



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Gospel of Matthew

“Blind Men and the Lord, Then and Now,” Matthew 9:27-31 – TRANSCRIPT

The Scripture reading for this morning is found in Matthew chapter 9, verse 27 through verse 31. Before I read that passage which is the passage for the exposition that follows, let me introduce it by reading a passage from the prophecy of Isaiah, in which the prophet speaks of the Messianic day that is ahead and describes a few of the things that will transpire when the king comes. And since it is evident that our Lord is in his earthly ministry fulfilling some of these things – at least presenting his credentials as the Messiah – I believe that it will bear with importance on our topic today.

In the 29th chapter of the prophecy of Isaiah, in verse 17 through verse 19 we read these words,

“Is it not yet a very little while, and Lebanon shall be turned into a fruitful field, and the fruitful field shall be esteemed as a forest? And in that day shall the deaf hear the words of the book, and the eyes of the blind shall see out of obscurity, and out of darkness. The meek also shall increase their joy in the LORD, and the poor among men shall rejoice in the Holy One of Israel.”

You can see from that passage that some of the things which the Messiah will do include the healing of the blind, the healing of the deaf, and other important things.

Now with this in mind, we turn to Matthew chapter 9 and verse 27 for the Scripture reading, in which we have the account of the healing of two blind men. The subject for this morning is, “Blind Men and the Lord, Then and Now.”

“And when Jesus departed thence, two blind men followed him, crying, and saying, ‘Thou son of David, have mercy on us.’ 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.’ Then touched he their eyes, saying, ‘According to your faith be it unto you.’ And their eyes were opened; and Jesus sternly charged them, saying, ‘See that no man know it.’ But they, when they were departed, spread abroad his fame in all that country.”

May the Lord bless this reading of his inspired word.

There is no realm that is not under the power of the Messianic king. The miracles of healing, which the king performed, indicate that. The miracles of power show that he has all power, and the miracles of restoration, which we are studying, display again the sovereign majesty of the Son of God. He is the conqueror of death, he is the conqueror of infirmity, and he is the conqueror of demons.

The thing that our Lord is doing, evidently, at this point in his ministry according to the Gospel of Matthew is displaying his Messianic credentials. In the passage that we read as an introduction to the Scripture reading, it was specifically stated that the deaf should hear, and the eyes of the blind should be turned from darkness to light. It is evident that Matthew, in constructing this gospel – and he has constructed it with a great deal of precision – longs for Israel to see, truly see, and understand her king. It’s not

surprising that the Lord should heal the blind, and it’s not surprising that he should include the healing of two blind men.

It’s pathetic, and yet natural, that the two men should be together. Equal sorrows cause men to creep close for warmth and companionship. And so, when we read of two blind men who followed the Lord Jesus, we are not surprised, for those who have difficulties tend to congregate together. Later on in this same gospel, in the 20th chapter, we will have another incident in which our Lord deals with two blind men.

And I say, it’s not surprising that in our Lord’s miracles there should be stress upon the healing of blindness, because blindness was a distressingly common ailment in the east, and still is. Mr. Spurgeon, in one of his sermons that deals with this topic, says, “In our own streets we meet here the blind beggar, but they swarm in eastern cities. Ophthalmia is the scourge of Egypt and Syria, and Volney declares that in Cairo, out of a hundred persons whom he met, twenty were quite blind, ten lacked one eye, and twenty others were more or less afflicted in that organ.

“At the present time,” Mr. Spurgeon went on to say, “one is struck by the immense number of the blind in Oriental lands, and things were probably much worse in our Lord’s days.”

There were two principal reasons for this, and one is that the glare of the bright eastern sun was not good for unprotected eyes. And then at that time, there was a great deal of ignorance among the people of the importance of cleanliness and hygiene. So all of this seems to be true to the culture and to the times in which our Lord ministered, and so when we read of the healing of the blind, we’re given an insight into the type of society in which our Lord ministered.

