

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

YOUNG MAN! A PRAYER FOR YOU.

A Sermon

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"And Elisha prayed, and said, Lord, I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see. And the Lord opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw: and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha."—2 Kings vi. 17.

THIS young man waited upon a prophet: he could not have had a more instructive occupation; yet his eyes needed to be opened. He was well disposed towards good things, for the tone of his language to his master shows that he was heartily at one with him; but his eyes were not yet half opened. Being in great alarm for his master's safety, he ran to him to warn him: good servants should be their master's best friends. In return, his believing master prays for him. If we desire the good of our servants, our children, and our friends, let us take care that we make supplication for them. All that we can do for them at our best is to give them secondary blessings; but if we pray to God for them, they will receive the best of gifts from him who sends down in his mercy nothing but good gifts and perfect gifts. When we have come to the end of our teaching, and example, and persuasion, let us hand our young friends over to the Lord, who works effectually unto eternal salvation.

Elisha's petition for this young man was, "O Lord, I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see!" The young man was at that time in the peculiar condition of seeing, and yet not seeing. He saw the enemy surrounding the city, but not the greater host of the Lord's angels who protected the man of God. Looking over the little walls of Dothan, he observed all the country round about to be occupied by the horses and chariots of the king of Syria; and he cried, "Alas, my master! how shall we do?" He could see the danger, but he could not see the deliverance; and therefore the prophet lifted up his heart to heaven, and said, "O Lord, I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see!" Elisha reckons his servant's natural sight as not seeing, and regards the vision which detects the invisible as the only true sight. Perhaps I am addressing some, at this time, who are very friendly to the cause of God, and are even connected with it by relationship or

occupation; they cheerfully lend a hand at any time in holy service so far as they can, and they wish prosperity to the cause of true religion. Yet their eyes have not been opened to see spiritual things; or, at least, not sufficiently opened to see the gracious and divine side of them. They see enough to perceive that they are in danger from a great enemy. They perceive that it is no easy thing to fight the battle of life: in the prospect of it they cry, "How shall we do?" They perceive that it is a difficult thing for a man to stand up for holiness, for truth, for integrity, for purity, and to maintain a gracious character throughout the whole of life. They seem to themselves to be environed with opposing forces in their business, in their temperament, in their companionships, and perhaps in their families. As for the cause of godliness, it seems hemmed in by adversaries; and they ask—What is to be done? Is not the matter desperate? Might it not be as well to surrender at once? For any such timid one I would present to God the prayer of Elisha: "O Lord, I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see!" Oh, that the prayer might be answered at this hour!

Very briefly, I shall speak, first, upon *our prayer*; secondly, upon *our reason* for offering such a petition; and thirdly, upon *our hope*; for we trust that, if our prayer is answered, the person whose eyes are opened will behold a vision which will bless him beyond anything he has ever dreamed of.

I. First, then, OUR PRAYER: "Lord, I pray thee, open the eyes of the young man, that he may see!" This petition bears many senses. I will mention a few only.

For certain of our friends we pray that their eyes may be opened *to see the enemy of their souls under the many disguises which he assumes*. We fear that many are ignorant of his devices. Young men, especially, are too apt to mistake the great enemy for a friend. They believe his false and flattering words, and are seduced to ruin. He holds forth to them the sparkling cup; but in its beaded bubbles death is lurking. He talks of "pleasure"; but in the lusts of the flesh the pleasure is a shadow, and misery is the substance. He wears the mask of prudence, and admonishes young men to "mind the main chance", and leave religion till they have made their fortunes; but that gain which comes of thrusting God aside will prove to be an everlasting loss. The devil as a serpent does more mischief than as a roaring lion. If we had to meet the devil, and knew him to be what he is, we might far more easily conquer him; but we have to deal with him disguised as an angel of light, and here is the need of a hundred eyes, each one of them opened by God, that we may see. Even worse than this is the fact that, at times, he does not meet us at all, but he undermines our path; he digs pits for our feet; he shoots his arrows from afar, or sends forth a pestilence which walks in darkness. Then have we need of a better sight than nature gives. I would pray for the young man who is just leaving home to go into the world, "O Lord, open the eyes of the young man, that he may see!" May he be able to detect the falsehood which may hide itself beneath the truth, the meanness which may wrap itself about with pride, the folly which may robe itself in learning, the sin which may dress itself in the raiment of pleasure! I

would not have you taken, like birds, in a snare. I would not have the youth led, like a bullock to the shambles, by the hand of temptation. Let us breathe such a prayer as that of Elisha for each person in this place who is beginning life. God grant that his eyes may be opened to see sin as sin, and to see that evil never can be good, and a lie never can be true, and rebellion against our God can never be the way to happiness!

