

THE SOUL'S MALADY AND CURE.

Luke v. 31. "*They that are whole need not a physician, but they that are sick.*"

THE occasion of the words is set down in the context; Levi was called from the receipt of custom (he was a custom-house man), but Christ called him, and there went out power with the word, "he left all, rose up, and followed him," ver. 28. Levi did not consult with flesh and blood, he did not say, "What shall I do for the hundred talents?" 2 Chron. xxv. 9. how shall I live and maintain my charge? I shall lose many a sweet bit at the custom-house; poverty is like to be my patrimony; nay, in case I follow Christ, I must espouse persecution; he doth not reason thus; but having a call, he hastens away after Christ, "he rose up and followed him;" and that he might give Christ a pledge and specimen of his love, he makes him a feast, ver. 29. "And Levi made him a great feast in his own house;" a better guest he could not invite. Christ always came with his cost; Levi feasted Christ with his cheer, and Christ feasted him with salvation. Well, Christ being at this feast, the Pharisees begin to murmur, ver. 30. "Why do ye eat and drink with publicans?" The Pharisees, 1. were offended at him that he should go in and eat with publicans. The publicans were counted the worst of sinners; sinners of the deepest dye; yet the Pharisees were not so much offended at the sins of the publicans, as they had a mind to pick a quarrel with Christ. He who was the horn of salvation to some, was a rock of offence to these Jews; others did feed on him, these did stumble at him. 2. They accuse Christ: for these words carry in them a charge and accusation, "Why do ye eat with publicans and sinners?" The Pharisees impeached Christ for eating with sinners; malice will never want matter of accusation. Though the devils proclaimed Christ's holiness, Luke iv. 34. "Let us alone, I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God." Yet the Pharisees tax him for a sinner: see what malice will do, it will make a man speak that which the devil himself will not speak. The devils justify Christ, the Pharisees accuse him. And Christ, who was

a Lamb without spot, could not escape the world's censures, no wonder if his people are loaded with the calumnies and censures of the wicked.

But let us examine the matter of the charge they bring against Christ, and see how groundless it was. They indict Christ for going in with sinners.

First, Christ did nothing but what was according to his commission; the commission he received from his Father, was, that he should come to save sinners, 1 Tim. i. 15.

Secondly, Christ went in with sinners, not to join with them in their sins, but to heal them of their sins; to accuse Christ, was, as Austin saith, as if the physician should be accused, because he goes among them that are sick of the plague. This groundless accusation Christ overhears, and in the text gives these envious Pharisees a silencing answer, "They that are whole need not a physician, but they that are sick." As if Christ had said, You Pharisees think yourselves righteous persons, you need no Saviour; but these poor publicans are sick and ready to die, and I come as a physician to cure them; therefore be not angry at a work of mercy; though you will not be healed, yet do not hinder me from healing others. "They that are whole need not a physician, but they that are sick."

In the words there are two general parts:

1. The dying patients.

2. The healing physician.

1. The dying patients, Them that are sick. Whence observe,

Doct. 1. That sin is a soul-disease, Psal. ciii. 3. Isa. liii. 4. "He hath borne our griefs," in the Hebrew it is our sicknesses. Man at first was created in a healthful temper, he had no sickness of soul, he ailed nothing; the soul, in the Greek, had its *eukrasia*, its perfect beauty and glory. The eye was clear, the heart pure, the affections tuned with the finger of God into a most sweet harmony. God made man upright, Eccles.

vii. 29.; but Adam, by eating the apple, fell sick; and had died for ever, had not God found out a way for his recovery. For the amplification of the doctrine, there are three things to be considered.

1. In what sense sin is resembled to sickness.

2. What the diseases of the soul are.

3. That sin-sickness is the worst.

1. In what sense sin is resembled to sickness.

1. Sin may be compared to sickness for the manner of catching.

First, Sickness is caught often through carelessness; some get cold by leaving off clothes. So when Adam grew careless of God's command, and left off the garment of his innocency, he caught a sickness; he could stay no longer in the garden, but lay bedrid; his sin hath turned the world, which was a paradise, into an hospital.

Secondly, Sickness is caught sometimes through superfluity and intemperance. Excess produceth sickness. When our first parents lost the golden bridle of temperance, and did eat of the forbidden tree, they, and all their posterity surfeited on it, and took a sickness. The tree of knowledge had sickness and death under the leaves; it was fair to the eye, Gen. iii. 6., but poison to the taste; we all grew desperately sick by eating of this tree. Adam's intemperance hath brought us to fasting and weeping; and besides that disease at first by propagation, we have added to it by actual perpetration. We have increased our sickness, therefore sinners are said to wax worse and worse, 2 Tim. iii. 13.

2. Sin may be resembled to sickness for the nature of it. As, 1. Sickness is of a spreading nature, it spreads all over the body, it works into every part, the head, stomach, it disorders the whole body. So sin doth not rest in one part, but spreads into all the faculties of the soul, and members of the body, Isa. i. 5, 6. "The whole head is sick, the whole heart is faint; from the sole of the foot, even unto the head, there is no soundness in it, but wounds and bruises, and putrefying sores," &c.

1. Sin doth corrupt the understanding, Gregory Nazianzene calls the understanding

the lamp of reason, this lamp burns dim, Eph. iv. 18. "Having their understanding darkened;" sin hath drawn a vail over the understanding, it hath cast a mist before our eyes, that we neither know God nor ourselves; naturally we are only wise to do evil, Jer. iv. 21. Witty at sin, wise to damn ourselves; the understanding is defiled, 1 Cor. ii. 14. We can no more judge of spiritual objects till the Spirit of God anoint our eyes, than a blind man can judge of colours; our understandings are subject to mistakes; "we call evil good, and good evil; we put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter," Isa. v. 20. A straight stick under water seems crooked; so to a natural understanding the straight line of truth seems crooked.

2. The memory is diseased; the memory at first was like a golden cabinet in which divine truths were locked up safe; but now it is like a colander or leaking vessel, which lets all that is good run out. The memory is like a searce, which sifts out the flour, but keeps the bran. So the memory lets saving truths go, and holds nothing but froth and vanity. Many a man can remember a story, when he hath forgot his creed. Thus the memory is diseased; the memory is like a bad stomach that wants the retentive faculty, all the meat comes up again: so the most precious truths will not stay in the memory, but are gone again.

3. The will is diseased; the will is the soul's commander-in-chief, it is the master-wheel; but how irregular and eccentric is it! The will in the creation was like that golden bridle which Minerva was said to put upon Pegasus to guide and rule him; it did answer to God's will: this was the language of the will in innocency, "I delight to do thy will, O God," Psal. xl. 8. but now it is distempered, it is like an iron sinew that refuseth to yield and bend to God, Isa. xlviii. 4. John v. 40. "Ye will not come to me that ye may have life." Men will rather die than come to their physician. The Arminians talk of free will; the will is sick, what freedom hath a sick man to walk; the will is a rebel against God, Acts vii. 51. "Ye do always resist the Holy Ghost." The will is diseased.

4. The affections are sick.

First, The affection of desire; a sick man

desires that which is hurtful for him, he calls for wine in a fever. So the natural man being sick, he desires that which is prejudicial for him; he hath no desire after Christ, he doth not hunger and thirst after righteousness; but he desires poison, he desires to take his fill of sin, he loves death, Prov. viii. 36.

Secondly, The affection of grief; a man grieves for the want of an estate, but not for the want of God's favour: he grieves to see the plague or cancer in his body, but not for the plague of his heart.

Thirdly, The affection of joy; many can rejoice in a wedge of gold, not in the cross of Christ. The affections are sick and dis-tempered.

5. The conscience is diseased, Titus i. 15. "Their mind and conscience is defiled." Conscience is either, 1. Erroneous, binding to that which is sinful, John xvi. 2. Acts xxvi. 9. "I verily thought with myself I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus." Conscience is an *ignis fatuus*, leading out of the right way. Or, 2. Dumb, it will not tell men of sin; it is a silenced preacher. Or, 3. Dead, Ephes. iv. 19. Conscience is stupified and senseless; the custom of sinning hath taken away the sense of sinning. Thus the sickness of sin hath gone over the whole soul, like that cloud which overspread the face of the heavens, 1 Kings xviii. 45.

