

“A CLEAN BILL OF HEALTH”

(Jeremiah 8:22)

“Is there no balm in Gilead; is there no physician there? Why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered?”

Look at the text above. It contains a triple-barreled question addressed by God to His people. By means of these questions, God seeks to arouse His people to the incredible inconsistency of their actions. Their manner of dealing with the Eternal and Almighty God is beyond belief — to a believer. But to an unbeliever, no consideration is ever given to his folly of doing deadly dealing with God. So we will examine the text from the viewpoints of God and the sympathetic believer.

I. A DISEASE PRESUMED

First, the text presumes on the presence and prevalence of a serious disease. A loss of health is plainly indicated in the third question of our text. The idea of health not recovered indicates that a health-destroying disease is rampant among the people.

Of course, the disease that is referred to is that of sin. Sin is pictured as a powerful and deadly disease throughout Scripture. This is seen continually in the ministry of Jesus. There are about thirty-two different cases of healing narrated in the four Gospels, and no two of them are exactly alike. They all have distinctive features, but they cover the whole range of the human physical condition. They reveal many kinds and degrees of disease and infirmity, and thus they illustrate the entire range of sin and its effects in human experience. By the illustrations He furnishes in healing physical diseases (the recorded miracles of Jesus in the Gospels), Jesus shows that He is perfectly competent to deal with our spiritual afflictions and diseases. Just what kind of disease is this mysterious spiritual illness called sin?

Sin is a *common* disease. Indeed, it is a racial disease, common to every member of the human race. Furthermore, it is a hereditary disease, transmitted through the generations of men. Romans 5:12 says, “As by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, so death passed upon all men, for all have sinned.” Psalm 51:5 says, “I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.” So there is one great sense (you must be careful to understand this) in which it is true to say that every human being is illegitimately born! The disease of sin has infected the whole race of mankind. John Paul Sartre was correct when he assessed the human situation in these words: “We are all tarred with the same brush!” Someone else said it with both truth and humor: “We are all made from the same mold — though some of us are *moldier* than others!” Sin is a disease that is common to men.

Sin is a *critical* disease. The Bible warns us again and again to give great care to our assessment of sin. “Fools make a mock of sin” (Proverbs 14:9). It is never easy for a fragile

human being with a self-protective psyche to hear such words as these from a doctor: “I’m sorry to inform you, but you have a terminal illness.” Or, “I have found all the symptoms of an extremely serious, potentially fatal, disease. But I also want to announce that there is a possibility of cure — if it is treated quickly and radically.” Nobody likes to hear announcements like these, but such announcements are made out of necessity scores of times every day. Anybody who regards such a disease in himself with light and glib attitude is a fool, and will be victimized by the advancing results of the disease. “He that being often reproved hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and *that without remedy*” (Proverbs 29:1). The inflicted person who obviously has all the symptoms of the deadly disease of sin and yet ignores the sure cure of The Only Capable Doctor is flirting daily with abject disaster.

Sin is to be dealt with as the desperate and deadly disease that it is. A good rule is to *treat sin as it will treat you. Sin is deadly to you, so you should be deadly to it. Sin is aggressive toward you, so you should be aggressive toward it. Sin attacks you, so you should attack it. Sin wages war against you, so you should wage war against it.* Sin is not friendly to you; you should not be friendly to it. Sin will destroy you, so you should destroy it. Sin is intolerantly consistent toward you; you should be intolerably consistent toward it.

Sin is a *depraving* disease. It has invaded every part of man’s being, paralyzing the mind and heart and conscience and will with its terrific power. Isaiah 1:5 provides the Divine Doctor’s diagnosis of the disease when it says, “The whole head is sick, and the whole heart is faint. From the top of the head to the soles of the feet, there is no soundness in them, but wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores, which have not been mollified, neither bound up with ointment.” Sin has flooded the very being of every man, and it is absolutely malignant in both intention and effect. If a large drop of iodine fell into a cup of water, it would not turn the water totally dark, but it would permeate the entire cup. So it is with sin. It always has room to grow — and will do so if not properly “treated.” But it has affected every part of every person. Now, if sin has affected the eyes of its victim, we might guess that the victim is blinded by it, even to the point that he cannot properly understand the disease. And this is true, far more true than even a “cured” person realizes.