Well, we tend to look at this and think that this is something far off from us, but it is not so. Of course, we do not have that many blind in our society, but we have a kind of blindness that is universal. And this incident is designed to stress that more than

anything else. This common form of blindness among us is spiritual blindness, and every one of us is spiritually blind, naturally.

We read, for example, in the apostle’s letter to the Corinthians, the first one, “For the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God. They are foolishness unto him. Neither can he know them, for they are spiritually discerned.” Every one of us is blind spiritually naturally. That’s the way we are born. We are born stone-blind, spiritually.

Now, in other passages, we read in Paul’s writings that when the new birth comes, we have our understanding enlightened, because our understanding was darkened. We also read in passages such as Romans chapter 8, verses 7 and 8, that they that are in the flesh cannot please God. We cannot – not, do not – but cannot. So, the blindness and the deafness and the dumbness of the miracles of our Lord in the spiritual sphere are designed to portray our own spiritual condition in that most important sphere, the sphere of the relationship of our inmost being to God.

Our Lord’s miracles are parables of this powerful saving energy in the spiritual world, and we do not read these parables properly until we have moved beyond the presentation of the physical Messianic credentials to the principles that lie back of the miracles.

Luther once said, “*Ein Jude oder judesche Herz ist so stock stein eisen teufel hart das mit keine weise zum bewegen ist.*” [Laughter] Which means something like this, “A Jew, or a Jewish heart, is so wood, stone, iron, devil-hardened that it can in no way be moved.” Now, Luther was right about the Jew. The only thing wrong with this statement is that he did not add, “And that portrays the Gentiles also.” For you see, the human heart is just as hard, and it cannot be possibly moved apart from the ministry of the Lord the Spirit.

This incident occurs just after the healing of Jairus’ daughter, incidentally. That seems to be the meaning of the clause in verse 27, “And when Jesus departed from there.”

So as he left the house in which Jairus’ daughter had been healed so wonderfully, as he made his way across the little village, two blind men begin to follow him, crying out and saying constantly, “Thou Son of David, have mercy on us.”

These men are very appealing to me. In fact, one of the most appealing men in all of Scripture to me is the blind man of John chapter 9, a man of immense practical understanding, and one is often tempted when you even mention the man to turn over and expound it, because he was such an unusual character. And I think one of the men that I want to talk with when I get to heaven is that blind man of John chapter 9.

But these two men, also, are very appealing men. And they are worthy of our spiritual imitation. I want you to notice these men. In the first place, they were very earnest in their desire for healing. The text of Scripture says that they followed him, crying and saying. So evidently, Matthew stresses, or desires to stress that they were not only saying, Son of David have mercy upon us, but they were shouting it out – emphasis rests upon it. They were earnest about their needs.

It’s very much a picture, in a contrary sense, of our society today. We feel that we can be earnest about almost everything but spiritual things. If a man is earnest in spiritual things, then he is regarded as a kind of religious fanatic. But now, we can be very earnest about our businesses, and that is perfectly alright. We can very earnest about our families, and that’s perfectly alright. And we certainly can be very earnest about our interest in sports, and that’s perfectly alright.

It’s perfectly alright to be very earnest about these things, but then when we turn to spiritual things, well, the truth of the matter is that most of us are just about as cold as the Arctic snows. These men are earnest. They are desirous for the blessings that they thought the Lord Jesus was able to bring them.

Not only were they earnest, but they were persistent. Those tenses of the verbs, crying and saying, of course, are present tenses as you can tell from the English text. And

so as our Lord made his way across from one house to the other, they persisted in their appeal to him.

And it is to me a rather poignant fact that these blind men managed to follow the Lord Jesus, and if we can gather from other statements, it’s evident that there were crowds that followed him, and so it was very difficult for two blind men to follow the Lord Jesus. I can just imagine them saying, “Where is he? Lead me to him. Which way did he turn? Is he still in the midst of the crowd?” And finally someone saying to them, “Give me your hand,” and one blind man speaking to the other: he’s going to lead us to him, give me your hand.

