

HENRIC SCHARTAU
AND
THE ORDER OF GRACE

Biography by Henrik Hägglund and
Fifteen Sermons by Henric Schartau

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Third Sunday After Epiphany

In the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

I am all full of festering sores, Come lay Thy hand upon me; I am adrift far from the shores, Let Thy grace never fail me. I am so weak, have pity, Lord, An erring sheep Thy care afford. Thy grace alone I'm pleading.

Pray thus, thou penitent sinner who art aware of thy soul's infirmity and longest for spiritual health. Pray to Jesus, the right physician of souls, in the name of God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Introduction.

"Wouldest thou be made whole?" This strange question was put by the Lord to a man who lay bodily sick. To-day I wish to direct the same question to all who are spiritually sick, *"Wouldest thou be made whole?"*

There was in Jerusalem a pool, called Bethesda, into which at certain seasons an angel descended and troubled the water. The first invalid to descend into the water after it had been troubled was healed. There was among others a man who had been sick for thirty-eight years, lying in one of the porches erected for the sick. He had waited long but in vain for the healing bath. He had no one to help him into the water and

was always preceded by some one who was a little stronger or who had a helper. Jesus saw him and learned that he had lain there for a long time, and He said to the man, "Wouldest thou be made whole?"

It may appear superfluous for Jesus to ask this question, since it was evident that the invalid wished to be made whole, but Jesus wished to show, first, that while the sick man could not help himself, his consent was nevertheless necessary; secondly, that when he wished to be made well, Jesus had the requisite power and willingness to heal him.

Man's spiritual condition resembles that of one bodily sick. Pains, unconsciousness, fever, infirmity, yes, even death follows upon spiritual, as well as upon bodily, diseases. The Holy Scriptures therefore represent the rising up from our sinful depravity as being like a healing from some malady. Our Gospel text speaks of two, who were bodily sick and whom Jesus healed. It is not, then, improper, if we take occasion to speak of spiritual healing from a disease with which our souls are all affected, a disease which eventually leads to eternal destruction, if it is not healed in time.

Jesus has procured so certain a remedy that it never fails, if rightly used. He has also opened a way to this remedy, so that every man can be healed. Jesus has made so perfect a payment for all our sins and purchased grace unto the rising up of the soul from sinful depravity that any one who rightly seeks for atonement and appropriates the grace in Christ never can remain lying in the wretchedness of his sins. The way lies open in repentance and faith, and the means of grace, the Word and the Sacraments, are available. It is by

these that the Holy Spirit, without our assistance, enables us to gain the health and life which Jesus has purchased for our sick, dead souls.

On behalf of Jesus I must now ask you the same question that He put to the sick man at Bethesda, "Wouldest thou be made whole?" Though your consent is necessary for the healing of your soul, you have nothing to contribute. If you wish to be healed spiritually, you shall know that Jesus is willing to heal you. He is also able; He lacks no power, for He is God. He has healed many thousands quite as wretched and corrupted as you. Fall down before Him as did the leper and ask for the healing of your soul, saying, "Our Father" etc.

Text: Mt. 8. 1-13.

Proposition

A GLORIOUS COMFORT FOR PENITENT SINNERS

1. Penitent sinners to whom it is a comfort that Jesus will make them whole.
2. The glorious comfort for such penitent sinners, that Jesus will make them whole.

Prayer.

O Jesus Christ! Thou art the healing and life of our souls. Concerning Thee it is written that, on one occasion when Thou wast teaching much people, the power of the Lord was with Thee to heal. Let Thy Word now be active to the making of this congregation whole by means of the health which Thou hast purchased for us with Thy blood. Amen.

First Part.

*To Whom It Is a Comfort That Jesus Will Make
Them Whole.*

Evidently there can be no comfort to be made well except to those who grieve because they are sick. No one rejoices in the hope of regaining his health, unless he knows that he has lost it and is painfully aware of this loss.