2. Sickness doth debilitate and weaken the body; a sick man is unfit to walk; so this sickness of sin weakens the soul, Romans v. 6. "When we were without strength Christ died." In innocency Adam was, in some sense, like the angels, he could serve God with a winged swiftness, and filial cheerfulness; but sin brought sickness into the soul, and this sickness hath cut the lock where his strength lay; he is now disarmed of all ability for service; and where grace is wrought, though a Christian be not so heart-sick as before, yet he is very faint. The saints' prayers do but whisper in God's ears, and if Christ did not pray them over again, God could not hear them; we sin fervently, but pray faintly; as David said, 2 Sam. iii. 39. "I am this day weak, though anointed king;" so Christians, though they have the oil of

grace poured upon them, and they are anointed spiritual kings, yet they are weak: sin hath enfeebled them; they take their breath short, and cannot put forth such strong desires after God as they ought. When we find ourselves dead in duty, our holy affections languishing, think thus, This is my sickness, sin hath made me weak; as Jephtha said to his daughter, Judges xi. 35. "Alas, my daughter, thou hast brought me very low;" so may the soul say, Alas, my sin, thou hast brought me very low, thou hast brought me almost to the gates of death.

3. Sickness doth eclipse the beauty of the body: This I ground on that scripture, Psal. xxxix. 11. "When thou with rebukes dost correct man, thou makest his beauty to consume away like a moth." The moth consumes the beauty of the cloth; so a fit of sickness consumes the beauty of the body. Thus sin is a soul-sickness, it hath eclipsed the glory and splendour of the soul, it hath turned ruddiness into paleness; that beauty of grace which once sparkled as gold, now it may be said, "How is this gold become dim?" Lam. iv. 1. That soul which once had an orient brightness in it, it was more ruddy than rubies, its polishing was of sapphire, the understanding bespangled with knowledge, the will crowned with liberty, the affections like so many seraphim, burning in love to God, now the glory is departed. Sin hath turned beauty into deformity; as some faces by sickness are so disfigured, and look so ghastly, they can hardly be known: so the soul of man is, by sin, so sadly metamorphosed (having lost the image of God) that it can hardly be known. Joel ii. 31. "The sun shall be turned into darkness." Sin hath turned that sun of beauty which shined in the soul into a Cimmerian darkness; and where grace is begun to be wrought, yet the soul's beauty is not quite recovered, but is like the sun under a cloud.

4. Sickness takes away the taste; a sick man doth not taste that sweetness in his meat; so the sinner by reason of soul-sickness, hath lost his taste to spiritual things. The word of God is *pabulum animæ*, it is bread to strengthen, wine to comfort; but the sinner tastes no sweetness in the word. A child of God who is spiritualized by grace,

tastes a savouriness in ordinances, the promise drops as an honey-comb, Psal. xix. 10. but a natural man is sick, and his taste is gone; since the tasting of the forbidden tree, he hath lost his taste.

5. Sickness takes away the comfort of life; a sick person hath no joy of any thing, his life is a burden to him. So the sin-sick soul is void of all true comfort, and his laughter is but the pleasing dream of a sick man; he hath no true title to comfort, his sin is not pardoned, he may be in hell before night for any thing he knows.

6. Sickness ushers in death, it is the prologue to death; sickness is as it were the cutting of the tree, and death is the falling of the tree; so this disease of sin (if not cured in time) brings the second death.

2. What the diseases of the soul are. Adam by breaking the box of original righteousness, hath filled the soul full of diseases; the body is not subject to so many diseases as the soul: I cannot reckon them all up, Psal. xix. 12. "Who can understand his errors?" Psal. xl. 12. Only I shall name some of the worst of these diseases. Pride is the tympany of the soul, lust is the fever, error the gangrene, unbelief the plague of the heart, hypoerisy the scurvy, hardness of heart the stone, anger the phrenzy, malice the wolf in the breast, covetousness the dropsy, spiritual sloth the green sickness, apostasy the epilepsy; here are eleven soul-diseases, and when they come to the full height they are dangerous, and most frequently prove mortal.

3. The third thing to be demonstrated is, that sin is the worst sickness. To have a body full of plague sores is sad; but to have the soul, which is the more noble part, spotted with sin, and full of the tokens, is far worse; as appears:

(1.) The body may be diseased, and the conscience quiet. Isa. xxxiii. 24. "The inhabitant of the land shall not say I am sick." He should scarce feel his sickness, because sin was pardoned; but when the soul is sick of any reigning lust, the conscience is troubled. Isa. lvii. ult. "There is no peace to the wicked, saith my God." When Spira had abjured his former faith, he was put IN LITTLE EASE, his con-

science burned as hell, and no spiritual physic that divines did apply, could ever allay that inflammation.

(2.) A man may have bodily diseases, yet God may love him. "Asa was diseased in his feet," 2 Kings xv. 23. He had the gout, yet a favourite with God. God's hand may go out against a man, yet his heart may be towards him; diseases are the arrows which God shoots; pestilence is called God's arrow, Psal. xci. 5. This arrow (as Gregory Nazianzene saith) may be sent from the hand of an indulgent father: but soul diseases are symptoms of God's anger, as he is a holy God, he cannot but hate sin, "he beholds the proud afar off," Psal. cxxxviii. 6. God hates a sinner for his plague-sores: Zech. xi. 8. "My soul loathed them."

(3.) Sickness, at worst, doth but separate from the society of friends; but this disease of sin, if not cured, separates from the society of God and angels. The leper was to be shut out of the camp; the leprosy of sin, without the interposition of mercy, shuts men out of the camp of heaven, Rev. xxi. 8. This is the misery of them that die in their sins, they are allowed neither friend nor physician to come at them, they are excluded God's presence for ever, in whose presence is fulness of joy.

Use 1. Information. Branch 1. See into what a sad condition sin hath brought us; it hath made us desperately sick; nay, we die away in our sickness, till we are fetched again with the water of life. O how many sick bedrid souls are there in the world! sick of pride, sick of lust; sin hath turned our houses and churches into hospitals, they are full of sick persons. What David's enemies said reproachfully of him, is true of every natural man, Psal. xli. 8. "An evil disease cleaveth fast unto him." He hath the "plague of the heart," 1 Kings viii. And even those who are regenerate are cured but in part, they have some grudgings of the disease, some ebullitions and stirrings of corruption; nay, sometimes the king's evil breaks forth to the scandal of religion, and from this sin-sickness ariseth all other diseases, plague, gout, stone, fever, 1 Cor. xi. 29, 30. "He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation

to himself; for this cause many are weak and sickly among you."

Branch 2. If sin be a soul-sickness, then how foolish are they that hide their sins; it is folly to hide a disease! Job xxxi. 33, 40. "If I covered my transgression as Adam, by hiding my iniquity in my bosom, let thistles grow instead of wheat," &c. The wicked take more care to have sin covered than cured; if they can but sin in private and not be suspected, they think all is well; there is a curse belongs to him who puts sin in a secret place, Deut. xxvii. 15. The hiding and concealing a disease proves mortal. Prov. xxviii. 13. "He that covereth his sins, shall not prosper."

Branch 3. If sin be a soul-sickness, then what need is there of the ministry? Ministers are physicians under God to cure sick souls; God hath set in his church pastors and teachers, Eph. iv. 11. The ministers are a college of physicians, their work is to find out diseases and apply medicines; it is a hard work, while ministers are curing others, they themselves are nigh unto death, Phil. ii. 30. They find their people sick of several diseases; some have poisoned themselves with error, some are surfeited with the love of the creature, some have stabbed themselves at the heart with gross sin. O how hard is it to heal all these sick gangrened souls! many ministers do sooner kill themselves by preaching than cure their patients; but though the work of the ministry be a laborious work, it is a needful work; while there are sick souls, there will be need of spiritual physicians. How unworthy then are they who malign and persecute the ministers of God! 1 Cor. iv. 9. O unkind world, thus to use thy physician; can there be a greater injury to souls? would it not be a piece of the highest cruelty and barbarism, if there were an act made that all physicians should be banished out of the land? and is it not worse to see multitudes of sick souls lie bleeding, and to have their spiritual physicians removed from them, which should under God heal them? this is a wrath-procuring sin, 2 Chron. xxxvi. 16. "They misused his prophets, until the wrath of the Lord arose against his people, till there was no remedy." See what is inscribed in Levi's

blessing, Deut. xxxiii. 8, 11. "And of Levi he said, let thy Thummim and thy Urim be with thy holy one; bless, Lord, his substance, and accept the work of his hands; smite through the loins of them that rise against him, and of them that hate him, that they rise not again." The Lord will wither that arm which is stretched out against his prophets.

