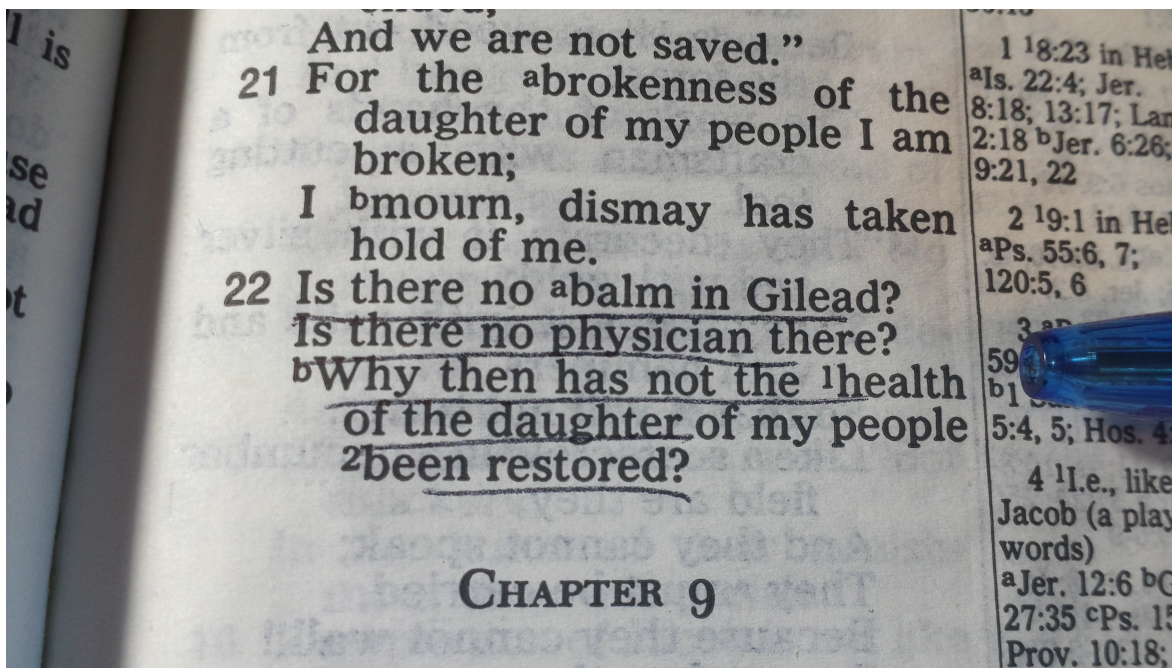


# “There is a Balm in Gilead”

Hymn Story and Scriptures for the African-American Spiritual,  
“There is a Balm in Gilead”

by Whitney V. Myers



Jeremiah 8:22 – Photo by Whitney V. Myers

*"Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no physician there? Why then has not the health of the daughter of my people been restored?" (Jeremiah 8:22)*

**Consider.** Would you like to receive the balm that heals us unlike any other? Jesus Christ is the only balm that can heal our sin sickness. Only Jesus can make us whole. "There is a balm in Gilead to make the wounded whole. There is a balm in Gilead to heal the sin-sick soul" (African-American spiritual).

***Biblical Background.*** Gilead was a mountainous part of ancient Palestine, east of the Jordan River now corresponding to northwest Jordan (Ref. 1, Ref. 2). Gilead was known for its healing balm (Jeremiah 46:11). We first see balm (mastic) mentioned in scripture as precious merchandise coming from Gilead (Genesis 37:25). Joseph's father, Israel (Jacob), sent balm as a present to Joseph as lord of the land of Egypt (Genesis 43:11).



Mastic Tree – Ref. 3

The prophet Jeremiah asked these questions, "Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no physician there?" (Jeremiah 8:22). Judah had turned away from the Lord and had completely ignored repeated warnings of judgment (for example, Jeremiah 5:20-31). Spiritual balm, God's salvation and healing, was available; however, the people were not seeking God. Spiritual balm through the priests and prophets was ineffective because "the prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests rule on their own authority" (Jeremiah 5:31).

***About the Spiritual, "There is a Balm in Gilead."*** "There is a Balm in Gilead" and other African-American spirituals came out of the period of slavery in America (1619-1865; Ref. 4). This spiritual is evidence that African-American Christians knew and trusted Jesus for salvation and healing despite their condition on earth. African-American Christians answered Jeremiah's question with a resounding "***Yes, there is a balm in Gilead***" (Ref. 5).

*The message of "There is a Balm in Gilead" still applies today.* Despite whatever condition we are in, or whatever misery or difficulty we are going through, Jesus can heal our wounds and make us whole.

**Apply.** In what area of your life do you need the healing balm of Jesus Christ today?

**Listen.** I encourage you to listen and enjoy these two beautiful and moving presentations of "There is a Balm in Gilead."

"There is a Balm in Gilead" - Adventist Vocal Ensemble (well known on BBC).  
Link: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8fcMxI\\_6xsk](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8fcMxI_6xsk)

"There is a Balm in Gilead" - East Carolina University Chamber Singers.  
Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GQK7oeKoH40>

## References

1. <http://biblehub.com/commentaries/jeremiah/8-22.htm>
2. <https://www.britannica.com/place/Gilead-ancient-region-Palestine#ref130865>
3. <https://www.britannica.com/plant/mastic-tree>
4. <https://www.infoplease.com/timelines/history-slavery-america>
5. <https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/resources/black-history-month-there-is-a-balm-in-gilead>

To see a hymn music video about inner healing, click on "Good News of the Kingdom" by Whitney V. Myers.

Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dshJZTor0g4>

For articles about Scripture Allusions (Bible References) in other hymns, refer to "Scripture Allusions in Hymns" by Whitney V. Myers.

Link: <http://www.whitneytunes.com/Scripture Allusions in Hymns/Scripture Allusions Hymns current.html>

# There Is a Balm in Gilead

Capo 3: F(D) Refrain

B<sup>b</sup>(G) F(D) C<sup>7</sup>(A<sup>7</sup>)

There is a balm in Gil - e - ad to make the wound - ed whole,

F(D)

B<sup>b</sup>(G) F/C(D/A) C<sup>7</sup>(A<sup>7</sup>)

F(D) ↵

there is a halm in Gil - e - ad to heal the sin - sick soul.

B<sup>b</sup>(G) F(D)

C(A)

1 Some times I feel dis - cour - aged and think my work's in vain,  
2 If you can - not preach like Pe - ter, if you can - not pray like Paul,

Refrain

B<sup>b</sup>(G) F(D)

B<sup>b</sup>(G) F<sup>7</sup>(D<sup>7</sup>) Gm(Fm) F/C(D/A) C<sup>7</sup>(A<sup>7</sup>)

Dm(Bm) B<sup>b</sup>(G)

but then the Ho - ly Spir - it re - vives my soul a - gain.  
you can tell the love of Je - sus and say, "He died for all."



Text and tune: Afro-American spiritual

irregular  
BALM IN GILEAD  
[www.hymnary.org/text/sometimes\\_i\\_feel\\_discouraged\\_spiritual](http://www.hymnary.org/text/sometimes_i_feel_discouraged_spiritual)

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