

SEEING AND NOT SEEING, OR MEN AS TREES WALKING

NO. 701

A SERMON
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON

*“And he cometh to Bethsaida; and they bring a blind man unto him, and besought him to touch him.
 And he took the blind man by the hand, and led him out of the town;
 and when he had spit on his eyes, and put his hands upon him, he asked him if he saw ought.
 And he looked up, and said, I see men as trees, walking.
 After that he put his hands again upon his eyes, and made him look up:
 and he was restored, and saw every man clearly.”*
Mark 8:22-25

OUR Savior very frequently healed the sick by a touch, for He intended to impress upon us the truth that the infirmities of fallen humanity can only be removed by contact with His own blessed humanity. He had, however, other lessons to teach, and therefore He adopted other methods of action in healing the sick.

Moreover, it was wise for other reasons to manifest variety in His methods. Had our Lord cast all His miracles in one mold men would have attached undue importance to the manner by which He wrought, and would have superstitiously thought more of *it* than of the divine power by which the miracle was accomplished.

Accordingly, our Master presents us with great variety in the form of the miracles. Though they are always fraught with the same goodness, and display the same wisdom and the same power, yet He is careful to make each one distinct from its fellow that we may behold the manifest goodness of God, and may not imagine that the divine Savior is so short of methods as to need to repeat Himself.

It is the besetting sin of our carnal natures to stay in what is seen and to forget the unseen, hence the Lord Jesus changes the outward *modus operandi*, or manner of working, in order that it may be clear that He is not bound to any method of healing, and that the outward operation is nothing in itself.

He would have us understand that if He chose to heal by the touch, He could also heal with a word. And if He cured with a word, He could dispense even with the word and work by His mere will, that a glance of His eye was as efficacious as a touch of His hand, and that even without being visibly present, His invisible presence could work the miracle while yet He was at a distance.

In the present case our Savior deviated from His accustomed practice, not merely in the method of healing but also in the character of the cure. In most of the Savior's miracles the person healed was restored at once. We read of the deaf and dumb man that not only was his mouth opened, but what was more remarkable for one who never had heard a sound before, he spoke plainly, receiving the gift of language as well as the power to make articulate sounds.

In other cases the fever left the patient at once, the leprosy was completely healed on the spot, and the issue of blood was stayed, but here “the beloved physician” went more leisurely to work, and only bestowed a part of the blessing at first, halting by the way, and making His patient consider how much was given, and how much withheld, and then by a second operation perfecting the good work.

Perhaps our Lord's action in this case was directed not only by the desire to make each miracle distinct, lest men should think that like a magician He had but one mode of operating, but it may have been suggested by the particular form of the disease, and the spiritual infirmity of which it is a type.

Jesus would scarcely have healed some sicknesses by degrees, it seemed needful to deal a decisive blow and end them. The casting out of a devil, for instance, must be accomplished entirely or else it is

not accomplished at all, and a leper is a leper still if but a spot remains. It is possible, however, to heal blindness by degrees, to give some little glimmer at first and then afterwards to pour upon the eyeballs the full light of day. Perhaps it may even be needful in some cases to make the cure gradual, that the optic nerve may grow accustomed to the light. As the eye is the emblem of the understanding, it is very possible, nay, it is usual, to heal the human understanding by degrees.

The will must be changed at once, the affections must be turned instantly, most of the powers of human nature must experience a distinct and complete change. But the understanding may be enlightened by a long course of illumination. The heart of stone cannot be gradually softened, but must instantaneously be made into a heart of flesh, but this is not necessary with the understanding. The reasoning faculties may be gradually brought into proper balance and order.

The soul may receive at first but a slight perception of truth, and there it may rest with comparative safety. Afterwards it may come to apprehend more clearly the mind of the Spirit, and in that degree of light it may abide without serious peril, although not without loss. It may be described as seeing, but not seeing afar off, and then the ultimate restoration of the understanding may be reserved to maturer experience.

