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HELP FOR YOUR SICKNESS

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"When the even was come, they brought him many that were possessed with devils: and he cast out the spirits with his word, and healed all that were sick: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses."—Matthew 8:16,17.

It was the evening: in all probability it was the evening of a Sabbath-day. The Jews were so tender not to break the Sabbath that they did not even bring forth the sick to the Saviour until the even was come. The Saviour would gladly have healed them on the Sabbath-day, for that was to him a high day for holy work, but they did not think it right, and so they kept back their sick till the day was ended. If any of you have thought that the time has not come for you to approach the Saviour, you have labored under a great error, for he would not have you delay for a single hour; but I hope you are now satisfied that you have waited long enough, and that at last the evening is near in which you should come to Jesus. God grant that any superstition which has kept you back may be removed; and may this be the set time, the hour of grace to your souls!

Whether it was the Sabbath-evening or not, the day had been spent by the Saviour in diligent labor; for our Saviour took care, when the people would listen to him on the seventh day, to preach with all his might. As soon as the sun was up, he began to tell out saving truth. He was tired when the evening was come, and he might have sought rest; but instead of that, they brought out the sick to him to heal, and he must close up a weary day by a yet more arduous task. Until darkness had covered the earth, he must continue still to scatter blessings right and left. At this hour our blessed Master has laid aside all weariness; and now at eventide he is waiting to bless. Whatever has been done during the day, yet if some poor, weary soul has spurned the voice divine through all the former hours, he is waiting still to save, ere yet the sun has quite gone down. When even was come, they brought unto him those that were sick. We are in like case. Let us put up this prayer to him, "O thou who didst bless the sick in the evening, come now and bless us while all is cool and still, and let us find thy salvation!"

What a strange sight that evening saw! They brought forth to the Saviour those that were possessed of evil spirits, and those that were sick. They brought them on their mattresses, and laid them in the streets. It must have been a very difficult

thing to bring out some that were possessed, because they struggled and raved; but nevertheless they brought them. The streets were turned into a hospital, and in the still evening air you could hear the cries of those poor creatures who were possessed of evil spirits, and the moans of those in acute pain. It was a sad sight, a piteous sight, to look upon; and as far as Christ's eye could see, every nook and corner were occupied with these sick people. But what a glorious thing it must have been to see him, the divine Physician, with tears of pity in his eyes, and yet with beaming joy on his countenance; suffering intensely all the while because of their suffering, and yet joyous because he was able to bless them. You see him go along, and lay his hand on one sick man, and he leaped up from the bed; and you hear him speak to another, and the foul spirit fled, and he that was madness itself became calm and rational. See him cast a look over yonder, and with the glance he expels the fever. Hear him speak a word to one far away, and with that word he dries up dropsy, or opens a blind eye. It was grand to see the Saviour thus fighting with Satan and with foul diseases, and everywhere victorious. That was one of the happiness evenings that ever ended a day in Palestine. I want you to feel that we can have its parallel tonight. We have Jesus here. We have been seeking him. There are some here who dwell with him. Jesus is here, and the sick folk are here, and he is just as able to heal tonight as he was in days gone by.

I am going to speak about *his works of healing*, and to draw encouragement therefrom; and we shall go into *the explanation of his power to heal*, which is given us in the second verse of our text: "Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses."

I. Let us notice, first, our LORD'S WORKS OF HEALING. On that occasion, and many others, he cures *all sorts of sickness*. I think I am right in saying that there is not in the whole list of diseases one which the Saviour did not heal. They may be known by new names, for they say the doctors have invented a dozen new diseases lately; but they are only old diseases which they have given new names. Our great grandfathers died of diseases the names of which they never knew, or else they had other names than those which are given to them now. But as man has always been much the same, most diseases have continued as long as the human race. We have to be very grateful that leprosy, which was the great scourge of the Jews, is almost extinct now; but in our Saviour's day it seems to have been exceedingly common. But leprosy and all forms of disease came under the Saviour's power, and fled at his word.

Now the parallel of this Jesus Christ can forgive sins of all sorts. There are different grades of sin. Some are exceedingly defiling and loathsome. Other sins are scarcely hurtful to the general commonwealth, and so are often unnoticed. Yet any sin will ruin a soul for ever. It may be thought to be little, but as a little prick with a poisoned arrow will heat all the blood, and bring on death, so is sin such a venomous disease that the least of it is fatal. But from whatever kind of sin you are suffering, I would encourage you to come to Jesus with it, be it what it may. Is yours an extreme case? Have you been grossly guilty? Come with it then, for our Lord healed the worst diseases. On the other hand, have you been kept out of gross sin from your early youth? Have you been preserved from outward vice? It may be that your chief sin is the forgetting of God, and living without love to Christ a deadly sin, let me tell you; but bring it to the Saviour.

