first, and go to heaven with the saints last. The poison is too sweet to give up, but we too will have the antidote by and by. We would fain breakfast with the devil, and sup with Christ. We are in no hurry to be made pure, our tastes for the present lead us in another direction.”

II. So, having explained the question, I shall, as strength holds out, go on to notice in the second place, that THIS QUESTION IS CAPABLE OF A GREAT MANY REPLIES, and therefore it is the more needful that it should be asked and answered.

1. First, there are some here whose only reply to this question may be called *no answer at all*, that is to say, they do not want to hear or consider anything of the sort. “Wilt thou be made whole?” “Well, yes, no—we do not quite know what to say, we do not want to be bothered about it. We are young people. There is plenty of time for us to think of these things. We are business people. We have something else to do besides worrying our minds with religion. We are wealthy persons. We really must not be expected to look at these things, as poor and coarse-minded persons are required to do.”

Or “We are sickly, and really, our attendance to our health takes up too much time to allow us to be troubled with theological difficulties.” Anything, I see, to put away the one thing needful from your thoughts. The poor soul is most precious, and yet least esteemed.

Oh, how some of you trifle with your souls. How you play with your immortal interests! I did so once myself. If tears of blood could express my regret for having so done, I would fain weep them, for the loss of time which comes through a long carelessness with regard to our soul’s interests is something very solemn, a loss of time which even mercy cannot restore to us, which even the grace of God cannot give back.

I would, young people, that these things were on your minds. Oh, how earnestly I would that these questions were seen by you to be important, yea, pressingly, overwhelmingly important to you, so that you could not shake off religious inquiry, nor keep away from your spirit the loving pressure of the Holy Spirit who would arouse you. Would to God that you were made wise enough to desire the noblest development of spiritual life, and the destruction of everything detrimental to your best welfare.

Be considerate, I pray you, concerning the first and chief question! Do not give it the go-by. Your dying hour may be much nearer than you think, the tomorrow in which you hope to consider these things may never arrive. I would put it to you again, if anything be deferred, let it be something that may

safely wait. If anything be postponed let it not be an eternal thing, a spiritual thing, but “seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness.”

Now, there are some persons who have had a great deal of religious concern, and have not shaken it off either, and yet their answer to this question, “Wilt thou be made whole?” is not a very earnest one. Years ago they were aroused, when they heard a sermon they used to treasure up every word. Their prayers were importunate, and their desires were eager, but they have not obeyed the command which saith, “Believe in Christ and live.” They have become habituated to unbelieving misery, to a continuance beneath the burden of sin which they will persist in carrying, while there is a dear Savior waiting to relieve them of the burden.

And now at this time their answer to the question is neither one thing nor the other. They groan out feebly, “I wish I did wish, I would that I did will, but oh! my heart is hard—

*‘If aught is felt ’tis only pain
To find I cannot feel.’*

I will to will, but scarce dare say I will.” See to what a state you have brought yourself, and may God help you now to make a desperate effort with that will of yours, may His quickening Spirit bless this affectionate word to your heart, and may you say, “Ah! yes, out of my deep despair, out of the pit wherein there is no water, I do yet cry to Thee, my God. Out of the belly of hell do I desire deliverance. I will, I will, I would be saved, O give me grace that I may be made whole.”

May none of you continue to be numbered with those who virtually give no answer to the question.

2. And secondly, there are too many who give very *evasive replies* to the question. To them I must speak. Wilt thou be made whole? My dear hearers, I am anxious to put this question to every unconverted one, but I anticipate that from several I shall get no distinct reply.

I shall hear one say, “How am I to know whether I am God’s elect or not?” Beloved, that is not the question, that question cannot be answered at this stage of the proceedings, it shall be answered by and by. Meanwhile, why do you need to bring up that subject, except it be to blind your eyes to the solemn inquiry which the text would raise?

