

# Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

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A PROMISE FOR THE BLIND.

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## A Sermon

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DELIVERED BY

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*On Tuesday Evening, April 3rd, 1855.*

*On behalf of The Christian Blind Relief Society.*

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“Behold, I will bring them from the north country, and gather them from the coasts of the earth, and with them the blind and the lame, the woman with child, and her that travaileth with child together : a great company shall return thither.”—Jer. xxxi. 8.

Poor Israel, as a nation, had its ups and downs. It was sometimes in captivity; and anon it experienced a deliverance. At one time, it was minished and brought low through affliction, persecution, or sorrow; at another, it was multiplied and increased exceedingly. It was the deliverance from one of these evil seasons that Jeremiah was commissioned to announce, by the promise that the Lord's people should come again to their own land.

Let us consider, for a few minutes, the circumstances of these Israelites. It must have been a sorrowful thing for them to dwell in a land that was not their own, to hear a language they understood not, to see the fierce inhabitants, their enemies, and the idolatrous worship of the heathen gods. We can well conceive of their mournful spirit, and the feeling with which they gave utterance to their plaintive song, “By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion. We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof. For there they that carried us away captive required of us a song; and they that wasted us required of us mirth, saying, Sing us one of the songs of Zion. How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?” But God sent among them prophets, who told them that they should be restored, and herein lay the glory of the promise, that it

included *all* the captive people of God, whatever might be their rank or position. The blind, the halt, and the lame, should all come back. The hoary-headed man with his staff equally with the young and vigorous; the lame man as well as he who could run like the hart; all should come to the mount of the Lord; nor should even women be left behind: "The blind and the lame, the woman with child, and her that travaileth with child together: a great company shall return thither." Had the prophet not said that the blind and the lame should come, that their faces should be turned towards the holy city, had he not said that they should enter into the temple of the Lord; they might have thought that, being poor and blind, they would never be allowed to come unto the holy mountain, even Zion.

But, my friends, this text has a further prophetic signification in its reference to the gathering in of the Jews in the latter times; and with this we have more particularly to do. I believe in the restoration of the Jews to their own land in the last days. I am a firm believer in the gathering in of the Jews at a future time. Before Jesus Christ shall come upon this earth again, the Jews shall be permitted to go to their beloved Palestine. At present, they are only at the entrance gates. I am told that the Jews have a practice of bringing some of the soil of their own country to England, under the seal of the chief rabbi; and that, at their death, it affords them the highest joy to know that they will have a portion of this soil buried with them, even were it no more than sufficient to cover a sixpence. They have another idea,—of course, it is a very foolish one,—that every Jew dying in a foreign land travels underground direct to Palestine. It is because they love their country that they believe such a falsehood.

But whatever may be our opinion respecting the Jews, and their position, this I know,—though they ought not to be fettered and oppressed, though they ought to have a vote in Parliament, though they ought to be freed from civil disabilities, yet they never can amalgamate with other nations. The time will come when they shall leave their sordid ideas in the pursuit of gain to secure the treasures of paradise. They are a scattered people now, and must be till the last times; then suddenly they shall rise, touched by the influence of the Spirit of God, again to be his people. Their temple shall again resound with the worship of God, and old Zion will be again built. Then may we truly expect the latter-day glory shall come. Certainly, if I read my Bible aright, I must believe that the downtrodden, despised Jew shall again be glad; and poor old Judæa, that has been the scoff and scorn of mankind, shall again be lifted up and restored, and shall shine forth "fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners."

If it be so, mark you, the blind Jew and the lame Jew will as surely go to Jerusalem as any of the rest of the Jews. They will all go; the blind, the lame, the woman travailing with child, will all meet in God's holy temple.

However, I leave this case of the Jews, their coming up from Babylon, and the last gathering in of Israel. I know very little

of them; but would rather speak of my text under another aspect. You know that God has a peculiar people, as much a chosen nation as the Jews ever were; a called and elected people, whom the Father has chosen from before the foundation of the world; a redeemed people, whom Jesus has purchased with his precious blood; a sanctified people, because God has separated them from the rest of mankind. Well, all these people are to be brought in, to be gathered to Christ; every one whom God has chosen, redeemed, and sanctified shall come to mount Zion. Blessed be God, they shall all come to this city above. God's wheat shall all be gathered into God's garner. The ransomed of the Lord shall all join the throng around the throne, for ever—

“To bless the conduct of his grace,  
And make his glories known.”