And so they managed to make their way to the house in which the Lord Jesus entered. And they are so persistent that they are not stopped by the fact that the people stop outside of the house. They go right into the house, into the presence of the Lord Jesus. They were obviously very purposeful in their seeking. They knew precisely what it was that they wanted. Thou Son of David have mercy on us; Thou Son of David have mercy upon us – they wanted to be healed of their blindness.

And their petitions, incidentally, were very God-glorifying. They addressed him as the Son of David, “Thou Son of David.” In other words, they acknowledged his right to the throne. Now this is something that the authorities were not acknowledging. And that kind of prayer is perfume in heaven, because in heaven, the Lord Jesus is the center of attraction.

It’s always been striking to me that in the great vision of revelation chapters 4 and 5, when we read of that throne room in heaven, with God sitting upon the throne and the elders and the living creatures and the angelic hosts about the throne. In the 5th chapter, when the tension turns to the Lamb of God who has been slain, John describes the throne, he describes the elders, he says in the midst of the elders, in the midst of everything, in the midst of the throne itself stands a lamb as it had been slain. And then,

of course, all breaks out in praise and glory and thanksgiving to God and to the lamb, so he is the center of attraction in heaven.

I like to think of this in the light of modern theology. As most of you know, I am a Professor of Systematic Theology, and one of my duties is to read modern theology. And I have to keep up, generally speaking, with the kinds of theologies that are being proclaimed to our 20th Century. We have theologies of revolution and liberation, we have process theologies, we have theologies of hope, we have neo-orthodox theology, and we also have some conservative theologies.

And, the striking thing about almost all of the theologies is the fact that the Lord Jesus is not given the central place in them. That is, the Lord Jesus as set forth in the word of God. Some of them claim to be Christocentric, but when you read them, you discover that the Christ that is being proclaimed is not necessarily the Jesus Christ of the Holy Scriptures, and so the Christocentricity of the biblical text is missing.

And I must confess, I read a lot of theology but my heart is not strangely warmed by most of them. It is the God-glorifying part of this petition that interests me. These men cry out, Thou Son of David, giving the Lord Jesus his rightful place as the promised Messiah king.

The cries of these men were also confessions of unworthiness. Notice, “Have mercy upon me,” they were saying. There was no talk of merits. They do not say, I attend church every Sunday. They do not say, I’ve been baptized, or I sit at the Lord’s table. They do not say that we have done good works. They do not say that we are religious. They don’t say that we are very good Jews. They do not make any appeal to any kind of merit whatsoever. They are beggars seeking mercy. And so they cry out, “Have mercy upon us, thou Son of David.”

Now it is evident these men have already received some ministry of the Holy Spirit, because men are naturally obstinate in their wills, they are darkened in their understanding, and they are depraved in their affections. They are obstinate by will. My

good friends, the Arminian believers say, “Oh, men may be saved if they will.” Well, I would reply, of course. We all believe that. But it’s just the “if they will” that’s the difficulty. And Scripture tells us “they will not come to me that they may have life.”

It is true that all may be saved if they will, but we don’t want to will it. That’s our natural condition. We are obstinate in our wills, rebellious in our wills. That is why we read, even of Christians, “Work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.” Even as believers, our will is still obstinate and rebellious toward divine things. So men are naturally rebellious of will.

They are also blind in understanding. The cross of the Lord Jesus Christ, which is so laden with glories and blessings, is a thing of no appeal to them. It does not captivate their hearts as the cross captivates the heart of a true believer. If you speak to a natural man and you point to the beauties of nature, point to that beautiful vault that is above us and to the mountains and streams and valleys and snows and all of the other beauties of natural creation, he can understand them.

But when you begin to speak of the wonders of covenant grace, of the atoning work of the Lord Jesus, of his death, burial and resurrection, of his present ministry in heaven as a Great High Priest, of the security of the believer who rests in him and is held by him safe and secure, of the sanctifying ministry of the Holy Spirit and also of the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus; well, he thinks it’s a wonderful tune that you’re playing, but he’s deaf, unfortunately, and he doesn’t hear.

