

Balm in Gilead

by J.C. Philpot

The sermon emphasizes the desperate state of humanity due to sin and the need for the Savior's blood as the only remedy for a wounded conscience.

Scripture: Isaiah 6:5, Jeremiah 8:22, Hosea 5:13, Habakkuk 2:3, 1 Peter 5:6

Topics: "Sin And Grace", "Spiritual Healing"

Description

J.C. Philpot preaches about the desperate state of God's people, emphasizing the deep wounds of sin and the need for a profound realization of one's sinful nature to fully appreciate the grace of God. He delves into the remedy provided by God, highlighting the balm in Gilead as the Savior's blood that cleanses from all sin and the need for a skilled Physician who understands every spiritual malady. Philpot addresses the question of why the health of God's people is not recovered, pointing out possible hindrances such as self-righteousness, unbelief, worldly-mindedness, and secret sins that delay the application of the balm and healing by the Physician.

Transcript

"Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no physician there? Why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered?" Jeremiah 8:22

A pregnant question! and asked by the prophet under very peculiar and painful feelings. What read we in the preceding verse? "For the hurt of the daughter of my people am I hurt; I am black; astonishment has taken hold on me." Whence sprang these convulsive pangs, this deep and overwhelming astonishment, which worked so powerfully in the mind of the prophet as actually to distort his features and make his face appear pallid and black? Why was he hurt and wounded in spirit? What was he astonished at? At three things. First, at the hurt of the daughter of his people, at the deep and desperate wounds under which Zion lay languishing; secondly, at the greatness of the remedy which God had provided; and, thirdly, as the malady was so desperate and the remedy so great, why the health of the daughter of his people was not recovered?

In endeavoring, then, to open up the words of the text, I shall, with God's blessing, attempt to show from them,

I. The desperate state of the daughter of God's people.

II. The remedy which God has provided for her desperate condition.

III. The answer the prophet's question, "Why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered?"

I. The desperate state of the daughter of God's people.

Sin is a damnable thing; and every one of God's people is made, has been made, or will be made, to feel it so. And the more that they see of sin, know of sin, feel of sin, the more damnable will sin appear in their eyes, and with greater weight and power will its dreadful guilt and filth lie upon their conscience.

Now there are but few, comparatively speaking, who have any clear sight or any deep feeling of what sin really is; and the reason, for the most part, is because they have such a slight, shallow, superficial knowledge of who and what God is. But let them once see the purity of God by the eye of faith, let them once have a manifestation of His justice and holiness, majesty and greatness to their soul, and let them, seeing light in His light, have a corresponding sight and sense of the deep and desperate state in which they are as fallen children of a fallen parent, then will they no longer have slight, superficial feelings of the nature and evil of sin, but will so see and feel its hideous and damnable character as to make them cry out with Isaiah in the temple, "Woe to me! I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the Lord Almighty." (Isa. vi. 5).

But if we look at the words of our text, it would seem as if the daughter of God's people, that is, the Church of God ("the daughter of God's people" being a Hebrew idiom for God's people), was suffering under wounds so as to need balm, and under a complication of diseases, so as to require a physician. There was work for the surgeon as well as for the physician; deep and desperate wounds which needed balm, and an inward destructive malady which required internal remedies. This is just what sin has reduced the family of God to. God has described His Zion as "full of wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores."

When the Church of God fell in Adam, she fell with a crash which broke every bone and bruised her flesh with wounds which are ulcerated from head to toe. Her understanding, her conscience, and her affections were all fearfully maimed. The first was blinded, the second stupified, and the third alienated. Every mental faculty thus became perverted and distorted. As in a shipwrecked vessel the water runs in through every leak, so when Adam fell upon the rocks of sin and temptation, and made shipwreck of the image of God in which he was created, sin rushed into every faculty of body and soul, and penetrated into the inmost recesses of his being.

Or to use another figure; as when a man is bitten by a poisonous serpent the venom courses through every artery and vein, and he dies a corrupted mass from head to foot, so did the poison-fang of sin penetrate into Adam's inmost soul and body, and infect him with its venom from the sole to the crown.

