

Luke 5:31

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And Jesus answering said unto them, They that are whole need not a physician; but they that are sick.

Analysis

Jesus responds to Pharisees' criticism: 'They that are whole need not a physician; but they that are sick.' This proverb illustrates spiritual reality—those who recognize their spiritual sickness seek the Physician (Jesus), while those who consider themselves spiritually healthy see no need for Him. The Pharisees' self-righteousness blinded them to their desperate need. Jesus doesn't claim some people are actually spiritually healthy but that those who think they are won't seek healing. Recognizing our sickness is the first step toward receiving the cure.

Historical Context

Physicians in the ancient world treated those acknowledging illness, not those claiming health. Jesus applies this obvious truth spiritually—He came for sinners who recognize their condition, not for self-righteous people who deny their need. The Pharisees' objection to Jesus eating with tax collectors and sinners (v. 30) revealed their assumption of moral superiority. Jesus exposes their spiritual blindness—they need the Physician as much as obvious sinners but refuse to acknowledge it. This principle explains why Jesus received prostitutes and tax collectors but opposed Pharisees—not because the former were better but because they admitted their need.

Related Passages

[James 2:17 — Faith and works](#)

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. How does the physician metaphor illustrate why self-righteousness is the greatest barrier to receiving salvation?
2. What does Jesus' statement teach about the prerequisite for receiving grace—acknowledging our spiritual sickness rather than claiming health?

Interlinear Text

καὶ	ἀποκριθεὶς	ό	Ἰησοῦς	εἶπεν	πρὸς	αὐτούς	Οὐ
And	answering		Jesus	said	unto	them	not
G2532	G611		G2424	G2036	G4314	G846	G3756
χρείαν	ἔχοντες·	οἱ	ὑγιαίνοντες	ἰατροῦ	ἀλλ'	οἱ	
need	they that are	G3588	They that are whole	a physician	but	G3588	
G5532	G2192		G5198	G2395	G235		
κακῶς	ἔχοντες·						
sick	they that are						
G2560	G2192						

Additional Cross-References

Mark 2:17 (References Jesus): When Jesus heard it, he saith unto them, They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

Jeremiah 8:22 (Parallel theme): Is there no balm in Gilead; is there no physician there? why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered?