And finally, men are naturally depraved in their affections. They don’t love to read the Bible. They don’t love to hear the ministry of the word of God. We don’t have the thousands of Dallas flocking into Believers Chapel to hear the word. We have a few Christians who manage to get into the small auditorium here; have to fight for a seat and occasionally do some unchristian things [laughter] in order to retain that seat, and that’s

about the end of it. Men are obstinate in their wills. They are darkened in their understanding. They are depraved in their affections.

These men are the object of the work of the Spirit. When a man has his will transformed so that he desires salvation, that his eyes have come open so that he sees facts concerning the Lord Jesus, and that he longs to enter into relationship with him, evidently we are the recipients of the work of the Holy Spirit. Otherwise, we should remain in our natural state.

Now, they come to him pleading then as criminals for mercy. In effect, they say, we do not have anything with which to commend ourselves to thee; if you should send us straight into eternity, separate from the God of heaven, it would be a just act. But, we know that according to Scripture, you save sinners, and we are sinners. Now they are speaking, of course, out of their blindness, but it’s evident they have come to spiritual understanding in measure, because they know he is the Son of David, so they address him as the Son of David. They’ve been enlightened so that they understand.

And to me, it’s one of the amazing things of our Lord’s ministry that these simple people understood more than those who were supposed to see, because, you see, they came to understand he was the Son of David. Later on, the Lord Jesus will ask the leaders, “What think ye of the Messiah? Whose Son is he?” And they will reply, “Why the Son of David,” and they mean by that, why, that’s what the Bible teaches.

And then he says, well, if he’s the Son of David, why do the Scriptures say, David speaking, “The Lord saith to my Lord, sit on mine right hand until I make thine enemies a footstool to my feet.” That seems to suggest that he’s more than Son—he’s LORD. What about that? And they weren’t able to answer the question and furthermore, it stopped them from asking the questions, too. They knew the letter of the law, that the Messiah was the Son of David, but they had not come to understand, yet, that he was Lord. And we will see that these men had not only been brought to understand that he was the Son

of David, the Messianic king, but in a moment they will say, “Yea, Lord.” And so the blind men see more than those who claim that they see. How true it is.

Today, the simple person who has come to faith in the Lord Jesus often understands more spiritual truth than the man who stands in the pulpit. I wonder if they had meditated on Isaiah chapter 9 and verse 18. In their cries they professed their faith and proclaimed his worth. That kind of prayer is always answered.

The response of the Lord is interesting. As he was come into the house—now it’s rather startling that he did not stop on the way. He let those men cry out after him. How far distant the one house was from the other, Scripture does not tell us. We assume it took some time because it was something that was persistently happening. If he went from one side of the city to the another, it must have taken ten, fifteen, thirty – perhaps forty-five – minutes, and the men are crying out all the time, Thou Son of David, have mercy upon us! But the Lord Jesus does not do anything.

Evidently, he desired to do this miracle away from the public eye. That’s created a great deal of difficulty for the scholars. And they’ve wondered why, coming to proclaim his Messianic credentials, he didn’t want people to hear about it. And I would imagine that one of the reasons for this is that the Israelites at this time had the concept of a Messiah as a political figure only.

They thought about the Messiah only as a king who would come and deliver them from the Romans, and establish them again as the head of the nations, with Jehovah God as their king over their Messianic-political figure. So, they thought of the king as a political figure, but their minds were so blinded to spiritual reality, that they didn’t know their need for forgiveness of sin. And so evidently, the Lord Jesus warned them not to spread the word abroad yet because it was not yet the time, knowing that this would produce the conflict that would lead to the crucifixion. And evidently, it was necessary that there precede this a time of teaching and preparation. So he performs some of his miracles in private places, and this is one of them.

As the blind men are brought in before the Lord Jesus, he has a question for them. He turns to them and he says to them, “Believe ye that I am able to do this?” Now this question was not for his benefit. He, of course, knew the answer to this question. It was for their benefit. He wanted to call attention to the means by which the blessing of God comes to man. Faith is the only thing, evidently, that stood between them and their sight. What is faith?

