

FROM BLINDNESS AND BEGGARY TO WORSHIP.

John ix.

That which is so wonderful in *John ix.* is that it gives us the history of the passage of a soul from beggary and darkness into being a worshipper of the Son of God. The man passes from this extreme of misery, blindness, and beggary too (for Scripture says, "Is not this he that sat and begged?") into being a worshipper, and that is one of the highest aspects of blessing any soul *can* know. This will be the occupation of the redeemed in heaven. It means such deliverance from self that you are delighting in an object outside yourself, and you are more than satisfied; that is worship. It is more than the knowledge of the forgiveness of sins, though I do not want to limit the blessing of being able to walk about in this world with the blessed sense of sins forgiven. "I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for His name's sake." (1 *John ii.* 12.) It is not to treat lightly such a word as that, that I speak of something further; but I want you to understand that that is not where *God* stops. You must know forgiveness first; but that is not the end. God's thought of blessing for you is that you may be found a worshipper for evermore in His presence. "The Father seeketh such to worship Him." (*John iv.* 23.)

I cannot go into all the details of this chapter;

but I must notice a few things. One striking characteristic in this blind man was that he went straight ahead. He never turned to the right or to the left ; the moment his eyes were opened he went straight on. And the soul that goes straight on, finds Jews, and synagogue, and parents against him ; still he goes on. He is not ashamed to confess his ignorance either. " I know not," he says ; but he goes on till we find him outside the synagogue in the presence of God.

But there is something more wonderful than this, which you will find in verses 58 and 59 of the preceding chapter, John viii. Jehovah, the One who had watched over Israel in all their manifold ways, was there in their midst, and *they knew Him not*. The leaders in Israel, in the beginning of the chapter, bring into the presence of Jehovah a poor sinner in her sins, and raise the question of what should be done to her. " Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be stoned." (v. 5.) They raise the question about stoning a sinner ; but what comes out in the end of the chapter is not the stoning of the sinner, but the stoning of the Saviour. (v. 59.) As glory after glory shone out about Him, their hatred rose more and more, till " they took up stones to cast at Him." What a story it tells ! Light was there. Into a world of utter darkness He came, bringing light. Think of the darkness that could be felt, and think of the Lord of glory coming down into this world. What a brilliant light was there dis-

played! "I am the light of the world." (Chap. viii. 12.) Does He claim too much for Himself when He claims to be the light of the world? Can you say, "Lord, Thou art my light, and outside Thy presence my estimate of everything is false"? What a moment when we learn that whatever reckonings we have arrived at, if made outside His presence, are utterly wrong!

Think of the grace and tenderness of that blessed Saviour when He was in this world, and how He uttered that solemn word of warning—"I am the light of the world: he that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." What a proposition! what words of grace were those! Those words of grace uttered in that day are as true in this day as when He uttered them. There is the light of life to-day as surely as in that day. It was in Christ then, and it is in Christ now. But before ever you can follow the Saviour, you must come into His presence; and to come into His presence is to come into the light; and to come into the light means to be uncovered, and to arrive at what *God* thinks about you. Love and everything you can need are there; but *light* is there too, and you must be found out. The human religiousness of these Pharisees could not go there--the man with a reputation to keep up will refuse the light of the Saviour's presence--and *they* took up stones to cast at him. Religious man has done worse than that; the *cross* was the end. To stone Him was only one of the blossoms of the same plant, if I

may so say. Here is the expression of the same hatred. They would not have the light because it exposed them ; and they would not have the love, for they hated Him. But you will always see that the more man's hatred rises up, the more God's grace rises far above it, and He passed out of their midst to go on for their blessing. His hour was not yet come, so He hid Himself. He turned away from all the violence and hatred found in the heart of man—that heart all the time covered over with religiousness, and ceremony, and sacrifice. How terrible in the eyes of Him who read what was *under* ! Every thought of the heart was as open to Him as the stones they would have hurled at His Person.

