

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE BLIND MAN'S EYES OPENED; OR, PRACTICAL
CHRISTIANITY.

A Sermon

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AT EXETER-HALL.

“Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him. I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work.—John ix. 3, 4.

OBSERVE, dear friends, how little disconcerted our Lord Jesus Christ was by the most violent opposition of his enemies. The Jews took up stones to stone him, and he hid himself from them; but almost the moment after, when he had passed, perhaps, through a single court, and was sufficiently out of range to be unobserved of them, he stood still and fixed his eyes upon a blind beggar who had been sitting near the temple gate. I am afraid that the most of us would have had no heart to help even the most needy while ourselves escaping from a shower of stones; and if we had attempted the work, moved by supreme compassion, we should have gone about it blunderingly, in a great hurry, and certainly should not have talked calmly and wisely, as the Saviour did when he answered his disciples' question, and went on to discourse with them. One of the things worthy to be noticed in our Lord's character is his wonderful quiet of spirit, especially his marvellous calmness in the presence of those who misjudged, and insulted, and slandered him. He is reviled often, but never ruffled; he is in deaths oft, but always full of life. No doubt he felt keenly all the contradictions of sinners against himself, for in a passage in the Psalms which refers to the Messiah we read, “Reproach hath broken my heart;” yet the Lord Jesus did not permit his feelings to overcome him, he was quiet and self-possessed, acting with a profound disregard of the calumnies and assaults of his bitter enemies.

One reason, I take it, for his being so self-contained was that he was *never elated by the praise of men*. Take my word for it, for I know it, that if you ever allow yourself to be pleased by those who speak well of you, to that extent you will be capable of being grieved by those who speak ill of you. But if you have learned (and it is a long lesson for the most of us) that you are not the servant of men, but of God, and that therefore you will not live upon the breath of men's

nostrils if they praise you, and you will not die if they denounce you—then you will be strong, and show that you have come to the stature of a man in Christ Jesus. If the great Master's head had been turned by the hosannas of the multitude, then his heart would have sunk within him when they cried, "Crucify him, crucify him." But he was neither lifted up nor cast down by men: he committed himself unto no man because he knew what was in man.

The innermost reason for this quiet of heart was *his unbroken communion with the Father*. Jesus dwelt apart, for he lived with God: the Son of man who came down from heaven still dwelt in heaven, serenely patient because he was raised above earthly things in the holy contemplations of his perfect mind. Because his heart was with his Father, the Father made him strong to bear anything that might come from men. Oh, that we all could wear this armour of light, the celestial panoply of communion with the High Eternal One. Then we should not be afraid of evil tidings, or of evil occurrences, for our hearts would be fixed on the sure rock of Jehovah's unchanging love.

There was perhaps another reason for our Saviour's wonderful composure when he was attacked with stones, namely, that *his heart was so set upon his work* that he could not be turned away from it whatever the unbelieving Jews might do. The ruling passion bore him on through danger and suffering, and made him calmly defy all opposition. He had come into the world to bless men, and he must bless men. The Jews might oppose him for this reason and for that, but they could not turn the current of his soul from the river-bed of mercy along which it rushed like a torrent. He *must* do good to the suffering and the poor, he cannot help it; his face is set like a flint towards his life-work. It had become his meat and his drink to do the will of him that sent him; and so, when they took up stones, although he withdrew himself a little, yet as he only wished to preserve his life to do good, he returned to his life-work without a moment's delay. Stones cannot drive him from his gracious pursuits. As we have seen a parent bird, chased away a moment from its nest, return to it the instant the intruder had withdrawn, so do we see our Lord come back to his holy work almost before he is out of the sight of his would-be murderers. Yonder sits a blind man, and Jesus is at once at his side to heal him. They will overtake thee, O Christ! They will seek to slay thee! There are more stones in their cruel hands. Thy haters hurl their missiles fiercely, and they will be upon thee in a moment! What cares he for that? No craven spirit can make him overlook an occasion for glorifying the Father. That blind man must be attended to, and at all hazards he stops to deal with him in love. If you and I become completely taken up with zeal for God, and with the desire to win souls then nothing will daunt us. We shall bear anything, and not seem to have anything to bear; we shall hear slander as though we heard it not, and endure hardship as though there were none to endure. As an arrow from a bow, shot by an archer strong, defies the opposing wind, and speeds forward to the white of the target, so shall we fly forward towards the great object of our compassionate ambition. Happy is that man whom God has launched like a thunderbolt from his hand, who must go on and fulfil his destiny; happy that it is his