Faith is, as the Puritans used to say, the instrumental cause of our salvation. It’s probably not right to speak of faith as the cause of our salvation. They preceded it with the adjective, instrumental. They meant by that that faith is the means by which we receive the blessing of the Lord. It itself does not save us. It’s the means by which the Savior and his salvation become ours, and so it is the instrumental cause.

Paul expresses it most plainly in Ephesians 2:8, 9 when he says, “By grace are you saved through faith, and that not of yourselves. It is the gift of God lest any man should boast.” Through faith – faith is the instrumental cause. Faith is the means by which salvation comes to us. Faith is placed in the Scriptures and in Christ, or in Christ as he is set forth in the Scriptures. Faith receives the holy Scriptures as the word of God, and embraces Jesus Christ whose word it is and of whom the word speaks.

Faith is not something natural to fallen man. It does not arise spontaneously within the human heart. It is a gift of God. And the Holy Spirit doesn’t, incidentally, give it and then withdraw it. He does not say, I give faith to John Doe and then tomorrow say I’ll take faith from him, because faith is the means by which we are united to Christ, and in being united to Christ we become recipients of intercessory ministry, so that the promises of God sustain us and also the praying Christ at the right hand of the Father. He ever lives to make intercession for us, and because he does, we are kept. When faith is given, it is given once and for all. No true believer can ever apostatize from the faith.

When a man apostatizes from the faith, evidently – who at one time affirms belief in Jesus as the eternal Son, who died for sins, offered the atonement that is satisfaction for

God, and then says later that he did not – that is evidence that he did not have true faith. True faith is not given and then taken away.

This past week, a young man called me on the phone. I don’t think I’ve ever met him before, but he has attended Believers Chapel, and probably is in the audience this morning, because I did see him again this morning. He introduced himself to me. His question to me over the phone was, “What is the faith that saves?” He had been having some discussions.

And I went to say what it appeared to me is saving faith, that faith includes a true view of Jesus Christ as the eternal Son, as one who possesses deity, and then also as one who has offered atonement – an penal satisfaction atonement, incidentally – an atonement that is sufficient for sinners. And he, evidently, had been having some discussions with individuals who thought that it was perfectly alright just to say, “I have faith in Jesus,” and that it was not necessary to define the object of our faith precisely. Well, I agreed with my friend. To say that we have faith in Jesus, but to have the concept of the Jesus who is not necessarily the eternal Son is not to have saving faith. You do not have faith in the proper object. You see, faith doesn’t save; it’s the object that saves. And if the object is not the divine Son who has accomplished this atoning work, then you do not have faith in an object that saves, just as if I were to say to you, “I have faith in the bank,” that doesn’t really, actually secure my money. What secures my money is the solvency of the bank. If they are sound and secure then my money is secure. But if they are not solvent, then I can say as long as wish, I have faith in the bank, but I can be disappointed some day.

You see, it is the object of faith that saves. I may approach a bridge, and I may say, I have faith in that bridge and its safety, and go out upon it with perfect confidence and fall into the stream. You see, it is the object of faith that saves, and so the object of faith must be sufficient to save. It is important that we define our faith, define the object of faith.

And of course, you’ll notice that this question of our Lord is not only a question that deals with faith as an instrumentality. It deals with faith as a personal faith, and a faith in a worthy object. He said, believe ye that I am able to do this? You see, their faith was to be placed in a personal being, not merely in a series of propositions, sound though they may be. Now, one must have a series of propositions – I’ve been giving you a series of propositions – but they are related to a person. And faith is not only faith in propositions, but in the person of whom those propositions speak and whom is defined by those propositions. So, believe ye that I am able to do this?

There’s a wonderful little story about Rabbi Duncan who was Professor of Old Testament at the University of Edinburgh many years ago. He was presiding over a class one day in the college there, and he had asked one of the students to repeat a certain passage, 2 Timothy chapter 1 and verse 12. And the student came to the essential part of that text and said, “I know in whom I have believed.” And Rabbi Duncan stopped him and said, “My dear sir, you must never let even a preposition come between you and your Savior. That text reads, ‘I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that is able to keep that which I have committed unto him.’” I won’t comment on the exegesis of that text, but the principle he was drawing was probably a biblical principle: our faith is in a person.

