

HEALED OR DELUDED? WHICH?**NO. 1658**

**A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MAY 7, 1882,
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“They have healed the hurt of the daughter of My people slightly,
saying, Peace, peace; when there is no peace.”
Jeremiah 8:11.*

*“Heal me, O Lord, and I shall be healed; save me, and I shall
be saved: for You are my praise.”
Jeremiah 17:14.*

THE people among whom Jeremiah dwelt had received a grievous hurt, and they felt it, for they were invaded by cruel enemies, their goods were plundered, their children were slain, and their cities burned. Jeremiah, with true love to his nation, warned them that the cause of all their trouble was that they had forsaken their God. They had turned aside from the living God, and had made gods of the idols of the nations round about them, and so had provoked Jehovah to jealousy. Therefore He chastened them sorely, and plagued them again and again, even as He had threatened them from of old. He took up the quarrel of His covenant, and He made them smart indeed. Jeremiah tried to show them that the only way to be healed of their hurt was to be healed of their sin, that if they would give up their idolatry and all the infamous wickedness that grew out of it, and turn to the true God and obey His commandments, then brighter days would come. Their conscience must have told them that all this was true, but alas, Jeremiah preached to them in vain. As the old classic prophetess Cassandra was doomed forever to speak the truth and never to be believed, so was Jeremiah, the people heard him, but they regarded him not. Meanwhile, certain pretenders to prophecy opposed Jeremiah, and sought to win the confidence of the nation. They came with “Thus says the Lord” upon their lips, blasphemously pretending to be speaking in the name of Jehovah when Jehovah had not sent them, nor did they seek His glory. These suggested to the people easier remedies than repentance, they should make an alliance with Egypt, and in that way beat off the Assyrians. They should send a certain amount of tribute to the great king, and thus buy off his armies. They buoyed up the people’s hopes with vain confidences, and took them away from repentance and return to God. No good came of their teachings—they did but film the wound of the nation and left the deadly venom still within. The hopes which they excited lasted but for a little time, and then died out in blank despair. They had not touched the root which bore the wormwood. They had made light of the national sin. They had healed the hurt of Judah slightly, saying, “Peace, peace,” when there was no peace.

Today God’s servants, who are the true successors of the prophets, have a task before them sterner even than that of the ancient seers. It is not ours to point to smoking ruins and the carcasses of the unburied dead—plain evidences of a grievous hurt, but our work is to deal with spiritual sickness, and to come among a people who confess no hurt. Great multitudes of our hearers do not welcome the news of a heavenly remedy because they are not aware that they are sick. They are not only sound in wind and limb, but in head and heart. From the crown of their head to the sole of their feet they have scarcely a blemish on them, or if they have some little spot here and there, yet they are much superior to the general run of mankind and need no special spiritual surgery. A physician who has to commence his practice by convincing his neighbors that they are sick has not a very hopeful sphere before him. Such is our work, we have first of all to declare in the name of the God of the truth, that man is fallen, that his heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked, that he is a sinner doomed to die, and such a sinner that there is no reclaiming him unless the Ethiopian can change his skin and the leopard his spots. Truths so humiliating to human pride are by no means popular. Men prefer to hear the smooth periods of those

who parade the dignity of human nature. The very phrase grates on my ears, talk of the dignity of a dunghill and you are as near the mark. Man, viewed as fallen, descends below the level of the beast which perishes, for the beast has not offended its Creator. See how Adam's proud descendants rage against this truth. To persuade them of it is a work so hard as to be utterly hopeless unless the Spirit of God Himself shall undertake it. It is a divinely wise arrangement that He has undertaken it, as it is written, "When He, the Spirit of truth, is come He shall convince the world of sin."

When that great labor is accomplished we have yet another remaining, namely, to excite in men a desire to seek healing. Many there are who confess their disease, but the disease of sin has worked in them a spiritual lethargy, so that they find a horrible rest in their lost estate, and have no longing to rise to spiritual health, of which, indeed, they know nothing. They are guilty, and willing to remain guilty, inclined to evil, and content with the inclination. Hundreds live and die in this condition. They know that there is a wrath to come on account of sin, but they put far from them the evil day, and amuse themselves with the mirth of the present. They do not deny that a great change must be undergone by them before they can enter heaven, but then there is time enough for this, for even at the 11th hour they may be called by grace. They are willing to run the risk of gasping out a last penitential prayer, and so they give mercy a denial, refusing the Good Physician, because they are afraid of being well too soon. Ah, me! We must bring them out of this. They will perish unless they are quickened out of this indifference; they will sleep themselves into hell unless we can find an antidote to the opiates of sin. Like the rich man, of whom we read that in hell he lifted up his eyes being in torments, they will dream on till their awakening will be too late. Would to God they might lift up their eyes while there is yet a hope of their beholding Christ upon the cross and finding everlasting life in Him.