Have you been idle? Have you been proud? Have you been lascivious? Have you been untruthful? Have you been profane? Have you been malicious? I cannot tell; but God knoweth who can read your heart as readily as we read a book. But whatever the sin may be, remember that all manner of sin and of blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men. "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." Oh, hear this, and look up to the Saviour, and pray him of his great mercy to exercise the healing art of his redeeming love on you, this evening, now that the sun has set! They brought to Jesus all sorts of diseases.

Note, next, that Jesus can deal with *special cases of devilry*. Possession with evil spirits was probably peculiar to that age. I sometimes think that, when the Saviour came down on earth, the devil had the impudence to ask to be let loose, that he and all his servants might come on earth, and in person might meet the Saviour. Satan is still busy, going about, seeking whom he may devour; but not exactly in the particular way in which he raged in Christ's day. He cannot take possession of men's bodies as he did then. So the Saviour met Satan foot to foot, and face to face; but the devil made a poor fight of it, for whenever the Lord Jesus made his appearance, the devil wanted to be off; and if he did not want to go, the Saviour soon moved him by saying, "Come out of him." Like a whipped dog, he did not dare to make a sound, but fled. A whole legion of demons were glad to get into a herd of swine, and ran violently down a steep place into the sea, to escape from the frown of our Lord. Satan had found somebody that was more than a match for him. The parallel to that is this. There are some men that we meet with, in whom the devil evidently reigns; and there are some women too for when women are bad, they can be bad, and there can be no mistake about it. The devil can make more mischief out of a woman than out of a man when he thoroughly gets possession of her. Well, whether men or women, there are some who might be called "the devil's own." One man is a drunkard: there is no holding him; he must drink on; he seems to be infatuated with it. He takes the pledge, and abstains for a little while; but by-and-by the devil gets hold of him again, and he goes back to his taps. Though he has drunk himself into delirium tremens, and to death's door, yet still he gives way to this loathsome vice. Others are possessed with the devil of lasciviousness, and it does not matter what they suffer; they will be always defiling themselves, ruining body and soul by their iniquity. We know persons who seem to have a devil in them in the matter of passion. They are but a little provoked, and they lose all command of themselves, and you would think that they ought to be put in a padded room in Bethlehem Hospital, and kept there till they cooled down. Otherwise, they might do mischief to themselves and to others. Surely some men, who can scarcely speak without swearing, have the devil in them. How one's blood runs chill, in going down our streets, to hear how commonly our working-men degrade themselves with filthy conversation! It is not exactly cursing; it is less honest and more vile! Is there any hope for such? These are the very people for whom Jesus Christ has often displayed his healing power. I could tell you tonight of lions that have been turned to lambs, men of furious passions, who have become gentle, and quiet, and loving, men of profane speech who would be shocked at the very remembrance of what they once said, and whose voices have been often heard in prayer: men and women, too, who loved the wages of iniquity, and lost their character, and defiled themselves; but they are washed, and they are sanctified. I have blessed the name of God when giving the right hand of Christian fellowship to ransomed ones to whom we could not have given our right hand a little while

ago, for it would have been wrong to join with them in the wickedness of their pursuits. Oh, yes, my Master still casts devils out of men! If there are any such here tonight, let your cry for help go up to our blessed Master. Come again, great Lord, and cast out the evil spirit from men, and get to thyself the victory in many a heart, to the praise of the glory of thy grace!

The remarkable point about this miracle-working was that *all were healed, and there was no failure*. When a man brings out a patent medicine, he publishes verifications of the efficacy of his physic. He gets a number of cases, and he advertises them. I suppose they are genuine. I should not like to be hanged if they are not. I suppose, therefore, they are all accurate and authentic. But there is one thing you never knew a medicine advertiser do: he never advertises the failure of the medicine. The number of persons that have been induced to buy the remedy, and have derived no good from it: if these were all advertised, it might occupy more room in the newspaper than those who write of a cure. My Lord Jesus Christ is a Physician who never had a failure yet never once. Never did a soul wash in Christ's blood without being made whiter than snow. Never did a man, besotted with the worst vice, trust in Jesus without receiving power to conquer his evil habits. Not even in the lowest pit of hell is there one who dares to say, "I trusted Christ, and I am lost. I sought his face with all my heart, and he cast me away." There is not a man living that could say that, unless he dared to lie; for not one has with heart and soul sought the Saviour, and trusted in him, and then had a negative from him. He must save him if you trust him. As surely as he lives he must save you, for he has put it, "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." I will repeat it, "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." You have never come if he has not receive you; for he must save those who trust in him.

