**THE EXPOSITION OF HOLY SCRIPTURE BY ALEXANDER MACLAREN**

**LUKE-035**. **THE LORD THAT HEALETH THEE by ALEXANDER MACLAREN**

*"He healed them that had need of healing."*

*Luke 9:11*

Jesus was seeking a little quiet and rest for Himself and His followers. For that purpose He took one of the fishermen's boats to cross to the other side of the sea. But the crowd, inconsiderate and selfish, like all crowds, saw the course of the boat, and hurried, as they could easily do, on foot round the head of the lake, to be ready for Him wherever He might land. So when He touched the shore, there they all were, open-mouthed and mostly moved by mere curiosity, and the prospect of a brief breathing-space vanished.

But not a word of rebuke or disappointment came from His lips, and no shade of annoyance crossed His spirit. Perhaps with a sigh, but yet cheerfully, He braced Himself to work where He had hoped for leisure. It was a little thing, but it was the same in kind, though infinitely smaller in magnitude, as that which led Him to lay aside the glory that He had with the Father before the world was, and come to toil and die amongst men.

But what I especially would note are Luke's remarkable words here. Why does he use that periphrasis, Them that had need of healing, instead of contenting himself with straightforwardly saying, Them that were sick, as do the other Evangelists? Well, I suppose he wished to hint to us the Lord's discernment of men's necessities, the swift compassion which moved to supply a need as soon as it was observed, and the inexhaustible power by which, whatsoever the varieties of infirmity, He was able to cure and to bring strength. He healed them that had need of healing, because His love could not look upon a necessity without being moved to supply it, and because that love wielded the resources of an infinite power.

Now, all our Lord's miracles are parables, illustrating upon a lower platform spiritual facts; and that is especially true about the miracles of healing. So I wish to deal with the words before us as having a direct application to ourselves, and to draw from them two or three very old, threadbare, neglected lessons, which I pray God may lead some of us to recognise anew our need of healing, and Christ's infinite power to bestow it. There are three things that I want to say, and I name them here that you may know where I am going. First, we all need healing; second, Christ can heal us all; third, we are not all healed.

**I. We all need healing.**

The people in that crowd were not all diseased. Some of them He taught; some of them He cured; but that crowd where healthy men mingled with cripples is no type of the condition of humanity. Rather we are to find it in that Pool of Bethesda, with its five porches, wherein lay a multitude of impotent folk, tortured with varieties of sickness, and none of them sound. Blessed be God! we are in Bethesda, which means house of mercy, and the fountain that can heal is perpetually springing up beside us all. There is a disease, dear brethren, which affects and infects all mankind, and it is of that that I wish to speak to you two or three plain, earnest words now. Sin is universal.

What does the Bible mean by sin? Everything that goes against, or neglects God's law. And if you will recognise in all the acts of every life the reference, which really is there, to God and His will, you will not need anything more to establish the fact that all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God. Whatever other differences there are between men, there is this fundamental similarity. Neglect--which is a breach--of the law of God pertains to all mankind. Everything that we do ought to have reference to Him. Does everything that we do have such reference? If not, there is a quality of evil in it. For the very definition of sin is living to myself and neglecting Him. He is the centre, and if I might use a violent figure, every planet that wrenches itself away from gravitation towards, and revolution round, that centre, and prefers to whirl on its own axis, has broken the law of the celestial spheres, and brought discord into the heavenly harmony. All men stand condemned in this respect.

Now, there is no need to exaggerate. I am not saying that all men are on the same level. I know that there are great differences in the nobleness, purity, and goodness of lives, and Christianity has never been more unfairly represented than when good men have called, as they have done with St. Augustine, the virtues of godless men, splendid vices. But though the differences are not unimportant, the similarity is far more important. The pure, clean-living man, and the loving, gentle woman, though they stand high above the sensuality of the profligate, the criminal, stand in this respect on the same footing that they, too, have to put their hands on their mouths, and their mouths in the dust, and cry Unclean!I do not want to exaggerate, and sure I am that if men will be honest with themselves there is a voice that responds to the indictment when I say sadly, in the solemn language of Scripture, we all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. For there is no difference. If you do not believe in a God, you can laugh at the old wife's notion of sin. If you do believe in a God, you are shut up to believe this other thing, Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned.

And, brethren, if this universal fact is indeed a fact, it is the gravest element in human nature. It matters very little, in comparison, whether you and I are wise or foolish, educated or illiterate, rich or poor, happy or miserable. All the superficial distinctions which separate men from one another, and are all right in their own places, dwindle away into nothing before this solemn truth that in every frame there is a plague spot, and that the leprosy has smitten us all.

