

# WAY TO SHILOH

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## Spiritual Health Check

### **Bible reading:**

#### **Jeremiah 8.20 – 9.1**

<sup>20</sup> The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved. <sup>21</sup>For the hurt of the daughter of my people am I hurt; I am black; astonishment hath taken hold on me. <sup>22</sup> Is there no balm in Gilead; is there no physician there? why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered?

#### **Jeremiah 9**

<sup>1</sup> Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!

#### **Luke 8.43 – 48**

<sup>43</sup> And a woman having an issue of blood twelve years, which had spent all her living upon physicians, neither could be healed of any, <sup>44</sup> Came behind him, and touched the border of his garment: and immediately her issue of blood stanchèd. <sup>45</sup> And Jesus said, Who touched me? When all denied, Peter and they that were with him said, Master, the multitude throng thee and press thee, and sayest thou, Who touched me? <sup>46</sup> And Jesus said, Somebody hath touched me: for I perceive that virtue is gone out of me. <sup>47</sup> And when the woman saw that she was not hid, she came trembling, and falling down before him, she declared unto him before all the people for what cause she had touched him, and how she was healed immediately. <sup>48</sup> And he said unto her, Daughter, be of good comfort: thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace.

Health is important – is it not? Some say there's nothing more important, "At least you've got your health" they say. But what about our spiritual health, the health of our souls? Well you may see this article as a spiritual health check. It's as though you have walked into a doctor's office. You want to go on in life but something is wrong, you sense it, maybe others such as Christian friends have told you. The best thing to do is to get a spiritual medical. Let's see how you are.

Poor Jeremiah (who has been known as the weeping prophet) was like one of these real friends who care and therefore warn. He was very sorrowful for his people and the children of his people (who picture all of us). He cried out "There's something wrong", "Time has passed and they are not saved". It's as if their trouble was his trouble. He cared for them like he cared for himself, he was full of feeling towards them. He was very sorrowful, he said "I am black" as if he was wearing a mourners dress. He goes on to say that he wished his head was, as it were, like a fish bowl full of water so that he could cry a fountain of tears, like he felt to do! Why was he so upset? What was wrong with them? We can see by looking at ourselves.

If you have to go to the doctors for a bodily medical, when you go, you may go of your own accord, or someone may have brought you or made you go, well, for whatever reason you are reading this, like the visit to the doctors, may it be for your own good.

## Examination

First things first, the doctor must carry out an examination. He will look you over and take a note of your general state. He may take note of your clothes and see if they are clean or dishevelled. The bible likens clothing to righteousness, and it says man's righteousness is like filthy rags to Him, but to have eternal life and reconciliation with the pure and holy God we must have the right clothes. It uses the illustration of a wedding garment and without it we'll be cast out. The truth is, if we aren't Christians, Christ hasn't clothed us with his goodness, without which we cannot stand before God and be accepted. Without that, no matter how well we think we look, we stand before God like standing before the doctor, threadbare and filthy.

Why do people dress in a certain way? Why do they care so much about clothes and trainers etc? Why do they spend so much on themselves or the way they look, but seem in this shallow age to care less about their character? When in other countries they have nothing! It's because people are inclined to be naturally vain, selfish, greedy and covetous. They are always running after fashions, which only last 5 minutes, in order to impress or feel accepted, this is a cruel business. You can imagine someone saying "The family has to go without because little Reta wants another new handbag." Our culture is increasingly going in this direction. All this makes us poor spiritually, our clothes stained and to God we look like a homeless person. Do you realise that without God's provision this is what your spiritual clothes are like, no matter how you present yourself outwardly?



## Eye Test



The next test is the eye test. What are our spiritual eyes like? How do we see spiritually, do we see at all? Do you understand spiritual things or can't you get your head round it, is your eyesight bad? The bible says that we see by FAITH. Faith is three things, KNOWLEDGE, BELIEF and TRUST. If we do not have these then we can hardly see, in fact it is as if we are blind. In order to really see our spiritual state and the reality of the world around us, we must learn to see things with new eyes. It's like turning off a torch to adjust our eyes to the dark.

