

Sermon preached by Mr. F L Gosden at Galeed Chapel, Brighton,
Lord's Day morning, 23rd October 1966

"Jesus heard that they had cast him out; and when He had found him, He said unto him, Dost thou believe on the Son of God? He answered and said, who is He Lord that I might believe on Him. And Jesus said unto him, thou hast both seen Him, and it is He that talketh with thee. And he said, Lord, I believe, and he worshipped Him." John 9:35-38.

We sometimes sing,

*Of all the crowns Jehovah wears,
Salvation is His dearest claim. (Gadsby's 969)*

and it is.

Salvation underlines every narrative of the Scriptures. There is something far deeper than the opening of the natural eyes of this poor blind man. If that was all, and the narrative had no further significance, the chapter would be of no use; but given by divine inspiration it is, as is the Lord Jesus, the same yesterday, today and for ever. Well, if ever we are saved, we shall have to be saved like this poor man; like the woman at Samaria's well. O how profound is the significance of these narratives! And yet what majestic simplicity in them all, especially perhaps this case of the blind man.

There are one or two points worthy of our attention and may be a help and encouragement to troubled people. For instance, it seemed a very strange thing for the Lord to make clay and anoint this man's eyes. You would think really that to plaster an eye with clay would almost blind a man that could see; and then to tell him to go and wash in the pool of Siloam, there seemed no connexion between the complaint and the cure; but

God moves in a mysterious way. (Gadsby's 320)

These things, as was the Cross of Christ, are to them that perish foolishness, but unto those that are saved they are the power of God, the wisdom of God. How the Lord does pour contempt on the works of man "The natural man cannot receive the things of the Spirit of God." It does not matter what learning he has, although we would not put a premium on ignorance, or despise learning if it is in its right place; but the world by wisdom know not God, neither by searching can he world find him out. The world by science can find out most things, but can never find God, never know Him. But He is revealed to babes, in that He shall have all the glory.

There is another thing about this making of clay, it shows the Lord can use means or dispense with them. Blind Bartimaeus was a different case. In that case the Lord answered and said, "What wilt thou that I should do unto thee? The blind man said unto Him, Lord, that I might receive my sight." Jesus did not make clay, He did not tell him to go and wash in the pool of Siloam, "Jesus said unto him, go thy way, thy faith hath made thee whole, and immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus in the way." The Lord can use means or He can dispense with them; and when He uses means it is His divine power which effects the miracle. His human hands touched this man's eyes, but it was His divine power that cured him; and just to this point, some may be tempted about

using means. You might feel with respect to some particular matter, some particular infirmity you may have, that you wish that the Lord would cure you immediately without any means. But He may not see fit to do this; but if you use means, then the devil might say to you, "Well, that was not the Lord's work at all, that was the medicine you took, that was the doctor you saw, that cure was through the operation you had, the Lord was not in it,

But if you watch the Scriptures you will find that the Lord in some cases used means to justify our doing the same. Sometimes He dispenses with means, and sometimes He answers prayer by negatives, as in the case of Paul with a thorn in the flesh. He asked the Lord three times to extract that thorn. I have heard it said that Paul was wrong to ask the Lord to take that thorn out, it was not submission to His will; but I do not agree with that opinion at all. If you have something come upon you in your body or in your circumstances, you have every right to take it to the throne of grace and to ask the Lord to heal or to remove it, if it is His will. Yes, you have every right to ask the Lord to take away a thorn, and there is ground for it. The Lord Jesus Himself, His sacred, sinless humanity shrank as that bitter cup was pressed to him by divine justice, He asked, "If it be possible let this cup pass from Me." O the love! With His heart full of anguish. If we by faith should see, taste and feel what was in that cup, the imputation of the sins of the whole of His people. But there was one thing that was not in that cup, and that was guilt; no guilt was there.

Well, I just mention these things because some may be tried who have used means, and then the devil may have tempted them and said, the Lord was not in that at all, that was the means:

There is another point in this beautiful narrative; When his eyes were opened, his neighbours and they who had before seen him that was blind, said, "is not this he that sat and begged? Some said, this is he, others said he is like him; but he said, I am he." How often this is the case when, it may be, one of a family is called by divine grace, or when one has been truly converted and goes to the same place of occupation among their fellows; 'What has come to so and so? You would hardly know he is the same person.' Has our religion ever made that difference?