But notice : "And *as* Jesus passed by, He saw a man which was blind from his birth." This first verse is one of the most wonderful in the chapter ; for it tells what Christ was. Was He so occupied with His own things, or with the hatred and violence of those who had been trying to stone Him, that He had no time to think about the necessities of men and women ? No ; the eyes of Jesus "*saw* a man which was blind from his birth." He had time to think of a poor, desolate, blind beggar. All the violence of Israel could not turn Him aside from doing the work He had come to do, nor disturb that blessed, tranquil spirit. He was unruffled, and He had infinite love and grace. He knew what was coming ; He walked in the light of that eternity before Him. He knew what

His grace and power could do, and He was only looking for occasions on which to lavish them ; He saw a needy man. Who can tell what the heart of the Saviour felt ? Those occupied in ceremonial observances might pass the beggar by, wrapped up in their observances ; but the Saviour felt about him as none other could. He must have stopped and observed the man. Think of how He observes and watches ! There is not a soul that has a longing, a want, a desire, that Jesus does not see. He has been rejected here ; but He is the same in those realms of light as He was when down here. Jesus knows, Jesus sees, and more, *He feels*. Our poor hearts are so narrow and cramped, so distracted by the things through which we are passing ; but His, never. Divine perfection is in all He does, and if there is one soul who has a need, Christ in heaven sees you, knows you, and will relieve you—and He alone can do it. He did it by His word in that day, and He does it by His word in this day.

Then the disciples asked Him, " Master, who did sin, this man or his parents, that he was born blind ? " The Lord shewed that no *special* sin had called forth governmental dealing on God's part. It does not mean that they were not sinners ; but here was an occasion on which " the works of God " could be manifested—a platform on which He could put forth what the sovereign grace and goodness of God were. He came from heaven, not to *rest* here. Earlier in this gospel He says,

"My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." He knew, when here, labour and weariness; for (as has often been said) "love could not rest where sorrow was, and light could not rest where sin was." There was the One, who from eternity had been the delight of heaven, a Man down here in this world, wearied in it, walking up and down in the midst of necessity. What does He say? "*I must work.*" What a word for those who are one with Christ for ever—"I must work . . . the night cometh, when no man can work." You that are for ever blest, you that have received from God all that He can give you, the hour is coming when you must lay down service for ever, toil behind you for ever; "the night commeth, when no man can work." You never will find a weary soul to say a word to in heaven; no sorrowful hearts and downcast eyes will be there. But now you have a priceless opportunity; you can carry forth into this sad world tidings of life and liberty. Christ knew what that judgment was which was soon coming, and He knew what the light of heaven was. He knew the woe there will be when the great white throne is set. Believer, ask God to open your eyes upon what eternity is, and you will find that the little things of life will drop down into their proper place; you see them in the light of eternity. Christ measured everything in the light of God's eternity. Think of the value of a soul. If *work* is before you, you never will work; t if *Christ* is before you, work must follow. It

is the love of *Christ* which constraineth us. Knowing all these precious words, knowing that heaven is open and Christ is waiting to receive every soul that goes to Him, I am amazed that we are not more whole-hearted, earnest and devoted.

The One who could call worlds into existence at the bidding of His word, had time to address Himself to the necessity of this poor beggar. His hands anointed his eyes with the clay. Hands that were soon going to be nailed to the tree, hands that are pierced now—what were they doing? They were anointing eyes that had never been opened on anything here. Oh, what a glorious Saviour! You must be more blind than this poor man was, if you cannot see any glory in the Son of God occupying Himself with the necessities of a poor beggar. He was never more glorious than at that moment. You may say there was glory on the Mount of Transfiguration; but is there not a glory here that surpasses it—a *moral* glory? The Saviour and sinner together here. First He anointed him, and then He spoke. Do you think that poor man ever heard a voice like *that* before? Is there any voice like the voice of Jesus? It was the first time His voice broke on the ear of that beggar. Can you say—

“I heard the *voice* of Jesus say,
Come unto Me and rest;
Lay down, thou weary one, lay down,
Thy head upon My breast”?

