

The Healing of One Born Blind

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A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, AUGUST 11 1872,

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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Since the world began was it not heard that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind." [John 9:32](#).

THAT was quite true—there was no instance recorded in Scripture or in profane history at the time when this man spoke, of any person who was born blind having obtained his sight. I believe it was in the year 1728 that the celebrated Dr. Cheselden, of St. Thomas's Hospital, for the first time in the world's history achieved the marvel of giving sight to a man who had been blind from his youth up. And since then the operation of couching the eyes has been several times successfully performed upon persons who were born blind.

This man was, however, quite correct in the statement that then, and in his day, neither by skillful surgery nor even by miracle had birth-blindness been healed. There was no doubt this man was a great student in the matter of blindness—it touched so nearly his own consciousness since he himself dwelt beneath its perpetual shadow. He was the one man in the city who understood the subject thoroughly. But, alas, by all his researches he found no ground for hope. Having learned the whole history of blindness and its cure, this man had come to the assured conviction that none ever had been healed who were in his plight—a mournful conclusion, indeed, for him.

Our Lord Jesus did for him what never had been done before for any man. This pleasing fact seems to me to be full of consolation to any persons here present who labor under the idea that theirs is a most peculiar and hopeless case. It probably is not so solitary and special a case as you think, but even if we grant your supposition, there is no room for despair since Jesus delights to open up new paths of Grace. Our Lord is inventive in love! He devises new modes of mercy! It is His joy to find out and relieve those whose miserable condition has baffled all other help. His mercy is not bound by precedents. He preserves a freshness and originality of love.

If you can find no instance in which a person like yourself has ever been saved you should not, therefore, conclude that you must necessarily be lost. Rather, you should believe in Him who does great wonders, yes, and marvels unsearchable in the way of Divine Grace! He does as He wills, and His will is love. Have hope that inasmuch as He sees in you a singular sinner, He will make of you a singular trophy of His power to pardon and to bless. It was so with this man's eyes—if never eyes that had been born blind were opened before, Jesus Christ would do it—and the greater would be the glory brought to His name by the miracle.

Jesus does not need showing the way—He loves to strike out paths for Himself and the greater the room for His mercy the better He likes the road. I purpose this morning gathering instruction from the particular expression which the healed man here used. May the Holy Spirit make the meditation truly profitable to us. And, first, I shall ask you to observe the peculiarity of his case—he was a man born blind. Then, secondly, the specialties of his cure shall occupy a little of our attention. And, thirdly, we shall make a few remarks upon the singular condition of the healed man from the moment that his eyes were opened.

I. First, then, THE PECULIARITY OF HIS CASE. It was not an instance of need of light—that might both speedily and easily have been remedied. There was light enough all around him, but the poor creature had no eyes. Now, there are millions of persons in the world who have little or no light. Darkness covers the earth and gross darkness the people. It is the Church's business to spread light on all sides and for this work she is well qualified. We ought not to suffer any person to perish for lack of knowing the Gospel. We cannot give men eyes, but we can give them light. God has placed among us His golden candlesticks and expressly said, "You are the lights of the world."

Now, I believe that there are some persons who have eyes who, nevertheless, see but little for need of light. They are children of God but they walk in darkness and see no light. God has given to them the spiritual faculty of sight, but as

yet they are down in the mines, in the region of night and death shade. They are imprisoned in Doubting Castle where only a few feeble rays struggle into their dungeon. They walk like men in a mist, seeing and yet not seeing. They hear doctrines preached which are not the pure Truth of God, the winnowed corn of the Covenant and, while their eyes are blinded with chaff and dust, they themselves are bewildered and lost in a maze.

Too many in this murky light weave for themselves theories of doubt and fear which increase the gloom. Their tears defile the windows of their soul. They are like men who hang up blinds and shutters to keep out the sun. They cannot see, though Grace has given them eyes. May it be yours and mine by explanation and example, by teaching with the language of the lips and the louder language of our lives, to scatter light on all sides—that those who dwell in spiritual midnight may rejoice, because for them light has sprung up!