"Some said; This is he, others said, he is like him; but he said, I am he." O how good it is, when such a work of grace is begun in the heart and the eyes opened so that men take knowledge of us that we have been with Jesus! But the simplicity and honesty of this man's case is beautiful. They asked him how his eyes were opened; you see the simplicity of his answer: "A man that is called Jesus made clay and anointed mine eyes and said unto me o to the pool of Siloam and wash, and I went and washed and I received my sight. Beautiful, simple testimony. "Come and hear all ye that fear God, and I will tell you what He hath done for my soul;" what He has done, in simple language, nothing dramatic. O it must be an abomination to God to see some who attempt to be dramatic in religion, especially in the pulpit! It is a majestic simplicity of a real work of grace in the heart.

But the Pharisees turned him out, excommunicated him. 'Jesus heard that they had cast him out, and when He had found him, He said unto him, Dost thou believe on the Son of God?' Jesus took that attitude that He did not know where he was; 'When He had found him.' Why, this was the Lord's doing, He knew where he was; He knew the Pharisees had cast him out, He knew that He would put His hand a second time and reveal Himself more fully to this man. The circumstances of the Lord's method in salvation are very important. In the case of blind Bartimaeus we read, "When

the Lord came where he was He stood still." His foreknowledge of Bartimaeus knew where he was. He asked him a question: "What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?" Now this by the Spirit, He does with sinners still; may we look for it, pray for it. "Unto them that look for Him shall He come the second time, without sin, unto salvation." The preaching of the Gospel is important. Not because of the poor men that preach it, but because it is a divine ordination through which God works and that He has been pleased by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.

What I am coming to is this: with blind Bartimaeus, He came where he was and stood still. And what a wonderful thing it would be today if He came along a certain pew, and He knows where there is a poor blind sinner, and stood still. "What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?" He had the answer ready. Why, that was his complaint, he was blind. The Pharisees did not know they were blind. The Pharisees said unto Him, "Are we blind also?" We, Pharisees, who know the law from beginning to end? And they said to this man in derision, Dost thou teach us? Are we blind? They were, but He said unto them, If ye were blind ye should have no sin. It is a mercy to be blind by divine teaching. O it is a mercy to be dead, having received the sentence of death in ourselves. But the Pharisees were neither dead nor blind, they were alive without the law, they could see without faith, but the light that was in them was darkness. "If ye were blind ye should have no sin, but now ye say we see, therefore, your sin remaineth."

'Jesus heard that they had cast him out.' It is a mercy if the world casts us out, my friends; and if we have the grace of God in our heart the world will cast us out. "Marvel not that the world hateth you; it hated Me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own, but because ye are not of the world but I have called you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you." Whether it is the religious world or the profane world; indeed the religious world gave the Lord more trouble than the profane world.

'Jesus heard that they had cast him out, and when He found him, He said/ unto him, Dost thou believe on the Son of God?' A vital question. He did not say, dost thou believe thou art going to heaven? Not that. 'Dost thou believe on the Son of God?' Well, that is the vital question to be asked. Paul, when he came to the end of his journey and had spoken to Timothy about the way that he had come, the persecutions he endured, the shipwrecks he had been in and how that day and nights there were neither sun nor stars appeared, and how that he received 40 stripes save one from the Jews, was hated of his brethren, was in danger of false brethren; but he said this; Timothy, I am not ashamed, not offended that the Lord saw fit to bring me such a rough way and thorny path because, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him." That is how he knew Him. He knew Him in those temptations, He knew He was omnipotent, he knew Him in those deliverances; he proved that His wisdom is infinite. "I know whom I have believed."

'Dost thou believe on the Son of God?' This is the vital question. Well, let us consider, as enabled, this Son of God, and as to whether we believe on Him. This good man's answer was very blessed. 'Who is He, Lord that I might believe on Him?' There is something about this narrative that is very attractive to me. May it be sanctified to us? Nothing fanciful in it. He was brought down deeper than all mere sentiment and tradition and imagination and emotion; nothing of that. 'Who is He Lord that I might believe on Him?' It is very evident that when the Lord Jesus opened his eyes His work was

not complete, but rather like unto another blind man whose eyes the Lord touched and he saw men as trees walking. He saw nothing really clearly. He was no longer blind, but he could not see anything clearly; and the Lord uses the ministry to clear men's sight by His spirit often. But He put His hand a second time and the man saw every man plainly. There is a different degree of experience.