But the fearful havoc which sin has made is never seen nor felt until the soul is quickened into spiritual life. O what work does sin then make in the conscience, when it is opened up by the Spirit of God! Whatever superficial or shallow views we may have had of sin before, it is only as its desperate and malignant character is opened up by the Holy Spirit that it is really seen, felt, grieved under, and mourned over as indeed a most dreadful and fearful reality. It is this sword of the Spirit which cuts and wounds; it is this entrance of life and light that gashes the conscience; it is this divine work which lacerates the heart and inflicts those deep wounds which nothing but the "balm in Gilead" can heal.

And not only is a poor convinced sinner cut in his conscience, inwardly lacerated and gashed by sin as thus opened up by the Spirit of God, but, as the prophet speaks, "the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint." He is thus laboring under a complication of diseases. Every thought, word, and action is polluted by sin. Every mental faculty is depraved. The will chooses evil; the affections cleave to earthly things; the memory, like a broken sieve, retains the bad and lets fall the good; the judgment, like a bribed or drunken judge, pronounces heedless or wrong decisions; and the conscience, like an opium-eater, lies asleep and drugged in stupified silence. When all these master-faculties of the mind, the heads of the house, are so drunken and disorderly, need we wonder that the bodily members are a godless, rebellious crew? Lusts call out for gratification; unbelief and infidelity murmur; tempers growl and mutter; and every bad passion strives hard for the mastery.

O the evils of the human heart, which, let loose, have filled earth with misery and hell with victims; which deluged the world with the flood, burnt Sodom and Gomorrah with fire from heaven, and are ripening the world for the final conflagration! Every crime which has made this fair earth a present hell, has filled the air with groans, and drenched the ground with blood, dwells in your heart and mine.

Now, as this is opened up to the conscience by the Spirit of God, we feel indeed to be of all men most sinful and miserable, and of all most guilty, polluted, and vile. But it is this, and nothing but this, which cuts to pieces our fleshly righteousness, wisdom, and strength, which slays our delusive hopes, and lays us low at the footstool of mercy, without one good thought, word, or action to propitiate an angry Judge. It is this which brings the soul to this point, that, if saved, it can only be saved by the free grace, sovereign mercy, and tender compassion of Almighty God.

These are painful lessons to learn. How trying is bodily illness! To be parched by fever, racked by internal pain, with nerves unstrung, temples throbbing, limbs tottering, appetite gone, are heavy afflictions. Wounds also festering, abscesses gathering, ulcers spreading, cancers eating--what a catalogue of ills this poor flesh is heir to!

Yet these are but types of the maladies and wounds which the fall has brought into the soul. But as it is one thing to read of disease in books and another to be sick oneself, one thing to walk through the wards of a hospital and another to lie there a dying patient; so it is one thing to know sin by theory and another to feel it by experience. This miserable state, brought upon us and into us by the fall, all the people of God must in some measure feel. It is of no use mincing the matter and saying that a person can be saved by the grace of God and the blood of Christ, without knowing anything of the depth of misery and wretchedness into which he is sunk as the fallen child of a fallen father. We must go down into the depths of the fall to know what our hearts are and what they are capable of; we must have the keen knife of God to cut deep gashes in our conscience and lay bare the evil that lies so deeply imbedded in our carnal mind, before we can enter into and experience the beauty and blessedness of salvation by grace.

How the saints of old were led down into these depths! See the tears with which David watered his midnight couch; mark the lamentations of Jeremiah out of "the low dungeon;" hear the groans of Heman "in the lowest pit, in the darkness and the deeps;" listen to the roarings of Job, "poured out like the waters." Were not all these choice and eminent saints of God? And whence their dolorous cries? Was it not sin which forced them from their heaving, laboring breasts? But if this will not satisfy you and show you what sin is as laid on the conscience, see the Son of God agonizing in the garden and on the cross, and then say whether sin be a slight thing, or its burden light or small.