The bright lights of this world such as the sin soaked tempting, false, glossy coated entertainment industry which cloaks a rotten core, must be turned off in our lives so we can see this dark world as it really is. You must trust that you will see the way. Believe in a new sight of faith given by God. How do you see?

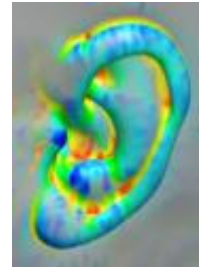
Do we see in the wrong way? Don't you see yourself as God sees you? You may be proud of bad behaviour. You may even think it funny or impressive. Don't you see sin as that bad? If this is so then your spiritual eyes are faulty. It is Christ we must look to with the eyes of faith like the children of Israel were commanded to look to that brazen serpent in the wilderness, as you can see from the front of this article this is where we get the universal sign of the medical world (Numbers 21.8.) We must see Christ with two eyes, one viewing his perfect life and the other his death for us.

## Ear test

What about your hearing? Next an ear test. The bible says we are like worms and if worms are blind then I think they are certainly deaf too. The bible says "he who hath ears to hear, let him hear". But how is your spiritual hearing? Do you have ears at all? Do you listen to this message when you hear it or think about it when you're on your own? Does it just go in one ear and out the other? When we are taught from the Bible do we just block it out or not care?

The worm just lives for its appetite, grubbing around in dirt. Is this you, just living to satisfy sinful pleasures, temptations or desires? If you can't see because the lights of the world are bright in your eyes, then open your ears, listen to the sound of the gospel. If you can't hear because the world's entertainments and allurements are drowning out the 'still small voice' of God, then open your eyes and look at creation, God's handiwork, these things will teach you. Look at the lives of good Christian people you trust, and believe in faith.

If you find it hard to see then open your ears, if you find it hard to hear open your eyes. There is a clarion call which sounds forth from God's word, let it rouse your sleeping soul. There is light in this world for those who care to see it. That enemy of souls uses smoke screens, be careful lest he beguile you, but if sight is gone use your ears and listen to the true Gospel that leads a man to his Saviour. If it is drowned out by the noise of this world, a diabolical orchestra conducted by it's prince, then open your eyes to the work of His hands in creation and in those who are His disciples. Either way pray, pray that the one who opens the eyes of the blind and the ears of the deaf will do the same for a needy man's soul.



## Hygiene test

The next test is our spiritual hygiene. The bible says that sin is like dirt and we are covered in it. Why do we lie, cheat, treat people badly, use crude words, use offensive names and make fun of others just to build ourselves up? We're all full of sinful desires and find pleasure in them. Things such as rude talk and thoughts, we act as if people are more important than God! It stains the soul. We need to be washed clean but can you clean yourself? If a fly gets into some ointment how can the ointment be cleaned? Or if the creature falls into some soup can the soup be made edible once more? Of course these are simple examples from life and the answer is equally as simple, the contamination is such that the substance must be completely changed in order to be clean again. So it is with our souls, to try and clean them with good works or religious ceremony or moral reform is as futile as trying to clean contaminated ointment, the corruption of original sin is such. A complete change must be sought and this is not of ourselves but comes from Jesus Christ changing us. Seek this change from Him, cry out for it, and He will not be slow in the action. Trying to clean yourself up spiritually is like washing in dirty water, we can't earn heaven, for our sins run too deep and stain to the heart. It may be possible to train yourself to control language but what about your thoughts. The truth is that the Bible says the tongue is virtually untameable and our words come from the overflow of our hearts. The Lord alone can wash clean of sin. Clinging to this world is like an orphan clinging to a filthy rag, refusing a bath, because it doesn't trust the kind person who offers to adopt him and clean him up.