We want men's eyes to be opened *to see God as everywhere, observing all things*. What an opening of the eyes this would be to many! It is a sad but true saying, that God may be seen everywhere, but that the most of men see him nowhere. He is blind indeed who cannot see HIM to whom the sun owes its light. Until our eyes are opened, we rise in the morning, and we fall asleep at night, and we have not seen God all day, although he has been every moment around us and within us. We live from the first day of January to the last day of December, and while the Lord never ceases to see us, we do not even begin to see him till, by a miracle of grace, he opens our eyes. We dwell in a wonderful world which the great Creator has made, and filled with his own handiwork, and cheered with his own presence, and yet we do not see him: indeed, there are some so blind as to assert that there is no Creator, and that they cannot perceive any evidence that a supremely wise and mighty Creator exists. Oh, that the Lord Jesus would open the eyes of the wilfully blind! Oh, that you, also, who are blinded by forgetfulness rather than by error, may be made to cry with Hagar, "Thou God seest me"; and with Job, "Now mine eye seeth thee"! If God will graciously convince men of his own divine presence, what a benediction it will be to them, especially to the young in commencing life! A clear perception that the Lord observes all that we do will be a very useful protection in the hour of temptation. When we remember the divine eye, we shall cry, like Joseph, "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" To see yourself is well; but to see God is better. Let us pray, "O Lord, open the young man's eyes, that he may see THEE!"

When a man begins to see his great enemy, and his best Friend, we may next pray, Lord, open his eyes *to see the way of salvation through the appointed Saviour*. There is no seeing the Lord Jesus but by his own light. We look to him with a look which comes from him. I have tried to explain salvation to people many a time, in simple words and figures; but there is a great deal more wanted than an explanation. It is right to be very plain; but more is needed than a clear statement. No matter how bright the candle, a blind man sees none the better. I continually pray, "Lord, open my mouth"; but I perceive that I must also pray, "Lord, open men's eyes!" Until God opens a man's eyes, he will not see what faith means, nor what atonement means, nor what regeneration means. That which is plain as a pikestaff to a seeing man is invisible to the blind. "Believe, and live"; what can be plainer? Yet no man understands it till God gives grace to perceive his meaning. It is our duty, as preachers, to put the gospel as plainly as possible; but we cannot give a man spiritual understanding. We declare, in baldest and boldest terms, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved"; but men ask, like simpletons,

“What do you mean?” We cry, “Look unto Jesus, and live”; but when our explainings are over, we learn that they have mistaken our meaning, and are still looking to themselves, and turning their backs on the Lord Jesus. To believe, or trust, is no mystery, but the simplest of all simplicities; and for that very reason men cannot be persuaded to think that we mean what we say, or that God means what he says. We need to pray—Lord, open their eyes, that they may see; for seeing, they do not see; and hearing, they do not perceive!

Blessed be the Lord, how sweetly they do see it the moment their eyes are opened by his own omnipotent touch! Then they wonder that they did not see it before, and call themselves ten thousand fools for not perceiving what is so plain. Faith in the Lord Jesus is the veriest A B C of divine revelation: it belongs to the rudiments and elements of heavenly knowledge, and we are dolts indeed not to take it as we find it in the Word, and leave off mystifying ourselves over so plain a matter. Once let the miracle-working power of God open our eyes, and we see well enough; but till then we grope in the noon-day for that which is right before us. I hope, beloved fellow-Christians, that you are praying while I am speaking; praying, I mean, for those around you, and for all the blind souls that wander among the graves of earth: “Lord, open their eyes, that they may see!” He that made the eye can open it. Sin cannot so darken the mind but that God can pour light into it. If we cannot make men see, we can at least lead them to the Master Oculist, who can rectify their sight.