Now it was seeing and feeling this which made the prophet cry, "I am black; astonishment has taken hold on me." When he saw himself so polluted and vile; when he viewed the Church of God pining and languishing with the sickness of sin, his very features gathered blackness; he seemed amazed that man should be what he is; his very soul trembled within him at a sight and sense of God's majesty and holiness; and he could only burst forth in the language of awe-struck wonder, "I am black; astonishment has taken hold on me."

And so it will take hold upon us, when, under divine tuition, we look into our hearts and see the lusts and passions, the unbelief and infidelity, the worldly-mindedness and carnality, the pride and covetousness, with all the hosts of evils that lurk and work, fester and riot, in the depth of our fallen nature. Well may we lift our hands with astonishment that the heart of man can be capable of imagining such depths of baseness, and that sin can so stride over the soul and trample down every promise of a crop.

But you will say, perhaps, "You are too hard upon us; you make us out too bad; and you use such exaggerated language, as if we were all fit only for prison." I admit I use strong language, because I feel strongly; but not exaggerated, because it is impossible to exaggerate the evils of the heart or the depths of the fall.

II. The remedy which God has provided for her desperate condition.

But it would seem that while the prophet was thus almost overwhelmed with a sight and sense of sin, he had brought before him a view of the remedy. He therefore cries out, "Is there no balm in Gilead?" Is the case desperate? Must the patient die of the disease? Must the poor sinner sink under his sins? Is there no hope for him? Say that he has wandered far away from God, forgotten Him, neglected Him, repaid all His favors with base ingratitude, requited all His bounties and mercies with carnality and folly--is there still no remedy? Must he perish under the load of his iniquities and crimes? "Is there no balm in Gilead?" Is the supply exhausted, or has its value ceased?

(1.) But what did this BALM in Gilead literally signify? Gilead was a country beyond Jordan, in which certain trees grew of great value and rarity, from the trunk and branches of which there distilled a highly odoriferous gum, which was said to be of sovereign efficacy in healing wounds. We find that the Ishmaelite merchants to whom Joseph was sold by his brethren were taking some of this balm to Egypt; and when Jacob would propitiate the chief lord of Egypt, whom he knew not then to be Joseph, he bade his sons "take a little balm" with them, as a suitable and acceptable offering. It thus became celebrated for its healing properties; and its very scarcity, the trees growing in no other soil or climate, and consequent preciousness, gave it a still higher reputation.

The prophet, therefore, viewing on the one hand Zion's desperate case, and on the other God's own divinely-contrived and appointed remedy, asks this pregnant question, "Is there no balm in Gilead?" He looked at the hurt of the daughter of his people, and saw her pining away in her iniquities; the veil being taken off his own heart, he saw her like himself, beyond description black and base. But was there no hope for him or her? Must she go down to the chambers of death? Must she sigh out her heart without any manifestation of pardon and peace? "Is there no balm in Gilead?"

Why, the very question implies that there is balm in Gilead; that God has provided a remedy which is suitable to the desperate malady; and that there is more in the balm to heal than there is in guilt to wound; for there is more in grace to save than there is in sin to destroy.

Why, then, should Zion so languish? Why is she so sick and sore? Why so bleeding to death? Why does her head so droop, her hands so hang down, her knees so totter? Why is her face so pale, her frame so wasted, her constitution so broken? What has done all this? Whence this sickness unto death? "Is there no balm in Gilead?" From that far country does now no healing medicine come? Has the balm-tree ceased to distill its gum? Is there none to gather, none to bring, none to apply it to perishing Zion?

But spiritually viewed, what is this precious balm? Is it not the Savior's blood--that precious, precious blood, of which the Holy Spirit testifies that it "cleanses from all sin?" Look at the words; weigh them well; they will bear the strictest, closest examination. "All sin;" then sins before salvation, sins after salvation, sins of thought, sins of word, sins of deed, sins of omission, sins of commission, sins against light, sins against life, sins against love, sins against the law, sins against the gospel, sins against God--in every shape, in every form, of every name, every kind, every hue, every blackness, one sin only excepted--the sin against the Holy Spirit, which a believer can never commit. "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanses," not from some sins, not from many sins, not from a thousand sins, not from a million sins, but "the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses from all sin."