Bunyan speaks of this. Christian who was diverted from the right way by Mr. Worldly Wiseman. There are plenty of them about. He said, I can tell you a short cut; the way you are going is laborious and full of dangers, there is no need to do it at all; there is a short cut, if you go to the town of Morality. Well, he went, but it brought him under the thunder and lightning of Sinai, but good Evangelist found him. O what a mercy when the blessed Spirit finds under the ministry a hearing people those who may have sought Him in the night but found Him not! Who said, "We will go about the city, in the broadways thereof". Who come with anxiety, "Saw ye Him whom my soul loveth? Evangelist found him, and said, "Dost thou see yonder wicket gate? He said, No. 'Dost thou see yonder shining light? I think I do; follow that light, it will bring you to the wicket gate.'

Well, here was this man; 'Who is He Lord that I might believe on Him?' Beautiful answer, I can but believe there are some here who have got as far as that. They are not blind, they know their nature is, but it is just that point; 'Who is He Lord, that I might believe on HIM?' He wanted things confirmed. He did not say, I do, He opened my eyes for according to this narrative he hardly knew who had done it. And a poor sinner, when their eyes are first opened, can hardly believe it is the work of God, especially when those opened eyes are given to see things as they are. 'Dost thou believe on the Son of God?' According as we can answer this question in the sight of God, so is our state of soul. The Son of God; what think ye of Him?

What think ye of Christ is the test? (Gadsby's 1149)

He is the foundation. What think ye concerning His Person? He is God's only-begotten Son. Do you believe it? How do you believe it? Do you believe it has any connexion with your soul's salvation? Paul says, "I know whom I have believed", is it then possible to believe in one you know not? It is. It is a kind of nominal believing in Christ, in an unknown God. The vital thing with respect to the Son of God is His eternal Person. I believe, though I would not preach myself - (it would be a terrible thing to do) but I do believe that that blessed truth was revealed to me and connected with my salvation. This is the foundation. If the Son of God was not eternal, the eternal Son of God, then He would be no foundation at all. He must have had a beginning and if He had a beginning, He would have an ending. And what about His work? What about your soul, poor sinner? Do you cleave to it by faith as your very hope? Do you anchor there, in the eternity of His Person?

Well, it would be no use to me otherwise - and that He was set up from everlasting, or ever the earth was, in the covenant of grace, as the foundation of all the counsels and purposes of God concerning salvation, concerning the Church. Do you believe in that Son of God? He was the Father's first elect, and His people are chosen in Him.

'Dost thou believe on the Son of God?' That glorious Person, co-equal with the Father, thought it not robbery to be equal with God, the express image of His Person, the brightness of the glory of God; that inexpressible glorious Person took human nature into union with His Person and that human

nature from a virgin. Do you believe it? 'Dost thou believe on the Son of God?' These things are vital. The virgin birth of the Lord Jesus is a precious doctrine. He did not contract the least taint of Adam's transgression. He was not born of Adam at all. He was born, conceived, by the Holy Ghost - Real humanity. "The children being partakers of His flesh and blood, He Himself also, likewise took part of the same." And for this reason, to vindicate the honour and glory and justice of Jehovah, and that could only be vindicated by human nature. There is only one thing that God could not do it is impossible for Him to lie; Impossible for Him to deny Himself. Therefore He could not save fallen mankind by a direct act of omnipotence from heaven. Justice must be vindicated, and only one Ransom could be found, and such was the love of God to the Church that He spared not His own Son. It is a wonderful truth. How do you view it? How do you hear it? As a point in theology? Paul warns the Colossians of philosophy. Why my friends, we need the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ. He was born of a woman, by the Holy Ghost. All our hope is there. 'Dost thou believe on the Son of God?' He took this human nature in order that He might become a Surety, a Substitute for His people. The condemnation of the world could have been exercised from heaven, There would have been no need for the sending of God's dear Son to condemn the world, but it was necessary for Him to send His Son to save it. But He spared not His own Son. Such was His love to unworthy sinners. He delivered Him up, delivered Him up into the hands of wicked men to be crucified, to be put to an ignominious death, even the death of the cross.

