

## OUT OF DARKNESS INTO LIGHT

"One thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see." John 9:25.

God's Word is a great picture gallery; and one of the most notable of the great pictures in it is the one in the ninth chapter of John's Gospel. It is a stage crowded with eager actors, whose words and movements arrest our attention. What a scene is portrayed! What lessons are taught!

Bestowing sight upon one who was born blind is one of the most interesting and important events in the life of our Lord, and the story unfolded in this chapter is one of the most animated, fascinating and dramatic within the compass of the scriptures. This story carries us back to the narrow, crowded streets of Jerusalem more than nineteen centuries ago. It was a Sabbath Day, an autumn day, when all nature was tinged with sober gold. It was the last autumn of our Lord's earthly life. The hour, it would seem, was late afternoon. The low descending sun was nearing the treetops in the west, and would soon drop like a great ball of fire into the Mediterranean. Near the Temple gate sat a blind beggar, whose eyes from his birth had rolled in irksome night. He was not allowed to ask alms on the Sabbath, but his very affliction was a plea for help. And Jesus, whose attention human need never escaped saw him--regarded him with a meaningful look; stopped before him; and the disciples in their mental confusion turned to Jesus and said, "Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind?"

Many of the Jews in the days of Jesus had a theory that if a man was unfortunate, somebody had committed a special sin and God was punishing him for this sin. A righteous man, they thought, would prosper in temporal affairs; a wicked man would be cursed. But Jesus repudiated the idea that we can tell what kind of a person a man is by the way that he prospers in temporal affairs. Sometimes suffering is punishment for sin, but it is not always so. Oftimes the righteous suffer and the wicked prosper. Jesus gives us to understand here that suffering is not wholly penal; sometimes it is redemptive in purpose. It was not because he or his parents had sinned in any particularly grievous form that he was born blind, but it was in order that the Son of God might have the opportunity of showing forth His divine power and mercy; that the works of God might be made manifest in him.

It is interesting to note that the Saviour saw this blind man; the man did not see Him for he had no capacity to do so. How blessed that the Saviour was not occupied with His own sorrows to the exclusion of those of others. What a pitiable sight was this blind man! Not for one moment had he been permitted to see the sunlight of a single day, nor the beauties of the world and the wonders of nature, nor to have the pleasure of seeing the face of father or mother. From how many enjoyments was he cut off! Into what a narrow world his affliction confined him! What a bitter disappointment and how sad his parents were when they discovered that their boy was blind. He was born into a world of beauty, yet never to see it. He had never seen the faces of those whom he had learned to love.

Accurately did he portray the terrible condition of the natural man. The sinner is blind spiritually; his understanding is darkened. Because of this he cannot see the awfulness of his condition; he cannot see his imminent danger; he cannot see his need of a saviour. Such a one needs more than light; he needs the capacity given him to see the light.

It was not a matter of mending his glasses (reformation), or of correcting his vision (education and culture), or of eye ointment (religion). None of these reach the root of the trouble. He was a blind beggar, possessing nothing of his own, but dependent on charity--what an object of need and helplessness.

The moment our Saviour beheld him, there awoke within Him an overwhelming sense of the necessity of helping that man and of helping him at once. Sought out by Christ and ministered to without a single cry or appeal from him, we have a beautiful illustration of the activities of grace reaching out to us in our unregenerate state. And be it remembered that the initiative is always with God. The first step has to be taken by Him. We do not choose Him, He chooses us. We do not seek Him, He seeks us. As always, to Jesus a misfortune was a call to minister.

He took ordinary clay, moistened it with saliva, and smeared it over the eyes of the blind beggar and told him to go wash in the pool of Siloam. There was no virtue in the clay nor in the pool nor in the washing to unseal the blind eyes, but the eye-opening power lay in his obedience to the Lord Jesus Christ. The simple obedience of the blind beggar is very beautiful. He did not stop to reason and ask questions, but promptly did what was told him. He went, he washed, and he came seeing. He proved to the world by meeting the requirements of the Great Physician that Jesus was amply able for his case.