Again, this was not the case of a man blinded by accident. Here, again, the help of man might be of much service. Persons who have been struck with blindness have again recovered. Notably is this recorded in Bible history when Elijah struck a whole army with blindness, but afterwards prayed to God for them and they received their sight at once. There is much that we can do in cases where the blindness is rather to be traceable to circumstances than to Nature. For instance, everywhere in the world there is a degree of blindness caused by prejudice. Men judge the Truth before they hear it! They form opinions about the Gospel not having studied the Gospel itself!

Put the New Testament into their hands, entreat them to be candid and to investigate it with their best judgments and to seek guidance from the Holy Spirit, and I believe many would see their error and amend. There are some true spirits whose mental perceptions are blinded by prejudice who would be helped very graciously to see the Truth if we would tenderly and wisely put it before them. The prejudices of education sway many in this country. We are to the backbone a very conservative people, tenacious of established error and suspicious of any long neglected truth. Our countrymen are not soon moved to receive the most obvious truth unless it has been in vogue for ages.

Perhaps it is better that we should be so than that we should be whirled about with every wind of doctrine and should run after every novelty, as some other nations do. But for this cause the Gospel has in this country to combat a mass of prejudice. "Such were my fathers, such ought I to be." "Such our family has always been, therefore such will I be and such shall my children be." No matter how sure may be the Truth of God that is brought before some men's minds, they will not even give it a hearing because old men, good men and men in authority have decided otherwise. Such persons assume that they are right by inheritance and orthodox by ancestry—they cannot learn anything—they have reached the fullness of wisdom and there they mean to stop.

The Church of God should try to remove all prejudices from human eyes from whatever sources they may come. Such opthalmia we may be able to cure—and it is within our province to attempt it. Like Ananias, we may remove the scales from the eyes of some blinded Paul. When God has given eyes we may wash the dust out of them. Mingle with your fellow men. Tell them what the faith is that has saved you, let them see the good works which the Grace of God produces in you—and as the Gospel at first removed from men's eyes the scales of Judaism, of the Greek philosophy and of the Roman pride—so doubtless in this land and in this age it will make short work of the prejudices which some are doing their best to foster.

But this was not the case of a man who was blind by accident and consequently not a type of an understanding darkened by prejudice. The man was blind from his birth! His was the blindness of Nature and, therefore, it baffled all surgical skill. And, concerning the blindness caused by human depravity, the blindness that comes with us at our birth and continues with us till the Grace of God causes us to be born-again, I may say that since the beginning of the world it has not been heard that any man has opened the eyes of one whose spiritual blindness was born with him and is a part of his Nature!

If it is something from without that blinds me, I may recover. But if it is something from within which shuts out the light, who is he that can restore my vision? If from the beginning of my existence I am full of folly—if it is a part of my nature to be without understanding—how dense is my darkness! How hopeless is the fancy that it can ever be removed except by a Divine hand! Let us think and say what we will, we are, every one of us, by nature born blind to spiritual things! We are not capable of perceiving God, not capable of perceiving

the Gospel of His dear Son, not capable of understanding the way of salvation by faith in such a practical way as to be saved by it. We have eyes but we see not! We have understandings but those understandings are perverted—they are like balances put out of gear, or a compass which

forgets the pole. We judge, but we judge unrighteously. By nature we put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter! We put darkness for light, and light for darkness—and this is inbred in our nature, worked into our very constitution. You cannot get it out of man because it is a part of the man—it is his Nature.

If you ask me why it is that man's understanding is so dark, I reply, because his whole nature is disordered by sin—his other faculties, having been perverted, act upon his understanding and prevent its acting in a proper manner. There is a confederacy of evil within which deceives the judgment and leads it into captivity to evil affections. For instance, our carnal heart loves sin—the set of our unrenewed soul is towards evil. We were conceived in sin and shaped in iniquity and we as naturally go after evil as the swine seeks out filth. Sin has a fascination for us! We are taken by it like birds with a lure, or fishes with a bait.

Even those of us who have been renewed have to watch against sin because our nature so readily inclines to it. With much diligence and great labor we climb the ways of virtue, but the paths of sin are easy to the feet—is not that because our fallen nature inclines in that direction? You have only to relax your energy and to loose your soul from its anchor-hold and it drifts at once downwards towards iniquity, for so the current of Nature runs. It needs much power to send us upward, but we go downward as readily as a stone falls to the ground! You know it is so! Man is not as God made him—his affections are corrupt.