One of the names given to the Devil is Beelzebub, which means the king of the dung heap, or lord of the flies. Sinning is like squashing a fly and licking your fingers, very bad for the body, horrible, no one would consider it, but this is what you do when you sin, and it is just as bad for the soul, actually it's a lot worse. It is clear from God's word that in sin it is as if man is a smelly mess and if you love your sins then you sit with that corrupt king there on top of the dung heap!



## Nourishment test



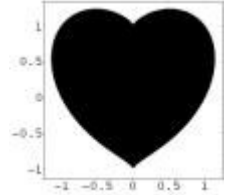
The doctor will then check whether a person is well nourished. Without a relationship with God through Christ, we are spiritually hungry (having a malnourished soul). We try to feed ourselves with all sorts of things of the world. On things such as movies, music lyrics, magazines, and novels but these are not enough. These are like sweets or chewing gum, that in the beginning is full of flavour but this is soon lost and has to be spewed out of the mouth, they will just make you sick. In the end they are like rotten food or poisoning yourself slowly. We do not read our bibles or do as God says when this is really the good food. We don't care for our souls, like someone not eating or caring for his body, we must be mad! It is because of our self-determination, pride and unbelief.

The world talks a lot about how healthy food for children should be in schools, but it doesn't seem to be concerned about their spiritual nourishment. Young people are left dehydrated, dying of spiritual thirst. To find Christ is to find a well of water for a parched soul. Don't feed and drink in the sins, entertainments and false ways of this world. It's like feeding from an empty spoon or drinking from an empty cup. Read, learn and love the bible and you will really eat and drink.

## Heart Test

Another test, which may be carried out, is the heart test. What is the heart of man? The heart is made of the mind, the affections and the will; all the time having the conscience as a witness, that six sense of right and wrong recording all we do. Our physical hearts beat, they beat a march towards the grave. But spiritually it is though we have heart disease, and a weak pulse. Psalm 107:17-22 talks of a sick man that needs Christ to deliver him, just like we do, but our hearts are hard. We don't want God, we won't have him we won't accept the message or pray as we should. It is like having hardened arteries, it makes us weak, not strong. Our heart is strained because we haven't come to repentance.

The Bible says in Matthew 15:19 "For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies:" and in Jeremiah 17:9 "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?"



The number one person the heart deceives is ourselves! We need a transplant, a completely new heart from some one else or our heart will fail and we will have a heart attack! Do not delay! - Some say "It's not the right time or situation, I'll come when I'm ready." I ask, is now the right time to continue in your sins, is it the right time to do wrong, to continue offending your Creator? Today is the day of salvation. To delay the remedy for our souls is like burying medicine for use later when we need it now. If we try to come back to it years later it will be spoiled. Our hearts are spoiled by years of sinning our lives away, they become naturally harder and harder until finally, turned to stone, they beat no more. If we wait until we're better, we will never come at all. As a non-Christian we are not what we should be, we are out of joint. To be truly forgiven is to be put right and given a new character. Don't continue skewed, corrupted, and diseased from within your soul. We are our own worst enemy, doing ourselves harm.

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## Energy levels

The doctor will check our energy levels. Without the Lord, we will soon be exhausted by the world's ways. Our sins will wear us out, things like running after temptations or wrong desires. Are you tired spiritually? We are in need of rest for our soul. Life will be like an uphill struggle. God will in the end cause your life to be labour and frustratingly burdensome, for to allow a person to continue in a way that leads to death would be a cruel thing, and so He warns through events and through the message of the Gospel.



You will be weary because you're going the wrong way up the wrong hill. Why don't you rest in the Lord? Are you tired of this old world and its bad ways? It's no hard thing to sit down and rest. If you've sought the Lord and climbed that right road of seeking then you will find rest in him.

## Pain



What about pain? The doctor will check if anything hurts. Sometimes, the conscience is the only thing that hurts, when all else feels good. Do you know that you do wrong and that your life is not right with God?