My text says, the blind and the lame shall meet there.

Now I am about to speak, first of all, of *the characters named in the text*; and then I am going to try to show you *the duties of Christians to the persons so designated, or spoken of, as the lame and the blind*.

I. First, I am to speak of **THE CHARACTERS NAMED IN THE TEXT**: “the blind and the lame.”

We will speak of the blind first. There are three classes of blind people: the physically blind, the mentally blind, and the spiritually blind. In illustration, I would take you to the London Road, and there you will find these three orders of blind people. There is the school for the blind, where you will find the physically blind. Just before you is the Roman Catholic Cathedral; there you will find the spiritually blind. And further on is the Bethlehem Hospital, commonly called Bedlam, where you will find the mentally blind. These are, then, the three divisions: the naturally, or physically blind; the mentally blind; and the spiritually blind.

Well, first, we refer to *the physically blind*. If chosen of God, they will love him, and they shall all come to heaven. Ah, poor Adam, how many are the infirmities which thy one sin has entailed upon thine offspring! Oh, mother Eve, how did thine act of transgression bring on us a train of woes! Lameness, blindness, deafness, with all the sad ailments of the paralytic, the dumb, the deformed! But all honour to the second Adam, he overcomes these infirmities; he saves “the blind and the lame.” Through his sovereign grace, he loves many of the poor, darkened sons of men. Blind men are not chosen for soldiers, except in the army of God; but in that army, he enlists many blind warriors, and makes them the best of his soldiers. Yes, blind saints, God loves you, and will not exclude you from heaven. The man who has to go leaning on his crutch all through the journey of life, is not refused at heaven's door because of his crutches. Ye blind men, groping along in the world, when you arrive at heaven's gate, are you to be excluded because of the want of your eyes? Rather, the moment they come to its threshold, God speaks the word, and the withered

limb regains its strength, the dim eye its lustre, and thus "the blind and the lame" become fitted to join the shining multitude around the throne.

We know that, if we die aged, we shall not be aged in heaven; there are no furrows on the brow of the glorified ones. Their eyes know no dimness; they know not what it is to have infirmities of body, for mortality is exchanged for immortality. It may be that we are weakly here; it may be that we have a feeble, diseased, emaciated body here; but there we shall have a spiritual body, like unto Christ's glorious body, clothed in light and majesty; we shall then be partakers of the bliss of heaven, shining as the stars in the firmament for ever and for ever. Now, ye physically blind, ye who do not see the glorious rays of the sun, do not be downcast, but remember that there have been many illustrious saints who have endured the same calamity. Chief and foremost, remember the blind bard of paradise, who, when his eyes were darkened, saw things that others never had imagined; I mean, Milton. Though you are deprived of your temporal sight, you may see far into the deep things of God. Others have been blind as well as you. Many blind men have been great men. Ye physically blind, rejoice that, blind though you are, if you look to Christ by faith, you will join "the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven."

But, then, secondly, *the mentally blind* shall be restored. I have referred to Bedlam for an illustration. I do not mean, by that, to refer to those who have suffered the entire loss of their reason. It would be a very doubtful question to discuss, whether a person born without the use of his natural reason can be an object of divine grace. It would lead to a great deal of discussion, without any practical result, so I leave it alone. But there is such a thing as practical mental blindness. There may be the master-mind, gigantic conceptions, a fruitful imagination, with the power of leading and governing other minds, and yet there may be a degree of mental blindness. We are all somewhat blind; we have all, we must confess, an imperfect vision; except the Pope, who claims to be infallible, and therefore proves that he is more blind than the rest of us. There are some of us who feel our fallibility in point of judgment, and who are obliged to acknowledge our ignorance and want of clear mental perception.

But, my friends, some of the mentally blind shall enter heaven. I now refer to those whose mental powers are very weak. I sometimes meet with these mentally blind people. They do not know much of their own language, and perhaps have never put as many as a half a dozen words together in their lives, in public. I once heard of one of these, an old woman, who had heard a most uninteresting discourse upon metaphysics, but she called it "a blessed sermon, for," she said, "the minister told us all about the Saviour being both meat and physic too." I think that was a good mistake. She, like many of the mentally blind, could not understand one-half of the words that are used by some of our preachers. She belonged to the somewhat mentally blind folk who have not

had the benefit of teaching or training. Well, blessed be God, they do not need it to find the way to heaven. "The wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein."