Sin is a *defiling* disease. Like leprosy (one of many disease types used for sin in the Bible), it renders its victim “unclean.” David appealed to God with these words: “Wash me, and I shall be clean” (Psalm 51:2, 7). Dirt and filth are often presented in Scripture as valid pictures of the effect of sin, and cleansing is used often as a picture of both salvation and sanctification. Sin soils the soul and contaminates the life.

Sin is a *depriving* disease. It brought Adam and Eve, our first parents, down from a state of health and innocence and deprived them of their total heritage with God. Little do we know what we are deprived of by sin! I wonder if God might not show us at the end an itemized account of the legacy we *might have had* if we had but used the provided remedy for sin. In our text, the deprivation of sin may be seen in the word, “recovered.” If health needs to be recovered, then it has been lost. Man has been deprived of the perfect health of a sinless state and an unhindered walk with God through sin. Sin is the great thief, stealing a fabulous and incalculable treasure from man. If I had a business with a fabulous inventory and an incredible

net worth, and I discovered that an employee was stealing gigantic sums of money from the business, would I treat that employee with indifference or tolerance. Well, sin has robbed God of man, and has robbed man of God and all the inestimable treasure of knowing God. Be honest! Should it be treated with tolerance?

Sin is a *deceiving* disease. While publicizing itself as a great friend and as the only prescription for happiness, sin instead lulls, deadens, and drags its victims and pushes them toward death and judgment. Many deadly diseases are innocent in appearance. In fact, many deadly viruses appear absolutely beautiful when viewed through a microscope. The working of death is not *apparent* as one of their symptoms. But remember the old adage: “Appearances are often deceiving.” Disease is not always accompanied with violent and decided symptoms.

The quaint old Puritan Thomas Brooks said it so well: “Sin is full of seeming sweets, but one day they will quickly vanish, and lasting shame, sorrow, horror and terror will come in the place thereof. Many eat on earth what they will digest in hell. Sin’s murdering morsels always deceive those that devour them. Adam’s fruit was a bitter sweet. Esau’s mess of pottage was a bitter sweet. The Israelite’s quails were a bitter sweet. Jonathan’s honey was a bitter sweet. And Adonijah’s dainties were a bitter sweet. *After the meal is ended, then comes the reckoning.*” But sin hides the deadly hook in the tasty bait, all the while enticing its fish to the frying pan.

Sin is a *deadening* and *destroying* disease. Jeremiah 2:17 uses an old and familiar Biblical illustration to picture the deadliness of sin. The illustration that is used for sin is that of snakebite. The serpent in question was the legendary “cockatrice,” a serpent of such deadly reputation that the Jews had invented the legend that this viper *killed with a look!* Of course, this legend is far wide of the truth, but the illustration still holds. Once the venom of a deadly viper enters the human bloodstream, it induces a fever which speedily kills its victim unless some antidote is immediately applied. I saw a serpent in the South African bush country that is so deadly that my friend and guide told me that when a man is bitten by this snake, he has a maximum of three minutes to live! What an apt and accurate picture of sin. The virulent, deadly poison of sin was introduced into the bloodstream of mankind when Adam and Eve succumbed to “that old serpent, the Devil.” The literally devastating effects of that original transgression remain with us still. As a result, every unsaved man — every human being who has not received the miracle cure of the Divine Antitoxin — is *dead* in trespasses and sins. In the eyes of God, he is no more than a corpse.

Man suffers from an indescribably dangerous, desperate, deadly disease. And there is absolutely no “do-it-yourself” cure. The healing of the disease of sin is beyond the ability of man. “Though you wash yourself with lye-soap, and use much of it, yet your iniquity is marked before Me, says the Lord God” (Jeremiah 2:22). Furthermore, the person with the disease has a heart that is “deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked” (Jeremiah 17:9). The heart is the center of sin’s deadly spread in each man (Matthew 15:18-20). A wise man might be interested in the prescription that would secure for him a clean bill of health, but where does he get such a prescription? Our text informs us of the remedy.

II. A DELIVERANCE PRESCRIBED

Next, the text suggests the existence and availability of a sure-cure medicine for the disease of sin. We are clearly told that there is both an adequate medicine and a skilled doctor to prescribe and apply it. “Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no physician there?” The questions are asked in this manner to show the Divine astonishment that man continues on his deadly course when the perfect cure is just at hand. The existence of a “balm” and a “physician” is admitted in the text. But what is meant by these picturesque terms?