Then other voices, which attracted you before the voice of Jesus was heard, lose their charm. When you hear that voice you will say, "I never heard anything like *that* before;" and all you will say after will be, "Cause me to hear Thy voice." If you will only take the place of being a listener for the voice of Jesus, your eternal salvation is secure. God wants you to listen to the voice of Jesus.

You may say you are not a poor, blind beggar; you are rich, and can have all you want. Friend, if your *soul* is not saved, if you do not know Jesus, you are *nothing* but a poor, blind beggar; you *are* in want, and you use your money to supply your wants. You say to the world, "I want your pleasures, I want your amusements, and I will give you money for them." There are rich as well as poor beggars in this world, and the fact of your going to the world shows you have not Christ; you have not joy in heaven. It must be one of two things; you are going in for the fashion of this world, which passeth away, or else it is Christ and His joys. I have no doubt we shall see that once blind man in heaven, and should we then ask him, he would tell us that the first moment the voice of Jesus fell on his ear, it was life and blessing. Those hands touched him. There is nothing so tender as the touch of Jesus. The Psalmist could say, "Day and night Thy hand was heavy upon me." That was God dealing with him; but then came the grace.

Notice the extreme simplicity of it all. "He

went his way, therefore, and washed, and came seeing." Satan tries to deprive souls of the simplicity of the Gospel. It is *divinely* simple ; the only question is, Do you *want* a blessing ? The difficulty is not with the word of God, but with souls ; their inclinations are wrong, If the inclination is after these things, if there is a want of them, it is all simple ; but if the inclination is after the world, all is wrong. I ask you this one question, Is there any inclination after Christ in your soul ? *Do you want Him ?* Would you like to come in contact with Him ? Here it was just one statement on the Saviour's part—"Go and wash" —and one action on the sinner's part. The blind man did not say, "What is the use of washing ?" He did not reason about it ; the Saviour spoke, and he acted, that was all. It was a beautiful example of the obedience of faith. The obedience of faith is faith's obedience—the obedience rendered by faith. That word spoken by Jesus went right down into the very depths of his soul. He acted only on the word of the Lord ; it was the ground of his faith. Is not that simple ? If you take Christ at His word, your soul will be brought into blessing ; and you will never get it in any other way. What are you staking your soul on ? The hour of your dissolution may come ; you will want something sure and settled *then*. Will hymns do ? No ; not to rest on, beautiful though they are as channels to let off the joys of the heart. It is the word of Christ you must have.

Take Christ at His word, and you will get blessing.

It is beautiful the way the man said, "I am he; I am the man that was born blind; I am the man who sat and begged;" but there was an end to all that. We never find he carried on any begging after. Of course he could see to work. But begging was in the past; he was not a beggar in the present. How simply he described his cure! But he did not yet know who had done it, or where He was to be found. He had to say, "I know not." It was a great loss to the man not to know this. He had received the blessing, but he did not know the Benefactor. How often one sees souls saved by the work of Christ, and not consciously knowing the Person of Christ! Men will look around and every way, but they do not look *up*. Now if your eyes are opened you will delight to look *up*. Scripture says, "The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day." (Prov. iv. 18.) What is your past? A perfect redemption wrought for your sins. What is your present? A perfect Saviour at God's right hand. And what is your future? You are going to "perfect day." Oh, who would not belong to Christ?