Well, all these mentally blind shall come. There will be people in heaven who never read a word in their lives. I know not how low the grace of God can go. Some poor creatures, who know nothing of the things of earth, even these may understand the gospel, it is so plain. We do not need a giant intellect in order to grasp its doctrines. Its element and substance is, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." Believer, ignorant though you may be, you can comprehend this grand scheme of man's redemption, so do not say that, because you are poor and ignorant, you will not enter heaven.

But, then, thirdly, there are *the spiritually blind*. Whenever you find a person spiritually blind, you ought to be very careful how you speak to him, or of him. I do think this is a matter in which we often fail. The discussion between Catholics and Protestants has been far from what it ought to have been. We seem bent upon forcing them to submit at once to our views, but this is wrong of us. We may condemn wrong principles, but let us always speak gently of the men who hold them. They are spiritually blind, so we should deal kindly with them, avoiding that bitterness of spirit which is so often manifested. Sick men will not take your medicine if you give them vinegar with it; give them something sweet with it, and they will take it. So be kind and loving to the spiritually blind, and they will be likely to give heed to you.

To say nothing of the Church of Rome, the Puseyites, or Arminians; to go no further than the present congregation, there are many spiritually blind here. Oh, man or woman, do you see your lost and ruined state by nature? No. Did you ever, by faith, see Christ crucified on the cross for man's redemption? No, you did not! Did you ever understand the sufficiency of the mediatorial sacrifice of Christ? No, you did not! Did you ever realize what vital union with the person of Christ means? No! Has the Holy Spirit ever spoken in your heart? You are obliged to confess that you know nothing about his purifying influence. Ah, then, you are blind, spiritually blind! Chapel-goer, church-goer, having the form of religion without the power, you are blind as a bat, which can only fly in the night; or like the owl, when daylight comes, you will not be able to find your way. Unless the scales are removed from your eyes, you will be exposed to the judgment of God; but if the Holy Ghost illuminates you, though *now blind*, you shall come to Zion with the rest of the chosen race.

But my text also mentions the lame. These are not so much the subject of our consideration to-night, and may therefore be passed over briefly. But many of the lame are to get to heaven. Who are they? Well, brethren, *there are some of God's people who are lame, because they are weak in faith*. We hear sometimes a great deal said about possessing a full assurance of being a child of God; and then, every now and then, we hear of others who have a

doubt, or only a hope, concerning their salvation. As good Joseph Irons used to say, "They keep hope, hope, hoping,—hop, hop, hopping,—all their lives, because they can't walk." Little-faith is always lame. Yet, although some of you never could say, with certainty, that you are the people of God, yet one or another of you can say with sincerity,—

"A guilty, weak, and helpless worm,  
On thy kind arms I fall;  
Be thou my strength and righteousness,  
My Jesus, and my all."

Ye lame ones, fear not; you will not be cast out. Two snails entered the ark; how they got there, I cannot tell. It must have taken them a long time. They must have started rather early, unless Noah took them part of the way. So, some of you are snails, you are on the right road, but it will take you a long while to get into the ark unless some blessed Noah helps you.

Again, *backsliders are lame*. There are Christians to be found who believe that it is possible to fall from a state of grace. Here I would speak cautiously. God's people cannot fall finally; but they can fall a long way. When a Christian falls, it is no light matter. I hear some talking of falling and getting up again, as if it were nothing; but let them turn to Hebrews vi. 4—6.\* But we will rejoice that—

"Grace will complete what grace begins,  
To save from sorrows or from sins."

I do not say that a Christian man may not fall, and break a limb; but I do say that a child of God cannot fall, spiritually, and break his neck. He cannot fall without grievous injury. The result, in his experience, must be unhappiness and misery. Look at poor David; after falling into that great sin, his history was nothing but troubles from rebellious sons and enemies. Ye loving, living children of the blessed God, I know that you will not talk lightly of falling into sin. Backsliders, fallen ones, God will have mercy upon you if you are truly penitent. It is a glorious fact that the sorrowing backsliders shall not be left behind. Backsliders shall sing above, as God's restored children, whom he ever has loved. Blind and lame ones, believe in the Lord, and you shall be found amongst the followers of the Lamb at the last.