The word “balm” in the text refers to a *symbolic medicine*. The “balm in Gilead” is a remarkable picture of God’s great provision for sin-sick man. Through fifty generations Gilead had been famous for its aromatic and medicinal plants. Gilead is the mountainous region east of the Jordan River in Israel, forming one of the frontiers of the Holy Land. And it was there that the fragrant, resinous gum which had such famous healing properties, was grown. The Webster’s New World Dictionary defines the word “balm” thus: “A fragrant gum resin obtained from certain trees and used as a medicine.” The Bible Dictionary defines it in Biblical terms: “Balm was a resinous gum which flowed from the side of a tree or shrub found on the sunny slopes of Mt. Gilead, and counted very precious.” When Jacob counseled his sons how to propitiate Joseph, after they had cruelly abused him years before, he told them to make him a present of “a little balm” (Genesis 43:11). This “balm of Gilead” was a common item of trade and merchandise on the north-south trade route between Egypt and Syria (Genesis 37:25), and it was universally regarded as an effective and valuable medicine (Jeremiah 46:11 and 51:8). This balm is used symbolically to picture God’s great remedy for mankind’s fatal disease.

Consider the *spiritual meaning* of the symbol. Here again, the Bible is a “Him” book — it points vividly, clearly, and unmistakably to Jesus Christ. The “balm of Gilead” is a beautiful and accurate symbol of Jesus. Note that the healing benefit is associated with a *mountain*. Even so, our salvation originated in a great transaction on a mountain, Mount Calvary. Note that the healing derives from a *tree*. Our salvation is derived from a transaction that took place on a tree (Galatians 3:13, I Peter 2:24). Note the Bible Dictionary definition recorded in the previous paragraph and see that this medicine “*flowed from the side* of a tree.” Our Savior bled from a riven and flowing wound in His side on the Cross. The “balm of Gilead” was collected by *wounding and bleeding* the balsam (“balm” is the shortened form of this word) tree. Just as rubber is collected from a rubber tree by inflicting a wound on the side of the tree and catching the substance that flows from the wound, the “balm of Gilead” was collected in the same manner. Our salvation results only from the wounding and bleeding of our Savior on Mount Calvary. The “balm” thus collected was transported to ailing people, and it proved to have a *mighty healing power*. An old hymn reflects this truth for us:

“Ever since by faith I saw the stream *Thy flowing wounds* supply,
Redeeming love has been my theme, And shall be ‘til I die.”

This balm was “*counted very precious*.” I Peter 1:18 speaks of “the *precious* blood of Christ.” and I Peter 2:4 speaks of Jesus as “chosen of God, and *precious*.” I Peter 2:7 shows us the attitude of the person who has taken the medicine and been cured by it: “Unto you who believe, *Jesus is precious*.” Of course, of course! How could it be otherwise? What a balm we

have in Jesus! The remedy He gives is full “remission” of the disease of sin in our present experience, and final deliverance from its effects hereafter. And the medicine is free! We can come and receive it “without money and without price.” So let’s have a look at the Physician who administers the cure.

III. A DOCTOR PRESENTED

The balm is the blood of Christ, but the blood is always powerless in Scripture unless it is applied. The medicine is worthless if it is not taken by the sick person. Sinners must “take the medicine” if they are to be cured.

Remember the occasion of the Passover in the Old Testament (Exodus 12). God’s prescription was that a lamb was to be slain for each Jewish household, and the blood of that lamb was to be sprinkled on the doorposts of the house. *The remedy was of no use unless applied.* The remedy itself may be objectively perfect, but it is only beneficial if it is subjectively applied.