No man is by nature whole. Every one is corrupted by the infection of sin. Spiritually he resembles the leper in our Gospel. Leprosy was a disease which spread sores all over the body, causing pain and an obnoxious odor. Human depravity is by Isaiah described in terms apparently borrowed from this disease, "The whole head is sick, and 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 festering sores." The whole head is sick. The entire reason of man is blinded; the functions and organs of the intellect are in the greatest disorder and confusion, so that "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, and he cannot know them." The whole heart is faint. The human will is faint with infirmity, slothfulness, and indifference as far as God and the kingdom of grace are concerned. Indeed, "the mind of the flesh is enmity against God." Our natural mind neither is, nor can be, "subject to the law of God." Human nature is full of sin, corruption, and wretchedness. From the sole of the foot to the crown of the head there are festering sores or manifest sins, also secret sins, "wounds and bruises" containing cankerous poison.

No man knows his spiritual infirmity by his own reason. In his natural condition man is like one sick, not only by reason of his suffering, but also because he is so seriously affected that he loses consciousness of his pains. Immediately after a person has broken his baptismal covenant, he has disturbing reminders of his backsliding, and an anxious feeling of regret overtakes him when he recalls the blessings he once enjoyed. He soon casts away his anxiety, however, stifles his apprehensions with new sin, and eventually becomes quite callous and secure. Even if there are occasional attacks of the former anxiety, they are soon forgotten, and the sinner may in the meantime boast of having a good conscience, not doubting his salvation.

It is the Word of God that informs a person of his spiritual disease. This is the significance of the word by Jeremiah, "Is not my word like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?" It breaks a man's stony heart and causes a smarting sensation of sorrow, as though the heart were crushed. The spiritual condition then resembles the physical condition of the centurion's servant of whom we read, "My servant lieth in the house sick, grievously tormented." When the law "pierces to the dividing of soul and spirit, joints and marrow," then the sins revealed thoroughly frighten the soul with fear of eternal condemnation, which the awakened soul at last realizes that he has merited. The law demands love to God with all one's heart, but now it becomes apparent in the light of God's Word that one harbors evil desires. In short, when God begins to heal the soul, its depravity becomes quite apparent.

A person then also becomes aware of his inability to

help himself. His soul resembles the servant in our Gospel, who was "sick of the palsy," and quite unable to help himself out of his tribulations. The awakened sinner is indeed willing to attempt to help himself, but his dismal failures and a greater enlightenment finally convince him that, in the words of the apostle Paul, "We are not sufficient of ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God." A sinner so awakened fears the wrath of God and finds himself unable to appease the Lord. He feels the loathsome violence of the passions and many a time with heartfelt sorrow and humiliation he experiences his inability to quench and, still less, to uproot them.

Second Part.

It Is a Comfort for Such Souls That Jesus Is Willing to Make Them Whole.

Indeed, a person so awakened already has the comfort that Jesus can make a wretched man whole. It is this comfort which secretly sustains a penitent soul and keeps it from despair. For where would otherwise be our hope? But, now hallelujah! Jesus can do it; let Him be eternally praised for it. He can do it, for He has been able to fulfill the law, endure the penalty of our sins, bring the devil to nought, take away sins, appease the wrath of God, and make Himself alive again. Nothing is beyond His power. "All authority," He says, "hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth." Jesus can heal a wretched soul. Lo, here there are prospects, there is hope of obtaining health by His stripes, and life by His death.

This comfort is given even in the state of awakening.