II. Now, secondly, and very briefly, WHAT ARE OUR DUTIES TO THESE BLIND PEOPLE?

I answer, first, *to the spiritually blind, our duty is to pray for them*. Yes, I believe we shall never do anything without this. However much you may profess to love them, yet if you do not pray for them, I cannot believe what you say. An infidel once met a Christian man, and said to him, "You don't believe in the Bible; you don't believe in the gospel." "I do," the Christian

\* See *The New Park Street Pulpit*, No. 75, "Final Perseverance."

replied. "Well, then, how is it that, as I pass you in going to my business every day, you have never spoken to me concerning my soul? You don't believe the Bible." "I do." "I cannot believe you," he said, "for if you do, you are very unfeeling."

Now, Christians, if you believe that you have spiritually blind people around you, what is your duty towards them? Sirs, unless you feel a deep concern about their state, I fear that the heavenly Physician has not removed the spiritual cataract from your eyes. If we believe their position to be one of extreme peril, that they, for want of the light to guide them, are perishing, how we ought to exert ourselves on their behalf. The ministers do not feel enough for souls in this degenerate age, but keep on preach, preach, preaching; or read, read, reading their good-for-nothing manuscripts, and yet there is no increase to their churches. The minister is here in the pulpit, and the people are down below in the pews; there is no golden link of sympathy between them. We want more of this sympathy. We want more intense love to souls, the souls of the ungodly. We want to go more to God's throne to plead *for* you, and then to plead *with* you. As God's ambassadors, we say with Paul, "We pray you, in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." It is no trifling matter to be spiritually blind. It is no light matter to have no eyes. No, the blind are sure not to enter heaven if they die spiritually blind. They must have their eyes enlightened by God if they are to be found above. May the ever-blessed and glorious God awaken all the spiritually blind! May we who are ministers, and all others who have the opportunity use it, under God's blessing, to throw light upon their dark minds! Try to get your neighbours to the house of God, but take care that it is a gospel ministry to which you invite them. Take care that you prove the value of the gospel you possess by your own consistent practice. Pray for them, and it may be that God will give unto them repentance unto life.

And then, next, *our duty to the mentally blind is to be very charitable, and try to instruct them.* We must manifest, in all our dealings with them, a kindness of disposition, never attempting to thrash them into what we believe to be right. I do not believe in the utility of bigoted denunciations. I sometimes differ from my Christian brethren, but I do not quarrel with them on that account; all I can say is, "Well, brother, if you can't see it, I cannot help it; it is in the Bible, and I can see it plainly enough." We, as Calvinists, believe that men cannot see the truth unless it is revealed to them by God; we should therefore be the last to condemn the ignorant, but should do our utmost to instruct them, and to open their eyes. It is of no use to attempt to force a man to believe. It has been said,—

"Convince a man against his will,  
He's of the same opinion still"

So, whenever you get into an argument with a mentally blind man, suppose it to be a Roman Catholic, don't get cross with him. If

you do, you will never make a friend of your opponent. Suppose others do not see as you do on some matters, on infant baptism or anything else,—and I think we Baptists very often err in our temper in some of our discussions,—well, don't try to compel them to see as you see. Brethren, that is not the way to convince them of the truth of our beliefs. Instead of acting like that, we should try to show our brethren the truth as it is in the Bible; and then, they must shut their eyes or else see it. "It is there," say you; "if you can't see it, I shall not be cross or out of temper with you." Never let us be cross with the mentally blind. You know that the policeman, when he meets a man at night, turns his lantern straight upon the man's eyes; so must we turn the light of truth upon these blind eyes, and not take out the truncheon to thrash them at once. We should also reflect that there was a time when we, too, knew nothing. It therefore behoves us to act kindly to the younger scholars in the school, seeing that we have not always ourselves been in the highest class.

But, now to conclude, we have to speak of *our duty to the physically blind*. There are some good people who would be glad to work for their living, but they are disabled through affliction; among these are the blind. When I go amongst the sick and poor, I find so many to relieve that, when I have given all I can afford, there is still more to do. Well, there they are, and to do them any permanent good you must give them something week by week. I was thinking, suppose another globe were created, and rolled up alongside this world, so that when any in this world became sick, or blind, or helpless, we could put them over into the other world to get rid of them. Well, suppose that were done, brethren; you would soon want them back again. "There is dear Sister So-and-so, she is entirely dependent upon the charity of her friends, but she has such rich deep experience; we have derived so much comfort from her society that we must have her back." Then, if these poor sufferers were in another world, you would have no way of doing good by relieving them, and then you would wish you could be doing something for them for the sake of the Lord Jesus Christ. You would then have to complain, "Here is this shilling; I don't know what to do with it. Here I have money that I cannot use because there are no objects of charity to whom I can give it. I wish Jesus Christ would come down to earth again; would I not minister to his necessities if he were here? Ay, that I would; I would give him the best of things that were to be found anywhere. Then I would sit at his feet, washing them with my tears, and wiping them with the hair of my head."