This is indeed the balm, when the conscience is cut and gashed, bleeding and sore, to allay the hurt, to soothe the pain, to bring together the edges of the wound and to make it graciously heal.

Is there any other remedy? Search the whole round of duties; run through the wide catalogue of 'forms and ceremonies'; examine every cell and nook of the monastery, the convent, and the confessional; weigh every grain of 'human merit' and 'creature obedience'; tithe with the utmost nicety the anise, mint, and cummin of self-imposed observances; hold up the 'coarse hair-shirt', the bleeding scourge, the jagged crucifix, the protracted fast, the midnight vigil, the morning prayer, and the evening hymn, and see whether all or any of these can heal a wounded conscience.

But why do I mention these things? Are there Papists or Puseyites before me? No! But because there really is no middle ground between faith in Christ's blood, and full-blown Popery. As between grace and works, Christ's blood and human merits, there is no real middle ground, so there is no standing ground between experimental religion and Popery, between absolution by Christ and absolution by the Pope. To drive out this Antichrist and bring in Christ is the main work of the Spirit, the grand aim and end of the gospel.

This is the reason why the Lord, in His wonderful dealings with the soul, makes it sink so deeply and feel so acutely. It is to drive out heart-popery. Where was the sword forged which "wounded one of the heads of the beast as it were, to death?" In the cell of an Augustine monk. Popery was first driven out of Luther's heart by the law and temptation; and then smitten down by Luther's hand. But thousands are Papists in heart who are Protestants in creed. How many, for instance, there are who would gladly heal themselves--some by duties, some by doctrines, some by resolutions, some by promises, some by vows, some by false hopes, some by ordinances, some by the opinion of ministers, some by church membership! What is this but a subtle form of Popery?

How many heal themselves in this slight way! and every one will do so until the wound is opened up and deepened by the Spirit of God. Then all these vain and inefficacious remedies are seen in their true light. They do not speak peace to the conscience; they bring no sense of pardon to the soul; the love of God does not accompany them; the fear of judgment is not taken away; the grave has still its terrors, and death has still its sting. All these remedies, therefore, are found in the case of the child of God to be utterly

inefficacious, because they cannot heal the wounds, the deep wounds, that sin has made.

(2.) But the question is also asked, "Is there no PHYSICIAN there?" We need a physician as well as balm, and one who can fully enter into the very state of the case. Now, a physician naturally ought to be a man of deep skill and large research, of thorough knowledge and great tenderness. He should understand, and rightly appreciate every symptom, and know exactly what remedies to apply.

But, spiritually, what a physician we need! We are afflicted throughout with disease! "The whole head is sick and the whole heart faint!" We need, therefore, a physician who knows all our secret maladies, who is perfectly acquainted with 'heart' disease and 'head' disease, who sees all our backslidings in lip and life, our various misgivings, doubts and fears, coldness and deadness, helplessness and inability, with all the workings of unbelief and infidelity, and the desperate abounding of our filth and folly. We need a physician who can look into our hearts, and perfectly understand all these aggravated symptoms, and yet deal with us with the greatest tenderness, as well as the deepest wisdom and the most consummate skill. There is this almighty Physician; and if we are enabled by grace to put ourselves into His hands, or rather, if He takes us and put us into His own hands, He will deal with us in the most tender and gentle, and yet the most efficacious manner possible.

Still, it will at times be very painful to be under His hands, for He will touch the sore places, and probe the deep wounds, and some of His remedies will be very severe, bitter, and pungent. Yet with all this apparently rough handling, He will display the most infinite wisdom, the most consummate patience, and the tenderest love.

III. The answer the prophet's question, "Why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered?"

When the prophet, then, had taken this solemn view of the hurt of the daughter of his people, and had seen, also, by faith, "the balm in Gilead and the physician there," he asks, "Why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered?"--clearly implying that although there was balm in Gilead, and a blessed Physician there, yet the health of the daughter of his people was not recovered.