The leper expressed his conviction that Jesus was able to cure him, saying, "Thou canst make me whole." The centurion had such lofty conceptions of the Saviour's power that he believed Jesus could heal the palsied servant even at a distance by a mere word. He explained his faith with a parable referring to himself. Though he was under authority, he nevertheless had power to accomplish several things by means of his servant and his soldiers, and so he was all the more sure that Jesus who is above all, having no superiors, could do everything. So also an awakened sinner is entirely convinced that Jesus can heal a diseased soul. This conviction of Jesus' power to help is a result of the first enlightenment by the gospel. When a person has read the Word of God, heard and read it in its entire connection, then he has acquainted himself with the gospel of Jesus Christ as well as with the law. The latter has indeed, according to God's order of grace, first enlightened the sinner to know himself and his wretchedness, but thereupon the Holy Spirit makes the Gospel vital to the heart and enables the sinner to know Jesus Christ and the great value of His redemption. The penitent sinner then understands and believes that since he is but a mere man while Jesus is God, therefore the payment effected by Jesus is greater than the sinner's guilt, His reparation greater than the sinner's fall, the grace purchased greater than the wrath merited, the salvation obtained far surpassing the wretchedness in which the sinner feels himself plunged. He therefore confidently believes that Jesus can forgive all his sins, raise him up out of perdition, and grant him grace unto salvation. Still there is an obscure uncertainty whether Jesus is also

willing. "If thou wilt," said the leper. Jesus was therefore anxious to assure him as well as the centurion of His willingness and readiness to help; He said, "I will; be thou made clean;" "I will come and heal him."

It is very certain that Jesus is willing to save sinners, just as we heard in His words that He was willing to heal them of their bodily infirmities. In like manner, and even more so, He is willing to heal their spiritual diseases. If He has come into the world to save sinners, He is also willing to have them share the salvation He has obtained for them. He is the same immutable Son of God that He has ever been, and He still has the same love for men that He had when He gave Himself for them in death. He has asserted this several times in His Word, "The Lord is . . . longsuffering to you-ward, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." "Who (God) would have all men to be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth." "Behold, I will bring it health and cure, and I will cure them."

This is great comfort for an awakened soul. When Jesus can and will, it must be so. The penitent sinner becomes assured of this, assured that his sins will be forgiven and that his conscience will be healed. This is the summary of all God's promises, that God is willing, that His good will is turned toward men. It was this comfort that was announced by angels at the Saviour's birth, "Men in whom he is well pleased."

This is glorious comfort for a man who is sad by reason of his sins. It sustains him in his temptations and gives him strength to reject the suggestion of the evil one, who whispers in his ear that it were better for him

to give up everything since it appears that he is making no progress in godliness.* When the question of despair arises in a crushed heart as to whether God ever cares for so wretched and abominable a creature, then here is the glorious comfort that Jesus will help from the depths of sin. The saddened soul is thus enabled to unbossom his troubles to the Lord and to ask for help from the power of sin and Satan. When Jesus had assured the centurion of His willingness to help, the latter became encouraged to disclose his heart to the Saviour. The comfort received has a powerful attraction and leads those who seek for salvation to a sincere confidential talk with Jesus concerning His power and will to help, of which His gracious promises give assurance. The comfort also discloses the spiritual poverty and faith of such an heart. When Jesus had comforted the centurion with the assurance of His willingness to help, the centurion said, "I am not worthy that thou shouldst come under my roof." Here was spiritual poverty. He added, "But only say the word, and my servant shall be healed." Here was a faith the likeness of which Jesus declared He had not found in Israel.

A like comfort is granted to a soul that is sighing for redemption from the misery of sin. He becomes assured that Jesus will help him. As Jesus stretched forth His hand and gave the leprous man both assurance and help, simultaneously, so He stretches forth His gracious hand in the Word, giving comfort to a penitent heart. One thus comforted no longer doubts that he will find healing for his soul, but says with Micah, "He will again have compassion upon us; he will tread our in-

iniquities under foot; and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea."

He will also obtain help. Jesus said, "I will," and immediately continued, "Be thou made clean." And straightway his leprosy was cleansed. After Jesus had first declared Himself willing to come and heal the centurion's servant, and the man had believed that Jesus could and would do it, it happened even so. Jesus said, "Go thy way; as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee," and the servant was healed in that very hour. Similarly, in the very moment that a soul frightened by God's law believes that Jesus can and will blot out his guilt and make him righteous before God, it happens even as he believes. Jesus "blots out his transgressions as a thick cloud," clothes the soul in His meritorious righteousness, and grants it "an inheritance among them that are sanctified by faith in Jesus," who has purchased this with His obedience, with His blood and death.