You say that, but if all these poor blind people were in another world, there would be no one to whom you could minister for his sake, so Jesus Christ has sent some of them to us that we may have the opportunity of doing good to them, and that, by-and-by, he may be able to say to us, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." He has cast some blind people upon the Church on purpose to give us the treat of doing something for them. He has said, "The poor

ye have always with you." He allows you the opportunity of evidencing your love to him by relieving those who need your help. When I hear of a church where they are all gentlemen, I always say farewell to that; for where there are no poor, the ship will soon sink. If there are no poor there, Christ will soon give them some if they are a real gospel church.

Now, the reason we have a Blind Society is simply this, there are some good people who cannot help themselves because they are blind and helpless; there is one from my church, and some from other churches. It is not a very large Society, it is all the better for that; for I find that, in the great Societies, there is so much influence needed, and so many votes required, that those who need help most cannot obtain it; and those who do not need it so much, but have the influence, get it all. Well, in this Christian Blind Relief Society, some of these poor blind people receive a trifle every week, and I assure you they are all needy and deserving objects of your charity.

This is what we ask you to-night to support. Jesus Christ stands at the door, and says to you as you retire, "Give me somewhat, this night, if you love me."

I have to appeal so often, and am followed so much by my own people, that I have not the face to ask you for anything to-night, so Christ shall ask instead, and I will ask next time.

Remember the poor! Take care of the blind!

### Expositions by C. H. Spurgeon.\*

MATTHEW IX. 27—35; AND XX. 29—34.

Chapter ix. Verse 27. *And when Jesus departed thence, two blind men followed him, crying, and saying, Thou son of David, have mercy on us.*

No sooner does Jesus move than fresh candidates for his bounty appear: the blind seek sight from him. Two sightless men had become companions in affliction; they may have been father and son. They were in downright earnest, for they "*followed him, crying, and saying, Have mercy on us.*" Persevering, vehement, yet intelligent was their appeal. They were of one mind in reference to Jesus, and therefore they went one way, and used one prayer, to one and the same person. Our Lord is here called by his royal name: "*Thou Son of David.*" Even the blind could see that he was a king's son. As Son of David, he is entreated to show mercy, and act according to his royal nature. It is *mercy* which gives us our faculties, and mercy alone can restore them.

This prayer suits us when we perceive our own darkness of mind. When we cannot see our way into truth, let us appeal to the Lord for gracious instruction; ever remembering that we have no claim except that which originates in his mercy.

\* The first page of the preceding Sermon shows that it was delivered in the year 1855, before the beloved preacher had come of age. The Expositions given by Mr. Spurgeon at that early period were not reported, as they were in the later years of his ministry. Consequently, two passages relating to Christ's healing of the blind have been selected from *The Gospel of the Kingdom* (Passmore & Alabaster, 3s. 6d.), the popular Exposition of the Gospel according to Matthew which was being prepared by Mr. Spurgeon almost up to the time of his home-going in January, 1892. Readers will therefore have the opportunity of comparing the messages left on record by him near the beginning and near the close of his long and prosperous London pastorate.

28. *And when he was come into the house, the blind men came to him : and Jesus saith unto them, Believe ye that I am able to do this? They said unto him, Yea, Lord.*

They were most eager for the boon. They gave him no leisure: they pressed into the house where he had sought privacy and rest: they came to him, even to Jesus himself. The Lord would have them express their faith, and so he makes inquiry of them as to what they believe about himself. Jesus makes no inquiry about their eyes, but only about their faith: this is ever the vital point. They could not see, but they could believe; and they did so. They had a specific faith as to the matter about which they prayed; for our Lord put it plainly, "*Believe ye that I am able to do THIS?*" They had also a clear view of the character of him to whom they applied; for they had already styled him "*Son of David*", and now they called him "*Lord*."