And is not this the case with many of God's people now? They are cut, wounded, lacerated by sin, though they know, at least in their judgment, that there is balm in Gilead, and that there is a Physician there. They are not seeking salvation by the works of the law, they are not trusting to their own righteousness, they are not halting between two opinions, they know that there is no hope but in the blood and righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ. And yet their wounds are not healed, nor their sickness relieved. But if there is balm in Gilead, and if there is a Physician there, why is not their health recovered?

But let us not here impeach either the reality of the MALADY, or the sufficiency of the REMEDY. It is certain that the balm of a Savior's blood has healed thousands, and that there is salvation in no other name and by no other way, for without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sin. It is equally certain that this great Physician has cured the most desperate diseases, diseases past all human help; it is also certain that this blood is never applied in vain, and that this Physician has an ear to hear, a heart to feel, and a hand to relieve.

Yet still there may be certain wise and sufficient reasons why this balm may not be immediately applied or this Physician not at once stretch forth His healing hand.

(1.) The patient may not have sunk deep enough into the malady. Some of God's people are often wondering why they do not know more of pardoning love, and of the application of the blood of the Lamb to their conscience; why they have not a clearer testimony and a more unwavering assurance of their interest in the everlasting covenant; why they have so much bondage and so little liberty, and, with a clear sight of the remedy, enjoy so little of its application. They clearly see that there is balm in Gilead, and that there is a Physician there. Still their "wounds reek and are corrupt because of their foolishness," and still the Physician delays to come.

But may not this be the reason? That they have not sunk deep enough, nor got yet into the 'incurable ward'? In many living souls there lurks a spirit of self-righteousness, and a secret unacknowledged dependence on the creature. Until that is purged away, the balm in Gilead is not fully suitable, nor do they apply with all their heart and soul to the great Physician. "And you shall seek Me, and find Me, when you shall search for Me with all your heart."

(2.) Or it may be that the due time is not come. "Humble yourselves," says the apostle, "under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time" (1 Pet. v. 6). There is "a set time to favor Zion," and until that time is run out the Lord does not manifest His favor. Abraham had to wait twenty-five years for a son; and Joseph two years in prison for deliverance; and David seven years, to sit on the throne. It is "through faith and patience that we inherit the promises." "The vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak and not lie; though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry" (Hab. ii. 3). When this set time is come, the balm will be applied, the skill of the Physician experienced, and the health recovered.

(3.) Or there may be certain hindrances in themselves of another kind why the balm in Gilead, and why "the Physician there" are not more deeply and experimentally known. They may not yet have been made willing to part with all their idols; they may still hug their sins; they may cleave to their own ruin, and play with the serpent that bites them. Or they may be half-hearted, may be drawn aside by pride or covetousness; the world may have fast hold of their heart, and their affections may be too much after earthly things.

Such was Ephraim's case: "His heart was divided, and thus he was found faulty." And what was the consequence? "When Ephraim saw his sickness, and Judah his sores, then Ephraim turned to Assyria, and sent to the great king for help. But he is not able to cure you, not able to heal your sores." (Hos. v. 13).

Or it may be that the wound has been only slightly healed, and therefore has broken out worse than before. A relapse, we know, is often worse than the original disease, and an old wound harder to heal than a fresh one. The Lord Himself condemns the prophets who "healed the hurt of the daughter of His people slightly." The wound, therefore, must needs break forth again, and the cure be thus put further off.

Or there may be some secret yet powerful temptation, under the power of which the soul is lying. Or some darling lust which holds him fast, and will not let him go, and in the baseness of his heart, he would rather go on with. Or it may be nursing what sweetness it can out of backsliding rather than be purged and cleansed by God's searching hand.

What a proof is this of the deceitfulness, the desperate deceitfulness, the wickedness, the deep and desperate wickedness, of the human heart! There is something in SIN which so bewitches, something in CARNALITY which so deadens, something in the WORLD which so engrosses, and something in SENSUAL GRATIFICATION that so hardens the conscience, that where these things are pursued and

indulged, the life and power of godliness are as if buried and suffocated. The soul, indeed, may at times cry and roar under this load of carnality and death, but its half-heaved cries do not penetrate the vault of heaven, nor enter into the ears of the Lord Almighty.