Incidentally, Dr. Archibald Alexander of Princeton Seminary, when he was dying, had a friend come by who endeavored to fortify his faith by reciting some of the most familiar texts of the Bible, and he, too, cited this text: 2 Timothy chapter 1, and he read it, “I know in whom I have believed,” and the sick man raised his hand and said, “No, no, no! It’s not ‘I know in whom,’ but it’s ‘I know whom!’ I cannot have even that little preposition ‘in’ between me and Jesus Christ.” I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that is able to keep that which I have committed unto him.

John Oxenham has expressed that in a stanza: “Not what, but whom I do believe,
that, in my darkest hour of need / hath comfort that no mortal creed to mortal man may

give.” So our faith is in the Scriptures, but in the Scriptures as Christ is found there and we embrace him as he is set forth in the word of God. That, as I understand it, is true faith.

Now I have so much to say, [laughter] but I must go on and finish. So I won’t say anything more about that. I want you to notice the answer of these men. He said, “Believe ye that I am able to do this?” They said unto him, “Yea, Lord.” That simple brevity is both pathetic and beautiful. Sincerity, someone has said, needs few words. How true it is.

They don’t say, well now Lord, if it is within your power and if you wouldn’t mind, and if it won’t disturb people, we think we would like to have this healing. No, it’s “yea, Lord.” Their answer, incidentally, revealed the appreciation they had of his dignity. They say, yea, Lord. At one moment, they call him Son of David, and another moment they call him Lord, and thus bring together those two aspects of his character. He is the true Son of David, descended from David according to the flesh, but also Lord. And therefore, David’s Lord.

So here is an individual who’s from David by the flesh, but is over David by the Spirit. What do we make of this. Well, we make of this what the Christian church has always made of the Lord Jesus, that he is one divine person who possesses both a divine and a human nature. Yea, Lord.

Now as a result of their reply, we read, “Then touched he their eyes.” I love these figures of our Lord’s compassion and humanity. It’s amazing how many times that word, touch, is used of the Lord. We’ve already had some in this Gospel of Matthew. For example, in the 3rd verse of the 8th chapter we read concerning the leper, “He touched him, saying, ‘I will; be thou clean.’” And then in the case of Peter’s mother-in-law, “He touched her hand, and then the fever left her” in verse 15. And then in chapter 9 and verse 25 he went in and took the little girl by the hand. He touched her. So over and over again we find our Lord touching those who he heals.

Now I don’t think there’s anything more appropriate – except, possibly, the leper, who with all of the vileness and all of the terribleness of the case of leprosy, and reading that our Lord reached forth and touched that leper – well, that communicates to us the humanity and compassion of the Lord Jesus. But this does, too. Because you see, it was so appropriate that he do this for blind people who could not look upon his face and see the loving pity in his eyes that those who could see, could. And so he reached forth and touched the blind men in order to assure them that he did have compassion and pity and would respond to the faith that they had placed in them. And so we read, “Then touched he their eyes, saying, ‘According to your faith, be it unto you.’”

Faith determines the measure and often the manner of the gifts of our Lord. According to your faith, be it unto you. Professor Goday used to like to say that “faith is the hand of the heart.” Now, if faith is the hand of the heart – that by which we receive the blessings of God – then it would seem from this statement that the larger our hands, the bigger our gifts. According to your faith, be it unto you.

I want to say, O God, give us more faith! You want to tend to fall down on your knees and say, O God, give us this faith to believe; pray prayers like, help Thou mine unbelief! But you know, that would be the wrong reaction. If you want faith, you don’t have to crawl down on your knees and say, “O God, give me faith.” You know what you do? You open your Bible and begin to read. The Bible says faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God. That’s how faith comes. So if you want faith, you don’t get on your knees and pray, “O God, give me faith.” If an angel were there, he would say, stand up and open your Bibles and begin to read. [Laughter] That’s how you get faith.

