

I will come and heal him—Foreseeing the exercise of the centurion’s faith, he promises that while he is coming, ere he arrives at the house, he will heal him, and this was literally done, Matthew 8:13. There is much beauty in this passage.

Matthew 8:8

But speak the word only—See here the pattern of that living faith and genuine humility which ought always to accompany the prayer of a sinner: Jesus can will away the palsy, and speak away the most grievous torments. The first degree of humility is to acknowledge the necessity of God’s mercy, and our own inability to help ourselves: the second, to confess the freeness of his grace, and our own utter unworthiness. Ignorance, unbelief, and presumption will ever retard our spiritual cure.

And healed all that were sick—Not a soul did the Lord Jesus ever reject, who came to him soliciting his aid. Need any sinner despair who comes to him, conscious of his spiritual malady, to be healed by his merciful hand?

Matthew 8:17

Himself took our infirmities—The quotation is taken from Isaiah 53:4, Christ fulfils the prophecies in all respects, and is himself the completion and truth of them, as being the lamb and victim of God, which, bears and takes away the sin of the world. The text in Isaiah refers properly to the taking away of sin; and this in the evangelist, to the removal of corporeal afflictions: but, as the diseases of the body are the emblems of the sin of the soul, Matthew, referring to the prediction of the prophet, considered the miraculous healing of the body as an emblem of the soul’s salvation by Christ Jesus.

They that be whole need not a physician—A common proverb, which none could either misunderstand or misapply. Of it the reader may make the following use:—

1. Jesus Christ represents himself here as the sovereign Physician of souls.
2. That all stand in need of his healing power.
3. That men must acknowledge their spiritual maladies, and the need they have of his mercy, in order to be healed by him.
4. That it is the most inveterate and dangerous disease the soul can be afflicted with to imagine itself whole, when the sting of death, which is sin, has pierced it through in every part, infusing its poison every where.

Stretch forth thine hand—The bare command of God is a sufficient reason of obedience. This man might have reasoned thus: “Lord, my hand is withered; how then can I stretch it out? Make it whole first, and afterwards I will do as thou commandest.” This may appear reasonable, but in his case it would have been foolishness. At the command of the Lord he made the effort, and in making it the cure was effected! Faith disregards apparent impossibilities, where there is a command and promise of God. The effort to believe is, often, that faith by which the soul is healed.

A little before (vv. 6, 8) Jesus Christ had asserted his Godhead, in this verse he proves it. What but the omnipotence of the living God could have, in a moment, restored this withered hand? There could be no collusion here; the man who had a real disease was instantaneously and therefore miraculously cured; and the mercy and power of God were both amply manifested in this business.

It is worthy of remark, that as the man was healed with a word, without even a touch, the Sabbath was unbroken, even according to their most rigid interpretation of the letter of the law.