'Dost thou believe on the Son of God?' as these points of the Gospel are unfolded by the Spirit; do they constitute the foundation of your hope and of your salvation? Do you see such a blessedness in this glorious Person and is He so precious to you that it eclipses everything in this world and gives you to see in Him there is a portion all divine? And is there such a connexion between this blessed Man and your soul's needs that a knowledge of Him to you is of more value than all the riches of this world together? 'Dost thou believe on the Son of God?' Dost thou believe in His righteousness? The Pharisees, being ignorant of His righteousness, went about to establish their own. I would say this - there is hope of a Pharisee, but there is not any hope of a hypocrite. Paul was a Pharisee; he was a Pharisee of the Pharisees as touching the law, he was blameless. But the Lord killed him. He killed Pharisees and turns their righteousness into corruption and filthy rags. What a mercy that is! O when His mighty grace deals with a sinner, it is effectual, my friends! It is not a proposition, it is a mighty work.

Paul would have given a different answer to this question when he was a Pharisee, from what he did after that Damascus Road experience. If when a Pharisee should be asked if he believed on the Son of God, he would have said, 'No I don't, who does? I have kept the law, I am perfect.' But the poor publican that went up to the temple if he should be asked if he believed on the Son of God, he would say, 'O I have brought all my sins, I believe in His precious blood' I have brought everything that I have got, my unrighteousness, my depraved nature and sin-stained life, I have brought my wrecked and ruined soul.

*Thy wondrous blood, dear dying Lamb,
Can make this world of guilt remove. (Gadsby's 480)*

Do you believe in Him like that? And do you so believe in His righteousness that you follow after it? O what a point it is! David said, "Let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us." But who prizes that glorious robe? only those that have seen and smelt their filthy rags. O how important is that part of

the work of the Holy Ghost in bringing sinners down into ruin, or at least showing them that they are there! The Holy Ghost never ruins a sinner; the Holy Ghost discovers to a sinner that he is ruined; that he has ruined himself: "O Israel, thou has destroyed thyself, but in Me is thy help." But to look out from wretchedness and woe and death and corruption and a sense of hell in your soul, by faith, to this glorious Lord, and to behold His righteousness, when in yourself there has been death stamped upon all; to look from that death unto Him Who is eternal life, everything right, divine perfections meeting Him!

'Dost thou believe on the Son of God?' How are you answering the question in your hearts? It may be that this runs through some troubled soul, all the way through when we ask this question, 'Who is He, Lord?' Not that you don't know who He is by the Scriptures, but what you want and will get if you are one of those exercised in this, is the answer the Lord gave to this dear man; 'Thou hast both seen Him and it is He that talketh with thee.'

Well, let us ask another question, that we have asked here I think in past occasions; "Is it anything to you, all ye that pass by?" Is the Gospel nothing to you? Has it any connexion with you, anything to do with your daily life, anything to do with your future, your end? or are you yourself your end? Terrible thing if we are our own end. A man that is shown himself will want a different end from what he is. But O, you see the end of faith, the Lord Jesus, the salvation of the soul! But as we try in our feeble way to lift up this glorious Lord on the Gospel pole, is it anything to you? "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness." Who benefited by it? Those that were bitten; stung; it was the sting, it was the bite of sin that made them look. A mercy to be a sin-stung, sin-bitten sinner!

'Dost thou believe on the Son of God?' Dost thou believe in His Substitution? He was a real Substitute. It is the most blessed consideration, because if all that the Lord Jesus became and all that He accomplished, if it was not as a Substitute, it would be of no value to us and He could not be a Substitute without being human, a real Man; and He is that real Man in heaven, to whom poor sinners may come and pray at the throne of grace, ever living to make intercession. A Substitute. We shall need a Substitute in that last great day, because we shall either die in ourselves or in Him.

Do you ever think of it? To die in yourself, just what you are. O if the Holy Ghost would open sinners' eyes! To have such a sight of myself, to die in myself, what a thing to die in! You will die in yourself, or you will die in the Lord, die in a Substitute; die sheltered beneath His precious blood. Die in the virtue of His precious, sinless life if He is yours. Dost thou believe it? 'Dost thou believe in the Son of God?' Bad as I am, the Lord know I believe there is one thing that He has taught me, sixty-odd years ago, sitting in that back seat they were singing the hymn, and I thought, how ridiculous for people to sing a hymn like that;

*Make us well our vileness know,
Keep us very, very low. (Gadsby's 706)*

I thought, 'I won't sing it, I won't sing hymns like that.' But I have had to sing it since. But I do believe in the Son of God, and the more you are taught what you are in yourself, the more precious He will be to your soul.

Amen.