Use 2. Exhort. Branch 1. If sin be a soul-disease, let this serve to humble us; the scripture often calls upon us to humility, 1 Pet. v. 5. "Be ye clothed with humility;" if any thing will humble, this consideration may; sin is a soul-disease: if a woman had a fair face, but a cancer in her breast, it would keep her from being proud of her beauty. So Christian, though thou art endued with knowledge and morality, which are fair to look upon, yet remember thou art diseased in thy soul, here is a cancer in the breast to humble thee; this certainly is one reason why God leaves sin in his own children; (for though sin be healed as to the guilt of it, yet not as to the stain of it) that the sight of their sores may make their plumes of pride fall. There are two humbling sights; a sight of God's glory, and a sight of our diseases. Uzziah the king had no cause to be proud; for though he had a crown of gold on his head, he had the leprosy in his forehead, 2 Chron. xxvi. 19. Though the saints have their golden graces, yet they have their leprous spots; seeing sin hath made us vile, let it make us humble; seeing it hath taken away our beauty, let it take away our pride; if God (saith Saint Austin) did not spare the proud angels, will he spare thee, who art but dust and rottenness? O look upon your boils and ulcers, and be humble! Christians are never more lovely in God's eyes, than when they are loathsome in their own; those sins which humble, shall never damn.

Branch 2. If sin be a soul-disease, and the most damnable disease, let us be afraid of it. Had we diseases in our bodies, an ulcer in the lungs, or hectic fever, we would fear lest they should bring death; O fear sin-sickness, lest it bring the second death. Thou who art a drunkard or a swearer, tremble at thy soul-maladies. I wonder to see sinners like the leviathan, made without fear. Why do

not men fear sin? why do they not shake with this disease? surely the reason is,

1. Stupidity; as they have the fever of sin, so withal a lethargy, 1 Tim. iv. 2. "Having their conscience seared with a hot iron." He that hath an unbelieving heart, and a seared conscience, you may ring out the bell; that man's case is desperate.

2. Presumption. Many fancy that they can lay a fig upon the boil; though they be sick, they can make themselves well; it is but saying a few prayers, it is but a sigh or a tear, and they shall presently recover; but is it so easy to be healed of sin? is it easy to make old Adam bleed to death? is it easy when the pangs of death are on thee, in an instant to have the pangs of the new birth? O take heed of a spiritual lethargy, fear your disease, lest it prove mortal and damnable. Physicians tell of a disease that makes men die laughing; so Satan tickles many with the pleasure of sin, and they die laughing.

3. If sin be a soul distemper, then account them your best friends that would reclaim you from your sins. The patient is thankful to the physician that tells him of his disease, and useth means to recover him. When ministers tell you, in love, of your sins, and would reclaim you, take it in good part; the worst they intend is to cure you of your sickness. David was glad of a healing reproof, Psal. cxli. 5. "Let the righteous smite me, it shall be a kindness; and let him reprove me, it shall be an excellent oil which shall not break my head." Ministers are charged by virtue of their office to reprove, 2 Tim. iv. 2. They must as well come with corrosives as lenitives, Tit. i. 13. "Rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith." The Greek word is cuttingly; as a surgeon searcheth a wound and then lanceth, and cuts out the gangrened flesh; or as a physician useth leeches and cupping glasses, which put the patient in pain, but it is to restore him to health; so must the ministers of Christ rebuke sharply, that they may help to save their dying patients. Who is angry with the physician for prescribing a bitter potion? Why should any be angry with Christ's ministers for re-proving, when, in regard of their office, they are physicians, and, in regard of their bowels,

they are fathers? But how few are they who will take a reproof kindly! Amos 10. "They hate him that rebuketh in the gate." But why do not men love a reproof?

(1.) Because they are in love with their sins; a strange thing that any should love their disease, but so it is, Prov. i. 22. "How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity?" Sin is the poison of the soul, yet men love it; and he who loves his sin, hates a reproof.

(2.) Sin possesseth men with a lunacy, Luke xv. 7. People are mad in sin, Jer. l. 38. "THEY ARE MAD ON THEIR IDOLS." When sickness grows so violent that men lie raving, and are mad, they then quarrel with their physician, and say he comes to kill them. So when sin is grown to a head, the disease turned to a phrenzy, then men quarrel with those that tell them of their sins, and are ready to offer violence to their physicians. It argues wisdom to receive a reproof. Prov. ix. 8. "Rebuke a wise man, and he will love thee." A wise man had rather drink a sharp potion, than die of his disease.

Branch 4. If sin be a soul-sickness, then do not feed this disease; he that is wise, will avoid those things which will increase his disease; if he be feverish, he will avoid wine which would inflame the disease; if he have the stone, he will avoid salt meats; he will forbear a dish he loves, because it is bad for his disease; why should not men be as wise for their souls? Thou that hast a drunken lust, do not feed it with wine; thou that hast a malicious lust, do not feed it with revenge; thou that hast an unclean lust, make not provision for the flesh, Rom. xiii. 14. He that feeds a disease, feeds an enemy. Some diseases are starved. Starve thy sins by fasting and humiliation. Either kill thy sin, or thy sin will kill thee.

Branch 5. If sin be a soul-disease, and worse than any other, then labour to be sensible of this disease. There are few who are sensible of their soul-sickness; they think they are well and ail nothing; they are whole and need not a physician. It is a bad symptom to hear a sick dying man say he is well. The church of Laodicea was a sick patient,

but she thought she was well, Rev. iii. 17. "Thou sayest I am rich, and have need of nothing." Come to many a man and feel his pulse, ask him about the state of his soul, he will say, he hath a good heart, and doubts not but he shall be saved. What should be the reason that when men are so desperately sick in their souls, and ready to drop into hell, yet they conceit themselves in a very good condition?

1. There is a spiritual cataract upon their eye, they see not their sores. Laodicea thought herself rich, because she was blind, Rev. iii. 17. The god of this world blinds men's eyes, that they can neither see their disease nor their physician. Many bless God their estate is good, not from the knowledge of their happiness, but from the ignorance of their danger; when Haman's face was covered, he was near execution. Oh pray with David, "Lighten mine eyes, that I sleep not the sleep of death," Psal. xiii. 3.

2. Men that are sick think themselves well, from the haughtiness of their spirits. Alexander thought himself a while to be the son of Jupiter, and no less than a god; what an arrogant creature is man! though he be sick unto death, he thinks it too much a disparagement to acknowledge a disease; either he is not sick, or he can heal himself. If he be poisoned, he runs to the herb, or rather weed, of his own righteousness to cure him.

3. Men that are sick conceit themselves well, through self-love. He that loves another, will not credit any evil report of him. Men are self-lovers, 2 Tim. iii. 2. Every man is a dove in his own eye, therefore doth not suspect himself of any disease; he will rather question the scripture's verity than his own malady.

4. Self-deceit and the deceit of the heart appear in two things.

(1.) In hiding the disease; the heart hides sin as Rachel did her father's images, Gen. xxxi. 34. Hazael did not think he was so sick as he was; he could not imagine that so much wickedness, like a disease, should lie lurking in him, 2 Kings viii. 13. "Is thy servant a dog, that he should do this great thing?" As the viper hath his teeth hid in his gums, so that if one should look into his

mouth he would think it a harmless creature; so though there be much corruption in the heart, yet the heart hides it, and draws a vail over, that it be not seen

(2.) The heart holds a false glass before the eye, making a man appear fair, and his estate very good. The heart can deceive with counterfeit grace; hence it is that men are insensible of their spiritual condition, and think themselves well when they are sick unto death.

5. Men take up a reverend opinion of themselves, and fancy their spiritual estate better than it is, through mistake. And this mistake is double.