Now it is certain that the affections very often sway the judgment. The balances are held unfairly because the heart bribes the head. Even when we fancy that we are very candid we have insensible leanings. Our affections, like Eve's, seduce the Adam of our understanding and the forbidden fruit is judged to be good for food. The smoke of the love of sin blinds our mental eyes. Our desire is often father to our conclusion—we think we are judging fairly but we are really pandering to our baser nature. We think this thing to be better because we like it better! We will not condemn a fault too severely because we have a leaning that way ourselves! Neither will we commend an excellence, because it might cost our flesh too dearly to be able to reach it—or the not reaching it might strike too severe a blow upon our conscience. Ah, while our natural love of sin covers the mind's eye with cataracts and even destroys its optic nerve, we need not wonder that the blindness is beyond removal by any human surgery!

Moreover, our natural pride and self-reliance revolt against the Gospel. We are, every one of us, very important individuals. Even if we sweep a street-crossing we have a dignity of self which must not be insulted. A beggar's rags may cover as much pride as an alderman's gown. Self-importance is not restricted to any one position or grade of life. In the pride of

our nature we are all accounted by ourselves to be both great and good, and that which would in any way lowers us we repudiate as unreasonable and absurd. We cannot see it and are angry that others should! He who makes us suspect our own nothingness asks us to believe a doctrine hard to be understood. Pride will not and cannot understand the doctrines of the Cross because they ring her death-knell.

In consequence of our natural self-sufficiency we all aspire to enter Heaven by efforts and merits of our own. We may deny human merit as a doctrine but flesh and blood everywhere lusts after it. We need to save ourselves by feelings if we cannot by works and to this we cling as for dear life. Then the Gospel comes with its sharp axe and says, "Down with this tree! Your grapes are gall. Your apples are poison. Your very prayers need to be repented of! Your tears need to be wept over, your holiest thoughts are unholy! You must be born-again and you must be saved through the merits of Another, by the free, undeserved favor of God." Then straightway all our manliness, dignity and excellence stand up in indignation and we resolve never to accept salvation on such terms! That refusal assumes the shape of a need of power to understand the Gospel. We do not and cannot understand the Gospel because our notions of ourselves stand in the way! We start with wrong ideas of self and so the whole business is confusion and we ourselves are blinded.

Again, Beloved, one reason why our understanding does not and cannot see spiritual things is because we judge spiritual things by our senses. Imagine a person who should take a foot rule as his standard of everything which exists in Nature and conceive that this man with his foot rule in his pocket becomes an astronomer. He looks through the telescope and he observes the fixed stars. He is told when he takes out his foot rule that it is quite out of place in connection with the heavens—he must give up his feet and inches and calculate by millions of miles.

He is indignant. He will not be deluded by such enthusiasm. He is a man of common sense and a foot rule is a thing which he can see and handle—why, millions of miles are mere matters of faith, no one has ever traveled them—and he does not believe in them! The man effectually closes his own eyes! His understanding cannot develop within such limits.

Thus we measure God's corn with our own bushel. We cannot be brought to believe that, "as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are His ways higher than our ways, and His thoughts than our thoughts." If we find it hard to forgive, we dream that it is the same with God.

Every spiritual Truth of God is acted upon in the same way. We propose to measure the ocean of Divine love in thimbles and the sublime Truths of Revelation we estimate by drops of the bucket. We shall never be able to reach the thoughts and things of God while we persist in judging after the sight of the eyes, according to the measure of an earth-bound, carnal mind. Our understanding also has become unshipped and out of gear from the fact that we are at a distance from God and that, consequently, we do not believe in Him. If we

lived near to God and habitually recognized that in Him we live and move and have our being, we should accept everything that He spoke as being true because He spoke it. And our understanding would be clarified at once by its contact with Truth and God.

But now we think of God as a remote person—we have no love to Him by nature nor any care about Him. It would be the best news some sinners could hear if there were information given that God was dead! They would rejoice above all things at the thought that there was no God. The fool always says, "no God," in his heart, even when he does not dare say it with his tongue. We all by nature would be glad to be rid of God—it is only when the Spirit of God comes and brings us near to God and gives us faith in our heavenly Father that we joy and rejoice in Him—and are able to understand His will.