vocation to bring sinners to the Saviour's feet. O blessed Spirit, lift us up to dwell in God, and so to sympathize with his fatherly compassion that we may heed neither stones, nor sneers, nor slanders, but become absorbed in our self-denying service for Jesus' sake!

Let that stand for an introduction. The Saviour in his worst and lowest estate, when near to death, thinks of nothing but the good of men. When cruel eyes are spying him out that they may slay him he has an eye for the poor blind; there is no stone in his heart towards the sorrowful even when stones are flying past his ears.

I. So I introduce you to-night to the first topic of the present discourse, which is **THE WORKER**. I give that as a well-earned title to the Lord Jesus Christ. He is *the* worker, the chief worker, the example to all workers. He came into the world, he says, to do the will of him that sent him, and to finish his work. On this occasion, when he is pursued by his enemies, he is still a worker—a wonder-worker with the blind man. There are many in this world who ignore sorrow, who pass by grief, who are deaf to lamentation, and blind to distress. The easiest thing that I know of to do with this wicked, wretched City of London, is not to know much about it. They say that half the world knows not how the other half lives: surely if it did know, it would not live so carelessly as it does, or be quite so cruel as it is. There are sights in this metropolis that might melt a heart of steel, and make a Nabal generous. But it is an easy way of escaping from the exercise of benevolence to shut your eyes and see nothing of the abject misery which is grovelling at your feet. “Where ignorance is bliss it is folly to be wise;” so said some easy-going ignoramus of old time. If beggars are importunate, then passers-by must be deaf. If sinners are profane, it is a simple matter to stop your ears, and hurry on. If this blind man must needs sit and beg at the gate of the temple, then those who frequent the temple must just slip by as if they were as blind as he. Crowds pass by and take no notice of him. Is not that the way with the multitude to-day? If you are in trouble—if you are suffering heart-break, do they not ignore you, and go their way to their farm and to their merchandise, though you lie down and starve? Dives finds it convenient to remain ignorant of the sores of Lazarus. It is not so with Jesus. He has a quick eye to see the blind beggar if he sees nothing else. If he is not enraptured with the massive stones and the beautiful architecture of the temple, yet he fixes his eyes upon a sightless mendicant at the temple gate. He is all eye, all ear, all heart, all hand, where misery is present. My Master is made of tenderness: he melts with love. O true souls who love him, copy him in this, and ever let your hearts be touched with a fellow feeling for the suffering and the sinning.

There are others who, though they see misery do not diminish it by warm sympathy, but increase it by their cold logical conclusions. “Poverty,” they say—“yes: well: that of course is brought on by drunkenness and by laziness and by all sorts of vice.” I do not say that it is not so in many cases; but I do say that the observation will not help a poor man to become either better or happier: such a hard remark will rather exasperate the hardened than assist the struggling. “Sickness,” say some,—“oh, no doubt, a great deal of sickness is caused by wicked habits, neglect of sanitary laws,” and so on. This also may