After these things are done, we have but stormed the outworks of the castle, for there still remains another difficulty. Convinced that they need healing, and made in a measure anxious to find it, the danger with the awakened is lest they should rest content with an apparent cure, and miss the real work of grace. We are perilously likely to rest satisfied with a slight healing, and by this means to miss the great and complete salvation which comes from God alone. I wish to speak in deep earnestness to everyone here present upon this subject, for I have felt the power of it in my own soul. To deliver this message I have made a desperate effort, quitting my sick bed without due permit, and moved by a restless pining to warn you against the counterfeits of the day.

I have taken two texts. First, that I may show how easy it is for us to be deluded into a slight healing, and secondly, that I may plead with you to seek real healing, and lastly, that I may plainly show where the true healing is to be had according to the teaching of our second text, "Heal me, and I shall be healed; save me, and I shall be saved."

I. First, then, we sorrowfully assert that IT IS, VERY EASY, FOR US TO BE THE SUBJECTS OF A FALSE HEALING. You will kindly understand that I am not going to talk about the inhabitants of the Island of Laputa, I am now speaking straight to every one of you, and I am setting myself in the middle pew that my keenest sentence may enter my own heart as well as yours. I say, we are all of us in danger of being the subjects of a false healing, ministers, deacons, elders, church members, aged professors, and young beginners—all alike.

We might infer this from the fact that no doubt *a large number of persons are deceived*. If a large number of persons are so, then why should not we be? The tendency of other men is probably also in us. Why not? Are there not many persons who consider that all is well with them because they have been observant of church ordinances from their youth up, and their parents were observant for them before they actually came upon the stage of responsibility? Were they not duly christened and correctly confirmed? Have they not taken the sacrament? Have they not gone through every form that is required by the sect to which they belong? What more can be needed? They do not, in so many words, assert that these ceremonies have given them perfect wholeness before God, but secretly they pour this flattering anointing upon their souls and lie down in quietness. If they are not all right, where will you find any who are? On the other hand, it may be that some now present are thankful that they never were christened nor confirmed, and they think a good deal of not having undergone those ceremonies. Let them not err in the same way as those they are judging. They have been attentive to religion from their own point of view, they are never absent from their pew, they like to be at prayer meetings, they enjoy every-

thing that has the stamp of Christianity upon it, and therefore they inquire no further, but take their safety for granted. They are afraid of digging too deep, and so they are satisfied with having a form of godliness. Though they have felt no change of heart, and no renewal of spirit, they nevertheless believe that all is well with them, at least they hope so, and therefore they are at ease in Zion. This is a poor, slovenly soul-surgery which will end in eternal death. Beware of it, I pray you, while yet a work of grace may be worked upon you.

Too many are reliant entirely upon external religion. If that is attended to carefully they conclude that all is right. To sing a hymn is in their minds a good thing, though their heart never praises God. To join in the posture of prayer is to them an excellent thing, though their heart never cries to God for mercy. Alas, that men should dream that the hollow hypocrisy which insults God with empty forms should have a magical virtue in it. Oh, that man should be so mad as to conceive that the bringing of the mere husks and bran of external devotion to God can be anything to Him but sheer mockery, provoking Him to greater wrath! And yet they mock God with pretended prayers, and feel pleased with their crime. They chant a heartless hymn and so vex His Spirit, and yet they are pacified by their empty song. The very deeds that will be mentioned against them to condemnation, they quote to their darkened mind as hopeful grounds of justification. Outward religion is a slight and pretended healing; being in fact no healing at all, but a cry of, "Peace, peace," when there is no peace.