“Down at the Cross where my Savior died, Down where for cleansing for sin I cried,
*There to my heart was the blood **applied**, Glory to His Name!*”

Our salvation is the work of a mighty, eternal, Divine “Harvey team” of spiritual medics. The question, “Is there no physician there?” is answered in God’s own magnanimous way. God the Father is the *doctor* who *prescribes* the remedy. God the Son, Jesus, is the *pharmacist* who *provides* the remedy. And God the Holy Spirit is the *registered nurse* who *applies* the remedy. In one of his great hymns, Charles Wesley called the Holy Spirit “the Spirit of health.” Certainly! All three of the above named medics are totally Divine. Can’t you just imagine approaching the door of the Doctor’s office and reading the sign: “God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit -- **INTERNISTS.**” You can get a spiritual “clean bill of health” if you will take the medicine which they prescribe, provide, and apply. Shouldn’t you make an urgent call to This Specialist — *today?*

This doctor is renowned for His *perception*. One doctor could not detect the nature of his patient’s illness. Finally, he said in frustration, “Have you ever had this sickness before?” The patient answered, “Yes, I have,” and the doctor said, “Well, you’ve got it again!” The Divine physician never has a perception problem. He knows the person of each of his patients perfectly, and His medical records are always complete and accurate. He is infinite in knowledge. When He makes a diagnosis, the wise patient will agree with Him, even though he may not understand the severity of the diagnosis at the moment.

This doctor is renowned for His *power*. When He walked on earth as a man, He often commanded diseases — and they obeyed Him! He never met a hopeless case. Blind men saw, deaf men heard, dumb men spoke, crippled men were made whole, and funeral services were interrupted by His power. No matter how mild or how major you think your case is, you need this Almighty Doctor to take your case and apply His medicine.

This doctor is renowned for His tender *pity*. He has infinite pity, and He is always ready to help the distressed, even if He is unasked.

This doctor is renowned for His incredible *patience*. He has wonderful patience towards the distressed. He bears with their ingratitude, and works their perfect cure.

Now, the sickness has been admitted and identified. Its characteristics and symptoms have been explored. The proposed remedy has also been examined. The attending physician has been introduced. With this kind of care, the cure would seem to be automatic and sure. But alas! The health of the patient is not only not recovered; instead, it continues to get worse with the advance of the disease. What is wrong?

IV. A DEFAULT PROTESTED

God asks a question, and waits for an answer. With an able doctor ready to handle the case, and a proven cure at hand, and a registered nurse who can apply the necessary medication — “why then isn’t the health of my people restored?” Why? *Why?* Why do the wounds never close? Why is the patient not back in the bloom of health? Why is there continued decline? Why do My people still languish in their sickness?

It could be that the patient is not healed because of *ignorance*. Strangely, the patient is blind and insensible with regard to the available cure. In fact, the patient seems to be completely unable to recognize his condition. And behold, this ignorance seems to be wilful ignorance — the patient shuts his eyes to the cure and obstinately refuses to look and listen. The label on the medicine contains both an invitation and a warning: “Whoso findeth me findeth life, and shall obtain favor of the Lord. But he that sinneth against me wrongeth his own soul, and all they that hate me love death” (Proverbs 8:35-36). Would a sick man knowingly cling to his disease? Would a diseased man knowingly wrap the arms of death around himself when a remedy for his disease is close at hand? Yet the patient hastens on toward death in wilful ignorance.

It could be that the patient is not healed because of *indifference*. The very nearness of the remedy lulls the patient; the very ease of appropriation makes him passive. “One of these days,” he thinks, and all the while the disease is tightening its grip on his vitals. Carelessness and procrastination hover as attendants over his sickbed, guaranteeing that he will not apply the cure. Neglect soothes him, always suggesting that there will be a better time for a trip to the doctor and an application of the medicine. Just two verses before our text, this tragic cry is raised, “The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved” (Jeremiah 8:20). Opportunity knocks, but indifference leans against the door, keeping it shut.

One of the great Christian pastors of America tells this gripping story:

One day one of the deacons of the church came to me and said, “Pastor, a family has moved next door to me. I visited with them. They are all lost. Not one of them is a Christian. Would you come and tell them how to be saved?” I went to the home, knocked at the door, and was graciously invited in. I met a