Probably the spiritual sight will never be, in absolute perfectness, bestowed upon us till we enter into the light for which the spiritual state is intended, namely, the glory of that place where they need no candle, neither light of the sun, for the Lord God gives them light.

The miracle before us portrays the progressive healing of a darkened understanding. The miracle cannot be used as a picture of the restoration of a willful sinner from the error of his way, or the turning of the debauched and depraved from the filthiness of their lives. It is a picture of the darkened soul gradually illuminated by the Holy Ghost, and brought by Jesus Christ into the clear light of His kingdom.

This morning, feeling that there are many half-enlightened souls present, I shall, by the Holy Spirit's assistance, *picture the case*. Then we shall notice *the means of cure*. Thirdly, we shall stop awhile and consider *the hopeful stage*. And then conclude by a short notice of the completion of the cure.

I. First, we have TO PICTURE THE CASE.

It is one of a wonderfully common class nowadays, very common certainly among the new additions to this congregation. For very many are coming to us who have been for the previous part of their lives spiritually blind, having been mere formal churchgoers, or stiff outside religionists among dissenters.

Observe carefully the case in hand. It is a person with a darkened understanding. It is not a man who might be pictured by a person possessed with the devil. A man possessed with the devil raves, rages, is dangerous to society, must be bound with chains, watched and guarded, for he will rend himself and injure others. But this blind person is perfectly harmless. He has no desire to injure others, and is not likely to be violent towards himself. He is sober, steady, honest, kind, and his spiritual malady may excite our pity but not our fear.

If these unenlightened persons associate with the Lord's people they do not rave and rage against the saints, but respect them and love their company. They are not haters of the cross of Christ. They are in their poor blind way even lovers of it.

They are not persecutors, revilers or scoffers, nor do they run desperately in the way of wickedness. On the contrary, although they cannot see the things of God, yet they feel their way in the paths of morality in a very admirable manner, so that in some respects they might even be examples to those who can see.

Furthermore, the case before us is not one of a person polluted with a contagious disease, foul and loathsome like leprosy. The leper must be put away, there must be a place reserved for him, for he contaminates all those with whom he comes in contact. Not so with this blind man who comes to the Savior.

He is blind, but he does not make others blind. If he is in association with other blind persons, he does not increase their blindness, nor if he be brought into connection with those who can see does he

injure their sight in any way. They perhaps might even derive some benefit from association with him, for they are led to be thankful for the eyesight which they possess when they mark the darkness in which he is so sorrowfully enveloped.

It is not, therefore, the case of a person of a libidinous life or of a foul conversation, not at all the case of a man who would deprave your children, who would lead your son or your daughter into sin. The unenlightened people of whom we speak are beloved in our families, and very properly so, for they spread no injurious doctrines, and set no ill examples, and even when they talk of spiritual things they make us pity them because they know so little, and grateful to God to think that He has opened our eyes to see the wondrous things of His Word.

They are neither raving haters of God nor yet foul livers, so as to do mischief to their race. Nay, these people are not even incapable in any respect except the one organ of the mind's eye. It is the understanding which is darkened, but in all other senses, these people whom I am now picturing are hopeful if not healthy.

They are not altogether deaf, they hear the Gospel with considerable pleasure and earnest heed. It is true they do not clearly understand it, it is very much the letter which they receive, and but in a very small degree the spirit. Still, at the same time, they do hear, and they are in the way of getting a greater blessing, for "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God."

And moreover, after a certain sort, they are not dumb either, for they do pray in a manner. It is true that their prayer is scarcely spiritual, but yet it has a kind of earnestness about it not to be despised. They have been to a place of worship from their youth up, and never neglected the outward forms of religion. Alas for them, they are still blind! But they are anxious to hear and to pray, and we trust will yet be able to do both. They are therefore not absolutely deaf or dumb.