Thus, you see, our entire nature, fallen as it is, operates to the blindness of our eyes and therefore the opening of the eye of the human understanding towards Divine things remains an impossibility to any power short of the Divine. I believe there are some Brothers whose notion is that you can open a sinner's blind eye by rhetoric. As well hope to sing a stone into sensibility! They dream that you must enchant man with splendid periods and then the scales will fall from his eyes. The climax is a marvelous engine and the preposition is more wonderful still! If these will not convince men, what will? To finish a discourse with a blaze of fireworks—will not that enlighten?

Alas, we know well enough that sinners have been dazzled a thousand times by all the pyrotechnics of oratory and yet have remained as spiritually blind as ever they were! A notion has been held by some that you must argue the Truth of God into men's minds. They say that if you can put the doctrines of the Gospel before them in a clear, logical, demonstrative form they must give way. But, truly, no man's eyes are opened by syllogisms. Reason alone gives no man power to see the light of Heaven. The clearest statements and the most simple expositions are equally in vain without Divine Grace!

I bear witness that I have tried to make the Truth of God "as plain as a pike-staff," as our proverb is, but my hearers have not seen it for all that! The best declaration of Truth will not, of itself, remove birth-blindness and enable men to look unto Jesus. Nor do I believe that even the most earnest Gospel appeals, nor the most vehement testimonies to its Truth will convince men's understanding. All these things have their place and find their use but they have no power in and of themselves to savingly enlighten the understanding. I bring my blind friend to this elevated spot and I bid him look upon yonder landscape. "See how the silver river threads its way amid the emerald fields. See how yonder trees make up a shadowy wood—how wisely yonder garden, near at hand, is cultivated to perfection—and how nobly yonder lordly castle rises on yon knoll of matchless beauty."

Look! He shakes his head—he has no admiration for the scene. I borrow poetical expressions, but still he joins not in my delight. I try plain words and tell him, "There is the garden and there is the castle, and there are the woods and there is the river—do you see them?"

"No," he cannot see one of them and does not know what they are like. What ails the man? Have not I described the landscape well? Have I been faulty in my explanations? Have I not given him my own testimony that I have walked those glades and sailed along that stream? He shakes his head—my words are lost. His eyes, alone, are to blame.

Let us come to this conviction about sinners, for, if not, we shall hammer away and do nothing! Let us be assured that there is something the matter within the sinner himself which we cannot cure. Let us do what we will with him and yet we cannot get him saved unless it is cured. Let us believe this, because it will drive us away from ourselves and it will lead us to our God. It will drive us to the Strong for strength and teach us to seek for power beyond our own. And then it is that God will bless us, because then we shall be sure to give all the glory to His name!

But I must leave the case—it is the case of a deep-seated blindness of Nature which cannot be touched by human skill.

II. Now, secondly, we shall dwell a little upon THE SPECIALITIES OF THE CURE—not exactly of this man's cure, but of the cure of many whom we have seen—and the first is, it is usually accomplished by the most simple means. The man's eyes were opened with a little clay put into them and then washed out at the pool of Siloam. God blesses very slender things to the conversion of souls. It is very humbling, sometimes, to a preacher who thinks, "Well, I did preach a pretty fair sermon that time," to find God does not care a pin about him or his sermon and that a stray remark he made in the street which he hardly thought was of any value whatever was what God has blessed!

That man, when he thought he succeeded best, had done nothing! And when he thought he had succeeded worst— then God blessed him. Many a soul has had his eyes opened by an instrumentality which never dreamed of being so useful and, indeed, the whole way of salvation is, in itself, extremely simple, so as to be well compared to the clay and spit which the Savior used. I do not find many souls converted by bodies of divinity! We have received a great many into the Church but never received one who became converted by a profound theological discussion.

