**THE GREAT PHYSICIAN**

“As Jesus passed on from there, He saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax office. And He said to him, ‘Follow Me.’ So, he arose and followed Him. Now it happened, as Jesus sat at the table in the house, that behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and sat down with Him and His disciples. And when the Pharisees saw it, they said to His disciples, ***‘Why does your Teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?’*** When Jesus heard that, He said to them, ***‘Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick.*** But go and learn what this means: “I desire mercy and not sacrifice.” ***For I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance’”*** (Mt.9:9-13).

Jesus often used various figures to teach spiritual truths. For example, He used the figures of a “sower” (Mt.13:3ff), “leaven” (v.33), and a “merchant” (v.45). In Matthew 9:9-13, He figuratively pictures Himself as a ***“physician”*** (9:12); and His patients as ***“sinners”*** who need ***“repentance”*** (v.11,13). Several thoughts come to mind as we consider this figure. In this article, I want to give attention to a study of Jesus as “The Great Physician,” and see the great lessons that are pictured for us.

**The Disease: Sin.** Of course, sin is transgression of God’s law (1Jn.3:4); it is ***“what ails us”*** in terms of having a good relationship with God. Sin is a ***universal*** disease; it affects every person at some point in their lives (Rm.3:23; 1Jn.1:8). Sin is a ***contagious*** disease; being around sin will eventually breed more sin (1Cor.5:6; 15:33). Sin is also a ***deceptive*** disease; it makes us think we’re fine, when we’re not (Rv.3:17: Hb.3:12-13). And sin is a ***fatal*** disease; but the fatality is not merely physical or even spiritual death – it is “eternal” death (Rm.6:23; Jm.1:13-15).

**The Patient: Sinner.** Obviously, one who commits sin is a sinner. In keeping with the “physician metaphor,” all sinners are inflicted with a fatal disease. In order to be cured, sinners must ***realize their need for help*** (Mt.9:12). Jesus also notes another obvious truth: Sinners need a physician ***while they are sick***(ibid)! Further, just as in the physical realm, sinners must ***trust their Physician*** (cf. Mt.9:20-22, “your faith has made you well”). Finally, it should be obvious that, if we want the help of our Great Physician, we must ***“call upon”*** Him (Rm.10:13-16; Ac.22:16). He cannot help those who won’t even “schedule an appointment!”

**The Physician: Jesus.** Here, we get to the real root of our cure: the physician! “Doctor Jesus” is ***eminently qualified*** to treat us; No one else can do what He can do with our sins (1Jn.2:1-2; Hb.7:25). As an expert in this field, He is ***very familiar with our condition*** (Hb.2:17-18; 4:14-16). Indeed, He has ***the only remedy*** that will work (Hb.10:11-14). And finally, ***He truly cares*** about His patients; no one will ever care as much as Jesus (Jn.3:16; 15:13). Best doctor ever!

**The Remedy: Gospel.** This is the ***“medicine,”*** if you please; the ***“cure”*** for our sin-disease. The gospel is that medicine; it is God’s power to save (Rm.1:16; 1Co.15:1-4). However, in order to be effective, ***it must be “taken,”*** or it will not work (Mk.16:15-16; 2Th.1:7-9). Yes, the gospel is ***an all-sufficient cure*** for our “sin-disease;” it contains everything we need (2Tm.3:16-17). But don’t forget: the medicine (gospel) must be taken ***“as directed”*** (Ga.1:6-10). We cannot mix this medicine with other medicines (gospels); we cannot substitute another medicine for the true gospel.

As we wrap this up, let me ask: If a hungry man refuses to eat and starves to death, who is responsible? If a sick man refuses to take the remedy and dies, who is responsible? ***Likewise, if a sinful man refuses the gospel and is lost, who is responsible?*** Can it truly be said that God is responsible, when He’s made every provision to save us? Or are WE responsible for our own neglect and apathy (cf. Hb.2:1-4)? I think the answer is obvious. If your sin-sick, then we urge you to come to “Doctor Jesus” right now!

--Lanny Smith