His neighbors, who had known him through the years, asked him, "How were thine eyes opened?" His answer was simple and honest. How his eyes must have sparkled with delight as he uttered these most significant words, "A man that is called Jesus made clay, and anointed mine eyes, and said unto me, Go to the pool of Siloam, and wash: and I went and washed, and I received sight." He could only tell of the means used; he could not explain how the miracle was wrought. They wished to satisfy their curiosity, but they had no desire to hear about Christ. In his testimony the healed man emphasized what Christ had done for him. He had had his eyes opened, and he could not refrain from speaking about it, and tell who did it, and how it was done. He was an honest man and had no mixed motives.

When his neighbors took him before the Pharisees, they crowded around him and propounded many difficult questions to him. The cavilling and unbelieving Jews were so perverse and prejudiced that they began to discuss the question of Christ's personal holiness, instead of admiring and rejoicing in the wonderful and benevolent miracle which He had just wrought. The Pharisees tried to confuse him. Again and again they asked him to recount the circumstances. He proved to be a splendid witness. He never deviated in his evidence. He spoke positively and convincingly. He told his experience, what he had heard and felt and seen. He had but one testimony to give. He could not, as yet, explain the character of Him who opened his eyes; he knew not whether He was a man who had sinned like others or not; neither could he defend himself by argument against those philosophical, unbelieving Pharisees; but one thing he certainly did know, that a man called Jesus had opened his eyes. He concluded that if this man were not of God, He could not have done this great thing.

He had a knowledge in contrast to much which he did not know. He knew that one thing definitely. He knew that Jesus had opened his eyes. His knowledge was based on experience, which is a very important thing. He did not know much philosophically, but he knew one thing experimentally -- and that is the fact that he had received his sight. He declared that knowledge to a critical people who disliked Christ. When they attempted to make him deny the power of Jesus, and to besmirch the character of the Lord, "He answered them and said, "Whether He be a sinner or no, I know not: one thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see." He was not upset by the many things he did not know about Jesus, but he was heartily glad for the one thing that he did know.

Being unable to intimidate him, they decided to summon the beggar's parents. If they could succeed in getting them to deny that their son had been born blind, the miracle would be discredited. Thus Satan still seeks to discredit the witness of the young Christian by getting his relatives to testify against him. This is an oft-used device of his. The parents were afraid of their inquisitors, and out of timidity and cowardice they replied, "He is of age; ask him." The overruling providence of God led the man to confess Christ, to have a firm faith in Him, to receive a fuller knowledge of this Christ who had brought him into so much blessedness.

When the Pharisees failed in their desperate and blasphemous effort at intimidation, they reproached and mocked him. They could not bear his company, so they excommunicated him from the synagogue. No sooner had they excommunicated him than the Saviour sought him out. He talked with Him, revealed Himself to him, and he acknowledged Him as Lord and worshipped Him. Great is the compassion of Christ. He knew full well the weight of the trial which had fallen upon this newly-born soul, and He proved Himself a "very present help in trouble." He cheered him with gracious words. His being cast out brought him into closer contact with the Saviour. It was much better for him to be outside with Christ than inside without Him. Just think of it, in the beginning of this passage he is a poor blind beggar in great need, and in the end of the passage he is a happy worshipper looking into the face of Christ. Think of this wonderful fact that the first person whose face he ever saw was the Lord Jesus Christ! Surely that was some compensation for all that he had endured in those years of darkness. What a wonderful experience it must have been when he opened his eyes upon the beauty of the world and gazed upon the face of the Lord Jesus.

Jesus continually looks out for the interests of His own. He is anxious to help them. He always hears and knows when you come to any ill; He knows when you are badly treated by others, and sometimes by so-called religious people. He never fails to compensate, in some way or other, those who suffer for His sake. Jesus is truly a Friend in need. There is no other like Him. How true it is that those who honor Him are honored by Him.

Do you know this Man that is called Jesus? Have you trusted Him as your personal Saviour? Till you know Him, you do not know God and are still in your sins. But when you trust and know Him your sins are put away and you have life eternal. When you come to know Him, the darkness is past and the true light is shining. Trust Him now and receive light and life and peace.

"I looked to Jesus and I found  
In Him my star, my sun,  
And in that light of life I'll walk  
Till travelling days are done."