

(II. His Eyes Opened. 6, 7.

V. 6. "*He spat on the ground....made clay....anointed the eyes of the blind man.*" Both spittle and clay were accounted in the East and in those days as efficacious in diseases of the eye. Tacitus relates that the blind man who sought a cure of the Emperor Vespasian, begged him "to sprinkle his eye-balls with the secretion of his mouth." Amongst primitive peoples, both of the east and west, a similar virtue is still ascribed to spittle. Jesus accommodated Himself to the ways of His time, in order, perhaps, to bring the rungs of the ladder of faith down to the very feet of this feeble man. His touch, too, infinitely tender as it was, would aid in drawing out the heart of the blind man to Him and so make faith easier.

V. 7. "*Go wash in the Pool of Siloam.*" It is the blind man's turn now. The approach had been made by Jesus. Now the man himself is required to act. The demand is a test of his trust and hope in the miraculous power of Jesus and an intimation to him, as well, of the sovereign will of Jesus in the matter. It is to be as He says and only as He says. Compare the case of Elisha and Naaman (2 Kings 5:9-14). "*He went his way therefore and washed*"; probably moved by his great need, for what would he not give for sight, and by the Holy Spirit of God working within him, although unrecognized by

him, as yet, as the Spirit of God. "*Came seeing*"—the result of his faith. Prompt reward for prompt obedience.

III. A Twofold Testimony. 8-11.

V. 8. "*Is not this he that sat and begged?*" The change in his appearance was at once remarked by his wondering neighbors and acquaintances. His face was so transformed as to be scarcely recognizable now that his eyes were opened.

V. 10-11. The candor and the caution of the man are alike to be noted. His testimony was direct and specific. "*A man that is called Jesus.*" He it is to whom he gives all praise. And he tells circumstantially of the making of the clay and the anointing of his eyes, and the command to go and wash in the Pool of Siloam, and his going and washing and receiving sight; but as to how the marvellous work was accomplished he risks no opinion.

These same characteristics appear in the sequel to the miracle with which the remaining part of the chapter (vs. 12-38) is taken up. How this beggar man copes with the Pharisees who are determined to put both him and His Healer in the wrong (vs. 13-34), and how he responds to the further appeal of Jesus for personal faith in Him as the Son of God (vs. 35-38), are worthy of highest admiration.

ILLUSTRATION AND APPLICATION

"*Blind from his birth,*" v. 1. A true picture, though not a flattering one, of the unregenerate. We are apt to deceive ourselves in regard to the slight inroad that sin has made upon us. The Word of God speaks no soft words on this point. Its testimony is clear, and straightforward, and decisive, that by nature we are utterly sinful. "I was conceived in sin, and brought forth in iniquity" is David's confession when answering to the voice of the Spirit of God within him, "Dead in trespasses and sins" is Paul's decision as to man's state, a decision made under the guidance of that same Spirit of God. Blindness, leprosy, death—these are the Bible images of sin. Not pleasant nor enticing, truly; but it is only when one sees how utterly sin has destroyed, and how utterly helpless he is to save himself from its pollution and its destructive power, that

he is prepared to abandon his own efforts and to fall helpless into the hand of Christ with the cry:

"Naked, come to Thee for dress;
Helpless look to Thee for grace;
Foul, I to the fountain fly;
Wash me, Saviour, or I die."

"*Who did sin, this man or his parents?*" v. 2. Life's mysteries of sadness are, to the Christian, not subjects of speculation. They are occasions for help. For the religion of Christ is intensely practical, as Christ Himself in the presence of sin and suffering was intensely practical. It is impossible that we can unravel the mystery of much of the woe that we see about us. It is idle for us to inquire. The mystery belongs, as it did in the case of this blind man, to the deep purposes of God. What is plain to us is that we