We very seldom hear of any great number of conversions under very eloquent preachers—very seldom indeed! We appreciate eloquence and have not a word to say against it by itself—but evidently it has no power spiritually to enlighten the understanding and neither does it please God to use the excellency of words for conversion. When Paul laid aside human wisdom and said he would not use the excellency of speech, he only laid aside what would not have been of much service to him. When David put off Saul's armor and took the sling and the stone, he slew the giant—and giants are not to be conquered today any more than they were then, by champions arrayed in Saul's armor. We must keep to the simple things, to the plain Gospel plainly preached. The clay and the spit were not an artistic combina-

tion—taste was not charmed by them, or culture gratified—yet by these and a wash in Siloam eyes were opened! Even thus it pleases God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe!

But, secondly, in every case it is a Divine work. In this case it was evidently the Lord Jesus who opened the man's eyes, literally, and it is always His work by the Holy Spirit spiritually. He gives a man to know spiritual things and to embrace them by faith. No eye is ever opened to see Jesus except by Jesus. The Spirit of God works all our good things in us. Do not let us get away from this belief on any account. The exigencies of some men's doctrinal systems require them to ascribe some measure of power to the sinner—but we know that he is dead in sin and altogether without strength. Beloved, alter your system of divinity but do not disavow the Truth of God which is now before us, for it stands confirmed by our own daily experience as well as revealed in the Word of God. It is the Spirit that quickens and enlightens. Blindness of soul yields only to that voice which of old said, "Let there be light."

Next, this opening of the eyes is often instantaneous and when the eye is opened it frequently sees just as perfectly as if it had always been seeing. I saw, a few hours ago, what I verily believe was the opening of the eyes of one seeking soul. Two enquiring ones came to me in the vestry. They had been hearing the Gospel here for only a short season but had been impressed by it. They expressed their regret that they were about to remove far away but they added their gratitude that they had been here at all. I was cheered by their kind thanks but felt anxious that a more effectual work should be worked in them, and therefore I asked them, "Have you in very deed believed in the Lord Jesus Christ? Are you saved?"

One of them replied, "I have been trying hard to believe." "No," I said, "that will not do. Did you ever tell your father that you tried to believe him?" They admitted that such language would have been an insult. I then set the Gospel very plainly before them in as simple language as I could, but one of them said, "I cannot realize it, I cannot realize that I am saved." Then I went on to say, "God bears testimony to His Son, that whoever trusts in His Son is saved. Will you make Him a liar now, or will you believe His Word?"

While I thus spoke, one of them started as if astonished and she startled us all as she cried, "Oh, Sir, I see it all, I am saved! O do bless Jesus for me, for showing me this and saving me, I see it all." The esteemed sister who had brought me these young friends knelt down with them while with all our hearts we blessed and magnified the Lord. One of the two sisters however, could not see the Gospel as the other had done, though I feel sure she will. Did it not seem strange that both hearing the same words, one should come out into clear light and the other should have to wait in the gloom? The change which comes over the heart when the understanding grasps the Gospel is often reflected in the face and shines there like the light of Heaven!

Such newly-enlightened souls often exclaim, "Why Sir, it is so plain! How is it I have not seen it before now? I understand all I have read in the Bible now, though I cared not for it before. It has all come in a minute and now I see what I never perceived before." I simply give one instance because it is one among thousands which one has seen—in which the eyes have opened instantly. I can only compare the enlightened sinner to a person who has been shut up in a dark prison and has never seen the light and suddenly his liberator opens a window and the prisoner is staggered and amazed at what he sees when he looks abroad on hill and flood.

To the Believer, Heaven-given sight is so superlative a gift and what is revealed to him so amazes him that he scarcely knows where he is! Very frequently, when Christ opens the eyes it is done in a moment and done completely in that moment, though in other instances it is a more gradual light—men are at first seen as trees walking—and then by degrees film after film is taken from the spiritual eye. Now you must not wonder if light comes so suddenly that it should be quite a new sensation to the man and therefore should surprise him. Do you remember the first breath of spiritual life you ever drew? I think I remember it still.

Do you remember the first sight you ever had of Christ? Oh, you must recollect it! There is fixed in the memories of some of us the first time we saw the sea and the first time we gazed upon the Alps, but these were nothing! We felt they were still but pieces of this old world and we had only seen a little more of what we had seen before. But conversion opens up a new world! It teaches us to peer into the invisible and to see the things not seen of mortal eyes. When we receive new eyes, we see a thousand things which utterly astound and at the same time delight us. Do you wonder if young converts get excited? I neither wonder nor blame—I wish we had a little more excitement in our gatherings for worship.