What about the pain of a broken heart? Down life's road, maybe the things you put your trust in will let you down, or be taken away, by illness, tragedy or loss. Pain is a warning. We all have a deep wound caused by sin and the enemy of souls, the Devil. He takes us further than we want to go. We try to cover up the wound with little plasters, which are no good, we look to earthly things, not God. But the wound needs to be treated, bandaged up and healed.

The Lord Jesus Christ became a cursed thing in order to heal many by his death on the cross; this is what covers the wound. Think of a scab, it looks horrible but the doctor will tell you it does a lot of good.

Sadly though, alongside the pain, there is an area in many a soul which has become such a nuisance that we have sought to desensitise it in order numb its uncomfortable sharp points. It is the conscience. The worse the sin gets and the more we practice it, the more the voice of the conscience is gagged and we mistreat this most valuable of senses until it hardly works at all.

## **Blood test**

Lastly comes the spiritual blood test, but hold on, you're feeling cold, that happens when you lose blood. Our spiritual condition is like bleeding to death. The Devil has wounded us and leads us astray. We have willingly followed him, instead of the Lord. We have lived by the sword and are likely to die by it. Satan keeps watch while we bleed to death slowly and wants us to just stay where we are. Not only that but we've been bitten by the snake of original sin, which has poisoned our blood, working through our veins slowly.



Our nature is sinful, we incline towards wrong. If you leave a child to its own devices without parental care, the child will turn to doing bad things naturally. We are entertained with TV, films and computer games, by guns, violence and crime. Why? The Internet is useful, but it reflects our character in that it is full of bad websites. The news is always bad, not one day passes without bad news.

Crime scene investigators have a special light that shows up blood within a crime scene. The gospel message is the light that shows us the blood of Christ on Calvary. We need to be washed by this, we need a blood transfusion, HIS for OURS.

## **Diagnosis**

So what are the results? Well it doesn't look good. We are on our last legs, we need to be made whole, renewed. We need our eyes and ears opened. We need to be given food and water. We need to be washed. We need a heart transplant. We need our wounds healed. We need a blood transfusion. We need new clothes and lots of rest! The results couldn't be any worse! We have the common malady of all men.

## **Prognosis**

What will happen if we carry on without any change? The future is bad. You will die spiritually. You are like the walking dead already, the living dead, like a zombie. We are all sick with sin and in a desperate state and we've made ourselves so. It is what you are doing that is killing you. You must stop it, but it's too late.

## **Treatment and cure**

What can the doctor do? Doctors consult medical books and we can consult the bible for the treatment and cure. We can see the church as the hospital, prayer as the medicine, treatment or surgery that needs to be done. The bible tells us that Christ is for the sinner, like medicine is for the sick. Matthew 9.12 says "They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick", and so it is clear that we do, we've had the tests and the examinations and our condition is grave.

"Now, look. If there be anywhere in the world a physician who has discovered sure and precious remedies, to whom is that physician sent? To those who are perfectly healthy? I think not. Put him down in a district where there are no sick persons, and he feels that he is not in his place. There is nothing for him to do. "The whole have no need of a physician, but they that are sick." Is it not equally clear that the great remedies of grace and redemption are for the sick in soul? They cannot be for the whole, for they cannot be of use to such. If you, dear friend, feel that you are spiritually sick, the Physician has come into the world for you. If you are altogether undone by reason of your sin, you are the very person aimed at in the plan of salvation. I say that the Lord of love had just such as you are in His eye when He arranged the system of grace." C.H.Spurgeon

It is by Christ's wounds we can be healed, because he suffered in place of the sick and wounded. He healed the sick, blind, deaf, dumb, leprous, those in great pain and even raised the dead. Only one man has ever-conquered death, therefore we can also in Him. Is death a natural part of life? No, it was not there in the beginning. Death is linked with sin.