Faith comes from companionship with the Lord Jesus, and acquaintances with his promises, and that comes from Scripture. Your faith will grow as you grow in the knowledge with our Lord. You have confidence in men because of your acquaintance with them. I had confidence in my father, and you had confidence in your parents, and confidence in your friends by virtue of your acquaintance with them. I had confidence in

my father because I knew him. We were that close; I knew I could count upon him, because I knew him. Now he would fail because he was a human being, of course, but our Lord never fails, and confidence comes from acquaintance with him. If I could just urge you so that you would turn to the word of God, we all would be so much better.

Now, he not only touched them, and he not only said, according to your faith be it unto you, but their eyes were opened. The response of nature to the word of God is obedience. And in one glorious moment, they enter into life. The dying men who had never seen, evidently, had as their first sight the face of Jesus Christ.

Mr. Spurgeon used to like to tell the story of a blind man who was speaking to a fellow saint. And the blind man said to him, and he had been born blind, “You know, I’ve been blessed in a greater way than you have.”

The man said, “What do you mean? I’ve been able to see all my life, and you’ve been blind all of yours.”

He said, “Yes, you’ve been able to see, alright. But you’ve seen many disagreeable things. You’ve seen all kinds of things that are very unsatisfactory, but the first look that I will have will be the sight of the face of my blessed Savior. I’ve been blessed in a much greater way than you have.”

Then the command comes again. Don’t tell anybody about it; no provocation that would produce false conceptions and lead to disorder. But they, desirous of expressing their gratitude for what Jesus Christ had done, they disobey by spreading the word far and wide. Now you might think that was good. I don’t think it was good at all. It was disobedience. Oh, it’s understandable, very understandable that these men who were blind now saw. It was just beyond their weak and frail human nature from saying anything about it, but let me assure you that we honor God most when we obey him. And even when it might seem strange and contrary to our views, we honor him most when we obey him.

Incidentally, we honor him most when we obey him and witness as led by the Holy Spirit. It’s not always good to spread the word far and wide when not led by the Holy Spirit. Witnessing is not, by itself, necessarily good. That’s evident from this. Now, I’m not against it, mind you. And when led by the Spirit, we should not disobey, and probably most of us disobey more by not witnessing than by witnessing, but the principle is to give the news of Christ under the direction of the Spirit.

Well this incident is a magnificent demonstration of the Messianic credentials again, and a beautiful illustration of the saving power of the Lord Jesus in the spiritual sphere, for that is, ultimately, the thing that this passage speaks about. And it’s a beautiful picture of blind men, and a genuine picture of our condition: we who have no hope, are without God in the world; we who are blind and cannot understand spiritual things. It of course, affords an occasion for a divine work.

These men didn’t need the new glasses of reformation. They didn’t need the corrected vision of education and culture. They did not need the eye-salve of religion. What they needed was new eyes. And you, too. You needed new eyes. It’s not enough to get religion. It’s not enough to experience reformation. It’s not enough to make some new resolutions. It’s not enough to fellowship with believing Christians. It’s not enough to attend meetings. It’s not enough to observe all the ordinances. It’s not enough to do good works and be a good citizen.

“Ye must be born again,” the Lord Jesus says. We need new eyes and new ears, new minds given by God through the Lord Jesus Christ.

There’s an old story about three Puritan preachers which I like, so I’ll tell you the story as I close. There was a British man by the name of Richard Luckwurst. He was well-known London hosier who lived, or had his business on Fleet Street in London.

In the 17th Century, in the age of the Puritan preachers – and there were great preachers in Scotland in those days – he decided he would make a visit to Scotland. He wanted to see all the sights: the castle, the grass market, Arthur’s Seat, the Salisbury Crags,

Greyfriar’s Church, St. Giles’ Church and all the sights in the beautiful city of Edinburgh, Scotland.