(1.) They enjoy glorious privileges; they were born within the sound of Aaron's bells, they were baptized with holy water, they have been fed with manna from heaven, therefore they hope they are in a good condition, Judges xvii. 13. "Then Micah said, Now I know the Lord will do me good, seeing I have a Levite to my priest." But alas! this is a mistake; outward privileges save not. What is any man the better for the ordinances, unless he be the better by ordinances? A child may die with the breast in its mouth. Many of the Jews perished, though Christ himself was their preacher.

(2.) The other mistake is set down by the apostle, 2 Cor. x. 12. "They, measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves amongst themselves, are not wise." Here is a double error or mistake.

First, "They measure themselves by themselves:" that is, they see they are not so bad as they were, therefore they judge their condition is good. A dwarf may be taller than he was, yet a dwarf still; the patient may be less sick than he was, yet far from well; a man may be better than he was, yet not good.

Secondly, "They compare themselves amongst themselves." They see they are not so flagitious and profane as others; therefore they think themselves well, because they are not so sick as others: this is a mistake, one may as well die of a consumption as the plague. One man may not be so far off heaven as another, yet he may not be near heaven; one line may not be so crooked as

another, yet not straight. To the law, to the testimony; the word of God is the true standard and measure by which we are to judge of the state and temper of our souls.

Oh let us take heed of this rock, the fancying of our condition better than it is; let us take heed of a spiritual apoplexy, to be sick in our souls, yet not sensible of this sickness. What do men talk of a light within them? the light within them by nature is not sufficient to show them the diseases of their souls; this light tells them they are whole, and have no need of a physician.

Oh what infinite mercy is it for a man to be made sensible of sin, and seeing himself sick, to cry out with David, 2 Sam. xii. 13. "I have sinned against the Lord." Were it not a mercy for a person that is distracted, to be restored to the use of his reason; so for him that is spiritually distempered, and in a lethargy, to come to himself, and see both his wound and his remedy: till the sinner be sensible of his disease, the medicine of mercy doth not belong to him.

Branch 6. If sin be a soul sickness, then labour to get this disease healed; if a man had a disease in his body, a pleurisy or cancer, he would use all the means for a cure; the woman in the gospel who had a bloody issue, spent her whole estate upon the physicians, Luke viii. 43. Be more earnest to have thy soul cured than thy body. Make David's prayer, Psal. xli. 4. "Heal my soul for I have sinned." Hast thou a consumptive body, rather pray God to heal the consumption in thy soul; go to God first for the cure of thy soul, James v. 14. "Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him;" the apostle doth not say, let him call for the physician, but the elders, that is, the ministers. Physicians are to be consulted in their due place, but not in the first place. Most men send first for the physician, and then for the minister; which shows they are more desirous and careful for the recovery of their bodies than their souls; but if soul diseases are more dangerous and deadly, then we should prefer the spiritual cure before the bodily; "Heal my soul, for I have sinned;" let us consider,

1. Till we are cured, we are not fit to do

God any service. A sick man cannot work; while the disease of sin is violent, we are not fit for any heavenly employment; we can neither work for God nor work out our salvation. The philosopher defines happiness the operation of the mind about virtue. To be working for God, is both the end of our life, and the perfection. Would we be active in our sphere? let us labour to have our souls cured. So long as we are diseased with sin, we are lame and bed-ridden, we are unfit for work. We read indeed of a sinner's works, but they are dead works, Heb. vi. 1.

2. If we are not cured, we are cursed; if our diseases abide on us, the wrath of God abides on us.

Quest. But how shall we get this disease of sin cured? this brings to the second thing in the text—The healing physician; The whole need not a physician. Whence observe:

Doct. 2. That Jesus Christ is a soul-physician. Ministers (as was said before) are physicians, whom Christ doth in his name delegate, and send abroad into the world. He saith to the apostles, and in them to all his ministers, "Lo I am with you to the end of the world," Matt. xxviii. 20. That is, I am with you to assist and bless you, and to make your ministry healing; but though ministers are physicians, yet but under-physicians. Jesus Christ is the chief physician; he it is that teacheth us all our receipts, and goes forth with our labours, else the physic we prescribe would never work; all the ministers under heaven would not do any cure without the help of this great Physician. For the amplification of this I shall show,

1. That Christ is a physician.
2. Why he is a physician.
3. That he is the only physician.
4. How he heals his patients.
5. That he is the best physician.

1. That Christ is a physician; it is one of his titles, Exod. xv. 26. "I am the Lord that healeth thee." He is a physician for the body; he "anointed the blind, cleansed the lepers, healed the sick, raised the dead," Matt. viii. 16. He it is that puts virtue into physic, and makes it healing; and he is a physician for the soul, Psal. cxlvii. 3. "He healeth the broken in heart." We are all as

so many impotent, diseased persons; one man hath a fever, another a dead palsy, another hath a bloody issue, he is under the power of some hereditary corruption; now Christ is a soul-physician, he healeth these diseases, therefore in scripture, the Lord Jesus, to set forth his healing virtue, is resembled,

(1.) By the brazen serpent, Numb. xxi. 9. Those who were stung, were cured by looking on the brazen serpent; so when the soul is stung by the old serpent, it is cured by that healing under Christ's wings.

(2.) Christ is resembled by the good Samaritan, Luke x. 33, 34. "A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead; but a certain Samaritan as he journeyed, came where he was, and when he saw him he had compassion on him, and went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in wine and oil," &c. We have wounded ourselves by sin, and the wound had been incurable, had not Christ, that good Samaritan, poured in wine and oil.

(3.) Christ as a physician is resembled by the trees of the sanctuary, Ezek. xlvii. 12. "The fruit thereof shall be for meat, and the leaf thereof shall be for medicine." Thus the Lord Jesus, that tree of life in paradise, hath a sanative virtue; he heals our pride, unbelief, &c. As he feeds our graces, so he heals our corruptions.

2. Why Christ is a physician.

(1.) In regard of his call; God the Father called him to practise physic, he anointed him to the work of healing, Luke iv. 18. "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel: he hath sent me to heal the broken hearted." Christ came into the world as into an hospital, to heal sin-sick souls: this, though it was a glorious work, yet Christ would not undertake it, till he was commissioned by his Father. "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, he hath sent me." Christ was anointed and appointed to the work of a physician, this was for our imitation; we are not to meddle in many matters without a call; that is acting out of our sphere.

(2.) Jesus Christ undertook this healing

work, because of that need we were in of a physician. Christ came to be our physician, not because we deserved him, but because we needed him; not our merit, but our misery, drew Christ from heaven; had he not come, we must of necessity have perished, and died of our wounds; our disease was not ordinary, it had seized on every part; it made us not only sick but dead; and such receipts were necessary as none but Christ could give.

(3.) Christ came as a physician out of the sweetness of his nature; he is like the good Samaritan, who had compassion on the wounded man, Luke x. 33. A physician may come to the patient only for gain; not so much to help the patient as to help himself: but Christ came purely out of sympathy; there was nothing in us to tempt Christ to heal us; for we had no desire of a physician, nor had we any thing to give our physician; as sin made us sick, so it made us poor; so that Christ came as a physician, not out of hope to receive any thing from us, but was prompted to it out of his own goodness, Hos. xiv. 4. "I will heal their backslidings, I will love them." Love set Christ a work; not only his Father's commission, but his own compassion moved him to his spiritual physic and chirurgery. King David banished the blind and lame out of the city, 2 Sam. v. 8. Christ comes to the blind and lame, and cures them; it is the sounding of his bowels that causeth the healing under his wings.

3. The third particular is, that Christ is the only physician, Acts iv. 12. "Neither is there salvation in any other," &c. There is no other physician besides. The papists would have other healers besides Christ, they would make angels their physicians; all the angels in heaven cannot heal one sick soul; indeed they are described by their wings, Isa. vi. 2. but they have no healing under their wings. Papists would heal themselves by their own merits. Adam did eat that apple which made him and his posterity sick; but he could not find any herb in paradise to cure him; our merits are rather damning than healing; to make use of other physicians and medicines, is as if the Israelites, in contempt of that brazen serpent which Moses set up, had erected other brazen serpents. O let us take heed of that *turba medicorum*.