be sadly true, but it grates on a sufferer's ear. A very kind and pleasing doctrine to teach in the wards of our hospitals! I would recommend you not to teach it till you are ill yourself, and then perhaps the doctrine may not seem quite so instructive. Even Christ's disciples, when they saw this blind man, thought that there must be something particularly wicked about his father and mother, or something specially vicious about the man himself, which God foresaw, and on account of which he punished him with blindness. The disciples were of the same spirit as Job's three comforters, who, when they saw the patriarch on a dung-hill, bereft of all his children, robbed of all his property, and scraping himself because he was covered with sores, said, "Of course he must be a hypocrite. He must have done something very dreadful, or he would not be so grievously afflicted." The world will still stick to its unfounded belief that if the Tower of Siloam falls upon any men they must be sinners above all sinners upon the face of the earth. A cruel doctrine, a vile doctrine, fit for savages, but not to be mentioned by Christians, who know that whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and even his best beloved have been taken away on a sudden. Yet I do see a good deal of this cruel notion about, and if men are in trouble, I hear it muttered, "Well, of course they brought it on themselves." Is this your way of cheering them? Cheap moral observations steeped in vinegar make a poor dish for an invalid. Such censures are a sorry way of helping a lame dog over a stile—nay, it is putting up another stile for him so that he cannot get over it at all. Now I mark this of my Lord—that it is written of him that he "giveth to all men liberally, *and upbraideth not.*" When he fed those thousands in the wilderness it would have been most just if he had said to them, "Why did you all come out into the wilderness, and not bring your provision with you? What have you to do out here without something to eat? You are unthrifty, and deserve to hunger." No, no, he never said a word of the sort, but he fed them, fed them all, and sent them home filled. You and I are not sent into the world to thunder out commandments from the top of Sinai: we are come unto Mount Zion. We are not to go on circuit as if we were judge and hangman rolled into one, to meet all the sorrow and misery in the world with bitter words of censure and condemnation. If we do so how different we are from that blessed Master of ours who says not a word by way of rebuke to those who seek him, but simply feeds the hungry, and heals all those who have need of healing! It is easy to criticize, it is easy to upbraid, but ours should be the higher and nobler task of blessing and saving.

I notice yet again that there are certain others who, if they are not indifferent to sorrow, and do not pitch upon some cruel theory of condemnation, nevertheless speculate a good deal where speculation can be of no practical service. When we get together there are many questions which we like to raise and dispute upon which are of no practical value whatever. There is the question of the origin of evil. That is a fine subject for those who like to chop logic by the week, without making enough chips to light a fire for cold hands to warm at. Such was the subject proposed to the Saviour—foreseen guilt, or hereditary taint—"Who did sin, this man, or his parents?" How far is it right that the sin of parents should, as it often does, fall upon the children?

I could propose to you a great many topics equally profound and curious, but what would be the use? Yet there are many in the world who are fond of these topics, spinning cobwebs, blowing bubbles, making theories, breaking them, and making more. I wonder whether the world was ever blessed to the extent of a bad farthing by all the theorizings of all the learned men that have ever lived. May they not all be put down under the head of vain janglings? I would rather create an ounce of help than a ton of theory. It is beautiful to me to see how the Master breaks up the fine speculation which the disciples are setting forth. He says somewhat shortly, "Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents," and then he spits on the ground, and makes clay, and opens the blind man's eyes. This was work, the other was mere worry. "Father," said a boy, "the cows are in the corn. How ever did they get in?" "Boy," said the father, "never mind how they got in, let us hurry up and get them out." There is common sense about that practical proceeding. Here are these people sunken in vice, and steeped in poverty. Postpone the inquiries—How did they get into this condition? What is the origin of moral evil? How is it transmitted from parent to child? Answer those questions after the day of judgment, when you will have more light; but just now the great thing is to see how you and I can get evil out of the world, and how we can lift up the fallen and restore those who have gone astray. Never let us imitate the man in the fable who saw a boy drowning, and there and then lectured him upon the imprudence of bathing out of his depth. No, no, let us land the boy on the bank, dry him and dress him, and then tell him not to go there again, lest a worse thing come unto him.