Who hears now-a-days the cry, "What must I do to be saved?" Or who hears a soul saying, "I have found Him of whom Moses in the Law and the Prophets did write"? Let us give plenty of liberty to the work of the Spirit of God and believe that when He comes men will not always act after the sober rules of decorum but will break through them and even be suspected of being drunk because they speak as men in their ordinary minds are not likely to do! It is a strange and marvelous thing to men when the Spirit of God opens their eyes and we must not wonder if they scarcely know what they say and forget where they are!

One thing is certain that when the eyes are open it is a very clear thing to the man himself. Others may doubt whether his eyes are opened but he knows they are—about that he has no question. "One thing I know, whereas I was blind, now I see." When the Lord in His infinite mercy visits a spirit that has been long shut up in the dark, the change becomes so great that he does not need to enquire, "Am I changed or not?" but he himself is assured of it by his own consciousness. Once give the man the eyes to see and he possesses a faculty that is capable of abundant use. The man who could see the Pharisees, could, by-and-by,

see Jesus. He who has his eyes opened can not only see the trees and fields around him, but he can behold the heavens and the glorious sun!

And once give a man spiritual light, he has at once capacity for seeing Divine mysteries. He shall see the world to come and the glories yet to be revealed. Those newly-created eyes are those which shall see the King in His beauty and the land that is very far off. He has the faculty for seeing everything which shall be beheld in the day of the revelation of our God and Savior Jesus Christ! Oh, what a marvelous work is this! May everyone of us know it personally! I put the question, Do we know it? Have we thus had our eyes opened?

III. I must close with a third point, which is this—THE CONDITION OF THE HEALED MAN. When his eyes were opened, first he had strong impressions in favor of the Glorious One who had healed him. He did not know who He was, but he knew He must be something very good. He thought He must be a Prophet and when he came to know Him better he felt that He was God and he fell down and worshipped Him. No man has had his eyes opened without feeling intense love to Jesus—yes, and I will add without believing in His Deity—without worshipping Him as the Son of God!

We do not want to be uncharitable, but we have a little common sense left. We never can see how a man can be a Christian who does not believe in Christ! Or how a man can be said to believe in Christ who only believes in the smallest part of Him—receives His Humanity—but rejects His Godhead. There must be a real faith in the Son of God and he is blind and dark, still, who does not fall down like the man in this story and worship the living God—beholding the Glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ—and blessing God that he has found both a Prince and a Savior in the Person of the Lord Jesus who has laid down His life for His people.

Oh, I am sure if your eyes are opened, you love Jesus this morning! You feel your heart leap at the very thought of Him! Your whole soul goes after Him! You feel, if He has opened your eyes, those eyes belong to Him and your whole self, too! This man, therefore, became from that moment a confessor of Christ! They questioned him and he did not speak bashfully and conceal his convictions, but he answered the questions at once. Stephen was the first martyr, but this man was the first confessor, assuredly, and before the Pharisees he put it out plainly and straight to their faces, in simple language.

And so, Beloved, if the Lord has opened our eyes we shall not hesitate to say so. He has done it, blessed be His name! Our tongue might well be smitten with eternal silence if we were to hesitate to declare what Jesus has done for us. I charge you who have received Grace from Christ Jesus to become confessors of the faith, to acknowledge Christ as you ought to do! Be baptized and united with His people and then, in whatever company you are, however others may speak for Him, or against Him, take your stand and say, "He has opened my eyes, and I bless His name."

Now this man becomes an advocate for Christ as well as a confessor, and an able advocate, too, for the facts, which were his arguments, baffled his adversaries. They said this and that, but he replied, "Whether it is so or no it is not for me to say, but God has heard this Man, therefore this Man is not a sinner as you say He is. He has opened my eyes, therefore I know where He must have come from. He must have come from God."