Nor, moreover, do they seem to be incapable in other respects. The hand is not withered, as in the case of one whom Christ met within the Synagogue. Neither are they bowed down by grievous depression of spirit, as that daughter of Abraham who had been bowed down for many years.

They are both cheerful and diligent in the ways of the Lord. If the cause of God wants assistance they are ready to assist it, and though by reason of the loss of their spiritual eyes they cannot enter into the full enjoyment of divine things, yet they are among the most forward people we know to help on any good cause. Not because they thoroughly comprehend the spirit of it nor can enter therein, for by reason of their natural blindness they are still aliens thereto. But still there is wrought in them something which is very lovely and very hopeful, for they are anxious as much as lies in them to help the cause of Christ.

In connection with all Christian congregations we have a knot of people of this kind, and in connection with some Christian churches the most even of the members are very little better. They have not received more than enough instruction to enable them to know their right hand from their left in spiritual matters. For lack of doctrinal teaching they are left in the dark, and because there is not held up before them the form of sound words, they remain in semi-blindness, unable to enjoy the fair prospects which cheer the eyes of the enlightened believer.

II. We have now to see OUR LORD'S METHOD OF CURE.

Every part of the miracle is suggestive. The first thing to be observed is *a friendly intervention*—his friends brought the blind man to Jesus. How many there are who do not rightly understand the fundamental doctrine of the Gospel of Christ, and need the help of believers! They have an affection for religion in the abstract, but they do not fully know what they must do to be saved.

The great truth of substitution, which is the cardinal point in the Gospel, they have not yet apprehended. They scarcely know what it is to come to rest wholly upon the Lord Jesus, because of the satisfaction which He has offered to almighty justice. They have a sort of faith, but they have such slender knowledge that their faith brings them little or no benefit.

Such people might often be blessed if more advanced Christians would try to bring them to a clearer knowledge of the Savior. Why can you not bring such souls under the sound of that ministry which has been instructive to yourself? Why can you not lay that Book in their way which was the means of

opening your eyes? Why can you not bring before their minds that text of Scripture, that passage of God's Word, which first illuminated you? Would it not be a most hopeful work for us to engage in, to look for those who are not hostile to the Gospel, but simply ignorant of it, who have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge, and who, if they once could be furnished with the light would then have found the one thing needful?

Surely, if we look after the degraded, the debased, and the depraved, who defile our festering courts and alleys, we ought with equal eagerness to seek out these hopeful ones who sit under the sound of preaching which is not Gospel preaching, or who hear the true Word, but perceive it not.

Brethren and sisters, you would do well if you prayed for these, and if, moreover, you sought out the excellent young men and the amiable young women, and endeavored to answer the question of their tender consciences, "Oh that we knew where we might find him!" It might be, in God's hand, the first step to their receiving spiritual eyesight if you would care for these children of mist and of the night.

When the blind man was brought to the Savior, he first received *contact with Jesus*, for Jesus took him by the hand. It is a happy day for a soul when it comes into personal contact with the Lord Jesus.

Brethren, when we are in our state of unbelief we sit in the house of God, and Christ seems to us to be at a distance. We hear of Him, but it is as of one who has departed to ivory palaces, and who is not now amongst us. And even if He passes by we feel as if He did not come near to us, and so we sit and sigh, and long to feel His shadow fall upon us, or to touch as it were the hem of His garment.

But when the soul really begins to close with Jesus, when He becomes the object of devout attention, when we feel that there is something to be grasped and realized about Him after all, that He is no distant and impalpable shade, but a veritable existence, and an existence having influence over us, then it is that He takes us by the hand.

I know some of you have felt this. It has frequently happened on the Sabbath that you felt that you must pray. You felt that the sermon was made for you. You thought someone had told the preacher about you, the truth came so closely home—the very details of the preacher's speech fitted the condition of your mind. That was our blessed Lord, I think, taking you by the hand. The service was to you no mere word-talk and word-hearing, but a mysterious hand touched you, your feelings were impressed, and your heart was conscious of peculiar emotions originating from the presence of the Savior.