We should pray that our friends may have their eyes opened *to see all manner of spiritual truth*. These optics of ours can only see natural objects: that is all they are intended for. We should be very grateful that our eyes can see as much as they do see; but spiritual objects are not discernible by the eyes of the body, which are for material objects only. The things which pertain to the spiritual kingdom must be perceived by eyes of a spiritual sort, eyes opened by the Lord. God must give to us spiritual senses before we can discern spiritual things: let this never be forgotten. There are those sitting among us who cannot discern spiritual things, for they have not the needed faculties. Carnal men and carnal women see only carnal things. The flesh cannot grasp, perceive, or discern the things of the Spirit. We must become spiritual, and receive spiritual faculties, before we can perceive spiritual things; in a word, we must be “born again.” “The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.” Hence the need of the prayer, “Lord, open thou the eyes of the young man, that he may see!”

Already the horses and chariots of fire were round about Elisha; but his servant could not see one of them, because they were spiritual chariots and spiritual horses—angelic beings belonging to the purely spiritual domain; and as yet the youth had not entered the spiritual region, and had no eyes with which to see into it. When God had given him spiritual eyes, then there began to break upon his vision that strange sight—ethereal, ærial, nay, spiritual, but yet most real; that sight which revived his soul with the conviction that the prophet was safe, since the ministers of God, as flames of fire, flashed to and

fro; and like an army, with horses and chariots, showed themselves strong for the defence of the servant of Jehovah. How surprised he was! How great his amazement! How content his mind! He and his master were mysteriously defended, beyond all fear of danger. O my hearers, as yet strangers to the things of God; if the Lord would open your eyes at once, you would be astonished indeed; for as yet you have no idea, you cannot have any idea, what the spiritual life is, nor what spiritual realities must be: neither can you have any true idea of them till you are quickened of the Lord. You may talk about spiritual subjects, and discuss them, and think yourselves theologians; but you resemble deaf persons criticizing music, and blind men describing pictures. You are not qualified even to express an opinion upon the matter till you are created anew in Christ Jesus, and brought within range of the spiritual and the heavenly. "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Let the prayer go up, then, from all enlightened hearts, for those who are not as yet walking in the light: "Lord, open the eyes of the young men, that they may see!"

We may expect a speedy answer. God does hear prayer. Who knows but that many sitting in this house may be surprised by the secret touch of the invisible Spirit, and all of a sudden may find themselves introduced into a new world? Elisha's prayer for this young man was not, and our prayer for others is not, that they may do something which they can do, that they may use some faculty which they already possess; but that a new sight may be granted to them, and that a new nature may be created within them, by a power altogether above and beyond themselves. We call in the hand of God. We ask the Lord to work a marvel. We would have you, dear friends, receive what no education can ever give you, what no graduation at any university can ever bestow upon you; we want you to obtain what no years of experience or of study can achieve; we want you to possess what no imitation of other people will gain for you; we want you to experience a change which only the Lord himself can work in you. We would have you pass from nature's darkness into God's marvellous light, from an awful blindness into a clear vision of things otherwise invisible. Register that prayer before the Lord, ye that are familiars in the courts of heaven! Present the prayer for children, and kinsfolk, and friends. Cry, "Lord, let them receive sight, through the gracious working of thy Holy Spirit!"

II. Secondly, let us set forth OUR REASON for praying such a prayer for those around us. On this occasion, I can truly say that I am praying much more than I am preaching. Whilst I am standing here before you, I am also bowing low before the Lord my God, and I am bearing upon my heart certain of you for whom I long in my heart, and have great heaviness of spirit. I am praying, in the secret of my soul, "Lord, open his eyes, that he may see!"

The first reason for our prayer is, because *we ourselves have been made to see*. Had this miracle of grace not taken place within us, we should have had no thought of prayer for you; but now our whole heart goes with the plea. Once we were as you are. Our eyes were blinded so that we saw neither our foes in all their terror, nor the glory of the Lord

round about us. Like blind Samsons, we went through the weary drudgery of earth surrounded by our foes. At length a glimmering of the light fell upon us, like a lightning-flash, showing us our sin; and after we were thus illuminated we endured a great fight of afflictions. Without were fightings, within were fears. Our enemies were round about us, and we knew not what to do. But some man of God prayed for us, and one day our eyes were turned toward the hills from whence cometh all aid to terror-stricken men. The Lord was there, though we knew him not; but yet we looked to him and were enlightened, and our faces were not ashamed; for round about him the mountain was full of chariots and horses of fire. "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."