Then comes out the enmity of the Pharisees and the alarm of the parents. What a picture of the heart of man! Nothing so hinders, blights and withers up everything in the soul, as the fear and bondage of man in religious things. They were

afraid of being put out of the synagogue. Inwardly they *must* have known who had effected the cure; but they were afraid to confess it. Who could know better than they how blind their son had been from his birth? Many a time must that mother have wept, and the father have groaned, over that little child born blind; and then, after long years, when his eyes were opened, were they not going to own the claims of the Benefactor? Oh, this deadly power of the fear of man! "How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only?" (John v. 44.) You are afraid of what your friends will say; but they will not stand for you in the day of judgment; you will be *alone* then. No, you must go on; you must come to Christ, and go on straight after Him. The man, as it were, says, "I cannot be anything but what I *am*; my Saviour has made me what I am, and I must own Him." He was not cast out of the synagogue until he had borne a beautiful testimony (vv. 30-33), delivered a wonderful farewell address. He spoke with the authority of a man who knew the Scriptures. "If this man were not of *God*"—that was his point, and they cast him out upon that. There was nothing else for him. He had said, as it were, "I cannot be anything but what I am; He has made me what I am, and I owe everything to Him." He was a bright ray of light in the midst of Israel, and his testimony was what Jesus had done for him. "And they cast him

out," but it brought him into the company of the Son of God.

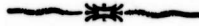
“ Jesus heard that they had cast him out ; and *when He had found him* ”—that shows how He went on to search after this man—“ and when he had found him,” the same voice spoke again. The only words the man had heard Him say before were, “ Go, wash in the pool of Siloam.” The next were, “ Dost thou believe on the Son of God ? ” and then, “ Thou hast both seen Him, and it is He that talketh with thee.” Where would you rather have been, *inside* with the Pharisees, with a religious status, or *outside* with the Son of God ? They were so near, so alone together, the poor sinner whose eyes had been opened, and the Saviour who had done it. What was the man's answer ? “ Lord, I believe. And he worshipped Him.” He had found an Object on which his heart could rest for ever : and what was the only thing he could do ? Worship. Have you ever reached such a state ? Do you know that there is such a thing to be known in this world as being at the feet of Jesus, and not being able to ask for anything, but only delighting yourself in the sense of what He is, your heart finding its only relief in bowing down at His blessed feet, and saying, “ *Thou art worthy* ” ? His worthiness so filling your soul that you lose the sense of yourself altogether ; for you are swallowed up and engulfed in the love, glory, grace, and goodness of Christ.

May God in His mercy bless His word, and make Christ precious to you, for His name's sake.

WORSHIP IN SPIRIT AND IN TRUTH.

It is impossible to separate true spiritual worship and communion from the perfect offering of Christ to God. The moment our worship separates itself from this, its efficacy, and the consciousness of that infinite acceptance of Jesus before the Father, it becomes carnal, and either form, or delight of the flesh. When the Holy Spirit leads us into real spiritual worship, He leads us into communion with God, into the presence of God, and then, necessarily . . . the infinite acceptability to Him of the offering of Christ is present to our spirit ; the acceptance of that sweet savour is that in which we go to Him. We are associated with it ; it forms an integral and necessary part of our communion and worship. We cannot be in the presence of God in communion without finding there the perfect favour of God in which an offered Jesus is. It is, indeed, the ground of our acceptance, as well as of our communion. Apart from this, then, our worship falls back into the flesh ; our prayers form what is sometimes called a gift of prayer, than which nothing often is more sorrowful ; a fluent rehearsal of known truths and principles, instead of communion and the expression of our wants in the unction of the Spirit ; our

singing, pleasure of the ear, the taste in music and expression in which we sympathize ; all a form in the flesh, and not communion in the Spirit. All this is evil ; the Spirit of God owns it not ; it is not in spirit and in truth ; it is really iniquity.



THE OFFERINGS OF GOD.

“By Him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to His name. BUT to do good and to communicate forget not : for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.”—Heb. xiii. 15, 16.