I say that the Master was no speculator; he was no spinner of theories; he was no mere doctrinalist; but he went to work and healed those that had need of healing. Now, in this, he is the great example for us all in this year of grace. Come, what have we ever *done* to bless our fellow men? Many of us are followers of Christ, and, oh, how happy we ought to be that we are so! What have we ever *done* worthy of our high calling? "Sir, I heard a lecture the other night," says one, "upon the evils of intemperance." Is that all you did? Has any action come of that brilliant oration and of your careful attention to it? Did you straightway try to remove this intemperance by your example? "Well, I shall think of that, sir, one of these days." Meanwhile what is to become of these intemperate ones? Will not their blood lie at your door? "I heard the other day," says one, "a very forcible and interesting lecture upon political economy, and I felt that it was a very weighty science, and accounted for much of the poverty you mention." Perhaps so: but political economy in itself is about as hard as brass; it has no bowels, or heart, or conscience, neither can it make allowance for such things. The political economist is a man of iron, who would be rusted by a tear, and therefore never tolerates the mood of compassion. His science is a rock which will wreck a navy, and remain unmoved by the cries of drowning men and women. It is as the simoon of the desert which withers all it blows upon. It seems to dry up men's souls when they get to be masters of it, or rather are mastered by it. It is a science of stubborn facts, which would not be facts if we were not so

brutish. Political economy or no political economy, I come back to my point—What have you *done* for others? Do let us think of that, and if any of us have been dreaming day after day what we would do “*if*,” let us see what we can do now, and, like the Saviour, get to work.

Yet that is not the point which I am driving at. It is this. If Jesus be such a worker, and no theorizer, then what a hope there is to-night for some of us who need his care! Have we fallen? Are we poor? Have we brought ourselves into sorrow and misery? Do not let us look to men or to ourselves. Men will let us starve, and then they will hold a coroner’s inquest over our body to find why we dared to die, and so necessitated the paying for a grave and a coffin. They will be sure to make an inquiry after it is all over with us; but if we come to Jesus Christ, he will make no inquiry at all, but receive us and give rest unto our souls. That is a blessed text, “He giveth to all men liberally, *and upbraideth not.*” When the prodigal son came home to his father, according to all propriety, as people would do nowadays, the father should have said to his son, “Well, you have come home, and I am glad to see you, but what a state you are in! How did you get into this condition? Why, you have scarcely a clean rag on your back! How is it you have become so poor? And you are lean and hungry: how comes this about? Where have you been? What have you done? What company have you kept? Where were you a week ago? What were you doing the day before yesterday at seven o’clock?” His father never asked him a single question, but pressed him to his bosom, and knew all about it by instinct. He came as he was, and his father received him as he was. The father seemed, with a kiss, to say, “My boy, by-gones are by-gones. You were dead but you are alive again; you were lost but you are found, and I inquire no further.” That is just how Jesus Christ is willing to receive penitent sinners to-night. Is there a street-walker here? Come, poor woman, as you are, to your dear Lord and Master, who will cleanse you of your grievous sin. “All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven.” Is there one here who has transgressed against the rules of society, and is pointed at as especially sinful? Yet, come, and welcome, to the Lord Jesus of whom it is written, “This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them.” The physician never thinks it scorn to go among the sick; and Christ never felt it shame that he looks after the guilty and the lost. Nay, write this about his diadem—“The Saviour of sinners, even of the very chief:” he counts this his glory. He will work for you, not chide you. He will not treat you with a dose of theories, and with a host of bitter oburgations; but he will receive you just as you are into the wounds of his side, and hide you there from the wrath of God. Oh, blessed gospel that I have to preach to you! May the Holy Spirit lead you to embrace it. So much concerning the worker.