Of course Jesus does not come into any physical contact with us, it is a mental, spiritual contact. The mind of the Lord Jesus lays its hand upon the mind of sinners, and by the Holy Spirit gently influences the soul for holiness and truth.

Mark the next act, for it is peculiar. The Savior led the man to *a solitary position*, for He took him out of the town. I have noticed that when persons converted who have been rather spiritually blind than willfully wicked, who have not been so much hostile as they have been ignorant, one of the first signs of their becoming Christians is the getting into retirement, and feeling their individual responsibility.

Brethren, I have always hope of the man who begins to think of himself as he stands alone before God, for there are tens of thousands in England who consider themselves to be parts of a nation of Christians and born members of a church, and thus never consider themselves as personally responsible to God.

They say the confession of sin, but it is always with the whole congregation. They chant the *Te Deum*, but it is not personal but choral praise. But when a man is led, even while in the congregation, to feel as if he were alone, when he grasps the idea that true religion is of the individual and not of the community, and that confession of sin is more fitting from his lips than from any other man, there is a gracious work commenced.

There is hope of the blindest understanding when the mind begins to meditate upon its own condition and examines its own prospects. It is a sure sign that the Lord is dealing well with you if He has taken you out of the town, if you are forgetting all others and thinking just now of yourself. Call it not selfishness, it is only such a selfishness as the highest law of our nature commands. Every man when

he is drowning must think of himself, and if it is a justifiable selfishness to seek to preserve one's own life, much more is it to labor to escape from eternal ruin.

When your own salvation is accomplished you shall have no more need to think of self, but you shall care for the souls of others, but now the highest wisdom is to think of yourself in your standing towards God, and to look to the Savior that you yourself may have eternal life. "He took him by the hand, and led him out of the town."

The next was a very strange act. He brought him under *ordained but despicable means*, He spit on his eyes. The Savior frequently used the saliva of His mouth as a means of cure, it has been said, because it was recommended by ancient physicians, but I cannot think that their opinion could have had much weight with our wonder-working Lord.

It seems to me that the use of spittle connected the opening of the eye with the Savior's mouth, that is to say, it connected in type the illuminating of the understanding with the truth which Christ utters. Of course spiritual eyesight comes by means of spiritual truth, and the eye of the understanding is opened by the doctrine which Christ speaks. Yet it seems to me that the association which we naturally put with spittle is that of disgust and that this was intentionally employed by the Savior for that very end.

It was nothing but spittle, though it was spittle from the Savior's mouth. And so, mark you, friend, it is very possible that God will bless you by that very truth which you once despised, and it will not be full of wonder if He should even bless you through that very man against whom you spoke the most bitterly.

It has often pleased God to award to His ministering servants a gracious kind of vengeance. Many and many times those who were the hottest and most furious against God's own servants have received the best blessings from the hands of those men whom they most despised.

You call it "spittle," nothing but that shall open your eyes. You say, "The Gospel is a very commonplace thing," it is by such common places that you shall have life. You have sneeringly declared that such a man speaks the truth in a coarse and vulgar style. You shall one day bless that vulgarity, and be glad enough to receive even after a coarse fashion the truth as his Master bids him speak it.

I think that many of us had to notice this in our conversion, that the Lord chastised our pride by saying to us, "Those poor people of whom you thought so harshly shall be made a blessing to you, and My servant against whom you were most filled with prejudice shall be the man to bring you into perfect peace." It strikes me that more than that a great deal, but all that, is in the thought of the Savior's spitting on his eyes.