We have been arguing for a long time against infidelity with arguments which have never achieved anything. I believe that skeptics glean their blunted shafts and shoot them at the shield of Truth again. I fear that the Christian pulpit has been the great instructor in infidelity, for we have taught our people arguments which they never would have known if we had not repeated them under the notion of replying to them. But, Beloved, you will never meet infidelity except with facts. Say what it is God has done for you and prove it by your godly lives. Against the holy lives of Christians, unbelief has no power! Stand in serried phalanx, each man with his sword of holy living, covered in the power of the Holy Spirit, and the assaults of your foes, however desperate their malice, will utterly fail! God grant us, like this man, to learn the art of arguing for Christ by personal testimony!

Well, then, it came to pass that this man with his eyes opened was driven out of the synagogue. Speckled birds are always hunted away by their fellow birds. One of the worst things that can happen to a man, as far as this world is concerned, is to know too much. If you will barely keep abreast with the times you may be tolerated. But if you get a little ahead of the age you must expect ill-treatment. Be blind among blind men—it is the very dictate of prudence if you would save your skin. It is a very unsafe thing to have your eyes opened among blind men. For they will not believe in your assertions and you will be very dogmatic—and as they cannot see, you have no common ground for argument— and you will fall at once to quarrelling.

And if the blind men shall be in the majority, the probabilities are you will have to go out of door or window and make yourself company elsewhere. When God opens a man's eyes to see spiritual things, straightway others say, "What is this fellow talking about? We do not see what he sees." And if the fellow is very simple he turns round to these blind men and says, "I will explain to you now." Dear Friend, you will lose your pains for they cannot see! If a man is born blind, you need not talk to him about scarlet and mauve and magenta—he cannot understand you—he does not know anything at all about it. Go on, for it is no use reasoning with him! The only thing you can do with him is to take him where he can get his eyes opened. To argue with him is utterly useless—he has not the faculty.

If you knew a person to be devoid of taste you would not quarrel with him because he said sugar tasted like salt—he neither knows what "sweet" means nor what "salt" means—but only uses words without understanding them. And a man who is without Grace in his heart does not and cannot know anything about religion. He catches up the phrases but he knows as much about the Truth of God itself as a botanist knows about botany who has never seen

a flower, or as a deaf man knows of music. Do not try to reason with such people—believe that they are incapable of learning from you by reasoning—and go to God's Holy Spirit, with this cry, "Lord, open their eyes! Lord, open their eyes!" Be very patient with them for you cannot expect blind men to see and must not be very angry with them if they do not.

But be very prayerful for them and bring the Gospel to them in the power of the Holy Spirit. And then who knows but their eyes may be opened? But wonder not if they say you are a "fanatic," an "enthusiast," a "Methodist," "Presbyterian," "cant," "hypocrite"—those are the kind of words which the spiritually blind fling at those who can see.

You say you have a faculty which they have not—they, therefore, deny the faculty because they would not like to admit that you have the best of them—and they put you out of the synagogue.

But notice, when this man was put out, Jesus Christ found him. It was a blessed loss for him, then, to lose the Pharisees and find his Savior! O Brothers and Sisters, what a mercy it is when the world casts us out! I remember an estimable lady of title, who is now in Heaven, who, when she was united with this Church was forsaken by all those persons of rank who had formerly associated with her. And I said to her, and she joined in the sentiment, "What a mercy you are rid of them. They might have been a snare to you. Now (I said) you will have no further trouble from them." "Yes," and she added, "For Christ's sake I could be content to be accounted as the off-scouring of all things." The society of the world never was any benefit to us and it never will be! Trying to be very respectable and to mingle in elevated society, and all that, is a snare to many Christians. Prize men for their real worth and not for their gilt! Believe those to be the greatest men who are the holiest men, and those to be the best company who keep company with Christ.

It is a great blessing to the Church when it is persecuted. For the matter of that we might be glad to have back the days of Diocletian again. The Church is never purer on the whole—never more devout—and never increases more rapidly than when she enjoys the bad opinion of society! But when we begin to be thought very excellent people and our Church is honored, esteemed, and respected—corruption sets in—we get away from Christ and prove again that the friendship of this world is enmity with God.

The Lord grant that we may have our eyes so opened that our testimony may bring upon us the charge of singularity, and, then, if put away from the company of those who cannot see the Lord, may we live all the closer to Him and this shall be a great gain to us. The Lord bless you, Beloved, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.