I am afraid, too, that many, who do not rely upon religious forms, yet confide in doctrinal beliefs. They are sound in the faith—Orthodox, Evangelical and Calvinistic. They heartily detest any doctrine that is not Scriptural. I am glad to find that it is so with them, but let them not rest in this. To cover a wound with a royal garment is not to heal it, and to conceal a sinful disposition beneath a sound creed is not salvation. Believe what you may, even though you should know the whole truth of God, yet if your faith never changes your heart nor affects your life, you will in no way be superior to the devil who believes, no, you may not be quite so good as he, for devils believe *and tremble*, and to believe without trembling is a stage lower down. Oh, my dear hearer, I implore you, do not rest content with such a slight healing as this. I have heard of one who changed from a Churchman to a Dissenter, and another who changed from a Dissenter to a Churchman, but I long to hear of you that you have turned from sin to righteousness, from self to Jesus. Conversions may be no better than perversions unless they are conversions to Christ. We must know the truth in the heart or we do not know it at all. Dry doctrine may kill, it is only living truth, worked in us by the Spirit of God, that can make us alive.

Many are the quackeries of the spiritual world, and multiplied are the panaceas of the physicians of no value, yielding to men a slight and transient hope. If others are deceived, may not you be?

Depend upon this, that *if there is a chance of our being deceived at all, we are always ready to aid in the deception*. As a rule, we are all inclined to think too well of ourselves. I dare say that if any cautious flatterer will assure me that I am a very wise person, I shall before long come to the conclusion that he is a remarkably sensible and far-seeing individual. If anyone should accuse you of a virtue which you never possessed, if he would but persevere long enough with his pleasing insinuation, you will begin to smile inwardly, and hint to your conscience that there are latent excellences about you which this man with the prophetic glance has discovered. The devil, who knows the exact bait for poor human nature, finds it easy to pacify an anxious mind by presenting a false salvation, and persuading the heart that all is well, while in fact nothing is well. A little feeling of natural regret flits over the mind, and the false fiend whispers, "It is repentance." "Oh, yes," says the ready dupe, "I am a penitent." A little presumptuous deceiving of ourselves into comfort is indulged and the deceiver sings, "Hail, precious faith." How pleased we are when we jump to the conclusion that we have passed from death unto life, and are indeed, the servants of the living God. We do not look back to see whether there was any new birth, whether there was any change of heart, whether there was any giving up of sin, whether there was any laying hold on righteousness, whether there was any severance from self and union to Christ. Those inquiries may be troublesome, and therefore the irksome duty of self-examination is cried down as unbelief, and we are bid to shut our eyes and make up our minds that all is right. "Believe that you are well and you are well" seems to be the gospel of many, but it is not the gospel of Jesus. But it is so easy to jump into fancied security that many take to it. We are almost all of us on the side of that which is most easy and comfortable to ourselves, the exceptions to this rule are a few morbid spirits who habitually

write bitter things against themselves, and a few gracious souls whom the Holy Spirit has convinced of sin who would comfort themselves if they could, but dare not do so. They are dying for want, and yet their soul abhors all manner of meat. I do not suppose I shall do any good this morning except to this last class, and they are few. But the words I shall speak will reach *their* ears I know, and I pray God it may drop into their hearts to comfort them. Take this, then, for granted, that there are many ways of being slightly healed, and we are most of us likely to be pleased with one or other of them.

Besides, *flatterers are not yet an extinct race*. False prophets abounded in Jeremiah's day, and they still may be met with. I could indicate where they are, but I advise you not to go after them. They are to be found in several places of worship in London, but you had better leave them alone. There is a flatterer in your own bosom, namely, proud self. Another flatterer often crosses your path, and is eager to destroy your soul, I mean Satan. If by any possibility you can be beguiled to put up with something which looks like healing, but which is not, you shall have all the art and craft of hell to help you in it. If it is possible, the very elect shall be thus deceived. Instead of faith, they shall have presumption; for regeneration, they shall have reformation; for holiness, morality; for purity, censoriousness; for zeal, fanaticism; for grace, fancy; and for Christ and His cross, human works and their merit. Many who profess to love you will aid the general deceit, and puff you up with the idea of being what you are not.