29. *Then touched he their eyes, saying, According to your faith be it unto you.*

Again he arouses their faith; and this time he throws the whole responsibility upon their confidence in him. "*According to your faith be it unto you.*" He touched them with his hand; but they must also touch him with their faith. The word of power in the last sentence is one upon which he acts so continually, that we may call it, as to many blessings, a rule of the kingdom. We have the measuring of our own mercies; our faith obtains less or more according to its own capacity to receive. Had these men been mere pretenders to faith they would have remained blind. If we will not in very truth trust our Lord, we shall die in our sins.

30. *And their eyes were opened; and Jesus straitly charged them, saying, See that no man know it.*

They both saw; the double miracle was wrought at the same moment. Comrades in the dark, they are now companions in the light. Singular that for two souls there should thus be one destiny! It was a singular double fact, and deserved to be made widely known; but our Lord had wise reasons for requiring silence. He "*straitly charged them.*" He left them no option: he demanded complete silence. He that opened their eyes closed their mouths. Jesus did not desire fame; he wanted less crowding; he wished to avoid excitement; and therefore he was express and peremptory in his order: "*See that no man know it.*"

31. *But they, when they were departed, spread abroad his fame in all that country.*

They most industriously published what they were bidden to conceal, till "*all that country*" rang with the news. In this they erred greatly, and probably caused the Saviour so much inconvenience by the pressure of the crowd, that he had to remove from the town. We may not hope that we are doing right if we disobey our Lord. However natural disobedience may appear to be, it is disobedience, and must not be excused. Even if the results turned out to be advantageous, it would not make it right to break the command of our Lord. Silence is more than golden when our King commands it. He doth not seek applause, nor cause his voice to be heard in the streets that he may be known to be doing a great work. His followers do well to copy his example.

We do not wonder that our Lord's name became famous when there were such persons to advertise it. How earnestly and eloquently would the two formerly blind men tell the story of how he opened their eyes! We are not forbidden, but exhorted to make known the wonders of his grace. Let us not fail in this natural, this necessary, this useful duty. More and more let us "*spread abroad his fame.*"

32. *As they went out, behold, they brought to him a dumb man possessed with a devil.*

As a pair of patients leave the surgery, another poor creature comes in.

Note the "behold." The case is striking. He comes not freely, or of his own accord: "*they brought*" him: thus should we bring men to Jesus. He does not cry for help, for he is "*a dumb man.*" Let us open our mouths for the dumb. He is not himself, but he is "*possessed with a devil.*" Poor creature! will anything be done for him?

33. *And when the devil was cast out, the dumb spake: and the multitudes marvelled, saying, It was never so seen in Israel.*

Our Lord does not deal with the symptoms, but with the source of the disorder, even with the evil spirit. "*The devil was cast out*"; and it is mentioned as if that were a matter of course when Jesus came on the scene. The devil had silenced the man, and so, when the evil one was gone, "*the dumb spake.*" How we should like to know what he said! Whatever he said it matters not; the wonder was that he could say anything. The people confessed that this was a wonder quite unprecedented; and in this they only said the truth: "*It was never so seen in Israel.*" Jesus is great at surprises: he has novelties of gracious power. The people were quick to express their admiration; yet we see very little trace of their believing in our Lord's mission. It is a small thing to *marvel*, but a great thing to believe.

O Lord, give the people around us to see such revivals and conversions, as they have never known before!

34. *But the Pharisees said, He casteth out devils through the prince of the devils.*

Of course, they had some bitter sentence ready. Nothing was too bad for them to say of Jesus. They were hard pressed when they took to this statement which our Lord in another place so easily answered. They hinted that such power over demons must have come to him through an unholy compact with "*the prince of the devils.*" Surely this was going very near to the unpardonable sin.