Indeed in bodily sickness it is lawful to multiply physicians; when the patient hath advised with one physician, he desires to have others joined with him; but the sick soul, if it joins any other physician with Christ it surely dies.

4. How Christ heals his patients.

Ans. There are four things in Christ that are healing.

1. His word is healing, Psal. cvii. 20. "He sent his word, and healed them." His word in the mouth of his ministers is healing; when the spirit is wounded in desertion, Christ doth create the lips that speak peace, Isa. lvii. 19. The word written is a repository in which God hath laid up sovereign oils and balsams to recover sick souls; and the word preached is the pouring out of these oils, and applying them to the sick patient. "He sent his word and healed them." We look upon the word as a weak thing. What is the breath of a man to save a soul? but "The power of the Lord is present to heal," Luke v. 17. Christ makes use of his word as a healing medicine; the receipts which his ministers prescribe, he himself applies; he makes his word convincing, converting, comforting.

Caution, Not that the word heals all; to some it is not a healing but a killing word, 2 Cor. ii. 16. "To the one we are a savour of death unto death." Some die of their disease; two sorts of patients die.

1. Such as sin presumptuously; though they know a thing to be sin, Job xxiv. 13. They are of those that rebel against the light; this is dangerous. David prays, Psal. xix. "Keep back thy servant from presumptuous sins."

2. Such as sin maliciously; when the disease comes to this head, the patient will die, Heb. x. 29. But to them who belong to the election of grace, the word is the healing medicine Christ useth, "He sent his word, and healed them."

2. Christ's wounds are healing, Isa. lv. 3. "with his stripes we are healed." Christ made a medicine of his own body and blood; the physician died to cure the patient. The pelican when her young ones are bitten by serpents, feeds them with her own blood to recover them. Thus when we were bitten

by the old serpent, then Jesus Christ prescribes a receipt of his own blood to heal and restore us. The blood of Christ being the blood of him who was God as well as man, had infinite merit to appease God, and infinite virtue to heal us: this, this is the balm of Gilead, that recovers a soul which is sick even unto death. Balm, as naturalists say, is a juice which a little shrub, being cut with glass, doth weep out. This was anciently of very precious esteem, the savour of it was odoriferous, the virtue of it sovereign; it would cure ulcers, and the stinging of serpents. This balm may be an emblem of Christ's blood; it hath a most sovereign virtue in it, it heals the ulcer of sin, the stinging of temptation, it merits for us justification, Rom. v. 9. O how precious is this balm of Gilead! by this blood we enter into heaven.

3. Christ's Spirit is healing; the blood of Christ heals the guilt of sin; the Spirit of Christ heals the pollution of sin; the Spirit is compared to oil, it is called the anointing of the Spirit, Isa. lxi. to show the healing virtue of the Spirit; oil is healing. Christ by his Spirit heals the rebellion of the will, the stone of the heart; though sin be not removed, it is subdued.

4. Christ's rod is healing, Isa. xxvii. 9. Christ never wounds but to heal; the rod of affliction is to recover the sick patient. David's bones were broken that his soul might be healed. God useth affliction as the surgeon doth his lance, to let out the venom and corruption of the soul, and make way for a cure.

Quest. But if Christ be a physician, why are not all healed?

Ans. 1. Because all do not know they are sick; they see not the sores and ulcers of their souls; and will Christ cure them who see no need of him? many ignorant people thank God they have good hearts; but that heart can no more be good which wants grace, than that body can be sound which wants health.

2. All are not healed, because they love their sickness, Psal. lii. 3. "Thou lovest evil;" many men hug their disease. Augustine saith, before his conversion, he prayed against sin, but his heart whispered, Not yet

Lord; he was loath to leave his sin too soon; how many love their disease better than their physician! while sin is loved, Christ's medicines are loathed.

3. All are not healed, because they do not look out after a physician. If they have any bodily distemper upon them, they presently send to the physician; their souls are sick, but mind not their physician Christ, John v. 40. "Ye will not come unto me that ye may have life." Christ takes it as an undervaluing of him that we will not send to him; some send for Christ when it is too late; when other physicians have given them over, and there is no hope of life, then they cry to Christ to save them, but Christ refuseth such patients as make use of him only for a shift: thou that scornest Christ in time of health, Christ may despise thee in the time of sickness.

4. All are not healed, because they would be self-healers; they would make their duties their saviours; the papists would be their own physicians; their daily sacrifice of the mass is a blasphemy against Christ's priestly office; but Christ will have the honour of the cure, or he will never heal us; not our tears, but his blood saves.

5. All are not healed, because they do not take the physic which Christ prescribes them; they would be cured, but they are loath to put themselves into a course of physic. Christ prescribes them to drink the bitter potion of repentance, and to take the pill of mortification, but they cannot do this, they had rather die than take physic; if the patient refuseth to take the receipts the physician prescribes, no wonder he is not healed. Christians, you have had many receipts to take, have you taken them? ask conscience. There are many hearers of the word do like foolish patients, who send to the doctor for physic, but when they have it, they let the physic stand by in the glass, but do not take it; it is probable you have not taken the receipts which the gospel prescribes, because the word hath no operation on your hearts, you are as proud, as earthly, as malicious as ever.

6. All are not healed, because they have not confidence in their physician; it is observable when Christ came to work any cure,

he first put this question, "Believe ye that I am able to do this?" Matt. ix. 28. This undoes many; O, saith the sinner, There is no mercy for me, Christ cannot heal me. Take heed, thy unbelief is worse than all thy other diseases. Did not Christ pray for them that crucified him? "FATHER, FORGIVE THEM!" Some of those were saved that had a hand in shedding his blood! Acts ii. 36, 37. Why then dost thou say Christ cannot heal thee? unbelief dishonours Christ, it hinders from a cure, it closeth the orifice of Christ's wounds, it stauncheth his blood, Matt. xv. 58. Millions die of their disease, because they do not believe in their physician.

5. The fifth and last particular is, that Christ is the best physician. That I may set forth the praise and honour of Jesus Christ, I shall show you wherein he excels other physicians; no physician like Christ.

1. He is the most skilful physician; there is no disease too hard for him, Psal. ciii. 3. "Who healeth all thy diseases." The pool of Bethesda might be an emblem of Christ's blood, John v. 5. "Whosoever first after the troubling of the water stepped in, was made whole of whatsoever disease he had." There are certain diseases physicians cannot cure; as a consumption in the lungs, some kind of obstructions and gangrenes. Some diseases are the reproach of physicians, but there is no disease can pose Christ's skill; he can cure the gangrene of sin when it is come to the heart; he healed Mary Magdalene, an unchaste sinner; he healed Paul, who breathed out threatenings against the church; insomuch that Paul stands and wonders at the cure, 1 Tim. i. 13. "But I obtained mercy;" I was bemercied. Christ heals head distempers and heart distempers, which may keep poor trembling souls from despair. Oh, saith the sinner, never was any so diseased as I! but look up to thy physician Christ, who hath healing under his wings; he can melt a heart of stone, and wash away black sins in the crimson of his blood; there are no desperate cases with Christ; he hath those salves, oils, balsams, which can cure the worst disease. Indeed, there is one disease which Christ doth not heal, namely, the sin against the Holy Ghost; this is called "a sin unto death;" if we knew any who

had sinned this sin, we were to shut them out of our prayers: "There is a sin unto death, I do not say that he shall pray for it," 1 John v. 16. There is no healing of this disease; not but that Christ could cure this, but the sinner will not be cured. The king could pardon a traitor, but if he will have no pardon he must die. The sin against the Holy Ghost is unpardonable, because the sinner will have no pardon; he scorns Christ's blood, despises his Spirit, therefore his sin hath no sacrifice, Heb. x. 26, 29.

2. Christ is the best physician, because he cures the better part, the soul; other physicians can cure the liver or spleen, Christ cures the heart; they can cure the blood when it is tainted, Christ cures the conscience when it is defiled, Heb. ix. 14. "How much more shall the blood of Christ purge your conscience from dead works?" Galen and Hippocrates might cure the stone in the kidneys, but Christ cures the stone in the heart; he is the best physician which cures the most excellent part. The soul is immortal, angelical; man was made in the image of God, Gen. i. 27. Not in regard of his body, but his soul. Now if the soul be so divine and noble, then the cure of the soul doth far exceed the cure of the body.