Slight healing is sure to be fashionable among a great many, because it requires so little thought. People will do anything but think according to the word of God. They will both think and speak against the revealed will and truth of God, but to consider what the Lord has said is not at all to their mind. They bring forward philosophical notions which read like passages of a comedy. He seems to be most honored nowadays who will invent the most monstrous theory, and stands to it, the more absurd it is, the better, so long as it is opposed to the Bible and to the accepted beliefs. I do not hesitate to say that any ordinary person, who would dethrone his reason and enthrone his imagination, could dream up as many good theories in a day as have been invented during the last 50 years by our vain-glorious philosophers. Give him sufficient liquor to make him half drunk, and he might invent many more, and those far more philosophical than the folly which rules the wisdom of the present hour. The more the philosophies stagger, the more they will suit this present age, for that which is really reasonable and solid is rejected. Sober thought about one's own soul and its destiny is by no means a favorite occupation with men. How few sit down and answer the question, "How much do you owe unto my Lord?" They would sooner hear a thunderclap than be asked to consider their ways. They would sooner be flogged than sit down and say to their soul—"How have you dealt towards your Creator? What is your state towards your Redeemer? What of love, what of fear, what of holy confidence, what of consecration have you ever given to Jesus Christ your Lord? How will it go with you when you come to die? How will you fare in the swellings of Jordan? How will you meet the Judge of all the earth in the Judgment Day?" Such questions as these they put back as only fit for women and for priests. Yet were they truly manly they would be eager to look such inquiries in the face. O sirs, it is a grievous pity that men should be lost for lack of thought. I would gladly hold you by the sleeve and beg you to remember and consider. Because superficial religion only requires so much church-going, or attendance at a sermon, or so many half-guineas, so much repeating of pious phrases, and listening to pious periods, it suits the thoughtless, but as to seeking after God by meditation, prayer, confession, faith, they cannot, away with it!

Superficial religion also will always be fashionable *because it does not require self-denial*. A man may be outwardly religious and yet be a private tippler, but he cannot be a true Christian at that rate, such secret defilement he must abandon. That, however, is a blow too near the root for many, they like not so sharp an axe as that. Or perhaps he has enmity towards his brother. Now he can go to mass or attend early communion, and yet hate his brother, but he cannot go to heaven and do that, he cannot be a regenerate man and do that. He may be following all the while some secret lust, and yet be a great man in his church, so long as he can keep his wantonness hidden away from prying eyes. A superficial religion suits the unclean gentleman, but genuine godliness will not allow a darling lust to live. Do you wonder that vital godliness is at a discount when it proclaims war to the knife against a lifelong indulgence? It is with Christ as it might be in surgery. Two eminent practitioners profess to deal with the disease called polypus. The first declares that he can work an effectual cure, but it must be understood that he uses the knife freely. He believes no cure to be possible unless all the roots of the growth are taken

away. He will not pretend to half measures, the whole thing must be eliminated, or he can work no cure. On the other side of the street another surgeon of great name depends upon an outward application which, in quite a painless manner, acts upon the diseased part, and according to his statements secures the desired result. He says, "My friend goes too deep and makes too much of the matter. Come in here. The disease is a mere trifle. I will end the mischief without cutting and hacking." You can readily guess how popular this last gentleman will be if he can gain public confidence. But what will be the end of it? That is the point. If the sharp and deep cut of the first surgeon ministers to ultimate health, and is absolutely necessary to a cure, is it not best? If, in the second case, the end of all those honeyed words is but the covering up of a foul loathsomeness, which will breed corruption and hasten death, is it not a wicked deception? Yet most men are so foolish as to choose the worse of the two in the affairs of their souls.

Slight healing, also, is sought by men, because *it does not require spirituality*. There are multitudes of men who, if the kingdom of heaven were to be had by outward actions, no matter how difficult, would at once commence the task. Say, "You must save so many hundreds of pounds and buy heaven," and they would starve themselves until they had hoarded up the money. Anything that could be done by the body would be cheerfully attempted, but true religion is spiritual, and carnal men cannot get at it. It is high above, and out of their sight. They ask us "How can we be saved?" We tell them. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ." Then they reply, "But what is this believing?" and they try and make believing into a kind of hard mechanical action of the understanding, by which it receives certain facts about Christ, just as it believes in Roman or Grecian history. They do not grip at the idea that it is the heart's resting upon Christ. When we begin to preach repentance and faith they appear to be in a fog, they cannot get at our meaning, because they are prejudiced by other modes of thought. Hence it is that the slight healing which comes of formalism and ceremonies, seeing it deals with outward manipulations, at once attracts them.