father, a mother, a boy about sixteen, a girl about seventeen, and another boy about twelve. I talked to them about Jesus. They were very responsive and said, "Preacher, next Sunday we will be in church." When the services began, I looked over the congregation. They were not present. I waited about two or three weeks and went back to the home. I talked to them again about the Lord. They said, "Pastor, we shall be there next Sunday. We shall certainly come to church." But Sunday came and they were not there. The following week in the early hours of one morning, I received a telephone call from a nurse in our Baptist hospital who belonged to our church. She said, "Pastor, I am so hesitant to call you at this hour of the morning, but there is a boy in the hospital who has been badly hurt. It appears that he has just a few hours to live. His father is by his side. I asked him if there was anybody he knew who might stand with him in this tragic moment. He said that he knows you. I just wondered if you could possibly come and stand with him just now?" I dressed, went to the hospital room where the boy was lying prostrate, terribly crushed in an automobile accident. The boy had been driving at high speed and had a head-on collision. I took my place by the father's side. In just a little while the nurse took the white sheet and pulled it over the boy's face. She looked tenderly at the father and said, "I'm so sorry, but your boy is gone." She left the room. After the nurse had left, the father pulled the sheet away from the face of the boy. Looking into his face, the father fell to the floor. He began to cry inconsolably. "I have not done right by my boy," he lamented, "O God, what shall I do?" After the memorial service and burial, the following Sunday, the four surviving members of the family came down the aisle of the church, declaring their faith in Jesus Christ. After the service, a member said, "Pastor, was not that the most glorious sight in the world? The whole family came to Jesus! All of them were saved!" I said, "Yes, that was a glorious sight." But in my heart as I looked at them seated there on the front seat, I said, "This is the saddest sight in the world. If only they had come a week before!" Someday when they stand at the judgment bar of the Almighty and the roll is called in heaven, God will call the name of the father and he will answer, "Here." God will call the name of the mother and she will answer, "Here." He will call the name of the seventeen-year-old girl and she will answer, "Here." What if the Lord God should then say, "Is that all?" "No," the father might answer, "there was one more, and if we had acted one week sooner, he would be here, too!" "*The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved*" (Jeremiah 8:20).

It could be that the patient is not healed because of *indulgence*. The puzzling truth is that some people love their sickness more than they want health. They cling to the deadly virus of sin. They clasp their sinful practices, desires as habits as one would hold a treasure. They are not healed because they are too fond of their sins. What is the explanation of this unreasonable adherence, this insane attachment, to sin? My friend, *which of your pet sins has ever sweat blood for you* as Jesus did? *What sin has ever been nailed to a cross to redeem you?* What cherished habit has risen from the dead for you? Has *selfishness* ever paid a price to redeem you to God? Has *sinful habit* ever given its life to take you to heaven? Has *pride* ever brought you to God? No, these things keep you from God and life and spiritual health.

It could be that the patient is not healed because of *individualism*. Some stupidly complain that they dislike the remedy. While dying, they try to re-write the Doctor's prescription! Others are too stupidly proud to humble themselves and accept the medicine. Can you imagine a dying man being too proud to enter the door of the Doctor's office? Many don't like the manner of application (conviction, conversion, confession, consecration). Should desperate, dying men dictate their likes and dislikes to the doctor who can save them? Some still pretend that they can save themselves, though their entire "medical history" proves perfectly that such is not the case. If you have the capability to correct your malady, why do you even have it to begin with. Give up your stupid folly, my friend, and **go to the Doctor!** Some dare to pass judgment on the continuing effects of the cure before they even get it. They don't want to *change*, so they cleave to the disease *that will change them forever!* Do you see your precarious position? You argue the ingredients of the medicine while hell opens its mouth to swallow you.

Frankly, if you are really in love with sin, and death, and hell, then you are already under the care of the physician who will oblige you. You see, Satan is also a physician, but he is a quack! He is so counterfeit that he has mastered the method of convincing people that he doesn't even exist. You may not believe that you are under the close care and scrutiny of "old Doctor Devil," but your disbelief does not change the fact. One day he will hold an eternal "post-mortem" over your spiritual remains. Meantime, his methods and medicines are designed to salve you, but they will never cure you. Though he knows full well that you have a deadly disease, instead of applying the scalpel and cutting out the offending tissue, he applies a mild and soothing ointment. He knows that you are under the control of some awful spiritual ailment, but he prescribes narcotics, or sedatives, or intoxicants, or sleeping pills. He makes you like the woman in the Gospel story, who had seen many physicians, and taken many medicines, but she was not any better, only worse. *Why do you spend all those hours in the Devil's Waiting Room when he "treats" you the way he does?* Please tell me, Why? Would you tell me of the millions that the dear old Devil has healed? Come, come, dear heart, get honest for a moment. I have logged considerable time under *both doctors*, and am reasonably familiar with the practice of each of them, and the difference between them is as wide as *heaven and hell*.

