

## THIRD SABBATH.

**SUBJECT:** *Christ opens the eyes of one born blind.* John ix.

This miracle was performed on the same sabbath day on which our Lord uttered the memorable words recorded in the preceding chapter. Christ's teaching was confirmed by works which no one could do except God were with him. He could, as in this instance, calmly do his Father's work amid the rage of His enemies. All Christ's miracles are symbols of His spiritual work. This one in particular shows that He who is the Light of the world can also give power to perceive that light,—can open the blind eyes.

Vv. 2, 3.—Sin and suffering are always connected; all our afflictions, sorrows and calamities come upon us in consequence of our sin. But special suffering, instead of being a sign of special sin, may be a token of God's love. Both the blind man and his parents were sinners; but neither party had so sinned as to be the cause of his being born blind. The Lord neither denies their sin nor his; all that He does is to turn away His disciples from that most harmful practice of diving down, with cruel surmises, into the secrets of other men's lives, and, like the friends of Job, guessing for them hidden sins in explanation of unusual sufferings.—*Trench.*

V. 4.—Every man has his work and his day; if he neglects his work in the day he cannot do it in his night. The Lord himself had to do his work in the right time. He was crucified in about six months after his, and, in view of his death, he toiled all the more diligently.

V. 6.—This course was followed, probably, to assist the faith of the poor man.—Like the blind one in this instance we should not shrink from following any directions which the Master may give. Saliva was supposed by the Jews to be medicinal.

V. 7.—*Silam*, a Hebrew name, meaning *sent*. The Turks hold this fountain still in great veneration, and regard its waters as good for diseases of the eye. The blind man at once obeyed, and at once received the reward of obedience. Christ is the *sent* of God, and all who wash in His blood receive their sight.

Vv. 8-14.—The opening of his eyes would greatly change the appearance of his face, so that his old friends and neighbours would hardly know him. Some doubted if it was the man, but he had no doubt on the subject. They brought him to the Pharisees, (i. e. the lesser Sanhedrim, which contained a majority of Pharisees,) in order to decide whether the miracle was right or wrong, it having been performed on the sabbath day. In religious cases the judgment of the Pharisees was regarded as *final*.

V. 16.—The court was divided; a majority trying to condemn Christ as working miracles through Beelzebub, the prince of devils; a minority venturing to ask "How can a man that is a sinner do such miracles?"

V. 17.—They ask the man, What is your opinion of him since he opened your eyes? He replies, "He is a prophet." He did not yet know the full dignity of his benefactor.

Vv. 18-23.—They desire to get the parents to tell a lie, to say that he was not born blind; but the parents get rid of the difficulty by testifying only that this was indeed their son, and that he *was* born blind, shirking a reply as to how he received his sight, for they feared to be excommunicated. The Sanhedrim had not yet decided that Jesus *was* or *was not* the Messiah, but they claimed the right of doing so, and had denounced the fearful penalty of excommunication against any who should anticipate a favorable decision. "*Of age*," thirty years or upwards.

V. 24.—They administer a solemn oath to the man, "*Give praise to God*," being the form of oath.

V. 25.—*Experience* is the best possible answer to infidel cavils.

V. 30.—Any unprejudiced person could tell whence Jesus was from the works done by him.

V. 31.—"*Sinners*"—heathen, and persons who transgressed the traditions of the fathers, these were the *sinners* in the estimation of the Pharisees.

V. 32.—It was not till the year 1728 that the surgical operation called *couching* the cataract was performed on *one born blind*—Jesus opened the eyes of the blind by miracle. Since the year mentioned, surgeons have occasionally succeeded in curing persons born blind.

V. 34.—They regarded his blindness as an evidence of his sin, and they excommunicate him. He cannot, henceforth, worship God in the public assembly of his professing people.

Vv. 35-41.—When an outcast, Jesus reveals himself to him, and he kneels down and worships him. Jesus then remarks the fearful blindness of the Pharisees who pretend to be the eyes of the nation, in contrast with the light, spiritual and physical, which has come to others who were willing to secure it.

## LESSONS.

1. Mark the faith, obedience, constancy and holy boldness of the man who was cured. He did at once what Christ commanded. He confessed the truth at the risk of life. He is the first recorded instance of a person excommunicated for confessing Christ. See how, with true simple words, he confounded the craft of his cunning per-