II. Now, the second thing is THE WORK-ROOM. Every worker needs a place to work in. Every artist must have a studio. Did Christ have a studio? Yes, he came to do very wonderful works—the works of him that sent him: but what a strange, strange place, the Lord found to do his work in! and yet I do not know that he could have found any other. He resolved to work the works of God, and he selected the fittest place

for so doing. One of the works of God is *creation*. If Jesus is to perform this work among men he must find out where something is missing which he can supply by a creating act. Here are two eyes without the proper light-receiving apparatus: here there is room for Jesus to create eyes and sight. He could not have created eyes in my head or in yours had we been present, for eyes are there already, and more eyes would be unsuitable for us. In the blind beggar of the temple there was room for Jesus to produce that which was lacking in the curious mechanism of the eye; the blind eye was, therefore, his workshop. If there were eyeballs, they were completely sightless, and had been so from the man's birth; and this gave the occasion for Jehovah Jesus to say, "Let there be light!" If that man's eyes had been like yours and mine, clear and bright and full of light, there would have been no space for our Lord's divine operation; but since he was still in the darkness which had been about him from his birth, his eyes afforded space wherein the power of the Almighty might be manifested by a work so wonderful that since the world began it had never been heard that any one had opened the eyes of a man who was born blind. The man was blind for this reason—"That the works of God should be made manifest in him." Oh, but that is a blessed thought if you will think it over! Apply it to yourself. If there is anything wanting in you there is room for Christ to work in you. If you are naturally perfect, and there is no fault in you, then there is no room for the Saviour to do anything for you; for he will not gild refined gold, nor lay enamel on the lily. But if you suffer from some great deficiency, some awful lack that makes your soul sit in darkness, *your* necessity is Christ's opportunity, your need of grace supplies his need of objects for his pity. Here is room for the Saviour to come and display his pity towards you, and you may be sure he will soon be with you. Even so, come Lord Jesus.

Then, again, it was not only this man's deficiency of sight, but it was this man's ignorance which required Almighty aid. It is a work of God not only to create, but to *illuminate*. The same power which calls into existence also calls into light, whether that light be natural or spiritual. It is a divine work to enlighten and regenerate the heart. This man was as dark in mind as he was in body—what a grand thing to enlighten him in a double sense! He did not know the Son of God, therefore he did not believe in him, but asked in wonder "Who is he, Lord, that I might believe on him?" Jesus Christ came to work in this man the knowledge of God, the life of God—in a word, salvation; and because the man was destitute of these things, there was room in him for the Saviour's skill and power. Friend, is that your case? Are you unconverted? Then there is space in you for the Redeemer to work by converting grace. Are you unregenerate? Then there is space in you for the Spirit of God to work regeneration. All these spiritual deficiencies of yours—your ignorance and your darkness—shall be turned by infinite love into opportunities for grace. If you were not lost, you could not be saved. If you were not guilty, you could not be pardoned. If you were not sinful, you could not be cleansed. But all your sin, and sorrow, by a strange mystery of love, is a sort of qualification of yourself for Christ to come and save you. "That is putting it," says one, "in a new light to me." Accept that new light,

and be comforted, for it is gospel light, and intended to cheer the despairing. You have said, "There is nothing in me;" therefore it is clear that there is room for Christ to be your all in all. You see there cannot be two all-in-alls: there can be but one, and as you do not pretend to the title Jesus will wear it. All the space that you occupy in your own esteem takes so much away from the glory of the Lord Jesus; and if you are nothing, then the whole house is left for the Saviour. He will come and fill up all your inward vacuum with his own dear self and be glorious in your eyes for ever.

I may venture to say to-night that all affliction may be regarded in the same manner as affording opportunity for the mercy-work of God. Whenever you see a man in sorrow and trouble, the way to look at it is, not to blame him and inquire how he came there, but to say, "Here is an opening for God's almighty love. Here is an occasion for the display of the grace and goodness of the Lord." This man being blind gave the Lord Jesus opportunity for the good work of giving him his sight, and that work was so great a wonder that all around were obliged to remark it and admire it. The neighbours began to inquire about it; the Pharisees had to hold a conclave over it; and though nearly nineteen centuries have slipped away, here are we at this hour meditating upon it. That man's opened eyes are enlightening our eyes at this hour. The Bible would not have been complete without this touching and teaching narrative: if this man had not been born blind, and if Christ had not opened his eyes, all generations would have had the less light. We ought to be glad that this man was so grievously afflicted, for thereby we are graciously instructed. If he had not been sightless we had not seen the great sight of birth-blindness chased away by him who is the Light of men. So I think I may say to all afflicted ones here to-night, Do not kick at your afflictions: do not be excessively troubled by them, or utterly cast down by them; but hopefully regard them as openings for mercy, gates for grace, roadways for love. The valley of Achor shall be to you a door of hope. That mighty worker of whom I have been speaking will find a workshop in your affliction, and therein he will fashion monuments of his grace. Glory in your infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon you. Rejoice that as your tribulations abound, so also shall your consolations abound by Christ Jesus. Ask him to make all things work together for your good and for his glory, and so it shall be.