Notice, that *his word was the soul medicine he used*: "He cast out the spirits with his word." No other medicine, no charms, no long performances, no striking of his hand over the place; but he spake, and it was done. He said to the devil, "Come out of him"; and it came out. He said to the disease, "Go"; and away it went. In that way the Lord saves men today by his word. While I am speaking it tonight, or when you shall be reading it, his word will be the power of God unto salvation. I am glad that you are here to hear it, for faith cometh by hearing. I shall be glad if you diligently read it, for reading is a kind of hearing, and many are brought to the Saviour thereby. Jesus Christ does not need to put you through a long purgatory, and keep you for months waiting to be saved. He has only this night to open your ear to hear his word, and when you hear it he can bless it to your soul so that you shall live, and your sin shall die; and you shall become changed by his matchless grace.

I speak his word tonight, praying that he will make it effectual, as he has done aforetime; and to him shall be the praise.

We have the same medicine tonight that Jesus used, for we have his word. We have got himself here in answer to the prayers of his people, and we have the same sort of sick people here; and therefore we expect to see the same wonders wrought.

II. May God give you a hearing ear, and save you while I speak, secondly, of our

LORD'S PERSONAL POWER TO HEAL! Whence came it that he was able to save? We are pointed to the secret of his power by these words, "That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias, the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses."

Christ was able to heal the diseases of men, because he bare them himself. Do not think that our Lord Jesus was actually diseased: he suffered greatly, but I read not that any disease was upon him. Probably there was no man in whom there was less tendency to natural disease than in him. His pure and blessed body was not subject to diseases which are brought upon men through sin being in them. How, then, did he take upon him our sicknesses and our sorrows?

First, *he bare our sicknesses by intense sympathy*. When Christ looked at all those sick people, he did, as it were, take all their sicknesses upon himself. You know what I mean. If you talk with a person who is very ill, and you feel for him, you seem to lay his pains upon yourself, and then you have the power to comfort him. When I am seeing troubled people, I enter into one sorrowful case after another till I am more sad than any of them. I try as hard as I can to have fellowship with the case of each one, in order to be able to speak a word of comfort to him; and I can say, from personal experience, that I know of nothing that wears the soul down so fast as the outflow of sincere sympathy with the sorrowing, desponding, depressed ones. I have sometimes been the means in God's hand of helping a man who suffered with a desponding spirit; but the help I have rendered has cost me dearly. Hours after, I have been myself depressed, and I have felt an inability to shake it off. You and I have not a thousandth part of the sympathy that was in Christ. He sympathized with all the aggregate of human woe, and so sympathized that he made his heart a great reservoir, into which all streams of grief poured themselves. My Master is just the same now. Though he is in heaven, he is just as tender as he was on earth. I never heard of anyone losing tenderness by going to heaven. People get better by going there; and so is Christ, if it were possible, even more tender than when on earth. Think of this. Somebody might not sympathize with you, poor sinner, but Jesus does. You would not like to tell some people what you have done, for they would turn upon their heel, and give you wide berth, but it is not so with Jesus. He looks upon sin, not with the eye of a judge, but with the eye of a physician. He looks at it as a disease, and he deals with it that he may heal it. He has great sympathy with sinners, though he has no sympathy with sin. He takes the sinner's sorrows to himself.

"Ah!" says one, "no man careth for my soul." Dear friend, man or woman, whoever you may be, One greatly cares for you, and he speaks to you tonight by these lips. Oh, that these lips were better fitted to be used by him! He says, "Come unto me, come unto me and I will give you rest." He bids you take of the water of life freely. He is ready at this moment to bestow salvation.

"Nobody knows my case," cries one. But Jesus knows it. He knows that dark spot in it. He knows that hard core which will not come away. He knows that filthy thing which you remember tonight, and shiver as you remember it. He knows it all, and yet he says, "Return, thou backsliding daughter." He bids the vilest of the vile to come to him, for he has sympathy with them still.

Jesus Christ took upon himself our sicknesses by his championship of our humanity. Satan misled our first parents, and the powers of darkness held us captive. In consequence of sin we have become sick and infirm, and liable to suffer.

Now, when our Lord Jesus came on earth, he as good as said, "I am the seed of the woman; and I have come to bruise the head of man's adversary." So Christ, in that respect, took upon himself all the consequences which come of sin. He stood forth as the Champion of fallen manhood, to fight Satan, and cast him out of men's bodies; to battle with disease, and to overcome the evil which lies at the root of it, that men might be made healthy.