3. Christ is the best physician, for he causeth us to feel our disease. The disease of sin, though it be most damnable, yet is least discernible; many a man is sin-sick, but the devil hath given him such stupifying physic, that he sleeps the sleep of death, and all the thunders of the word cannot awaken him; but the Lord Jesus, this blessed physician, awakes the soul out of its lethargy, and then it is in a hopeful way of recovery. The jailer was never so near a cure, as when he cried out, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" Acts xvi. 30.

4. Christ shows more love to his patients than any physician besides; which appears five ways:

(1.) In that long journey he took from heaven to earth.

(2.) In that he comes to his patients without sending for. The sick send to their physicians, and use many entreaties; here the physician comes unsent for, Isa. lxv. 1. "I am found of them that sought me not."

He doth prevent us with mercy, he entreats us to be healed; if Christ had not first come to us, and, with the good Samaritan, poured in wine and oil, we must have died of our wounds.

(3.) The physician lets himself bleed to cure his patient, Isa. liii. 5. "But he was wounded for our transgressions;" through his wounds we may see his bowels.

(4.) Our repulses and unkindnesses do not drive Christ away from us. Physicians, if provoked by their patients, go away in a rage, and will come no more. We abuse our physician, thrust him away, we bolt out our physician, yet Christ will not forsake us, but comes again, and applies his sovereign oils and balsams, Isa. lxv. 3. "I have spread out my hands all the day unto a rebellious people." Christ puts up wrongs and incivilities, and is resolved to go through with the cure. O the love of this heavenly physician!

(5.) Christ himself drank that bitter cup which we should have drunk; and by his taking the potion we are healed and saved. Thus Christ hath shown more love than ever physician did to the patient.

5. Christ is the most cheap physician: sickness is not only a consumption to the body but the purse, Luke viii. 43. Physicians' fees are chargeable, but Jesus Christ gives us our physic freely, he takes no fee, Isa. lv. 1. "Come without money and without price." He desires us to bring nothing to him but broken hearts; and when he hath cured us he desires us to bestow nothing upon him but our love; and one would think that were very reasonable.

6. Christ heals with more ease than any other: other physicians apply pills, potions, bleeding; Christ cures with more facility. Christ made the devil go out with a word speaking, Mark ix. 25. So when the soul is spiritually possessed, Christ can with a word heal, nay, he can cure with a look. When Peter had fallen into a relapse, Christ looked on Peter, and he wept. Christ's look melted Peter into repentance; it was a healing look. If Christ doth but cast a look upon the soul, he can recover it. Therefore David prays to have a look from God, Psal. exix. 132. "Look thou upon me, and be merciful unto me."

7. Christ is the most tender-hearted physician. He hath ended his passion, yet not his compassion. How doth he pity sick souls! he is not more full of skill than sympathy, Hos. xi. 8. "My heart is turned within me." Christ shows his compassion in that he doth proportion his physic to the strength of the patient. Physic, if it be too sharp for the constitution, endangers the life. Christ gives such gentle physic as works kindly and savingly. Though he will bruise sinners, yet "he will not break the bruised reed." O the soundings of Christ's bowels to poor souls that feel themselves heart-sick with sin! he holds their head and heart when they are fainting; he brings the cordials of his promises to keep the sick patient from dying away. Christians, you perhaps may have hard thoughts of your physician Christ, and think he is cruel, and intends to destroy you; but O the workings of his bowels towards humble broken-hearted sinners! Psal. cxlvii. 3. "He heals the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds." Every groan of the patient goes to the heart of this physician.

8. Physicians oft prescribe such physic as is prejudicial to the patient, in two cases; 1. Either in case they find not out the cause of the disease, and then they may give that which is contrary, hot things instead of cooling: or, 2. In case they do find out the cause, they may give that which is good for one thing and bad for another. As it falls out when the liver and spleen are both dis-tempered, the physic which helps the liver may hurt the spleen. But Christ always prescribes that physic which is suitable, and withal he blesseth the physic. If the disease of the soul be pride, he humbles it with affliction. God turned Nebuchadnezzar to grass to cure him of his tympany. If the disease of the soul be sloth, Christ applies some awakening scripture, Matt. xii. 11. Luke xiii. 24. 1 Pet. iv. 18. If the disease be the stone of the heart, Christ useth proper medicines; sometimes the terrors of the law, sometimes mercies, sometimes he dissolves the stone in his own blood. If the soul be fainting through unbelief, Christ brings some scripture cordial to revive it, Matt. xii. 20. "A bruised reed he will not break," Isa. lvii. 16. "I will not contend for ever, neither will

I be always wroth: for the spirit should fail before me, and the souls which I have made." Thus the Lord Jesus always prescribes that physic which is proper for the disease, and shall work effectually to the cure.

9. Christ never fails of success. Physicians may have skill, but not always success; patients often die under their hands; but Christ never undertakes to heal any but he makes a certain cure, John xvii. 12. "Those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost." Judas was not given to Christ to be healed; but never any who was given to Christ did miscarry.

Quest. How shall I know that I am given to Christ to be cured?

Ans. If it be with thee as with a sick patient, who sees himself dying without a physician. Art thou undone without Christ? dost thou perceive thyself bleeding to death without the balm of Gilead? then thou art one of Christ's sick patients, and thou shalt never miscarry under his hands. How can any of those be lost whom Christ undertakes to cure? as he pours in the balsam of his blood, so he pours out the perfume of his prayers for them: John xvii. 11. "Holy Father, keep through thy own name those whom thou hast given me." Satan could never upbraid Christ with this, that any of his sick patients were lost.

10. Other physicians can only cure them that are sick, but Christ cures them that are dead: Ephes. ii. 1. "You hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins." A sinner hath all the signs of death on him; the pulse of his affections doth not beat, he is without breath, he breathes not after holiness, he is dead; but Christ is a physician for the dead; of every one whom Christ cures, it may be said, "He was dead and is alive again," Luke xv. 32.

11. Christ cures not only our diseases, but our deformities. The physician can make the sick man well; but if he be deformed, he cannot make him fair. Christ gives not only health, but beauty. Sin hath made us ugly and misshapen; Christ's medicines do not only take away our sickness, but our spots; he doth not only make us whole, but fair, Hos. xiv. 4. "I will heal their backslidings," ver. 6. "His beauty shall

be as the olive-tree." Jesus Christ never thinks he hath fully healed us, till he hath drawn his own beautiful image upon us. Cant. ii. 13. "Arise my fair one;" fair with justification, fair with sanctification. Christ doth not only heal, but adorn; he is called the Sun of righteousness, Mal. iv. 2. Not only because of the healing under his wings, but because of those rays of beauty which he puts upon the soul, Rev. xii. 1.

12. And lastly, Christ is the most bountiful physician. Other patients do enrich their physicians, but here the physician doth enrich the patient. Christ prefers all his patients; he doth not only cure them, but crown them, Rev. ii. 10. Christ doth not only raise from the bed, but to the throne; he gives the sick man not only health, but heaven.

Use 1. Good news this day, there is balm in Gilead; there is a physician to heal sin-sick souls; the angels that fell had no physician sent them, we have; there are but few in the world to whom Christ is revealed; they that have the gold of the Indies want the blood of the Lamb; but the Sun of righteousness is risen in our hemisphere, with healing in his wings. If a man were poisoned, what a comfort would it be to him to hear that there was an herb in the garden could heal him! If he had a gangrene in his body, and were given over by all his friends, how glad would he be to hear of a surgeon that could cure him! O sinner, thou art full of peccant humours, thou hast a gangrened soul; but there is a physician that can recover thee. "There is hope in Israel concerning this;" though there be an old serpent to sting us with his tentations, yet there is a brazen serpent to heal us with his blood.