I leave that thought of the workshop when I have added that I do believe that sin itself has somewhat of the same aspect as affliction, for it makes room for the mercy of God. I hardly dare say what Augustine said: when speaking of the fall and of the sin of Adam, and looking to all the splendour of grace that followed after it, he said "*Beata culpa*"—happy fault—as if he thought that sin had furnished such opportunities for the unveiling of the grace of God, and so displayed the character of Christ, that he even dared to call it a happy fault. I will not venture upon such an expression, I scarcely dare do more than repeat what that great master in Israel once said; but I do say, that I cannot imagine an occasion for glorifying God equal to the fact that man has sinned, since God has given Christ to die for sinners. How could that unspeakable gift have been bestowed if there had been no

sinners? The cross is a constellation of divine glory brighter than creation itself.

“For in the grace that rescued man,
His noblest form of glory shines;
Here on the cross 'tis fairest writ
In precious blood and crimson lines.”

How could we have known the heart of God? How could we have understood the mercy of God? If it had not been for our sin and misery, how could such forbearance and love have been displayed? Come, then, guilty ones, take heart, and look for grace. As a physician needs the sick that he may exert his healing power, so does the Lord of mercy need you that he may show what grace he can bestow. If I were a physician, and desired a practice, I should not inquire for the healthiest parish in England, but for a position where the sick would fill my surgery. If all I sought was to do good to my fellow men I should desire to be in Egypt or some other land visited by cholera, or plague, where I could save human life. The Lord Jesus Christ looking over this throng to-night, seeks not for those who are good, or think themselves so, but for the guilty, who know their sinfulness and bemoan it. If there be here a sinner, leprous and defiled; if there be here a soul from head to foot sick with the incurable disease of sin, the Lord Christ, the mighty worker, looks on him, for in him he finds a laboratory wherein he may work the works of him that sent him.

III. You will bear with me now if I pass on, in the third place, briefly to notice THE WORK-BELL.

You hear early in the morning a bell which arouses the workers from their beds. See how they troop into the streets, swarming like bees hastening to or from the hive. You see them going forth to labour, for the bell is ringing. There was a work-bell for Christ, and he heard it. Then he said, “I must work; I must work; I must work.” What made him say that? Why, the sight of that blind man. He no sooner saw him than he said, “I must work.” The man had not asked anything, nor uttered a sound; but those sightless orbs spake eloquently to the heart of the Lord Jesus, and rang aloud the summons which Jesus heard and obeyed, for he himself said, “I must work.”

And why must he work? Why, he had come all the way from heaven on purpose to do so. He had come from his Father's throne to be a man on purpose to bless men, and he would not cause his long descent to go for nothing. He must work; why else was he here where work was to be done?

Besides, there were impulses in his heart which we need not stop now to explain, which forced him to work. His mind, his soul, his heart, were all full of a force which produced perpetual activity. Sometimes he selected a route when he was travelling because “he must needs go through Samaria.” Sometimes he went after men because he said, “Other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring.” There was a sort of instinct in Christ to save men, and that instinct craved gratification and could not be denied. “I must work,” he said. The sight of those blind eyes made him say “I must work;” and he thought of that poor man—how for twenty years and more he had lived in utter darkness—how he had not been able to enjoy the beauties of

nature, or look his loved ones in the face, or earn his daily bread ; and he pitied the sorrows of the man in a life-long darkness. Moreover, as he recollected how that man's soul had also been shut up like a prisoner in a dungeon by reason of gross ignorance, he said, "I must work, I must work." You see they are after him with stones, but he stops, for he says "I must work. They may stone me if they will, but I must work. I hear the summons and I must work."