Every serious disease is limited as to the season of its healing. There is an unseen line in the path of the diseased person beyond which there is no cure. Dear, dear friend without Christ, you are in a position of great and grave danger. Physical diseases will put you in the grave, but *this disease will put you in hell*. And it spreads its virulent poison by the hour. That unseen line may pass under your feet with your next step. But, Good News! The Divine Doctor does not keep office hours; He "neither slumbers nor sleeps." He is "closer than breathing, and nearer than hands and feet." The prescription for healing was prepared in the Laboratory of Calvary long, long ago. **Call the Doctor now** (Romans 10:13). He "stands ready to save you" at this very moment.

V. THE DESTRUCTION PREVENTED

While you are logging your time of loyal slavery under Satan's "care," a tender, compassionate, capable Physician is close at hand. You need to know this about Him. He has

taken the very disease that is killing you into His own Person — and **conquered it**. The disease of sin unleashed its full power on Him — and killed Him. But then *He* unleashed *His* full power on *it* — and *killed it!* Now His blood is the great antitoxin you need to overcome the disease in you. But I want to warn you. This Physician has no intention of sparing even the slightest vestige of the disease in you. This Doctor uses very drastic and decisive measures in dealing with this disease. *He treats the disease like the disease is treating you*. His treatments are both *critical* and *continual*. His usual methods are fourfold. One is *destructive*, another is *purgative*, a third is *corrective* or *counteractive*, and the fourth is *nutritive*. Let me discriminate between them.

First, He uses a *cutting* method, the method of removal and destruction. Just as a good physician may use a scalpel, or a lance, or a cauterizing device to destroy deadly tissue, so will Jesus. His great “operating room” is in the Laboratory of Calvary, at the Cross. Coming to the Cross is like facing a major operation. It completely alters your sense of values. You are getting along well, with your modest dreams being satisfied — when one day a sudden pain comes. A trip to the doctor leads finally to a hospital ward where you await major surgery. As you lie in that hospital bed waiting, how your perspective changes! Your job neither worries nor excites you; you simply don’t care at the moment whether you see your house or car again. The nearer you get to the operating room, the more you feel your own weakness, until when the morning of the surgery arrives you feel absolutely helpless. You can do nothing, absolutely nothing — except commit yourself to the “attending powers” to help you through. The world of self-help is crucified to you as you are being wheeled from the ward to the operating room. A serious operation strips a man of everything and reduces him to the place where he must trust someone else for everything. You may be sure that *even atheists pray* at such a time!

The same crushing blow to our own self-importance takes place when we come to the Cross. We feel our malignant sinfulness so keenly that we despair of ever mending things ourselves. We become willing, under Divine pressure, to submit ourselves humbly to the Divine Physician.

“Nothing in my hand I bring, Simply to Thy Cross I cling,
Nothing else will for sin atone, Thou must save, and Thou alone.”

Too drastic a picture, you say? Then you need to listen carefully to Doctor’s perfect prescription: “If thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee.... If thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee: for *it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that the whole body should be cast into everlasting fire*” (Matthew 5:29-30). This Doctor is Divine, and you refuse His prescription at your peril.

Second, He uses a *cleansing* method, the method of purgation and catharsis. Just as a good doctor will prescribe innumerable cleansings of wounds and tissues, and just as he will use drastic scrubbing to cleanse the system, so will Jesus. David applied at the “prescription counter” with this appeal in the 51st Psalm: “Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow; cleanse me thoroughly from my sin.” He had apparently been to The Doctor before, and knew what to expect! He knew that some cleansing agent had to

pass through the polluted recesses of his moral and spiritual life. In II Corinthians 7:1, Paul said, “Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit.” What remarkable language! As when a person enters a washroom and applies soap and water to cleanse his hands, and then emerges, declaring, “*I washed my hands.*” We understand quite well what he means, but it was the soap and water, properly applied, that washed his hands.