We often hear the verse quoted, “Let all things be done decently and in order.” Surely it is well to bear that in mind, but I ask “whose order? God’s or man’s?” In these days when man’s order has so largely displaced God’s order in divine things ; when, if I may so speak, the altar (symbol of worship) has been displaced by the pulpit, it is well to call to mind the injunction to Moses : “Look that thou make them after their pattern which was shewed thee in the mount.” Nothing was left to the imagination even of a Moses. Is there no lesson for God’s people now in all this? There are those who think so ; and, having prayerfully and carefully studied the word of God, have learned to discard the traditions of men and to cleave to God’s order. Such have learnt, by grace, how precious is the privilege of the sacrifice of praise and how acceptable it is to God by Jesus

Christ, which the above important passage in the Hebrews brings before us.

However, I would especially call the attention of such to the second part, which is linked to that which precedes by the closing words, "with *such sacrifices* God is well pleased."

The "BUT" is characteristic. It implies a tendency in us to go only part of the way in our "sacrifices," and to stop at the first. However, thank God for whatever He has put in our hearts of desire to be well pleasing to Him; and the being reminded of what He is looking for from us will operate powerfully in causing us to bear likewise this real and tangible fruit of our love to Him.

With this in view let us go back to a lesson in the Old Testament, viz., 2 Kings xii. 6 and following: "But it was so, that in the three and twentieth year of king Jehoash the priests had not repaired the breaches of the house. Then king Jehoash called for Jehoiada the priest, and the other priests, and said unto them, Why repair ye not the breaches of the house?" and further on (ver. 9), "But Jehoiada the priest took a chest,*

* We are reminded of this chest by Luke xxi. 1 and following, in these terms, "And He looked up, and saw the rich men casting their gifts into the treasury. And He saw also a certain poor widow casting in thither two mites. And he said, Of a truth I say unto you, that this poor widow hath cast in more than they all; for all these have of their abundance cast in *unto the offerings of God*; but she of her penury hath cast in all the living that she had."

It is advisable for us to dwell for a moment on

and bored a hole in the lid of it, and *set it beside the altar*, on the right side as one cometh into the house of the Lord; and the priests that kept the door put therein all the money that was brought into the house of the Lord. And it was so, when they saw that there was much money in the chest, that the king's scribe and the high priest came up, and they put up in bags, and told the money that was found in the house of the Lord. And they gave the money, being told, into the hands of them that did the work, that had the over-sight of the house of the Lord; and they laid it out to the carpenters and builders, that wrought upon the house of the Lord."

Lastly further on (ver. 14), "But they gave that to the workmen, and repaired therewith the house of the Lord. Moreover they reckoned not with the men, into whose hand they delivered the money to be bestowed *on workmen*: for they dealt faithfully."

The words of the Lord Jesus Christ previously

words of the Lord Jesus on this occasion. His divine approbation of the *two mites* of the poor widow is frequently reverted to by our carnal sensibilities as though we thought it to be well-pleasing to the Lord to put *into the offerings of God* a few pence! Beloved brethren, where are we as to this? Do we not rather see how very *rare* is this widow's offering, so highly esteemed by God, because it was *all the living that she had*. Which of us has ever once given *all the living that he had*? Ah! if the godly desire of this poor widow thus to take part, in spite of her destitution, in the offerings of God, was shared by us, what abundance there would be in these offerings, and also what returns of righteousness for those participating therein! (2 Cor. ix. 10).

referred to (Luke xxi.) have put us in a line of exquisite instruction, so that from this narrative we may cull again and again.

We also have to do with the *house of God* and with the *offerings of God*. The abuses which have been committed and which are still being practised in connection therewith, we, through the Lord's grace, have come out from, and have become prudent and cautious with reference to every human means and ingenious expediency having for their object the producing among the children of God of this fruit of liberality enjoined in Scripture. But let us be careful that this reaction does not cause us to fall into negligence and indifference with regard to the requirements of the house of God. "The Lord looketh *on the heart*." He sees if the heart is devoted to Him, and if His word, directed by the Holy Spirit, has the effect of disposing our hearts to such things as are "well-pleasing to Him." Now it is He who has caused these words to be written to us, "Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things" (Gal. vi. 6).