But, brethren, do not let us lose ourselves in generalities. All means each, and each means me. We all know how hard it is to bring general truths to bear, with all their weight, upon ourselves. That is an old commonplace: All men think all men mortal but themselves; and we are quite comfortable when this indictment is kept in the general terms of universality--All have sinned. Suppose I sharpen the point a little. God grant that the point may get to some indurated conscience here. Suppose, instead of reading All have sinned, I beseech each one of my hearers to strike out the general word, and put in the individual one, and to say I have sinned. You have to do with this indictment just as you have to do with the promises and offers of the Gospel--wherever there is a whosoeverput your pen through it, and write your own name over it. The blank cheque is given to us in regard to these promises and offers, and we have to fill in our own names. The charge is handed to us, in regard to this indictment, and if we are wise we shall write our own names there, too.

Dear brethren, I leave this on your consciences, and I will venture to ask that, if not here, at any rate when you get quietly home to-night, and lie down on your beds, you would put to yourselves the question, Is it I?And sure I am that, if you do, you will see a finger pointing out of the darkness, and hear a voice sterner than that of Nathan, saying Thou art the man.

**II. Christ can heal us all.**

I was going to use an inappropriate word, and say, the superb ease with which He grappled with, and overcame, all types of disease is a revelation on a lower level of the inexhaustible and all-sufficient fullness of His healing power. He can cope with all sin-the world's sin, and the individual's. And, as I believe, He alone can do it.

Just look at the problem that lies before any one who attempts to stanch these wounds of humanity. What is needed in order to deliver men from the sickness of sin? Well! that evil thing, like the fabled dog that sits at the gate of the infernal regions, is three-headed. And you have to do something with each of these heads if you are to deliver men from that power.

There is first the awful power that evil once done has over us of repeating itself on and on. There is nothing more dreadful to a reflective mind than the damning influence of habit. The man that has done some wrong thing once is a rara avis indeed. If once, then twice; if twice, then onward and onward through all the numbers. And the intervals between will grow less, and what were isolated points will coalesce into a line; and impulses wax as motives wane, and the less delight a man has in his habitual form of evil the more is its dominion over him, and he does it at last not because the doing of it is any delight, but because the not doing of it is a misery. If you are to get rid of sin, and to eject the disease from a man, you have to deal with that awful degradation of character, and the tremendous chains of custom. That is one of the heads of the monster.

But, as I said, sin has reference to God, and there is another of the heads, for with sin comes guilt. The relation to God is perverted, and the man that has transgressed stands before Him as guilty, with all the dolefulness that that solemn word means; and that is another of the heads.

The third is this--the consequences that follow in the nature of penalty. Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. So long as there is a universal rule by God, in which all things are concatenated by cause and effect, it is impossible but that Evil shall slay the wicked. And that is the third head. These three, habit, guilt, and penalty, have all to be dealt with if you are going to make a thorough job of the surgery.

And here, brethren, I want not to argue but to preach. Jesus Christ died on the Cross for you, and your sin was in His heart and mind when He died, and His atoning sacrifice cancels the guilt, and suspends all that is dreadful in the penalty of the sin. Nothing else--nothing else will do that. Who can deal with guilt but the offended Ruler and Judge? Who can trammel up consequences but the Lord of the Universe? The blood of Jesus Christ is the sole and sufficient oblation and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world.

That disposes of two of the monster's heads. What about the third? Who will take the venom out of my nature? What will express the black drop from my heart? How shall the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard his spots? How can the man that has become habituated to evil learn to do well? Superficially there may be much reformation. God forbid that I should forget that, or seem to minimise it. But for the thorough ejection from your nature of the corruption that you have yourselves brought into it, I believe--and that is why I am here, for I should have nothing to say if I did not believe it--I believe that there is only one remedy, and that is that into the sinful heart there should come, rejoicing and flashing, and bearing on its broad bosom before it all the rubbish and filth of that dunghill, the great stream of the new life that is given by Jesus Christ. He was crucified for our offences, and He lives to bestow upon us the fullness of His own holiness. So the monster's heads are smitten off. Our disease and the tendency to it, and the weakness consequent upon it, are all cast out from us, and He reveals Himself as the Lord who healeth thee.

Now, dear brethren, you may say That is all very fine talking. Yes! but it is something a great deal more than fine talking. For nineteen centuries have established the fact that it is so; and with all their imperfections there have been millions, and there are millions to-day, who are ready to say, Behold! it is not a delusion; it is not rhetoric, I have trusted in Him and He has made me whole.