May not this throw light on the experience of some of God's people? How many seem to make no progress at all! They hope, they fear; sometimes they seem to have a testimony and sometimes none; and thus they go on perhaps for years, and many even almost to a death-bed, before there is any clear decided work in their consciences to slaughter and kill their disease, or any sweet manifestation of the mercy and love of God to heal and save them. It is true that these, with all other matters, we must eventually trace up to the sovereignty of God. The final answer to all inquiries why 'misery' and 'mercy' were so long deferred, and came only just in time, must still be, "The Lord will have it so."

And yet however sovereign the dispensations of God are, no one who fears His great name should so shelter himself under divine sovereignty as to remove all blame from himself. When the Lord asks, "Have you not procured this remedy to yourself?" the soul must needs reply. "Yes, Lord, I surely have." This is a narrow line, but one which every one's experience, where the conscience is tender, will surely ratify. Though we can do nothing to comfort our own souls, to speak peace to our own conscience, to bring the love of God into our hearts, to apply the balm of Gilead to bleeding wounds, and summon the great Physician to our bed-sides--we may do many things to repel Him.

We cannot bring ourselves near to God, but we can and do put ourselves far from Him. We cannot advance into the warmth and brightness of His beams, but we can wander into regions of cold and frost. We cannot make to ourselves a fountain of living waters, but we can hew out a broken cistern. We cannot live to God's glory, but we can live to our own. We cannot seek God's honor, but we can seek our own profit. We cannot walk after the Spirit, but we can walk after the flesh. We can be carnal, worldly-minded, reckless, thoughtless, careless about our souls, though we cannot be spiritually-minded, heavenly, holy, with hearts and affections at God's right hand. We cannot make ourselves fruitful in every good word and work, but we may, by disobedience and self-indulgence, bring leanness into our souls, barrenness into our frames, deadness into our hearts, coldness into our affections, and in the end much guilt upon our consciences.

No man knows better, I believe, than myself, that we cannot do anything of a spiritual nature to bring us near to God, but I am equally sure that we can do many things that set us very far from Him. Let all the shame and guilt be ours; all the grace and glory are God's. Every drop of 'felt mercy', every ray of 'gracious hope', every sweet application of truth to the heart, every sense of spiritual interest, every blessed testimony, every sweet indulgence, every heavenly smile, every tender desire, and every spiritual feeling--all, all are of God. If ever my heart is softened, my spirit blessed, my soul watered, if Christ is ever felt to be precious, it is all of His grace--it is all given freely, sovereignly, without money and without price.

But I cannot deny it--that by our carnality, inconsistency, worldly-mindedness, negligence, ingratitude, and forsaking and forgetting the God of our mercies, we are continually bringing leanness and barrenness, deadness and darkness into our own souls. Thus we are forced to plead "Guilty, guilty!" to put our mouth in the dust, acknowledge ourselves to be vile, and confess ourselves indeed "of sinners chief, and of saints less than the least."

Yet thus does God, in His mysterious dealings, open up a way for His sovereign grace and mercy to visit the soul. The more we feel ourselves condemned, cut off, gashed and wounded by a sense of sin and

folly, backslidings and wanderings from God, the lower we shall lie, the more we shall put our mouth in the dust, the more freely we shall confess our baseness before Him. And if the Lord should be pleased, in these solemn moments, to open our poor blind eyes to see something of the precious blood of the Lamb, to apply some sweet promise to the soul, or to bring to the heart a sense of His goodness and mercy, how sweet and suitable is that grace, as coming over all the 'mountains and hills of our sin and shame'.