Use 2. If Christ be a physician, then let us make use of this physician for our diseased souls: Luke iv. 40. "When the sun was setting, all they that had any sick with divers diseases, brought them unto him, and he laid his hands on every one of them and healed them." You that have neglected a physician all this while, now when the sun of the gospel, and the sun of your life is even setting, bring your sick souls to Christ to be cured. Christ complains that though men are sick even to death, yet they will not come or send to the physician; John v. 40. "Ye will not

come to me that ye might have life." In bodily diseases the physician is the first that is sent to; in soul diseases the Physician is the last that is sent to. But here there are many sad objections that poor souls make against themselves, why they do not come to Christ their soul physician.

Object. 1. Alas, I am discouraged to go to Christ to cure me, because of my unworthiness; just like the centurion, who sent to Christ about his sick servant, Luke vii. 6. "Lord, trouble not thyself, for I am not worthy that thou shouldst enter under my roof." Christ was coming to heal his servant, but the centurion would have staved off Christ from coming: "I am not worthy." So saith many a trembling soul, Christ is a physician, but who am I that Christ should come under my roof, or heal me? I am unworthy of mercy: as Mephibosheth said to king David, 2 Sam. ix. 8. "What is thy servant, that thou shouldst look upon such a dead dog as I am?" Now to such as have their hearts broken with a sense of their unworthiness, and are discouraged from coming to Christ to heal them, let me say these five things by way of reply.

1. Who did Christ shed his blood for but such as are unworthy? 1 Tim. i. 14. "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners." Christ came into the world as into an hospital, among a company of lame, bed-ridden souls.

2. Though we are not legally worthy, we may be evangelically; it is part of our worthiness to see our unworthiness, Isa. xli. 14. "Fear not, thou worm Jacob." Thou mayest be a worm in thine own eye, yet a dove in God's eye.

3. Though we are unworthy, yet Christ is worthy; we do not deserve a cure, but Christ hath merited mercy for us; he hath store of blood to supply our want of tears.

4. Who was ever yet saved because he was worthy? what man could ever plead this title, Lord Jesus heal me, because I am worthy? What worthiness was in Paul before his conversion? what worthiness was there in Mary Magdalene, out of whom seven devils were cast? but free grace did pity and heal them; God doth not find us worthy, but makes us worthy.

5. If we never come to Christ to be healed till we are worthy, we must never come;

and let me tell you, this talking of worthiness savours of pride, we would have something of our own; had we such preparations and self-excellencies, then we think Christ would accept of us, and we might come and be healed; this is to fee our physician; O let not the sense of unworthiness discourage: go to Christ to be healed: "Arise, he calleth thee," Mark x. 49.

Obj. 2. But I fear I am not within Christ's commission, I am not of the number that shall be saved; and then though Christ be a physician, I shall not be healed.

Ans. 1. We must take heed of drawing desperate conclusions against ourselves; it is high presumption for us to make ourselves wiser than the angels. All the angels in heaven are not able to resolve this question, Who are elected, and who are reprobated?

2. Thou that sayest thou art not within Christ's commission, read over Christ's commission, see who he comes to heal, Luke iv. 18. "He hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted." Hath God touched thy heart with remorse? dost thou lay to heart thy gospel unkindnesses? dost thou weep more out of love to Christ, than fear of hell? then thou art a broken-hearted sinner, and art within Christ's commission; a bleeding Christ will heal a broken heart.

Obj. 3. But my sins are so many that sure I shall never be healed, I am sick of many diseases at once.

Ans. Thou hast the more need of a physician; one would think that was a strange speech of Peter to Christ, Luke v. 8. "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord;" rather, Lord come near to me. Is it a good argument to say to a physician, I am diseased, therefore depart from me? No, therefore come and heal me. Our sins should serve to humble us, not to beat us from Christ. I tell you, if we had no diseases, Christ would have no work to do in the world.

Obj. 4. But my disease is inflamed, and grown to a paroxysm; my sin is greatly heightened.

Ans. The plaster of Christ's blood is broader than thy sore, 1 John i. 7. "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin." The blood of the Lamb takes away

the poison of the serpent: all diseases are alike to Christ's blood; he can cure the greatest sin as well as the least. Hast thou a bloody issue of sin running? the issue of blood in Christ's side can heal thine.

Obj. 5. But mine is an old inveterate disease, and I fear it is incurable.

Ans. Though thy disease be chronical, Christ can heal it. Christ doth not say, if this disease had been taken in time, it might have been cured: he is good at old sores. The thief on the cross had an old festering disease, but Christ cured it; it was well for him his physician was so near. Zaccheus, an old sinner, a custom-house man, he had wronged many a man in his time, but Christ cured him. Christ sometimes grafts his grace upon an old stock; we read Christ cured at sunseting, Luke iv. 40. He heals some sinners at the sunseting of their lives.

Obj. 6. But after I have been healed, my disease hath broken out again; I have relapsed into the same sin; therefore I fear there is no healing for me.

Ans. It is rare that the Lord leaves his children to these relapses, though, through the suspension of grace, and the prevalency of temptation, it is possible they might fall back into sin; these sins of relapse are sad. It was an aggravation of Solomon's offence, that he sinned after the Lord had appeared to him twice, 1 Kings xi. 9. These sins after healing, open the mouth of conscience to accuse, and stop the mouth of God's Spirit, which should speak peace. These sins exclude from the comfort of the promise; it is as it were sequestered; but if the soul be deeply humbled, if the relapsing sinner be a relenting sinner, let him not cast away the anchor of hope, but have recourse to his soul-physician; Jesus Christ can cure a relapse, he healed David's and Cranmer's relapse, 1 John ii. 1. "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ." Christ appears in the court as the advocate for the client. As he poured out his blood upon the brazen altar of the cross: so he pours out his prayers at the golden altar in heaven, Heb. vii. 25. "He ever liveth to make intercession for us." Christ, in the golden work of intercession, presents the merit of his blood to his Father, and so ob

tains our pardon, and applies the virtue of his blood to us, and so works our cure; therefore be not discouraged from going to thy physician; though thy disease hath broken out again, yet Christ hath fresh sprinklings of his blood for thee, he can cure a relapse.

Obj. 7. But there is no healing for me, I fear I have sinned the sin against the Holy Ghost?

Ans. 1. The fear of sinning it, is a sign thou hast not sinned it.

2. Let me ask, Why dost thou think thou hast sinned the sin against the Holy Ghost? I have grieved the Spirit of God.

Ans. Every grieving the Spirit of God is not that fatal sin. We grieve the Spirit when we sin against the illumination of it; the Spirit being grieved, may depart for a time, and carry away all its honey out of the hive, leaving the soul in darkness, Isa. l. 10. But every grieving the Spirit is not the sin against the Holy Ghost. A child of God when he hath sinned, his heart smites him; and he whose heart smites him for sin, hath not committed the unpardonable sin. A child of God having grieved the Spirit, doth as Noah, when the dove did fly out of the ark, he opened the windows of the ark to let it in again. A godly man doth not shut his heart against the Spirit, as a wicked man doth, Acts vii. 51. The Spirit of God would come in, he keeps him out; but a gracious soul opens his heart to let in the Spirit, as Noah opened the door of the ark to let in the dove. Christian, is it not so with thee? then be of good comfort, thou hast not sinned the sin against the Holy Ghost; that sin is a malicious despiting of the Spirit, which thou tremblest to think of.

Therefore, laying aside these arguments and disputes, whatever the diseases of the soul are, come to Christ for a cure, believe in his blood, and thou mayest be saved? You see what a skilful and able physician Christ is, what sovereign oils and balsams he hath, how willing he is to cure sick souls; O then what remains, but that you cast yourselves upon his merits to heal and save you! of all sins unbelief is the worst, because it casts disparagement on Christ, as if he were not able to work a cure. O Christian, believe in thy

physician, John iii. 15. "That whosoever believeth in him shall not perish." Say as queen Esther, Esther iv. 16. "I will go in unto the king, which is not according to the law, and if I perish, I perish." So say, The Lord Jesus is a physician to heal me, I will adventure on his blood, if I perish, I perish. Queen Esther ventured against the law, she had no promise that the king would hold out the golden sceptre; but I have a promise which invites me to come to Christ: "He that comes unto me I will in no wise cast him out," John vi. 37. Faith is a healing grace: we read, when the Israelites were burying a man, for fear of the soldiers of the Moabites, they cast him for haste into the grave of Elisha; now the man, as soon as he was down, and had touched the dead body of the prophet, revived, and stood up on his feet, 2 Kings xiii. 21. So if a man be dead in sin, yet let him be cast in Christ's grave, and by faith touch Christ, who was dead and buried, he will revive, and his soul will be healed. Remember there is no way for a cure but by believing; Christ himself will not avail us, Rom. iii. 25. "Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood." Faith is the applying of Christ's merits. A plaster, though it be ever so rare and excellent, yet if it be not applied to the wound, will do no good; though the plaster be made of Christ's blood, yet it will not heal, unless applied by faith. The brazen serpent was a sovereign remedy for the cure of those that were stung; but if they had not looked upon it, they received no benefit: So though there be a healing virtue in Christ, yet unless we look upon him by the eye of faith, we cannot be cured. Above all things labour for faith; this is the all-healing grace; this hand touching Christ fetcheth virtue from him.