35. *And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people.*

Chapter xx. Verses 29, 30. *And as they departed from Jericho, a great multitude followed him. And, behold, two blind men sitting by the way side, when they heard that Jesus passed by, cried out, saying, Have mercy on us, O Lord, thou son of David.*

On Jericho a curse had rested, but the presence of Jesus brought it a blessing. We suppose he must needs go through Jericho as once before he must needs go through Samaria. Our Lord *departed from Jericho*, and a vast crowd attended him; for his fame had spread far and wide. Nothing striking is noted concerning his doings till two beggars come upon the scene. Mercy needs misery to give it an occasion to work. *Behold, two blind men sitting by the way side.* They could not behold Jesus, but we are asked to behold *them.* They had taken up a hopeful position, *by the way side*, for there they would be likely to hear any good news, and there they would be seen by the compassionate. They had ears if they had not eyes, and they used their hearing well. On enquiry, they learned *that Jesus passed by*, and believing that he could restore their sight, they grew earnest in prayer to him: *they cried out.* Their plea was pity: "*Have mercy on us.*" Their appeal was to the royal heart of Jesus: "*O Lord, thou son of David.*" Our Lord's sermon was interrupted by the repeated outcries of these two blind beggars of Jericho; but this never displeased him; neither would true preachers of the gospel be disconcerted if some of their hearers were to cry out with similar eagerness for salvation.

31. *And the multitude rebuked them, because they should hold their peace: but they cried the more, saying, Have mercy on us, O Lord, thou son of David.*

The crowd desired to hear Jesus, but could not do so because of the

shouts of the blind men: therefore *the multitude rebuked them*. Did they upbraid them for ill manners, or for noise, or for harshness of tone, or for selfishly wishing to monopolize Jesus? It is always easy to find a stick when you wish to beat a dog. The people wanted them to be quiet, and *hold their peace*, and found plenty of arguments why they should do so. This was all very well for those who were in possession of their faculties; but men who have lost their sight cannot be quieted if there is an opportunity of obtaining sight; and as that opportunity was rapidly passing away from these poor men, they became vehement in their earnestness. Unhindered by the threats of the crowd, *they cried the more*. Some men are urged onward by all attempts to pull them back. When we are seeking the Lord, we shall be wise to make every hindrance into a stimulus. We may well bear rebukes and rebuffs when our great aim is to obtain mercy from Jesus.

Unvarying was the blind beggars' cry: "*Have mercy on us, O Lord, thou son of David!*" Variety of words they had no time to study. Having asked for what they needed, in words which leaped from their hearts, they repeated their prayer and their plea, and it was no vain repetition.

32. *And Jesus stood still, and called them, and said, What will ye that I shall do unto you?*

*Jesus stood still.* At the voice of prayer, the Sun of righteousness paused in his progress. Believing cries can hold the Son of God by the feet. *He called them*: and this because they had called him. What comfort that call yielded them! We are not told that they came to him: there is no need to tell us that. They were at his feet as soon as the words were uttered. How sadly blind are those who, being called a thousand times by the voice of mercy, yet refuse to come!

Our Lord enlightened minds as well as eyes, and so he would have the blind men intelligently feel and express their needs. He puts to them the personal enquiry: "*What will ye that I shall do unto you?*" It was not a hard question, yet it is one which many an attendant at our places of worship would find it difficult to answer. You say you "wish to be saved": what do you mean by those words?

33. *They say unto him, Lord, that our eyes may be opened.*

Just so. They needed no time for second thoughts. Oh, that our people were as quick to pray, "*Lord, that our eyes may be opened!*" They went straight to the point. There is not a word to spare in their explanatory prayer. No book was wanted, no form of words; the desire clothed itself in simple, natural, earnest speech.

34. *So Jesus had compassion on them, and touched their eyes: and immediately their eyes received sight, and they followed him.*

So, that is, since they thus stated their desire, and had so great a need, *Jesus had compassion on them*, pitying their loneliness in the dark, their deprivation of enjoyment, their loss of power to follow a handicraft, and their consequent poverty. *He touched their eyes*. What hands were those which undertook such lowly fellowship with human flesh, and wrought such deeds of power! *Immediately their eyes received sight*. Only a touch, and light entered. Time is not necessary to the cures of Jesus. Proof of their sight was at once forthcoming, for *they followed him*. We best use our spiritual sight when we look to Jesus, and keep close to his heel.

Oh, that the reader, if he be spiritually blind, may ask for the touch of Jesus, and receive it at once, for immediately he will receive sight! An inward light will in an instant shine forth upon the soul, and the spiritual world will become apparent to the enlightened mind. The Son of David still lives, and still opens the eyes of the blind. He still hears the humble prayer of those who know their blindness and their poverty. If the reader fears that he, too, is spiritually blind, let him cry unto the Lord at this very instant, and he will see what he shall see, and he will for ever bless the hand which gave sight to the eyes of his soul.