No powders of the merchant you perceive, no myrrh and frankincense, no costly drugs, but just a common spittle on the lips. And so if you would see, my hearer, the deep things of God, it shall not be by the philosophers, nor by the profound thinkers of the day, but he that saith unto you, "Trust Christ and live," teaches you better philosophy than the philosophers, and he who tells you that in Him, in the Lord Jesus, dwells all the treasures of wisdom and of knowledge, tells you in that simple statement more than you could learn though Socrates and Plato should rise from the dead and you could sit a scholar at their feet.

Jesus Christ will open your eyes, and it shall be by this ignoble means the spittle of His mouth.

You will further perceive that when He had spit on his eyes it is added He put His hands upon him. Did He do that in the form of *heavenly benediction*? Did He by the laying on of His hands bestow upon the man His blessing, and bid virtue stream from His own person into the blind man? I think so.

So, brethren, it is not the spittle, it is not the leading of the man out of the crowd after all. It is not the ministry, it is not the preaching of the Word, it is not the hearer's thoughtfulness that shall earn spiritual blessings. It is the benediction of Him who died for sinners, which confers all upon us. This man is exalted on high to give repentance and remission of sin. He who was despised and rejected of men, it is through Him and through Him only that priceless boon, such as sight to the blind, shall be given to the sons of men.

We must use the means, and neither despise them nor trust them. We must get alone, for retirement is a great blessing, but we must look up after all to the Lord and giver of every good gift, or else the spittle had need to be wiped away in disgust, and the being alone shall only make the blind man lose his way the more effectually, and wander in the deeper darkness with less of sympathy and help.

This sketch is the photograph of some here. I believe there are persons here who from their youth up have attended places of worship without the slightest perception of spiritual life, and would have continued to do so had not the Lord been pleased to make use of friends, happy cheerful Christian friends, who said, "Come now, I think I can tell you something which you do not know."

These friends by prayer and teaching brought you into contact with Jesus. Jesus touched you, influenced your mind, made you thoughtful, made you see that there was more in religion than just the mere external, made you feel that going to church or going to chapel was not everything, nay, was not anything at all, unless you learned the secret, the real secret of everlasting life.

It has been through all this that you have begun to feel that there is power in that Gospel which once you despise. And that which you sneered at, as Methodism and rant, is now to you the Gospel of your salvation. Let us thank God for this, for it is by such means that eyes are opened.

III. We have now come to the third point, and we will pause a moment at A HOPEFUL STAGE.

The Savior had given the man's eyeballs the power to see, but He had not removed completely the film which kept out the light. Hear the man. Jesus says to him, "Canst thou see anything?" He looks up, and the first joyful word is, "*I see!*" What a blessing! "I see!" Some of you, dear friends, can say that—"whereas I was once blind, now I see." Yes, Lord, it is not total darkness now. I do not see as much as I should, nor as much as I hope I shall, but I do see. There are many, many things I knew nothing of, which I do know something about now. The devil himself cannot make me doubt that I do see. I know I do.

"I used to be quite satisfied with the outward form, if I got through the hymns and prayers and so on, I felt satisfied, but now, though I feel I cannot see as I want to see, I can see as much as that. If I cannot see light, there is certainly darkness visible. If I cannot see salvation, I can see my own ruin. I do see my own wants and necessities, if I see nothing more, I do see these."

Now, if a man can see anything, it matters not what, he certainly has sight. Whether it is a beautiful object or an ugly thing that he sees does not matter. The mere seeing of anything is proof positive that there is sight in his eyes.

So the spiritual perception of anything is a proof that you have spiritual life, whether that perception makes you mourn, or whether it makes you rejoice; whether it makes you broken-hearted, or binds up your heart, if you do see it, you must have the power of sight, that is clear enough, is it not?

But hear the man again. He says, "*I see men.*" That is better still. Of course the poor fellow had once been able to see, or else he would not have known the shape of a man. "I see men," says he. Ay, and there are some here who have enough sight to be able to distinguish between one thing and another, so as to know this from that.