Wilt thou, or wilt thou not, be made whole? Come, man, do not shirk the question. Come to it and face it like a man. Are you willing to be reconciled to God, and to be obedient to Him, or not? Say yes or no, and speak out. If you wish to be God’s foe, and to love sin and unrighteousness, say so, you will be honest with yourself, and see yourself in the true light. But if indeed you would be purified from sin, and be made holy, say so—it will be no great thing after all to say nothing at any rate, to boast of, it is but a will, and that is nothing whereof to glory.

“Well,” says another, “I have not the power to cease from sin.” Again I say that is not the question. There must evermore be drawn a distinction between the will and the power. God will give the power, rest assured, in proportion as He gives the will. It is because our will is not there that the power is not there. When a feeble will comes, a feeble power comes, but when the will becomes intense then the power becomes intense too. They rise and fall together.

But that is not the query. I do not say, “What canst thou do?” but “What wouldst thou be?” Would you be Holy? Are you earnestly, honestly anxious to be this day set free from the power of sin? There is the question, and I do pray you, for your soul’s sake, look into your heart and answer this inquiry as in the sight of God.

“But I have been so guilty in the past,” saith one, “my former sins alarm me.” Again, though I am glad you have a sense of your sin, I would remind you that this is not the question. It is not how sick you are, but are you willing to be made whole? I know you are a sinner, and a much worse one than you think yourself to be, however black your sin is to your own eye, it is ten times more black to God’s eye, and you are an utterly condemned and lost sinner by nature.

But the question now is, “Wilt thou be made whole?” It is not, “Wilt thou have the past forgiven, and be delivered from the penalty of it?” Of course you would. But would you be set free from the lusts that have been your delight, from the sins that have been your darlings? Would you be delivered from the desires of your flesh and of your mind, the things that your heart hungers after? Would you be made as the saints are, as God is, holy, set free from sin? Is that the yearning of your spirit, or is it not?

3. Now, I shall pass on to observe that there are a great many persons who *practically say*, “No,” to this. They do not evade it, but they honestly say, “No.” Nay, I must retract that word. I question whether they honestly say, “No,” they virtually say, “No,” by their actions. “I would be made whole,” saith one, and yet when divine service is over he goes back to his sin.

A man says he would be cured of his disease, and yet he indulges again in that which gave the disease, is he untruthful or insane? The eating of a certain meat may be the cause of disease—the doctor tells the patient so. He says he desires to be healed, and yet he falls back at once upon the very dish that caused his sickness. He is a liar, is he not? And he that says he would be made whole, and yet dallies with his old sin, does he not lie to himself and his God?

When a man would be made whole, he frequents the places where healing is given. Yet there are some who very seldom go up to the house of God, who go perhaps but once on the Sabbath, who now and then hear the Gospel, or attend places because they are called places of worship, where the Gospel is not preached, where the conscience is never harrowed, where the demands of God’s law and the promises of God’s Gospel are never fully insisted on. Yet are they quite content with having gone there, and think they have done well, like a man who being sick does not go to the physician who understands the case, but calls in at any quack’s shop where there is a profession made of curing, though never one was cured.

Such a person does not desire to be made whole. He would not act so if he did.

How many, again, hear the Gospel but do not hear it attentively! A telegram on the Exchange—they read it with both their eyes—will there be a rise or fall of stocks? An article from which they may judge of the general current of trade—how they devour it with their minds, they suck in the meaning, and then go and practice what they have gathered from it.

A sermon heard, and lo, the minister is judged as to how he preached it—as if a man reading a telegram should say the capital letter was not well inked on the press, or the dot on the “i” had dropped off the letter, or as if a man reading an article of business should simply criticize the style of the article, instead of seeking to get at its meaning, and act upon its advice.

Oh, how men will hear and think it to be the height of perfection to say they liked or disapproved of the sermon! As if the God-sent preacher cared one doit whether you did or did not like his sermon, his business being not to please your tastes, but to save your souls, not to win your approbation, but to win your hearts for Jesus, and bring you to be reconciled to God.