We would go beyond the limits of our space were we to recall the various aspects of this important subject of our service towards God. We desire to restrict ourselves to a single point which we believe to be more easily lost sight of. And, as has been said, the reaction against the abuses is liable to weaken in us our responsibility with reference to the needs of God's house, and thus to

cause us to lose our privilege in participating therein.

The short verse, Mark xi. 12, gives us a lesson at once touching and sorrowful: "And on the morrow, when they were come from Bethany, *He was hungry.*" He, the Lord! He who fed the multitudes, and who also provided for the wants of His disciples (Luke xxii. 35), *on one occasion* at least did He find no person that would trouble himself about procuring Him food for the day! This teaches us that the perfect Servant would go before His own in the narrow path along which He would call them to pass after Him. And, according to His own words, "The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord" (Matt. x. 24); in like manner do not the godly servants of Christ frequently find themselves similarly tested? But what say we, beloved brethren, if enjoying the teaching of the Lord by His servants, we forget to offer them the simplest necessities of life and allow them *to be hungry?* The apostle praises Gaius for having acted faithfully in all that He had done to the brethren, and to those even who were strangers who had borne witness of his love before the assembly; and, says he, "whom if thou bring forward on their journey *after a godly sort* (literally "*worthily of God*"), thou shalt do well; because that for His name's sake (corrected reading gives, "for the Name") they went forth, taking nothing of the Gentiles" (3 John 6, 7). On the other hand Nehemiah blames those whom he had

left at Jerusalem for a time, because "the portions of the Levites had not been given them" (Neh. xiii. 10), so that, he goes on to say, "the Levites and the singers, that did the work, were fled everyone to his field. Then contended I with the rulers, and said, Why is the house of God forsaken?"

It is well for us that these things are recorded in Scripture, just as we have written in the law of Moses, "Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn. Doth God take care for oxen? Or saith He it altogether for our sakes? *For our sakes, no doubt this is written*: that he that ploweth should plow in hope; and that he that thresheth in hope should be partaker of his hope" (1 Cor. ix.).

Do not let any of us, beloved brethren, be looking at others in order to disburden ourselves of these duties on them. It is with the Lord that we have to do, each one for himself, rich, poor, or those of moderate means, it is to Him we bring our offerings, it is His house; and if His house be neglected He sees it, and it is to each one of us He addresses His exhortations, and "His commandments are not grievous." "All things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do," and if our offerings are not forthcoming or are inadequate, He sees the reason of it. He sees how few sacrifices we bring there. We would do well to ponder over Haggai i. 9; indeed the whole of that short book affords profitable matter for meditation in connection with the sub-

ject before us. We can excuse ourselves as to these charges by comparing ourselves with others, by the smallness of our means, etc., but the Lord sees how much self-denial there is on our part. And He is near to put His finger on the multiplicity of our expenses, superfluous, useless or even hurtful, which we indulge in for ourselves, while His house, and His servants are forgotten.

In conclusion, let us remember that whilst we are neglecting these exquisite instructions which the word addresses to our hearts, *it is our loss*. It is sufficient, beloved, to remind you of this, "knowing" (as the apostle Paul says to Philemon) "that thou wilt also do more than I say."

"The "chest" of Jehoash was placed beside "the altar," and likewise in the exhortation of Paul to the Hebrews he connects together in the same way "the sacrifice of praise" and "the sacrifice of doing good and communicating," as the two sides of the service with which God is well pleased. May He give us to remember "without ceasing" this precious exhortation!

Do not let us be asking: "Are there any needs? What servant of God is without the necessaries of life?" etc. Dear friends, the needs are of every day occurrence, and the instruction lasts during eighteen centuries to exercise and test our faithfulness. And if we are inattentive to it, we shall certainly lose the blessing that God has linked up therewith. Moreover God may let us be deprived both of servants and service (Haggai i. 11).