Though you were as blind as bats once, nobody could make you believe that baptismal regeneration was the same thing as the regeneration of the Word of God. You can see the difference between these two things at any rate. One would think anybody might, but a great many cannot.

You can see the difference between mere formal and external worship and spiritual worship—you can see that. You can see enough to know that there is a Savior, that you need a Savior, that the way of salvation is by faith in Christ, that the salvation which Jesus gives really saves us from sinning and brings those who receive it safe to eternal glory. Thus it is clear that you can see something, and you know within a little what that something is.

Listen, however, to the blind man, for here comes in the word that spoils it to a great extent—"I see men *as trees, walking.*" He could not tell whether they were men or trees, except that they were walking, and he knew that trees did not walk, and therefore they could not be trees. Objects were a confused blot

before his eyes. He knew from their motion that they must be men, but he could not tell exactly by sight whether they were men or trees.

Many precious souls are waiting at this hopeful but uncomfortable stage. They *can see*. Bless God for that! They will never be thoroughly blind again. For if they can see the Man Jesus, and the tree on which He died, they make but one object of them if they please, for Christ and His cross are one. Eyes which cannot clearly see Jesus may yet dimly see Him, and even a dim sight will save the soul.

Observe that this man's sight was very *indistinct*—a man or a tree—he could not tell. So is it with the first sight that is given to many spiritually blind persons. They cannot distinguish between doctrine and doctrine. The work of the Spirit and the work of the Savior they frequently confuse in their minds. They possess justification and they possess sanctification, but it is probable they could not tell you which was which.

They have received imparted righteousness of heart, and they have also received the imputed righteousness of Christ, but between the imparted righteousness and the imputed righteousness they can scarcely distinguish. They have them both, but they do not know which is which—at least not so as to be able to write down the definitions, or tell them to their fellow men. They can see, but they cannot see as they should see. They see men as trees walking.

Their sight, in addition to being indistinct, is *very exaggerating*. A man is not as big as a tree, but they magnify the human stature into the towering timber. And so half-enlightened people exaggerate doctrines. If they receive the doctrine of election they cannot be content to go as far as Scripture goes—they make a tree of the man by dragging in reprobation. If they get a hold of the precept, baptism, or whatever it may be, they exaggerate its proportions, and make it a sort of all-in-all.

Some get one crotchet and some get another, and it is all through mistaking a man for a tree. It is a great mercy that they see doctrine at all and precept at all, but it would be a greater mercy if they could see it as it is, and not as it now appears to them.

This exaggeration generally leads to *alarm*, for if I see a man walking up to me who is as tall as a tree, I am naturally afraid that he will fall on me, and I get out of the way. Many persons are afraid of God's doctrines because they are as high as trees they think. They are none too high. God has made them of the right stature, but their blindness exaggerates them, and makes them more terrible and high than they might be.

They are afraid to read books upon certain truths, and they fight shy of all men who preach them only because they cannot see those doctrines in the right light, but are alarmed with their own confused vision of it.

In connection with this exaggeration and this fear, there is to such people *an utter loss of the enjoyment* which comes from being able to perceive beauty and loveliness. The noblest part of a man is after all his countenance. We like to catch the features of our friend, that gentle eye, that tender expression, that winning look, that radiant smile, that expressive glow of benevolence upon his face, that towering forehead, we like to see all, but this poor man could see none of these, for he could scarce tell a man from a tree, could not discover those softer lines of the great master artist which make true beauty.

He could only say, "It is a man," but whether a black man, black as night or fair as the morning, he did not know and could not tell, and whether sour and morose, or kind and gentle, he could not distinguish. So it is with these persons who have obtained some spiritual sight. They cannot see the details of the doctrines.

You know, brethren, it is the details in which lies the beauty. If I trust Jesus as my Savior I shall be saved, but the enjoyment of faith comes from knowing Him in His person, in His offices, in His work, in His present, and past, and future. We perceive His true beauty, by studying Him, and observing Him carefully, and with holy watchfulness.