"Lord, I was blind; I could not see
In thy marred visage any grace;
But now the beauty of thy face
In radiant vision dawns on me."

What else but such a heavenly vision could have scattered all our guilty fear? What else could have given us peace in the midst of tumult? We did not quite understand how it was done, nor did the change come to all of us in the same way; but we can all say, "One thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see"; and since the prayers of others availed for us, we ought with double earnestness and hope to continue to plead for those who still have missed the glorious revelation. "Lord, open the eyes of the young man, that he may see!"

We call upon the Lord for this second reason, because *only by his power can men be made to see*. This we found in our own experience. In vain we struggled to behold the salvation of God; in vain we sought the help of godly people; no sight came to our souls, nor were the eyes of our understanding enlightened, until the Lord himself laved our eyes in the waters that go softly. Then we came seeing. And this we also discover when we try to lead others to the light. We speak to them of the glories we ourselves behold, and set before them the truth of God; but we cannot make them see. To bestow spiritual vision is as great a wonder as to make a world, and requires the same fiat of omnipotence. Only he who created the eye can give this second sight. "Since the world began was it not heard that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind." What folly, then, to attempt the greater task of bestowing the sight of the heart! How vain the boast of those who attempt to invade God's prerogative, and imagine that human ordinances or observances can open blind eyes! Beloved, let us, after we have done our best to make the people see the glory of the gospel, ever fall back on the God of the gospel, and entreat him to do his own blessed work.

"He comes, from thickest films of vice,
To clear the mental ray;
And on the eye-balls of the blind,
To pour celestial day."

Do not try to hold up your tallow candles to reveal the chariots of fire, nor parade your vain philosophy, as if that could clear away the

darkness of the soul. Leave room for God to work; and, in a moment, at the touch of his finger, in response to the prayers of his people, the wondrous work shall be accomplished.

Most importunately do we pray when we see the people enquiring. The cry, "What shall we do?" sends us to our knees; for we know that what is necessary is, not something to be done, but something to be seen. And we feel persuaded that the Lord who awoke the desire in the hearts of the seekers, will surely, also, open their eyes to behold his glory. The very fact that we feel drawn to pray for them, is already a token to us that, ere long, the scales shall fall from their eyes; and through their vision of the splendour and sufficiency of the provision that God hath made for those who trust in him, the name of the Lord will be greatly glorified. Therefore, with much expectancy, we again utter our prayer, "Lord, open their eyes, that they may see!"

Another reason for this prayer is—you are not aware of your own blindness. You are trusting in yourselves that you can see well enough all you need to see. That young man, of whom I am thinking now, has no idea whatever that his eyes are stone blind to eternal things. He thinks himself a sharp and clever fellow; and I do not deny that he is so, in his own line of things. I am glad that he has such quick faculties for this life. God bless him; and may he prosper in his business, and in the enterprise upon which he is just entering! May the good Lord be with him concerning the matter on which his heart is set! But still, dear friend, I am rather afraid of your cleverness; I am somewhat frightened at that keenness of yours, because I have seen sharp men cut themselves, and I have seen the self-reliant make miserable failures. Something is to be said for confidence in its proper place; but self-congratulation is a proof of inward weakness, and forebodes a breakdown. If you are depending on an arm of flesh, at the very best you are resting on a broken reed; you require a strength beyond your own to fight the moral and spiritual battle of life. Your self-reliance, in this case, is a piece of groundless self-conceit. Do you not remember one, of whom we read in this very Book of Kings, that, when he was forewarned of what he would yet do, he exclaimed, in astonishment, "Is thy servant a dog, that he should do this great thing?" Hazeael could not think himself capable of such crimes; and yet he no sooner had the opportunity than he fell into the evil up to the very neck. He was dog enough to be cruel, for he was dog enough to fawn upon himself. You do not believe, young man, that you will ever be dishonest; and yet that little gambling speculation of yours will lead to it. You cannot think that you will ever be godless; and yet you are even now departing from the good old ways of your home, and making a jest of sacred things when in certain company. They that trust in themselves are storing up the fuel for a great fire of sin. The pride which lifts itself up will throw itself down. Because the fine young fellow does not know how blind he is, we therefore lament his blindness, and are the more earnest in bringing him to Jesus, that he may receive his sight. "Lord, open his eyes, that he may see!"