Now, if these things that I have been saying do fairly represent the gravity of the problem which has to be dealt with in order to heal the sicknesses of the world, then there is no need to dwell upon the thought of how absolutely confined to Jesus Christ is the power of thus dealing. God forbid that I should not give full weight to all other methods for partial reformation and bettering of humanity. I would wish them all God-speed. But, brethren, there is nothing else that will deal either with my sin in its relation to God, or in its relation to my character, or in its relation to my future, except the message of the Gospel. There are plenty of other things, very helpful and good in their places, but I do want to say, in one word, that there is nothing else that goes deep enough.

Education? Yes! it will do a great deal, but it will do nothing in regard to sin. It will alter the type of the disease, because the cultured man's transgressions will be very different from those of the illiterate boor. But wise or foolish, professor, student, thinker, or savage with narrow forehead and all but dead brain, are alike in this, that they are sinners in God's sight. I would that I could get through the fence that some of you have reared round you, on the ground of your superior enlightenment and education and refinement, and make you feel that there is something deeper than all that, and that you may be a very clever, and a very well educated, a very highly cultured, an extremely thoughtful and philosophical sinner, but you are a sinner all the same.

And again, we hear a great deal at present, and I do not desire that we should hear less, about social and economic and political changes, which some eager enthusiasts suppose will bring the millennium. Well, if the land were nationalised, and all the means of production and distributionwere nationalised, and everybody got his share, and we were all brought to the communistic condition, what then? That would not make men better, in the deepest sense of the word. The fact is, these people are beginning at the wrong end. You cannot better humanity merely by altering its environment for the better. Christianity reverses the process. It begins with the inmost man, and it works outwards to the circumference, and that is the thorough way. Why! suppose you took a company of people out of the slums, for instance, and put them into a model lodging-house, how long will it continue a model? They will take their dirty habits with them, and pull down the woodwork for firing, and in a very short time make the place where they are as like as possible to the hovel whence they came. You must change the men, and then you can change their circumstances, or rather they will change them for themselves. Now, all this is not to be taken as casting cold water on any such efforts to improve matters, but only as a protest against its being supposed that these alone are sufficient to rectify the ills and cure the sorrows of humanity. Ye have healed the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly. The patient is dying of cancer, and you are treating him for a skin disease. It is Jesus Christ alone who can cure the sins, and therein the sorrows, of humanity.

**III. Lastly, we are not all healed.**

That is only too plain. All the sick in the crowd round Christ were sent away well, but the gifts He bestowed so broadcast had no relation to their spiritual natures, and gifts that have relation to our spiritual nature cannot be thus given in entire disregard of our actions in the matter.

Christ cannot heal you unless you take His healing power. He did on earth sometimes, though not often, cure physical disease without the requirement of faith on the part of the healed person or his friends, but He cannot (He would if He could) do so in regard to the disease of sin. There, unless a man goes to Him, and trusts Him, and submits his spirit to the operation of Christ's pardoning and hallowing grace, there cannot be any remedy applied, nor any cure effected. That is no limitation of the universal power of the Gospel. It is only saying that if you do not take the medicine you cannot expect that it will do you any good, and surely that is plain common-sense. There are plenty of people who fancy that Christ's healing and saving power will, somehow or other, reach every man, apart from the man's act. It is all a delusion, brethren. If it could it would. But if salvation could be thus given, independent of the man, it would come down to a mere mechanical thing, and would not be worth the having. So I say, first, if you will not take the medicine you cannot get the cure.

I say, second, if you do not feel that you are ill you will not take the medicine. A man crippled with lameness, or tortured with fever, or groping in the daylight and blind, or deaf to all the sounds of this sweet world, could not but know that he was a subject for the healing. But the awful thing about our disease is that the worse you are the less you know it; and that when conscience ought to be speaking loudest it is quieted altogether, and leaves a man often perfectly at peace, so that after he has done evil things he wipes his mouth and says, I have done no harm.

So, dear brethren, let me plead with you not to put away these poor words that I have been saying to you, and not to be contented until you have recognised what is true, that you--you, stand a sinful man before God.

There is surely no madness comparable to the madness of the man that prefers to keep his sin and die, rather than go to Christ and live. We all neglect to take up many good things that we might have if we would, but no other neglect is a thousandth part so insane as that of the man who clings to his evil and spurns the Lord. Will you look into your own hearts? Will you recognise that awful solemn law of God which ought to regulate all our doings, and, alas! has been so often neglected, and so often transgressed by each of us? Oh! if once you saw yourselves as you are, you would turn to Him and say, Heal me; and you would be healed, and He would lay His hand upon you. If only you will go, sick and broken, to Him, and trust in His great sacrifice, and open your hearts to the influx of His healing power, He will give you perfect soundness; and your song will be, Bless the Lord, O my soul.... Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth thy diseases.

May it be so with each of us!