So it is with the doctrines, the mere whole of the doctrine, in the gross is blessed, but it is when we come to take the doctrine to pieces that we gain the purest enjoyment. "Yes," says the clown, as he looks at a fine painting, such, for instance, as Paul Potter's famous Bull at The Hague, "it's a rare picture

certainly,” and then he goes away. But the artist sits down and studies its details. There is to him a beauty in every touch and shade which he understands and appreciates.

Many believers have light enough to know the faith in its bare outline, but they have not observed the filling up, and the minutiae wherein the sweetest comfort will always be found by the spiritually educated child of God. They can see, but they “see men as trees, walking.”

Although I know that the most of you, my brethren, have traveled far beyond this stage, yet I know there are hundreds of God’s people who are still lingering there, and hence it is, when Satan gets the upper hand, that sects, and parties, and theories arise.

If a number of people with good eyes meet together and look at an object, they will very nearly agree in the description of what they see. But if you select an equal number of men with eyes so weak that they can scarcely tell a man from a tree, they will make no end of confusion, and likely enough fall to quarrelling. “It is a man,” cries one, “he walks.” “It is a tree,” cries the second, “it is too tall to be a man.”

When half-blind men grow willful and despise their teachers, and will not learn as the Holy Spirit ordains to teach, they set up their ignorance for knowledge, and perhaps lead other half-enlightened ones into the ditch with them. Even where a holy modesty prevents this mischievous result, this half-sight is still to be lamented, for it leaves men in sorrow when they might rejoice, and lets them mourn over truth which if understood would fill their mouths with song all the day long.

Many are troubled about election. Now if there be a doctrine in this Book which ought to make believers sing all day, and all night too, it is just the doctrine of electing love and distinguishing grace. Some people are frightened over this and some over that, whereas if they understood the truth, instead of flying from it as from an enemy, they would run into its arms.

IV. Having given this sketch of the man in this transition state, we close by noting the ULTIMATE COMPLETENESS OF THE CURE.

Brethren, be grateful for any sort of light. Without the grace of God we could not have a ray of it. One ray of light is more than we deserve. If we were shut up in the blackness of darkness forever, how could we complain? Do we not deserve, since we shut our eyes against God, to be doomed to perpetual darkness? Be thankful then for the least gleam of light, but do not so prize what you have as not to wish for more. That man is sadly blind still who does not care to see more.

It is a bad sign of unhealthiness when we have no desire to grow. When we are satisfied that we know all the truth, and cannot be taught any more, it is probable that we need to begin at the beginning. One of the first lessons in the school of wisdom is to know that we are naturally fools, and *that* man is growing wise who is growing conscious of his own deficiency and ignorance. But when the Lord Jesus Christ brings a man to see a little, and to desire to see more, He does not leave him till He has led him into all the truth.

We find that the Savior, to complete the cure, *touched His patient again*. A renewal of your contact with the Savior must be the means of your perfection, as it was your first means of enlightenment. Being close to Christ, in intimate acquaintance with His blessed person, in sole dependence upon His merit. Study you His character, desire to commune with Himself for yourself, and to see Him with your own eyes by faith and not with the eyes of another—this shall be the means of giving you clearer light. The divine touch does it all.

I suppose that when the man’s eyes were fully opened, *the first person He saw was Jesus*, for he had been taken away from the crowd, and could only see men at a distance. Blessed vision, to drink in the sight of that face, to perceive the beauties of that matchless lover of our souls. Oh the joy! One might be content to be blind forever if *He* were not to be seen, but when He is seen, oh the heavenly delight of being rescued from the blindness which concealed Him from our eyes!

Believer, above all things, pray that you may know Him, and understand Him. With all your gettings, get an understanding of Him. Count doctrine precious, only because it is a throne on which He sits. Think much of the precept, but make it not to be a legal stone to hide Him in the sepulcher, think

only of it as it is illustrated and set forth in His life, and even your own experience, care little for it if it does not point as with a finger to Christ.