Remember that God’s cure for sin is both *critical* and *continual*. It occurs in a once-for-all crisis, then in an ongoing process. Many diseases require the treatment of a major crisis, then the ongoing care of regular treatments before cure is complete. The disease of sin is this way. An “arrest” takes place the moment a person is saved. The disease goes into “remission,” but the final and total cure will come in “glorification,” which is yet sometime off. In I Corinthians 6:11, the Apostle Paul records a terrible list of sinners and their sins, but then he adds, “And such were some of you — *but you are washed*, you are sanctified, you are justified.” These verbs refer to “the big purge” of salvation, but other passages refer to the daily cleansing of sin’s continual contamination. Every sinner needs “the big salvation bath,” and then afterward, the daily local cleansings for the contamination of defilement of daily sin as he travels Home. Any Christian should know enough about the disease to give it full respect each day of his life.

“I want a principle within Of jealous, godly fear;
A sensibility of sin, A pain to feel it near.
Oh may the least omission pain My well-instructed soul;
And drive me to the blood again, That makes the wounded whole.”

Third, this Divine Doctor uses a *corrective* method, the method of curative counteraction. Just as a good doctor will employ antidotes and counter-measures to correct the advance of the disease, so will Jesus. Sin operates by its own “law of gravity.” It has a continuing downward pull that must be corrected.

A giant hot-air balloon makes a good illustration of sin. You see that balloon lying on the ground with all of its attending features, and it would require a great force to pick it up and carry it. But when the balloon itself is inflated with helium (or whatever fuels it), then it is very difficult to hold it down. Without the fuel to get it airborne, the law of gravity holds it to the earth. When the fuel operates within the balloon, *gravitation is not eradicated; it is merely counteracted*. The idea of *correction by counteraction* is found often in Scripture. Romans 8:2 says, “The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus (the counteractive law) has made me free from the law of sin and death (the spiritual law of gravity).” Science calls the downpulling force the law of gravitation, and the uplifting force is called the law of levitation.

Years ago, a great English preacher, Thomas Chalmers, preached a remarkable sermon entitled, “The Expulsive Power of a New Affection.” “If any man is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away, behold, *all things have become new.*” Among the new things is a brand-new affection: “The love of Christ constrains” him. This new affection has an incredible *expulsive* power, pushing off the “old growth” of sin. It also has an *expansive* power, building a growing reservoir of spiritual resources to assist in the ongoing struggle against sin.

And it has an *expressive* power which leads the person into a life giving, praying, witnessing, serving, etc. What corrective and counteractive powers there are in the Doctor's prescription for the disease of sin.

Finally, Jesus, the Divine Doctor, uses a *nutritive* method in overcoming the disease of sin. Just as a good doctor may include dietary instructions in his treatment, so does Jesus. A prescribed diet, with health-giving nutrients, vitamins and minerals, is often used to restore health to the sick person. The body has its own continuing processes to assist with its health. One such process is *excretive* — the giving off of wastes which would infect and poison the body. This process may work through the skin, which excretes perspiration and drains many tiny impurities from the body, or through the lungs, which take in oxygen and give off poison acids. These breathing processes are called respiration, which replenishes the body with all the vital elements of oxygen, and expiration, which exhales poisons from the body.. Or it may work through the digestive tract, which receives solid foods and gives off solid wastes.

A Christian who cherishes his spiritual life and health must not ignore or neglect the nutritive necessities of his spiritual life. "I have meat to eat that you know not of," said Jesus. "My meat is to do the will of God, and to finish His work." So failure to do the will of God simply *starves the spirit of man to death*. "Thy words were found, and I did eat them, and Thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of my heart," said Jeremiah (Jeremiah 15:16). "I have esteemed the words of Thy mouth to be more necessary than my food," said Job (Job 23:12). "Man lives by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God," said Jesus (Matthew 4:4).

The salvation which saves us from the penalty of sin (Romans 6:23) and the sanctification which saves us from the power and pollution of sin are like a person with a dread disease submitting to a skilled doctor's care. No one likes to think of having a serious, malignant, malicious, advancing disease — but everyone does! But Jesus, the "great Physician," has provided a clean bill of health to anyone who takes His great cure, and He maintains the patient's health through a clearly prescribed and carefully followed regimen of diet, rest, exercise, and cleanliness.

There are diet foods that bear a "Healthy Choice" label. *All of Jesus' prescriptions bear that label*. Have you made the healthy choice for a whole life? "The great Physician now is near, the sympathizing Jesus." *Call on The Doctor today! He can give you a clean bill of health!*