

## THE HEALING OF A DEAF MAN

Mark 7:31-37

Across the country from the borders of Tyre and Sidon to the Sea of Galilee, our Lord went. In every place He went He found people who had need of Him, and whoever requested His help received it. Great multitudes sought healing at His hands. Out of the multitudes, Mark mentioned one case whose healing he described in detail.

### I. The Patient.

Near the end of the journey Christ met a man upon whom He performed a miracle of healing.

#### 1. He was deaf.

Even though his deafness was not painful, it was an affliction that placed the man at a great disadvantage. The sense of hearing is especially precious. It is one of the main inlets of knowledge and enjoyment. It is one of the chief links in social relationships and one of the sweetest bonds of fellowship with our fellow men. Absence of the sense of hearing largely isolates man from his fellow creatures and dries up one of the few streams of pleasure which this world affords.

#### 2. He had an impediment in his speech.

It is not surprising that his deafness was accompanied by a defect in utterance. Literally, he was "a deaf stammerer." How long he had been in that condition is not stated. It is a certainty that he was not deaf when he was born. Had he been deaf when he was born, he would not have been able to speak at all. He must at one time have heard with more or less distinctness. How he lost his hearing is not stated, but disease, either of the ears or of the throat, or some accident may have been the cause of his being unable to hear.

This man could neither hear nor speak aright. Had we seen him at a distance or in a crowd, we should probably have thought him like others. Only through close personal contact with him could we have discovered his deafness and have learned that he could not articulate properly. The ears were there, but they were useless; the tongue also was present, but it was inefficient.

It is difficult to say which of the two privations, deafness or blindness, is the greater. If we may judge from the fact that it is rare to find a deaf person who is lively and cheerful, while the happiness of the blind is a matter of constant observation, we may agree with Bishop Horsley in his remark, "Of all natural imperfections, deafness seems the most deplorable, as it is that which most excludes the unhappy sufferer from society."

The blind man, indeed, is cut off from all perception of the external appearance of things, but it is easy to communicate with him. In whatever company he finds himself he can hear the conversations and participate in them. Even though the deaf man has the use of his eyes, he is isolated in company, and the very fact that he sees the effect of the words of a speaker in the laughter they evoke, or the tears which they cause to flow in those around him, makes him the more discontented and impatient, so that he is very apt to court solitude.

Bad as the man's condition was, it was only a faint illustration of the sinner's spiritual state, for he hears without hearing: that is to say, though the physical sense may be acute, the spiritual ear is stopped. Swift to hear everything that concerns his worldly interest, he is deaf to the voice of God, and that deafness is due to sin. As the well-known adage has expressed it, "There are none so deaf as those who will not hear"; and that is just his case.

A world abounds today with men and women who are deaf to the voice of Christ, even when He speaks in tones of gentleness or of severity; and ears are stopped so that they do not hear His voice. In all congregations there are those who are dumb so far as their giving testimony for Christ. How many there are who have painful impediments in their speech! They are voluble in the marts of trade; they are eloquent while discussing politics; but they are pitifully silent when called upon to give testimony to the redeeming love and the healing power of Jesus Christ.

## II. The Physician.

Fortunately for this deaf man, he had friends who brought him to the Great Physician. These friends besought Christ to place His healing hand upon the unfortunate patient. Fortunate indeed are any and all who have friends who bring them to Christ. This is the greatest kindness which can ever be performed for anybody. Thrice happy are those who have friends to bring them to Christ that their ears may be unstopped to hear His voice and their tongues unloosed to herald His praise. How wonderful that the friends of this patient brought him to the glorious Physician with the request that He should put His hand upon the patient and heal him!

### 1. The Physician took the patient aside from the multitude.

We are not told expressly for what reasons He did so. Perhaps He did so in order to conceal from the multitude the mode of the miracle lest they might presumptuously endeavor to imitate Him. Likely He did so in order to secure privacy and to prevent popular excitement.

Doubtless there was a wise reason for this course on the part of Christ. If we knew all of the circumstances, we should see the wisdom of all of the different methods which Christ adopted in exacting cures. He likely understood the spiritual condition of each one who was brought to Him for healing. Sometimes He healed in the midst of the crowd, but on other occasions, as here, He led the patient aside from the multitude. Sometimes He exacted a cure by a word; then again by a touch; and still again he sent one patient to wash in the Pool of Siloam that he might receive his sight. In some cases the healing was instantaneous; in other cases the cures were gradual. We may be sure that in every case He adopted the wisest possible course, based on His perfect knowledge of the physical, mental and spiritual conditions of the patient. Manifold wisdom governed all of our Lord's actions. In the case of this patient, it is even possible that Christ did not want any to suppose that He was bound to any one mode of healing.

Often still God has to take us aside from the multitude when He wishes to teach us great spiritual lessons. It is necessary at times for us to be alone with God. He sometimes lays us on beds of suffering that He may teach us lessons of patience, heroism and faith. Often people will not listen to the voice of God, and learn the lessons He desires amid the rush and roar of daily duty; but in the quiet of the sick chamber, they will listen to His voice and learn the lessons which He wishes to teach.

### 2. The Physician touched the patient.

Christ came into physical contact with the patient. There is marvelous power in the touch of hand or finger. These unusual and suggestive actions were not merely means by which He conveyed the blessing, but were signs by which He explained to the patient how the blessing came to him. These symbolic actions were necessary in this case, as the man could not hear the voice of Christ. The only methods of contact with him were by sight and feeling.

The Physician spoke to the patient in his own language--that of signs. He put His fingers into his ears, as much as to say that He intended to bore through them and open them. Then He touched the stammering tongue with His fingers, which He had first applied to His own mouth. By these signs He sought to awaken faith. Christ wanted to teach His patient and us that healing virtue resided in His body. Power must go out from the divine Physician to the unfortunate patient.

3. The Physician evinced compassion for the patient. Christ had compassion on the afflicted man who was barred from communication with his fellow men. This helpless man, who was before Christ, was a living proof of the wreck which sin had brought into this world. Living in perfect fellowship with God at all times, and knowing that He was doing the work which the Father had given Him to do, Christ looked up to heaven for guidance and help. His upward look implied intense desire and earnest prayer at the moment His heart was moved with compassion for this patient.
4. The Physician spoke the word of healing to the patient. Christ spoke the word of power and healing to His patient. He said, "Ephphatha," which means, "Be opened." From that very moment the man heard distinctly and spoke plainly. When Christ touched the tongue of the stammerer there was healing in the contact. Just as the bringing of a wire into touch with another wire completes the circuit and transmits the electric current to its goal, where it does its work, so the union of the Physician and the patient, of which the touch was the symbol, conveyed the healing power from the Physician to the patient.

### III. The People.

The people were moved profoundly by what they saw and heard. They saw the patient's ears opened and the string of his tongue loosed, and they heard him speak plainly. It is not surprising that the people were astonished beyond measure. Nevertheless, Christ charged them not to tell anybody. He had some good reason for commanding them to remain silent about what had taken place. It is ever true that there is a time to speak, and there is a time to be silent. Instead of restraining their feelings of astonishment and delight, the people published the news of the miracle which Christ had performed. Their disobedience was not commendable. Neither is our silence commendable when Christ commands us to speak for Him.

When the people beheld the mighty works which were done, they promptly acknowledged the greatness and the goodness of God. When they observed the gracious, wondrous and benevolent works of the Great Physician in healing the afflicted patient, in boundless amazement they exclaimed, "He hath done all things well: he maketh both the deaf to hear, and the dumb to speak."