Now learn this lesson, all ye followers of Christ. Whenever you see suffering, I hope you will each one feel "I must work, I must help." Whenever you witness poverty, whenever you behold vice, say to yourself, "I must work, I must work." If you are worthy of the Christ whom you call leader, let all the necessities of men impel you, compel you, constrain you to be blessing them. Let the world which lieth in the wicked one arouse you ; let the cries of men of Macedonia awaken you, as they say "Come over and help us!" Men are dying, dying in the dark. The cemetery is filling, and hell is filling too. Men are dying without hope ; and are passing into the eternal night. "I must work." They cry,—Master, spare thyself: incessant labour will wear thee down and bring thee to thy grave. But see ! see ! see ! Perdition swallows crowds, they go down alive into the pit ! Hark to their doleful cries ! Lost souls are being shut out from God. "I must work." Oh, that I could lay my hand—or, better far, that my Master would lay his pierced hand on every true Christian here and press it upon him until he cried out, "I cannot sit here. I must be at work as soon as this service is done. I must not only hear, and give, and pray, but I must also work."

Well, that is a grand lesson ; but I do not mean it to be the chief one, for I am looking out for those who long to find mercy and salvation. What a blessing it is for you, dear friend, if you want to be saved, that Christ *must* save ! There is an impulse upon him that he must save. I know you say, "I cannot pray. I cannot feel as I wish to do." Never mind about that : the matter is in abler hands. You see, this man did not *say* a word : the sight of him was enough to move the heart of the Lord Jesus. As soon as Jesus had seen him he said, "I must work." Have you never seen a man in London who has no particular oratory, and yet succeeds in obtaining alms on a large scale ? I have seen him. He dresses like a labourer. He wears a tattered smock-frock, and he sits down in a corner where many pass by : his squatting-place is a little out of the rush of traffic, but near enough to secure attention from many passengers. He displays a spade much the worse for the use made of it by somebody else, and on it is written, "I am starving !" He looks gaunt and hungry ; he is exceedingly well got up, and is as pale as chalk can make him. Oh, the quantity of halfpence that go into his old hat ! How people pity him ! He does not sing a mournful ditty ; he does not speak a word ; and yet many are moved by the fact that he looks as if it were true that he was starving. Now, my hearer, you need not be false in what you do if you set out your misery and sin before the Lord. To-night, when you reach home, kneel at your bedside, and say, "Lord Jesus, I cannot pray ; but here I am. I am perishing, and I put myself within sight of thee. Instead of hearing my pleas, look at my sins. Instead of demanding arguments, look at my wickedness. Instead of oratory, which I have not, Lord, remember that I shall soon be in

hell if thou dost not save me." I tell you, the bell will ring, and the great worker will feel that the time has come for him to labour; he will say in the words of my text, "I must work," and in you the works of God shall be made manifest. You shall be the workshop of Christ.

IV. One more head, and that is THE WORK-DAY. Our divine Master said, "I must work the works of him that sent me, *while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work.*"