Next, we pray this prayer, because we have reason to fear that

you are surrounded by those who will mislead you. We know the young man well. He has newly come to London from that sober, orderly, country home, and he has no notion of the snares which will be laid for him by fowlers, male and female. Oh, you who have no experience, and little discretion, hear the voice of warning! Satan has cunning servants about him, that hunt for the precious life with double diligence. Our Lord Jesus has about him servants who too often slumber; but the devil's servants are not slothful in their dreadful business. You will find them waylay you in the streets without, and press around you in the haunts of pleasure within. They are everywhere, and they leave no stone unturned that they may entrap the unwary. And what if this blind young man is put down in the midst of all these blood-suckers? They will devour him if they can: what if he is left to be their victim? It is like turning out a sheep among a pack of wolves. "Lord, open the eyes of the young man, that he may see!"

We pray this prayer for some of you, because *you are going away from those who have hitherto watched over you*, and this is a dangerous change for you. Your mother—ah! we can never tell what a blessing a godly mother is to a young man—your mother parts from you with great anxiety. Will you ever forget her tender words? Our fathers are all very well—God bless them!—and a father's godly influence and earnest prayers are of untold value to his children; but the mothers are worth two of them, mostly, as to the moral training and religious bent of their sons and daughters. Well, I say, you are going right away from your mother's holy influence, and from your father's restraining admonitions. You will now have nobody to encourage you in the right way. You will miss your sister's holy kiss, and your grandmother's loving persuasions. You are going out of the hot-house into a night's frost: well may we pray concerning you, that you may carry with you well-opened eyes, to see your way, and look before you leap. The young man is now to walk alone: "Lord, open his eyes, that he may see!" If he does not look before he leaps, he will soon be in the ditch; and who shall pull him out?

Again, we pray this prayer with the more pleasure, because *you will do so much good if your eyes are opened*. A blind man in the midst of such a world as this, what can he do? He cannot help other travellers, for he has to seek aid for himself. You wish to give rather than to take, do you not? Some here have great abilities, and I want them to use them aright. I am persuaded that I am speaking to young people whom God has ordained to be of great service to their age. That youth yonder does not as yet know what is in him. He is playing with himself; he is making a fool of himself; he is throwing his pearls before swine: he is wasting his strength. If the Lord should open his eyes, he would see what he is doing. What a man he would make if he were but right with God! Think of Saul of Tarsus, how he harassed the church of Christ; but when the scales fell from his eyes, the Lord had no better servant under heaven than that once-furious persecutor. With both hands diligently he built up the church which once he laboured to cast down. "The thing which has been is the thing which shall be." Pray, therefore, O my brethren, for our young

men, who have sinned, that they may be restored; and for those who are as yet ignorant, that they may be enlightened; for the cause of God has need of these, and in these the church shall find her champions! Little know we the wealth of comfort for the faithful which may lie in one young life. Surely, we ought to pile on our prayers, and make our intercession flame like some great beacon-light for the rising youth of our time.

There is yet another reason, fetched from the other side of the case. We should pray for the blinded one, since *he may terribly sin if not soon made to see*. How capable of doing mischief is a man blinded by ignorance, by passion, by ambition, or by any other form of sin! Who knows the capacities for evil that lie within a single soul? That once bright spirit, Satan, when he first thought of raising revolt against the God of heaven; it was, perhaps, a single momentary flash of rebellious thought; but before long he had become proudly antagonistic to his Maker, and the dragon had drawn down with his tail a third part of the stars of heaven to quench them in the eternal night of endless wickedness. Then he came to this earth, and polluted Paradise, and seduced our first parents from their happy innocence, so that they became the progenitors of an unhappy race, steeped up to their lips in sin. That one first thought of ill, oh, how pregnant was it with innumerable evils! So, too, among ourselves. A boy, his mother's pride, to whom she looks forward as the honour of the family, may for a while appear to be everything that love can hope; but he falls into the hands of one of those tempters to unbelief who are so abundant in this great city. He is taught to pour ridicule upon his mother's piety, and soon he casts off the bands of his father's God. He forgets the sanctity of God's holy day, and forsakes the house of prayer; and then he learns the way to the houses of strange women, and to the palace of strong drink; and he plunges into one sin after another, till he is himself the leader of others down to the abyss. That boy, who used to kneel at his mother's knee, and say his childish prayer, and then stand up, and sing of Jesus and his love, was fondly regarded as one who would honour Jesus in his life; but see him now: he staggers home after midnight, vomiting oaths! He is foul both in soul and in body, and those who love him best are saddest at the sight of him. Dear friends, if we would not see our children or our friends running to this excess of riot, and sinking in this superfluity of naughtiness, let us in agony of spirit plead with God at once on their behalf. Oh, for an immediate entrance of the light into their souls! Lord, open their eyes, that they may see! Lord, cause them to start back from the beginnings of sin, which are as the breaking out of the water-floods! O Saviour, quench in them the spark of evil ere it grows into a fire, and rages to a conflagration!