Don't delay; it is essential that some illnesses are caught early, and often, medically speaking, a person may be in such a deadly situation, because of accident or illness, that if they were to fall

asleep or slip into unconsciousness, they would most probably die. The medic must work hard to keep his/her patient awake. This can be the same spiritually for the unforgiven sinner who has been made aware of their condition and been somewhat awakened to it. However, man in his natural fallen state is prone to sleep spiritually. If that person drifts again into a state of spiritual lethargy or sleep then it may be the death of them in terms of their soul, but the Devil will whisper at the beginning of a man's life "it's too early", and at the end "it's too late", oh be not deceived! Going away from God, as we are with our sinful nature, and running after the things of this sinful world, consuming it's propaganda, is like going to a contagious ward full of sick people when we are already prone to catch disease. As Mr C.H Spurgeon commented on the reading of sceptical books; "we have enough tendency to sickness in our own constitutions without going to fever hospitals to test the atmosphere!". The problem being we'll tend to believe the thing that best suits us making it 'true' in our own corrupted minds. If you refuse Christ and die of your own wounds, blood is on your own hands. "Some praise the balm of Self improvement, or man's morality; many try the Roman salve, or the oil of Babylon; others use a cunning ointment mixed by learned philosophers; but for his own soul's wounds, and for the hurts of others, this writer knows but one cure, and that is given gratis by the good Physician to all who ask for it. A humble faith in Christ Jesus will soon bring you to this sovereign remedy. Use no other, for no other is of use." C. H. Spurgeon

The healing "Balm of Gilead" an area within Judah, is a picture of Christ. This is why Jeremiah was upset, his people were sick of soul like us, but they would not accept the remedy that was in their own country (having the prophets, types and the scriptures) but instead they looked elsewhere, as do we. The bible may be in our house; but no we won't read it often and trust it, it gathers dust and this shows where our affections lie; we are able to pray; but no we'd rather cry on a friend's shoulder; we may even come to church but we don't really listen or follow what the preacher is saying, we may even have Christian parents but we're inclined to rebel rather than repent. We look elsewhere. It is as if a man refuses to have a Good surgeon carry out a life saving operation on him because the man resented and hated the surgeon mistakenly. However, this surgeon was the only one who could successfully carry it out. This man was a fool and lost his life because of it and his prejudice. Be wise, yield to Christ and stop resisting the Spirit.

Mr Spurgeon reminds us of the 'brazen serpent', "And now, it may be, some of you are convinced of sin, by the Holy Spirit. I will now proclaim to you the way of salvation. "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life." Behold, O trembling penitent the means of thy deliverance. Turn thy tearing eye to yonder Mount of Calvary! see the victim of justice-the sacrifice of atonement for your transgression. View the Saviour in his agonies, with streams of blood purchasing thy soul, and with intensest agonies enduring thy punishment. He died for thee, if now thou dost confess thy guilt. O come thou condemned one, self-condemned, and turn thine eye this way, for one look will save. Sinner, thou art bitten. Look! it is nought but "Look!" It is simply "Look!" If thou canst but look to Jesus thou art safe. Hear the voice of the Redeemer: "Look unto me, and be ye saved." Look! Look! Look! O guilty souls.

*"Venture on him, venture wholly,  
Let no other trust intrude  
None but Jesus  
Can do helpless sinners good,"*

"May my blessed Master help you to come to him, and draw you to his Son, for Jesus' sake. Amen and Amen."

The Lord Jesus said, "be dressed and ready"; "I am the bread of life, he who comes to me will never go hungry". He is a lamp to our feet and a light to our path so that we can see; "He who believes in me will never be thirsty"; "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me"; "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God"; "Come unto me all ye who are weary and heavy laden and I will give you rest". He will wipe the tears from our eyes and take us to a place of no pain. Like the woman who reached out to touch the Lords garment in FAITH (Luke 8.43), He is bound to heal us and stop our bleeding hearts. He'll turn to us in compassion, like He did to the woman, and say kindly, "Son/ Daughter, be of good comfort: Thy faith hath made thee whole: go in peace". Amen.