Not that faith hath more worthiness than other graces; but only it is influential, as it makes us one with Christ. If a man had a stone in a ring that could cure many diseases, we say this ring heals; but it is not the ring, but the stone in that ring that doth the cure; so faith saves and heals, not by its own virtue, but as it lays hold on Christ, and fetcheth down his sacred influences into the soul.

2. If Jesus Christ be a spiritual physician, let us labour to hasten the cure of our souls. Consider,

(1.) What a little time we have to stay here, and let that hasten the cure. Solomon saith, "There is a time to be born, and a time to die," Eccles. iii. 2. but mentions no time of living, as if that were so short that it were not worth the naming: the body is called a vessel, 1 Thess. iv. 4. This vessel is filled with breath, sickness broacheth it, and death draws it out. O hasten thy soul's cure, death is upon its swift march, and if that surprise you suddenly, there is no cure to be wrought in the grave, Eccl. ix. 10. "There is no work, nor device, nor wisdom in the grave whither thou goest."

(2.) Now is properly the time of healing, now is the day of grace, now Christ pours out his balsams, now he sends abroad his ministers and Spirit, 2 Cor. vi. 2. "Now is the accepted time." There were certain healing days, wherein the king healed them that had the evil. The day of grace is a healing day: if we neglect the day of grace, the next day will be a day of wrath, Rom. ii. 5. O therefore hasten the cure of thy soul; rather neglect thy food than thy cure; sin will not only kill, but damn. To get a cure,

[1.] Come to the healing pool of the sanctuary; the Spirit of God may on a sudden stir these waters; the next Sabbath, for ought thou knowest, may be a healing day to thy soul.

[2.] Pray others to pray for you; when any disease is upon your body you desire the prayers of others; the prayers of the saints: the precious balms and medicines to cure sick souls.

3. Is Jesus Christ a soul physician? then let me speak to you who are in some measure healed of your damnable disease. I have four things to say.

1. Break forth into thankfulness; though sin be not quite cured (there are still some grudgings of the disease), yet the reigning power of it is taken away; you are so healed that you shall not die, John iii. 16. xi. 26. "Those that were cured by the brazen serpent afterwards died; but such as are healed by Christ, shall never die." Sin may molest,

it shall not damn; O then what cause have you to admire and love your physician? The Lord Jesus hath taken out the core of your disease, and the curse; publish your experiences, Psal. lxxvi. 16. "I will tell you what God hath done for my soul:" as a man that hath been cured of an old disease, how glad and thankful is he? he will tell others of the medicine that cured him. So say, "I will tell you what God hath done for my soul:" he hath cured me of an old disease, a hard, unbelieving heart, a disease that hath sent millions to hell. Truly we may cheerfully bear any other sickness, if this soul-sickness be cured, Lord (saith Luther) strike and wound where thou wilt, if sin be pardoned. O! "Let the high praises of God be in your mouth," Psal. cxlix. 6. God expects thankfulness as a tribute; he wonders men bring not their thank-offering, Luke xvii. 17. "Were there not ten cleansed, but where are the nine?"

2. Are you healed? take heed of coming into infected company, lest you take the infection; the wicked are devils to tempt to sin. Lot was the world's wonder that lived in Sodom when it was a pest-house, yet did not catch the disease.

3. Take heed of relapses; men are afraid of a relapse after they are cured; beware of soul relapses. Hath God softened thy heart? take heed of hardening it. Hath he cured thee in some measure of deadness? do not relapse into a drowsy security. Thou mayest have such an uproar and agony in thy conscience, as may make thee go weeping to thy grave. O take heed of falling sick again! "sin no more lest a worse thing come unto thee," John v. 14.

4. Pity your friends that are sick unto death; show your piety in your pity. Hast thou a child that is well and lusty, but hath a sick soul? pity him, pray for him. David wept and fasted for his sick child, 2 Sam. xii. 16. Thy child hath the plague sore of the heart, and thou hast conveyed the plague to him; weep and fast for thy child. Hast thou a wife or a husband that though they do not keep their bed, yet the Lord knows they are sick, they are under the raging power of sin? O let thy bowels yearn over them! lift up a prayer over them; the prayer

of faith may save a sick soul. Prayer is the best physic can be used in a desperate case; you that have felt the disease of sin, and the mercy of your physician, learn to pity others.

4. And lastly, Is Christ a soul physician? then let us go to Christ to cure this sick, dying nation. Britain, God knows, is a sick patient, "The whole head is sick, the whole heart is faint." The body politic hath a *cachexy*, it is ill all over: magistracy, ministry, commonalty are diseased; and those who pretend to be our healers, are physicians of no value. We have spent our money upon these physicians, but yet our sores are not healed, Jer. xiv. 19. "Why hast thou smitten us, and there is no healing for us?" Instead of healing us, those who should have been our physicians, have increased the nation's malady, by giving a toleration; this is like giving strong water in a fever, which doth more inflame the disease. Ah, sick Britain, because sinful Britain! sick of error, uncleanness, drunkenness; so sick, that we may fear our funerals are approaching: and, which is the worst symptom, though balm hath been poured into our wounds, the precious ordinances of God have been applied, yet we

are not healed; a sign of bad flesh that is so ill to be cured.

This sin-sickness in the land hath produced many direful effects; division, oppression, bloodshed, the very bowels and arteries of the nation are almost torn asunder, so that now God hath fulfilled that threatening upon us, Mic. vi. 13. "I will make thee sick with smiting thee." We had made ourselves sick with sinning, and God hath made us sick with smiting. Now what remains, but that we should go to the great physician, whose blood sprinkles many nations, that he should apply some healing medicines to dying Britain; God can with a word heal; he can give repentance as well as deliverance; he can put us in joint again. Let all the people of the land lie between the porch and the altar, saying, "Spare thy people, O Lord," Joel iii. 17. Our prayers and tears may set Christ on work to heal us, Psal. cvi. 23. "Therefore he said that he would destroy them, had not Moses his servant stood in the breach to turn away his wrath." Let us never leave imploring our heavenly physician, till he lay a fig on England's boil, and cause it to recover.

THE BEAUTY OF GRACE.

1 Pet. i. 2. *Grace unto you, and peace be multiplied.*

THE blessed apostle having felt the efficacy and sovereignty of grace, is taken up with the thoughts of it; and so sweet is this wine of paradise, that he commends it to those dispersed Christians to whom he writes, wishing them all increase. *Grace unto you, and peace be multiplied.*

The words run in the form of a salutation, "grace unto you, and peace." When we salute our friends, we cannot wish them a greater blessing than grace and peace: other mercies lie without the pale, and are dispersed in common to men; but grace is a special congiary and gift bestowed on them who are the favourites of heaven. In the words observe,

1. The connexion. 2. The order.

1. The connexion, Grace and peace. The

way to have peace. is to have grace; grace is the breeder of peace; the one is the root, the other the flower; peace is the sweet water that drops from the limbeck of a gracious heart.

2. The order, First grace, then peace; grace hath the priority; grace and peace are two sisters, but grace is the eldest sister; and give me leave at this time to prefer the elder before the younger. "Grace unto you be multiplied." For the illustration, consider,

1. What is meant by grace.

2. The Author of it.

3. Why it is called grace.

4. The cogency of it.

1. What is meant by grace. This word