III. I must now close by mentioning what OUR HOPE is about men when we pray this prayer for them, as I have been doing all along—"Lord, open the young man's eyes, that he may see!" What is our hope in reference to this? What will they see if the heavenly eye-salve be applied?

Elisha, no doubt, felt that the answer to his prayer would be precisely what it really was. "The Lord opened the eyes of the young

man; and he saw: and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha." We want men's eyes to be opened, *that they may know, first, that spiritual forces really exist.* The things which we see are not the only real things, nor even the most real things. The things that are seen are temporal; they are, in truth, but shadows of the unseen. The substantial realities are not seen by these poor eyes: the substance is only perceived by our true selves. All that is visible is the mere shadow: the very image of the things is out of sight. Faith teaches us to believe in the existence of that most glorious of all spirits, the great God, in whom we live, and move, and have our being. Faith reveals to the heart the existence of that divine and ever-adorable Person, the Lord Jesus Christ, who is at this hour with his church, and will abide with her to the end of the world. Faith also makes us know the existence, and power, and presence of the Holy Ghost, who dwelleth with believers, and is in them, working out the eternal purpose of God in their sanctification. No knowledge is more sublime than to know the Trinity in Unity; Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, one Jehovah. When we come to realize that the Lord God is the source of all things; that God hath made us, and not we ourselves, and that all things come into being by his sovereign will and power; then we come to recognize his presence, to consult his will, and to lean upon his might. God becomes real in our thought and apprehension. Since he whom we cannot see nevertheless supporteth all things that are, we feel that the invisible is the basis of all things. Oh, that we could get men's minds out of these time-worn ruts of things seen, these narrow bounds of space, and time, and seeing, and handling! Oh, that they could rise into the region where the dim faculties, which are bounded by so small a circle, would give place to perceptions which know the infinite, the eternal, the true, the divine! Oh, that the human mind, which was made in the image of God, could find itself at home with God, whose child it may become, by a second birth, of the living and incorruptible seed, by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever!

Verily, if we get our eyes open, *we shall begin to recognize that God is greater than this world,* and all worlds; and then the mighty truths, which concern his way of mercy in Christ Jesus, will ennoble the soul. Then shall we become true comrades of those bright messengers of God that fly to and fro, fulfilling the behests of the Most High. That there are devils, I think no Christian man will ever doubt; for at certain seasons we have been sadly conscious of a singularly terrible presence, with which our souls have been in agonizing conflict. In that fearful battle it has gone hard with us; our armour has been battered, our comfort has been grievously wounded, and our courage badly mauled. We have been saved as by the skin of our teeth. We hardly knew how to hold on at all, we were so sore beset by unnatural temptations, and suggestions nothing less than infernal. Then, at the Lord's rebuke, this great adversary has taken sudden flight, and angels have come, and ministered to us new joys, and fruits of consolation, fresh from the tree of life. Then have we enjoyed communion with unseen messengers of God, who have seemed to bind up our wounds, and bring us on our way, and whisper peace. Did not an angel come

to strengthen our Lord in Gethsemane? Have we not, in our measure, enjoyed a similar visitation? It is a grand thing to see the hosts of God attending us, and to know that bright convoys of these shining ones will come to salute us at the last. It is a great gain to have the eyes opened, to see the Lord's goodness and mercy following us all the days of our life, and ourselves, even here, dwelling in the house of the Lord for evermore. Open your eyes to spiritual things, and at once you are encouraged. The present is grievous, while you know only the visible; but the wilderness blossoms as the rose when you see the invisible. Project yourself beyond this narrow region, and behold the infinite, and sources of joy spring up around you everywhere. Poverty is forgotten in the midst of such riches; and even pain and disease have lost their sting.