Now, listen. This is not meant about Christ the risen Saviour, but this refers to the Lord Jesus Christ as he was a man here on earth. There was a certain day in which he could bless men, and when that day was over he would be gone; there would be no Jesus Christ on earth to open blind men's eyes, or to heal the sick; he would be gone from among men, and be no more approachable as the healer of bodily disease. Our Lord as a man here on earth had a day. It was only a day—a short period, and not very long; he could not make it longer, for it was settled by the great Lord. The day of his sacrifice was appointed; he himself once said, "My hour is not yet come." But that hour did come. Our Lord occupied thirty years in getting ready for his life-work, and then in three years his warfare was accomplished. How much he crowded into those three years! Centuries of service could not equal the labour of that brief period. Brothers, some of us have had thirty years of work, but we have done very little, I am afraid; and what if we have only three years more? Let us feel the impulses of the coming eternity! Within a little while I shall no more look into the faces of the throng, they will remember me but as a name; therefore, I will preach as best I can while my powers remain, and my life is prolonged. Within a little while, my brother, you will not be able to go from door to door winning souls: the street will miss you and your tracts: the district will miss you and your regular visits. Do your work well, for your sun will soon set. These words of mine may be more prophetic to some present than we dream. I may be speaking to some who are nearing their last hour, and shall soon render in their account. Up brothers! Up sisters! Say, "We must work, for the night cometh, wherein no man can work." Life cannot be made longer if we wish to make it so: predestination will not lengthen out the thread when the hour has come to cut it off. Life will be short at the very longest, and, O how short with those who die young!

If you and I shall omit any part of our life-work, we can never make up the omission. I speak with solemn reverence of our divine Master, but, if he had not healed that blind man in the day wherein he lived on earth, he would have missed a part of the business upon which the Father sent him. I do not mean that as God, out of heaven, he might not have given the poor beggar sight, but that makes the case the more stern in its bearing upon us, since we have no such future to expect: if we do not serve men now, it will be out of our power to bless them from the skies. This narrative could never have appeared in the life of the Son of Man had he forgotten to be gracious to the blind man. His period of sojourn here below was the time for our Lord to work; if he had come back from heaven to heal the man, that would have been done in a second advent, and not in the first; and if even *he* omits anything from his first errand below, it cannot be put in again. When you and I

have written a letter we add a postscript; when we have made a book we can write an appendix or insert something that we have left out. But to this life of yours and mine there can be no postscript. We must do our work now or never; and, if we do not now, even now, while our opportunity serves us, perform our service to our God, we can never do it. If you omitted anything yesterday, you cannot alter the fact of imperfect service on that day. If you are more zealous now it will be the work of to-day; but yesterday will still remain as incomplete as you left it. We must therefore be on the alert to do the work of him that sent us while it is called to-day.

To this conclusion I come, and here draw to a close—if our Lord Jesus Christ was so diligent to bless men when he was here, I feel certain that he is not less diligent to hear and heal them now in that spiritual sense in which he still works upon men.

Oh, that I knew how to lead you to seek my Lord and Master; for if you seek him he will be found of you as surely as you seek him. Christ has not lost the bowels of his compassion; he is not cold in heart or slack in hand. Go to him at once. I spoke just now to some of the chief of sinners, and I say to them again—Go to Jesus! Let me speak to some of you who are *not* the chief of sinners, you that have been hearers of the gospel and have only failed because you do not believe in Jesus. Go to him at once. *You* are backward, but he is not. He must still work, and still work while the gospel day lasts, for that gospel day will soon close. He is waiting and watching for you. Oh, come to him—come even now. “I do not know what it is to come,” says one. Well, to come to Christ is simply to trust him. You are guilty: trust him to pardon you. “If I do that,” says one, “may I then live as I did before?” No, that you cannot, for if a ship needed to be brought into harbour, and they took a pilot on board, he would say to the captain, “Captain, if you trust me, I will get you into harbour all right. There, let that sail be taken down.” And they do not reef it. “Come,” says he, “attend to the tiller, and steer as I bid you.” But they refuse. “Well,” says the pilot, “you said you trusted me.” “Yes,” says the captain, “and you said that if we trusted you, you would get us into port; but we have not got into port at all.” “No,” says the pilot, “you do not trust me, for if you trusted me you would do as I bid you.” A true trust is obedient to the Lord’s commands, and these forbid sin. If you trust Jesus, you must leave your sins, and take up your cross and follow him. Such trust shall surely have its reward: you shall be saved now and saved for ever.

God bless you, dear friends, for Christ’s sake.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—John viii. 59, and ix

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—386, 607, 552.