But, my dear hearers let me warn you with all the energy I possess against ever being satisfied with any of the slight healings that are cried up nowadays, because they will *all end in disappointment*, as sure as you are living men. I could wish that they might speedily end, so you could begin again, and begin right. Believe me; sickness is often a time when a man is led to turn over the pages of his past life, to see whether they will bear inspection. It will be a fearful thing when you are racked with pain and depressed in spirit to see all your evidences blotted and blurred, and all your hopes of heaven cancelled by the hand of truth before your sight. Suffering times call for realities, solid facts, eternal verities, for then it is that dark thoughts crowd in upon the soul, and anxious questions which must and will have an answer. Then conscience talks in this fashion, "You must be born again." Are you born again? "Without shedding of blood there is no remission of sin." Has that blood-shedding ever come near to you? Such thoughts as these gather around the spirit in the dead of night, and haunt the soul in the weary watches, when you toss to and fro and cannot sleep. Unless you fix your eyes upon the cross, and can answer, "I have believed in Jesus for salvation, and I still believe in Him. I have forsaken every evil way, and I am still striving against sin. I am a renewed man, I am struggling to the light, and struggling up to purity and to my God"—unless, I say, you can give such firm and solid answers, there will be hard times for you, and deep depressions far more grievous than the physical pain could possibly bring to you. I pray you therefore do not put off making sure work for eternity.

Remember that if you pass through this life deceived, there will await you, an awful undeceiving in the next world. I will not try to depict the man who finds himself lost forever, though he died in the odor of sanctity. What will be his horror when he finds himself cast out, and hears the Lord Jesus say, "I never knew you"? Your minister knew you, the deacons knew you, the members knew you, but the Lord Jesus never did, for you had no heart-fellowship with Him and were not in heart a believer in Him. O brethren, if there is any error about your profession get it right *now*. Do not go on under a delusion. Surely you cannot wish to be puffed up with vain imaginations of hopes which are fallacious. Search then, and see. Beg the Lord to search you, and let your state before Him be in all things according to truth.

Time flies, and so does my strength, and therefore we must hasten to the second point.

II. BE IT OURS TO SEEK TRUE HEALING. But then, as we have already said, this true healing must be radical. Oh, pray to have it so! The healing which we need must go to the root of the business,

and work a thorough change. Such a work is described in Scripture as a creation—“created anew in Christ Jesus,” it must be a resurrection—“And you has He quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins.” Now, I ask you, my dear brethren, whether you can undertake this. Creation and resurrection, do these lie in your power? You can do nothing of the kind, and so you are driven to my second text, “O Lord, heal me, and I shall be healed; save me, and I shall be saved.” Be it known unto every one of you, men and brethren, that you must be the subjects of a divine power by which you must be as totally changed as if you had been annihilated and then created anew. By this divine agency you must be as really changed as if you were dead and buried, and then were raised again from the dead. There is no soul-healing, no soul-saving apart from this. Does this strike you with despair? I am glad of it, for this kind of despair is next door to eternal hope. When a man despairs of himself he will begin to trust in his God. Oh that we might each one now lie at Christ’s feet as dead till He shall touch us and say, “Live.” Truly, I desire no life but that which He gives. I would be quickened by His Spirit, and find in Him my life, my all.

Now go a step further. The healing we need must be a healing from the guilt of sin. My anxious friend, you must no longer be guilty, you must be free from fault. Every offense you have ever committed must be washed right out, even the least stain of it must vanish, and it must be as though it had never been, and you must be as though you never had offended at all. “How can that be?” you ask. It is clear it cannot be by anything that you can do, and this again drives you to the prayer of my text, “Heal me, and I shall be healed; save me, and I shall be saved.” How can it be? Only by the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ our Savior. He took the sin of His people upon Him, became their substitute and representative, bore their iniquity, and was made a curse for them, and in consequence they are set free, cleared, and justified. What a word was that, “Awake, O sword, against My shepherd, and against the man that is My fellow, says the Lord of hosts.” Beneath that sword our Shepherd offered up His life a ransom for the flock. By one tremendous sacrifice which He offered unto the Father, the Lord Jesus delivered all His redeemed. Look to Jesus Christ, and in a moment your sins have ceased to be. “With His stripes we are healed.” Hallelujah! The day comes when the sins of Jacob shall be sought for, and they shall not be found, yes, they shall not be, says the Lord. Blessed healing this! Who but a divine Physician could work such a cure? This is pardon worthy of a God.