Elisha's young attendant, when his eyes were opened, saw, next, that *God's people are safe*. He perceived that there were more with Elisha, after all, than could possibly be against him, and he felt that he himself was safe as the servant of the servant of God. Thus he believed in his master's God, and found a shelter from his own fears. The invaders were flesh and blood, but the defenders were of fire, and thus were able to consume the adversaries at once. He saw, and saw it so joyfully, that God's horses of fire, and chariots of fire, were more than a match for all the forces of evil. I pray that the eyes of every Christian person here may be so opened that they shall never doubt that the powers on the side of truth and righteousness and God are, after all, mightier than the hosts of evil. It may be that you live among those who scoff at your faith, and despise all that you hold dear; indeed, it seems that, wherever you turn, everybody is against you in this day of doubt. I think I hear you cry, with David, "My soul is among lions: and I lie even among them that are set on fire, even the sons of men, whose teeth are spears and arrows, and their tongue a sharp sword." Courage, my comrade, God is near thee! His angels are keeping watch and ward about thee! We are not alone, for the Father is with us. Oh, that our eyes may be so opened as to see that more are they that are with us than all that are against us! Indeed, "if God be for us, who can be against us?" Let us be strangers to fear. In holy confidence, let us be "stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord." Never allow a doubt as to the ultimate issue. Is God himself your shield, and your exceeding great reward? Then, what can man do unto you? Perhaps, within a month, some of you, to whom I now speak, may be in so severe a fight that you will be almost driven to throw down your weapons in utter despair, saying, "How can I stand against so many? —I that am so feeble?" I beseech you, remember this warning. Have not I told you of it? I would plead with you to play the man. Gird up the loins of your mind; be sober, and hope to the end; for if the Lord has opened your eyes, you will perceive that you are on the winning side, and that HE is coming soon who will smite his enemies upon the cheekbone. If you are on the side of God, and of his truth; if you do the right; if you believe in the Lord Jesus; if you commit yourself to the keeping of the hand which was pierced with the nails; heaven and earth may pass away, but the Lord can never

desert you. The skies may be rolled up like a shrivelled parchment scroll, and all the things that are seen may melt away; like baseless fabrics of a vision, earth and sea may vanish; but a believing soul must live, and triumph, and be exalted to a throne with Christ; for he hath said, "Because I live, ye shall live also." Hold fast your integrity. Believe the truth of God even to the end; for the Lord Jesus will not fail, nor be discouraged, till all his foes are beneath his feet.

If your eyes are opened, you will know that *saints are honoured by their Lord*. See! he despatches his squadrons to be a body-guard to one of them; would not you wish for such honours? See here the secret of the peace which abides with the man of God: as he has meat to eat that men know not of, so has he company that men cannot see. He lives like a prince in the centre of a camp, and sleeps securely. Faith makes the difference between the tranquil prophet and his frightened boy. Oh, that you would believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and so enter into his peace! May this be the red-letter day in which your eyes shall be opened to see spiritual things, and you shall begin to live a spiritual life! For this I have prayed. For this let us all breathe for a moment a silent prayer. (Here followed an interval of silence, and then the preacher spoke in prayer.) "Lord, I pray thee, open the young man's eyes, that he may see: yea, Lord, open the eyes of all the blind among us, for Jesus' sake! Amen."

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—2 Kings vi.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—560, 490, 461.

Very little can be added to what was printed concerning Mr. SPURGEON'S illness at the end of last week's sermon. His condition has varied greatly during the past week; and it still continues very critical. On Friday, the doctors decided that, in future, they would only issue one bulletin daily, viz., the one prepared after their morning examination and consultation. As soon as this was announced, many friends concluded that there was a great improvement in the dear sufferer. There is, at the time this note goes to the printers, an abatement in certain serious symptoms; but the need for continued supplication is as urgent as it has been at any time during this long period of terrible suspense. Our comfort is that the Lord liveth, and loveth his dear servant, and that whatever he doeth with him must be right. He has but to speak the word, and the sufferer shall be healed.