Liking is hardly to be thought of in the question, seldom enough is a patient enamored of a surgeon’s lancet. The surgeon who conscientiously removes the proud flesh, or prevents a wound from healing too rapidly, cannot expect admiration for his use of the knife while the sufferer yet feels it. Nor does the preacher, when faithfully declaring the truth, expect men to commend him with their tastes, if their consciences commend him it is enough.

Ah, my hearers, you give us listless hearing, critical hearing, anything but practical hearing, and all this goes to prove that after all, though you crowd our houses of prayer, you do not want to be made whole.

Too many take up the Gospel as a man of reading may take up a surgery book to amuse himself with a smattering of the art, but not to find out what will touch his own case, or remove his own sickness. So you do with this Bible, you read it as a sacred volume, but not as bearing upon your own best interests. How little you know of deep earnest heart-longing to find Jesus, to be reconciled to God and to be delivered from the wrath to come! There are men who both by their non-hearing and their hearing, say, “We do not want to be made whole.”

Many there are, again, who do not desire to be made whole because being made whole would involve their losing their present position in society. They do not want to part with their ungodly gains or wicked companions. Religion would involve them in some degree of persecution. They would not like to be sneered at as a Methodist or Presbyterian. They could not afford to go to heaven if the road were a little rough. They would prefer to go to hell so long as the road which leads there is smooth and pleasant. They count it better to be lost with the approbation of fools, than to be saved with the derision of the wicked.

They think it inconvenient to be gracious, irksome to be pious, disreputable to be devout, foolish to be too exact. They would fain have the crown without the fight, the reward without the service. They would enjoy the sweets of soul health, but not lose the advantages of associating with the leprous and defiled. Alas! poor fools.

4. Thank God, there are some who can say, “Yes, yes, I would be made whole.” And of their case I am going to speak in the next place.

III. WHEREVER AN HONEST, AFFIRMATIVE ANSWER IS GIVEN TO THIS QUESTION, WE MAY CONCLUDE THAT THERE IS A WORK OF GRACE COMMENCED IN THE SOUL.

If any one of my hearers can earnestly say, “Yes, my great longing is to be set free from sin,” my dear friend, I am thrice happy to be privileged to speak to you this morning. If you say, “It is not fear of punishment, sin is punishment enough for me, if I could be in heaven and yet be a sinner such as I am, it would be no heaven to me. I want to be clear from every fault both of thought, and word, and deed, and if I could be perfect I should be perfectly happy, even if I were sick and poor.”

Well, if the Lord has made you long after holiness, there is in your heart already the embryo of grace, the seed of everlasting life. Ere long you shall rejoice that you are born again, and are passed from death unto life.

“Oh,” say you, “I wish I could see that, I wish I could feel it!” I do not believe that any utterly graceless person ever could have hearty, earnest, intense longings after holiness for its own sake.

Now, if you would get the joy and peace that is to come out of this fact, I have to say to you very much what Jesus said to the poor man at Bethesda. He said, “Take up thy bed, and walk.” So now this morning, hear you the word of the Lord—trust you now, at once, in the finished work of Jesus Christ, who as a substitute was punished for your guilt. Rely on Him, and you shall be a joyous as well as a saved soul.

“Have I the power to believe in Christ?” saith one. I answer, “Yes, you have the power. I would not say to every man, ‘Thou hast the power to exercise faith,’ for the lack of will is the death of moral power. But if you be willing you have the right, you have the privilege, you have the power, to believe that Jesus died for you, that God who has made you to long after holiness, has prepared holiness for you, and the instrument by which that will work it in you now is your faith. The same Spirit who in you works to will, is in you working in you to do of His own good pleasure. Look you then, to Christ and be saved.”

I pray that some of you may come to perfect peace this morning by looking to Christ. “I want holiness,” say you. Yes, and it may seem a strange thing, but true is it that while you look after holiness in yourself you will never have it, but if you look away from yourself to Christ, then holiness will come to you.