But you must not only be free from sin, you must be freed from sinfulness, a work must be worked in you, my dear brothers and sisters, and in me, by which we shall be clean rid of every tendency to do evil. We cannot enter into heaven with sinful tendencies, corruption and depravity cannot be endured before the throne of the thrice holy Jehovah. The very roots and rootlets of sin must come out of the nature which is to share the abode of God. Does not this drive you to despair? Does not this make you cry, “Heal me, O God, and I shall be healed; save me, and I shall be saved”? It ought to do so, and in so doing it will work your safety. In answer to your cry the eternal Spirit shall come upon you, creating you anew in Christ Jesus. He shall come and dwell in you, and shall break down the reigning power of sin, putting it beneath your feet. Though this defeated foe shall strive and struggle like a serpent with his back broken, yet it has its death wound, and cannot regain its former dominion. It will struggle so long as you are in this life, but it must ultimately die, and you shall attain perfection—

*“Sin, my worst enemy before,
Shall vex my eyes and ears no more;
My inward foes shall all be slain,
Nor Satan break my peace again.”*

No tendency to sin, no affection towards evil, no fear of relapse, nor danger of apostasy shall remain, but there shall be in us the living and incorruptible seed, and we shall be the members of Christ’s body. We shall be as pure as Adam when he was first created, we shall have about us a purity superior to that of mere creation, a purity produced by the infusion of the divine life. We came into this world defiled by original sin, but every trace of this will vanish through the work of the Spirit of God and the washing in the precious blood. This is a work which can only be worked in us by God Himself. Oh to be so saved that we can survive divine inspection, a divine inspection by which every spot would be revealed if spots were there, but we shall be without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing.

It is most desirable to be so healed in soul as to stand the test of this present life. I have known friends, discharged from the hospital as healed of disease, who were bitterly disappointed when they came into everyday life, a little exertion made them as ill as ever. A person had a piece of diseased bone in her wrist, it was taken out by the hospital surgeon, and the arm seemed perfectly healed. But when she began to work the old pain returned, and it was evident that the old mischief was still there, and that a part of the decayed bone remained. Thus some are saved, so they think, but it is only in seeming, for when they get into the world, and are tried with temptation, they are just the same as they used to be. They have not received a practical salvation, and nothing but practical salvation is worth having. A sham cure is worse than none. If a bone is ill set it is often necessary to break it again, and it sometimes seems to me that certain converts need their hearts to be broken again that they may be truly comforted. If any man here has been healed, but his arm will not work for Jesus and for righteousness, it needs breaking again. And I should not mind if my sermon should break it, so long as he was driven to Christ to get it set in the right fashion. If you cannot resist the temptations of this life, depend upon it, your salvation is a mere myth.

We want to have a salvation that will bear the test of sickness, and the strain of death, so that a man may lie back on his bed and say, "I do not fear to die. Jesus Christ has made me perfectly whole, and among the healed ones before His throne I shall shortly stand and sing His praises world without end." Oh, my dear hearers, could you die like that? Have you a hope which will bear the light of your last hours? If you have not, do not let this day close until you have found it. I beseech you at once cry to Jesus to save you in His own effectual way.

III. I close by saying, LET US GO WHERE TRUE HEALING IS TO BE HAD. It is quite certain that God is able to heal us of all our sins, for He who created can restore. Whatever our diseases, nothing can surpass the power of omnipotent love. Blessed be the name of the Lord, no work of grace can be beyond His will, for He delights in mercy. His name is Jehovah-Rophi, the Lord that heals you, and He has given us a sweet word, "I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely." You remember how David sang, "He sent His word, and healed them, and delivered them from their destructions"? The Lord is so fond of healing sin-sick souls, that He had but one son, and He made a physician of Him that He might come and heal mankind of their deadly wound. And He being made a physician came down among us, and sought out for His patients, not the good and excellent, but the most guilty, for He said, "The whole have no need of a physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." Jesus, then, the beloved Physician is able and willing to meet the case of every one of us. His wounds are an unfailing remedy. Oh, that you were willing to come to Him and spread your case before Him. Come at once. Even at this instant. Jesus certainly can meet your condition, though apart from Him it may be utterly hopeless.