Consider that you only grow when you grow up in Him. “Grow in grace,” says the apostle, but he adds, “and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.” “Grow up,” says he, but what does he add? “Grow up into Him in all things, which is the head, even Christ Jesus.” Ask to see, but put the prayer in this form—“Sir, we would see Jesus.” Pray for sight, but let it be a sight of the King in His beauty, that you may one day see the land that is very far off.

You are nearing clearness of vision when you can see Jesus only, you are coming out of cloud-land into the brightness of day, when, instead of seeing men as trees, you behold the Savior. Then you may let the men and the trees take care of themselves.

We read that our Lord bade His patient “Look up.” If we would see we must not look below us, no light springs from this dusky earth. If we would see, we must not look within us, it is a dark, black cavern, full of everything that is evil.

We must look *up*. Every good gift and every perfect gift cometh from above, and we must look up for it. Meditating upon Jesus and resting upon Him, we must look up to our God. Our soul must consider her Lord’s perfection, and not dream of her own. She must muse upon His greatness, and not on any fancied greatness of her own. We must look up—not on our fellow servants, or upon the externals of worship, but up to God Himself. We must look, and as we look up we shall find the light.

We are told that at last “the man could see every man clearly.” Yes, when the great Physician sends the patient home, you may rest assured that his cure is fully wrought. It was well with him in the superlative degree. He saw, he saw every man, he saw every man clearly. May this be the happy lot of many a half-enlightened one here present!

Be not satisfied, my dear friends, with being saved, desire to know *how* you are saved, *why* you are saved, *the method* by which you are saved. It is a rock on which you stand, I know, but think upon the questions—how you were put on that rock, by whose love you came there and why that love was set on you.

I would to God that all the members of this church were not only *in* Christ Jesus, but *understood* Him, and knew by the assurance of the understanding whereunto they have attained. Be you always ready to give a reason for the hope that is in you with meekness and fear. Recollect there are many grave distinctions in Scripture which will save you a world of trouble if you will know and remember them.

Try to understand the difference between the old nature and the new. Never expect the old nature to improve into the new, for it never will. The old nature can never do anything but sin, and the new nature never can sin. They are two distinct principles, never confound them.

Do not see men as trees walking. Do not confuse sanctification and justification. Recollect that the moment you trust in Christ you are justified as completely as you will be in heaven, but sanctification is a gradual work, which is carried on from day to day by God the Holy Spirit. Distinguish between the great truth that salvation is all of God, and the great lie that men are not to be blamed if they are lost. Be well assured that salvation is of the Lord, but do not lay damnation at God’s door. Be not ashamed if men call you a Calvinist, but hate with all your heart Antinomianism.

On the other hand, while you believe human responsibility, never run into the error of supposing that man ever turns to God of his own free will. There is a narrow line between the two errors, and ask for grace to see it. Ask for grace neither to fall into the whirlpool nor to be dashed against the rock, neither to be a slave of this system nor that. Never say of one text of Scripture, “Be still, I cannot endure you,” nor yet of another, “I believe you, and you alone.”

Seek to love the whole Word of God, to get an insight into every truth revealed, and as you have God’s Word given you not as so many discordant looks but as a whole, so seek to grasp the truth as it is in Jesus in all its compactness and unity.

I would urge you, if you have got sight which enables you to see at all, to fall on your knees and cry unto the great Sight-giver, “O Master, still go on, take every film away, remove every cataract, and if it

should be painful to have my prejudices cut away or burnt out of my eyes, yet do it, Lord, until I can see in the clear light of the Holy Ghost, and shall be meet to enter into the gates of the holy city, where they see You face to face.”

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—MARK 8:1-30

Taken from The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit C. H. Spurgeon Collection. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.