Even now, that very desire of yours has come to you from Him, it is the beginning of the new birth in your soul. Look, I pray you, away, right away, even from your best desires to Christ on the cross, and this day shall be the day of your salvation.

It may seem a very little thing to have a desire, but yet such a desire as I have described is no little thing, it is more than human nature ever produced of itself and only God the Eternal Spirit can implant it. I am persuaded that a living, saving faith always goes with it, and sooner or later comes to the surface, and brings joy and peace therewith.

IV. But now, lastly, WHERE THIS QUESTION IS ANSWERED IN THE NEGATIVE, I must remind you, IT INVOLVES MOST FEARFUL SIN.

I could wish I had not to preach on this last point, but I must, painful as it is. There are some here, there are many elsewhere, who are not willing to be made whole. You, my unconverted brethren, are thus unwilling. Face that now, I pray you, as you will have to face it soon. It is just this. You prefer yourself to God, you prefer to please yourself before pleasing Him, you prefer sin to holiness. Look at it closely and fairly. Sin is your own choice, your own present deliberate choice. You are now making it, and have often made it, and will, I fear, continue to make it, if God's grace does not prevent.

Look it in the face, for soon, on a dying bed, you will see the whole matter in the light of eternity. You will then discover that you preferred the pleasures of this life to heaven. You preferred the gaieties and amusements, and self-righteousnesses, and prides, and self-wills of a few fleeting years to the glory and the bliss of perfectly obeying Christ, and being in His presence forever.

Oh! when you come to die, and certainly when you live in another state, you will curse yourself for having made such a choice as this. When you lie a-dying unsaved it will come to you thus, "I am not here an unsaved man unwillingly, but I would not be made whole, I willed not to be a believer, I willed to be impenitent. I heard the Gospel, I had it put before me, I deliberately willed to put it behind me, and to remain what I am, and now I am dying unforgiven and unholy, and that of choice."

Remember, no spiritually unsound man can enter heaven. He must be made whole, or be shut out of glory. We cannot stand in the most holy place until we are made perfect. Then you, O unhealed soul, remaining as you are, will never stand in God's presence, and you choose, you deliberately choose, never to be admitted to the courts of paradise.

Furthermore, and oh! how this will strike you in a short time (how short I know not, nor do you), there being no entrance into heaven for you, you having chosen not to enter heaven, there will remain but one other thing, namely, for you to be driven from His presence into the eternal burnings of His wrath. This will surely be one of the stings of hell, that you perish of your own accord. How will you cry, "I chose this, I chose this. Fool that I was, I willed this." For what is hell? It is sin full-blown. Sin is evil in the conception, hell is sin in its development.

What thoughts will be yours in hell? "I chose that which has involved me in a misery from which there never can be any escape, in a death out of which there can be no deliverance. I must die to God, to holiness, to happiness, and exist forever in that everlasting death, that eternal punishment, and all because I would have it so, and as the result of my own free will."

Do look that in the face, I pray you. It seems to me to be the most dreadful element about the whole of the lost sinner's case. If I could when cast into hell, say, "I am here because of God's decree, and for no other reason," I could find something with which to harden my spirit to endure the misery of my lost condition, but if I shall be compelled in hell to feel that my ruin is of myself altogether and only, and that I perish for my own sin, my personal rejection of Christ, then is hell, hell indeed. These flames, are they of my own kindling? This prison house, is it my own building? That door so fast as never to open, is it my own barring? Then the last relic of consolation is taken away from my soul forever.

But my dear hearer, I hope you say, "I do desire to be made whole." Then let me again remind you that the place to find the fulfillment of that desire is at the foot of the cross. Stand there and hope in the great Redeemer, there is some life in you already, the dying Savior will increase it. Stand at the foot of the cross where fall the precious drops of blood, view the flowing of His soul-redeeming blood, and hope you, nay, believe you that He shed that blood for you, and you are saved.

Go your way, you who would be made whole, for Jesus says, "I will, be thou clean."

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—JOHN 5:1-30

Taken from The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit C. H. Spurgeon Collection. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.