Application.

In conclusion, you have now heard that Jesus is willing to heal you. It cannot be done, however, if you say in your heart, "I will not." Then Jesus must complain as in the case of the Jews, "Ye will not come to me, that ye may have life." But you say that you wish to be healed. You are anxious to get rid of secret apprehensions which occasionally trouble you, and of the anxiety which attacks you now and then. You are quite willing to have an healed, quiet, contented, and peaceful conscience; but you are not willing to admit that your secret uneasiness of mind comes from secret sins, that your anxiety is derived from a state of guilt not remit-

ted. This is equivalent to an unwillingness to be healed. The wounds of conscience must smart before they can be healed. If your sins have never caused you anguish, you can have no healed soul, and you should consider that your sins are quite as great, yes, even greater being thus concealed, and that eternal death must follow upon the temporal death, if your blindness and sense of security follow you till you meet death.

If there is some one, as I hope there may be, in this great congregation who sincerely wishes to find his soul's healing through Jesus Christ, I say to him, "Cast not away therefore your boldness"; for Jesus is of the same will as you, and your healing will certainly come in due season. Search in His Word, the Holy Scriptures, for a greater insight into His promises, which assure you that Jesus is willing to save. Pray that He may, by virtue of the power in His Word, give you the assurance, the same comfort, that He gave to the men in our text, "I will, I will"; then it shall be done unto you even as you believe and as Jesus wills. He shall Himself finish His gracious will upon you, deliver you from the sins which oppress you, and grant you His peace.

Again, if there be some one who has obtained such healing, then I have a word of warning in our Gospel of to-day. Jesus did not allow the leper who had been healed to tell any one until he had shown himself to the priest in accordance with the law of Moses, "for a testimony unto them." When the priests had permitted him to offer the gift of one healed then they had also acknowledged that the leper had been healed, and they had, consequently, testified against themselves that

Jesus was from God, since He had been able to do this. From this I wish to take occasion to warn the soul that has been healed: Speak not about it to men until you have first offered a sacrifice of thanks and praise to the Lord. Your offering of praise may thereupon, on some opportune occasion, be given in the presence of your unbelieving relatives and acquaintances as a testimony to their hardness and impenitence of heart in neglecting the grace offered them, by means of which they might have come to the same blessed condition for which you are praising the Lord.

In the second place, I wish to call to the attention of a soul thus healed the warning which Jesus gave to the man who had lain at Bethesda. Jesus found him in the temple after he had been healed, and said to him, "Behold, thou art made whole: sin no more, lest a worse thing befall thee." Behold, you have found salvation for your soul. A rare occurrence in our days! Sin no more. Beware of your former sins, lest you fall into them again and into a far worse condition than before. You have the same inherited disease as the rest of our race. I mean the original and congenital sinful depravity. Beware, lest its lusts deceive you to consent to any sin and to transgress God's commandments. You are living in a world which "lieth entirely in the evil one," and where most men are afflicted with the prevailing leprosy of sin. You must therefore see to it that you be not again "entangled in the defilements of the world." "Keep yourself unspotted from the world." Resist the devil manfully, with prayer in faith, that he may not wound your conscience and corrupt your soul. Seek Jesus Christ in the Word, for He is your soul's salva-

tion. Be anxious to have your life in faith strengthened and nourished by frequent communion at the Lord's Table.

Now if my Lord Jesus should wish that this probation sermon of mine shall be the only word of God which I am to preach among you, let His will be done. It would be great joy for me in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ — and, indeed, it is even now a gratifying thought — if, by virtue of the healing power of the Word of God, some of my auditors should stand healed in His sight.

Amen, in His name, amen.