He is our Champion still. I delight to preach him to you, ye sorrowing, ye sinful, ye lost, ye castaways! One has come who has taken up your cause, the sinner's Redeemer, next-of-kin to man, who has come to avenge him of his adversary, and to buy back his lost inheritance. Behold in Jesus the Champion of sinners, the David who comes and defies the Goliath that has long afflicted men. Oh, I wish you would trust our glorious Champion! Remember how he met the adversary alone, and vanquished him? 'Twas on that dark, that dreadful night." The enemy sprang upon him in the garden like a lion, and the Saviour received him on his breast. He brought the Saviour to his knees; but there he grasped the lion, hugged him, crushed him, rent him, and flung him from him. Our Samson sweat as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground; and though he had won that victory, he afterwards bowed his head, and gave up the ghost. He lives, however, now again, the Champion of the cause of all suffering, the sorrowing, and the sinful, if they will but come and put their case in his hands. He himself took our sicknesses and our infirmities, by championing our cause, and standing in our place to fight our battles. Give him *your* cause, trust *your* soul in his hands, and he will redeem *you* out of the jaw of the lion, yea, out of the very mouth of hell.

But here is the pith of the whole matter. The reason why Jesus is able to heal all the mischief that sin has wrought is this because *he himself took our sin upon him by his sacred substitution.* Sin is the root of our infirmities and diseases; and so, taking the root, he took all the bitter fruit which that root did bear. Oh, tell it out again, and tell it out again, and tell it every day, and tell it in the dead of night, and tell it in the glare of noonday, and tell it in the market, and tell it in the street, and tell it everywhere, that God took sin from off the back of sinners, and laid it on his innocent and only-begotten Son! O mystery divine, never to be known, if God had not revealed it; and not even now to be believed if God himself had not assured us of it! He laid sin upon Christ. "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." Harken, then ye guilty ones! Hear how freely God can forgive, and yet not injure his justice. If you trust Christ, you may be sure that you are among the number of those whose sins were laid on Christ. He was punished in your room, place, and stead. Now, it is not just that, if another was punished in your stead, you should be punished too; and therefore the very justice of God requires that, if Christ suffered in you stead, you should not suffer. See you that?

"But did he suffer in my stead?" I must answer this question by another, "Dost thou believe that Jesus is the Christ? Wilt thou trust thy soul with him?" Well, if

thou dost, thy transgressions are not thine, for they were laid on him. They are not on thee, for, like everything else, they cannot be in two places at one time; and if they were laid on Christ they are not laid on you. But what did Jesus do with the sins that were laid on him? Can they not come back to us? No, never; for he took them to the sepulchre, and there he buried them for ever. And now, what saith the Scripture? "In those days, and in that time, saith the Lord, the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found." "I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions; and as a cloud, thy sins." "Thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea." Our sins are gone. Christ has carried them away. "As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us." Believers are the seed for whom the victory has been gained. They are the seed to whom the promise is sure. It is not to those who are of works, but to those who are of faith. Those that are born again, of the Spirit of God, through faith which is in Christ Jesus these are "redeemed from among men." Suppose I owed ten thousand pounds: if a dear friend should call on my creditor, and pay that ten thousand pounds for me, I should owe the creditor nothing. I could meet him with a smiling face. He may to-morrow morning bring his account-book if he likes, and say, "There, you see, there are ten thousand pounds down there against you." I would joyfully answer, "Yes; but look on the other side. You have been paid. Here are the words at the foot of your bill, 'Received in full of all demands.'" Now, when Jesus took the sins of believers upon himself, he discharged them by his death; and every man that believes has the receipt in full in our Lord's resurrection. "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God." Yea, those that believe in Christ have the complete forgiveness of every sin. As for me, I like to sing with Kent

" Here's pardon for transgression past,
It matters not how black their cast;
And O my soul, with wonder view,
For sins to come here's pardon too!"

All blotted out at once with one stroke of the sacred pen obliterated once for all. God does not again lay to the charge of men what he has once forgiven them. He does not forgive them half their sins, and visit them for the rest; but, once given, the blessing is irrevocable; as it is written. "The gifts and calling of God are without repentance." He never draws back, nor repeats of what he has done. He saves, and the salvation which saves is everlasting salvation.

Now I see why Christ can heal. Dear heart, you have come here to-night full of the disease of sin, and you are saying, "Will he heal me?" Look to him! Look to him! The morning that I found Christ I did not think to find him. I went to hear the word as I had heard it before; but I did not hope to find Jesus there and then. Yet I did find him. When I heard that there was nothing to be done but simply to look to Jesus; and when the exhortation came so sharp, and shrill, and clear, "Look! look! look!" I looked, and I bear witness to the change that passed over me such a change as though I died and rose again. And such a change, my hearer, shall pass over thee if thou believest.

"There is life for a look at the Crucified One:
There is life this moment for thee."

God give thee the look, and give thee the life, even now, for Jesus Christ's sake!
Amen.

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