There is, then, balm in Gilead, and there is a Physician there. This is, and must ever be, our only hope. If there were no balm in Gilead, what could we do but lie down in despair and die? For our sins are so great, our backslidings so repeated, our minds so dark, our hearts so hard, our affections so cold, our souls so wavering and wandering--that if there were no balm in Gilead, no precious blood, no sweet promises, no sovereign grace, and if there were no Physician there, no risen Jesus, no Great High Priest over the house of God, what well-grounded hope could we entertain? Not a ray! Our own obedience and consistency? These are a bed too short and a covering too narrow.

But when there is some application of the balm in Gilead it softens, melts, humbles, and at the same time thoroughly heals. No, this balm strengthens every nerve and sinew, heals blindness, remedies deafness, cures paralysis, makes the lame man leap as a deer, and the tongue of the mute to sing, and thus produces gospel healing, gospel strength, and a gospel living.

When the spirit is melted, and the heart touched by a sense of God's goodness, mercy, and love to such base, undeserving wretches, it produces gospel obedience, aye, a 'humble obedience', not that 'proud obedience' which those manifest who are trusting to their own goodness and seeking to scale the battlements of heaven by the ladder of self-righteousness, but an obedience of gratitude, love, and submission, willingly, cheerfully rendered, and therefore acceptable to God, because flowing from His own Spirit and grace.

It is the application of this divine balm which purifies the heart, makes sin hateful, and Jesus precious--and not only dissolves the soul in sweet gratitude, but fills it with earnest desires to live to God's honor and glory. This is the mysterious way the Lord takes to get honor to Himself. As He opens up the depth of sin and the fall, makes the burden of sin felt, and shows the sinner his enormous iniquities--He brings the proud heart down, and lays the head low in the dust. And as He makes him sigh and cry, grieve and groan; He applies His sovereign balm to the soul, brings the blood of sprinkling into the conscience, sheds abroad His mercy and love, and thus constrains the feet to walk in cheerful and willing obedience.

This is obeying the precept from right motives, right views, right influences, under right feelings, and to right ends. This is the true Christian obedience, obedience "in the spirit and not in the letter," an obedience which glorifies God, and is attended by every fruit and grace of the Spirit. Thus, wondrous to say, the more we see and feel of the depth of the malady, the more do we prize, as God is pleased to show it, the height and blessedness of the remedy; the lower we sink in SELF, the higher we rise in CHRIST; the more we see of our sinful nature, the more we admire the grace of God; the more we are harassed, and tried, and distressed by our sin, the more suitable and precious, and God-glorifying is the gospel of the grace of God.

So that the more we sink into the ruins of the fall, the higher we rise experimentally into the knowledge of the gospel of the grace of God. And all this attended, when it is genuine, by the fruits of the Spirit, a spiritual obedience, a glorifying God, a separation from the world, and as the Lord enables, a glorifying Him in body, soul, and spirit, which are His.

Here, then, is the answer to the prophet's question, "Is there no balm in Gilead?" Yes, there is! blessed be God--the blood of Jesus and the sweet promises of the gospel.

"Is there no physician there?" Yes! blessed be God, there is, a wise, a mighty, yes, an Almighty, an all-sufficient Physician!

"Why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered?" If not recovered, it is only delayed and delays are not denials. The time will come, the appointed season will roll round, and then every hindrance will be removed. If it be the world, some affliction will be sent to wean the heart from it. If an idol, the hand of God will take it away or destroy its power. If it be a temptation, God will deliver from it, or make a way of escape that the soul may be able to bear it. If unbelief prevails, He will overcome it, and give faith a victory over it. If there be any lust indulged, He will purge the heart from its power and prevalence.

So that our wisdom and mercy alike, is to fall into His compassionate hands, to renounce our own righteousness, to acknowledge that we have nothing in ourselves but filth and folly, and thus to seek His face, to call upon His name, to hope in His mercy, and rest in His goodness; and, as He may be pleased to shine upon the soul, to thank and praise His holy name for the mercy He displays in Christ to the vilest of the vile.

Here, then, is the answer to this important question, "Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no physician there?" Blessed be God, there is both one and the other. "Why then is not the health of the daughter of God's people recovered?" It is already accomplished in the mind of God, and will be made experimentally manifest in His own time and way.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/jc-philpot/balm-in-gilead/>

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