Word came to Janet Aken, a nurse, an elderly woman who had been born in Scotland, that Mr. Luckwurst was making the trip. And she was a Christian woman, loved the preaching of the word, knew about the great Scottish preachers, and hoped that this man might hear some of them. And she asked him, when he went there, if he wouldn’t listen to some of the preachers. Now, he wasn’t a very religious man. He wasn’t even a church-going man, and the last thing that he wanted to hear in Scotland was to hear preachers. But she prevailed upon him, and just before he left she gave him a crumpled piece of paper on which were written three names: Mr. Samuel Rutherford; Mr. David Dixon; Mr. Robert Blair. And as he left she called out, as his carriage moved away, “D’n f’get! D’n f’get to hear the preachers!” Well, when he got there, he decided he would do it.

Now, Rutherford had been a pastor in [Indistinct], Scotland, and had made his name there. Later, he was a professor at St. Andrew’s University, and later was associated very strongly in the drawing up of the Westminster Confession of Faith. He had a big hand in it.

David Dixon was a minister at Irvine, Scotland, great preacher of the covenant of redemption, and afterward Professor of Divinity at Glasgow and Edinburgh. Hugh Campbell has said, “The Professor of Divinity at Edinburgh was a truly great man, and the Professor of Divinity at Glasgow was a still greater man, but the minister of Irvine was the greatest man of all, because he had won the heart of the Scots through his preaching as the pastor of the church there.

Robert Blair was considered the wisest man of Scotland, and he was the intimate friend of each of the two. And when Rutherford died, incidentally, he called for Robert Blair. And Robert Blair is the one who heard from Rutherford’s lips those triumphant words which Mrs. Cousin has used in the formation of the stanzas of the hymn, “The

Sands of Time are Sinking.” Those are the words that arose from Samuel Rutherford when you sing, “I hail the glory dawning from Emmanuel’s land,” or you sing, “Their glory dwelleth in Emmanuel’s land.” Those are words that came from Mr. Rutherford’s lips, and were used as the basis for “The Sands of Time.”

Well, when Mr. Luckwurst got to Scotland – and he has written all of this in his account of his visit up there, and it’s recorded in Robert Woodrow’s *Unelector*. He says that he went first to St. Andrews where he “heard a sweet and stately-looking man, Blair by name, and he showed me the majesty of God. He exhibited the divine sovereignty and the glory in a way that I had never beheld before.”

And then in the afternoon, in St. Andrews, on the same day, he said that he heard Samuel Rutherford, “a little, fair man who moved and melted my heart by showing me the loveliness of Christ.”

“Then next day, I went to Irvine,” he said, “where I heard a well-favored, proper old man with a long, white beard, and the old man, Dixon by name, showed me all my heart.” Isn’t that interesting?

One of the preachers, Robert Blair, spoke of the majesty of God, the sovereignty of God and all of his works. And then Samuel Rutherford – whose memoirs and letters, Spurgeon held, were next to the Bible in appeal – he preached the loveliness of Christ.

What do you need in order to receive the blessing of all of this? Why my dear friend, you need to know all your heart. It is wicked, rebellious, darkened, blind, depraved. You need a Savior. You’re lost. And Dixon’s, “he showed me all my heart” is the stepping-stone to conversion to Jesus Christ.

If the Holy Spirit has spoken to you, today, and you have come to understand something of the glory of the Lord Jesus and the loveliness of his ministry, what you need is to know your own heart. And if you have come by the Spirit’s enlightenment to an understanding of that, then you are ready to respond to the good news concerning the Lord Jesus. He is available for sinners. If you know you are a sinner, you may have him.

May God give you grace to respond and say to him, Lord, I thank Thee that Thou hast died for sinners. I’m a sinner. I receive the gift of everlasting life. Let’s bow together in a closing prayer.

[Prayer] And now may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is truly lovely, the fellowship and communion of the Holy Spirit who alone enlightens and regenerates, the love of God the Father who initiated the divine program, be and abide with all who know our Lord in sincerity.

And Father, if there should be some here how have not yet believed, give no rest nor peace until the rest in Christ.

We pray for Jesus’ sake. Amen.