As I turned over my text while coming here, I was charmed with the encouragement which it offers to the very chief of sinners, for these may say to themselves, "Is it, after all, God's work to save? Well, then, He can save a great sinner as well as a little sinner." If salvation were of works or of merits then many persons would evidently be excluded from hope, but if it is entirely of grace then none are excluded. And if the power is found in God and not in us, then the same power which can save the most moral young man can save the most dissolute and debauched person, and the same grace which can save the godly matron can save the impious harlot. The power of God is equal to any miracle. The mercy of God can go any length. Tell it; tell it that Jesus Christ is able to have compassion on the ignorant, and to save those who are out of the way. Out of the way sinners, outrageous sinners, black sinners, scarlet sinners, they, too, may pray the prayer, "Heal me, and I shall be healed; save me, and I shall be saved." If it is of grace, then surely hope is encouraged where otherwise despair might reign supreme. If it is of pure mercy, then the utmost guilt need not shut out a soul from heaven. Would God, dear friends, you would come and try the unfailing grace of God in Christ Jesus, which is unto all and upon all them that believe. I know while I am preaching that certain of you say, "He does not mean me: I am too great a sinner." On the other hand, another class imagines that they are not sinful enough, so they also fancy that the discourse is not meant for them. Oh that you would give up this wicked perversity, and know that all truth that applies to you is meant for you. I have heard of Robert Burns that, on one occasion when at church, he sat in a pew with a young lady whom he observed to be much affected by certain terrible passages of

Scripture which the minister quoted in his sermon. The wicked wag scribbled on a piece of paper a verse which he passed to her. I fear that the substance of that verse has been whispered into many of your ears full often—

*“Fair maid, you need not take the hint,
Nor idle texts pursue;
’Twas only sinners that he meant,
Not angels such as you.”*

This sermon is meant for those who think themselves angels as well as for those who know themselves to be sinners. Cease from all dreamy confidences, awaken yourselves from proud self-content, and come to Jesus the Savior, who alone can save from sin and death.

I love my text because it gives security for the future. “Heal me, and I shall be healed.” Certain theologians appear to doubt the lasting nature of the divine cure, and fancy that Christ’s patients may die after all. Would they have us pray, “Lord, heal me, and I shall not be healed”? Yet that would be the way to pray if we may fall from grace and perish. We do not believe in this questionable healing, but we pray, “Heal me, and I shall be healed.” If you are saved by a priest or by yourself, you may be lost, but if God saves you, you never will be lost. That which God does, He does forever. The Lord never puts His hand to a creation which He leaves unfinished. He that is born again cannot be unborn. We may unravel all that is of nature’s weaving, but that which is God’s workmanship defies the infernal powers. There stands the promise, sure forever— “I give unto My sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of My hand.”

Dear friends, if you are saved, pray the Lord that you may be saved indeed, and if you are not saved, get to Him and pray Him to begin His good work within your souls. I am often anxious about this congregation. I do not want to build up in this place a host of hopes that are ill-founded. I felt that I must come and deliver this message at this time, though I am quite unfit to be among you. I have not delivered it as I hoped to do, still there it is, and unto God I commend it. I was told if I preached this morning I should suffer a month’s relapse as the consequence of it, but I ran the risk, because I could not be quiet till I had delivered my soul. Oh that the careless might be disquieted. Oh that the penitent might be encouraged. Let none of us excuse ourselves from self-examination. Do not let the preacher, or the deacons, or the workers in this church deceive themselves. Let us get on the rock and know that we are on it. Let us be true men, true to the core, sincere right through and through. Let us pray God that there may be a work of grace in us, and not the mere outgrowth of human will, and fancy, and self-flattery. If there are any who have not even felt the slight healing, I am glad they have not. May their wounds never be bound up till Jesus binds them. May none of us ever think of health unless it comes from beneath the wings of the Sun of righteousness. May we all stand together and gaze with tearful eyes upon the cross of our Lord. He is all my salvation, all my desire, and all my praise. If I perish, it shall be at His feet. If I live, it shall be in His service. Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—PSALM 101.
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—230, 51 (VERSION 2), 721.**

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