

No.
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"IF YE THEN BE RISEN WITH CHRIST, SEEK THOSE THINGS
WHICH ARE ABOVE, WHERE CHRIST SITTETH ON THE
RIGHT HAND OF GOD." COL. 3. 1.

"THE ONCE - BLIND MAN".

An Address (revised) at

Forest Gate, E. 7.

3rd August, 1914.

by

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An Address by Mr. P.W.Heward
3rd August, 1914. Forest Gate.

I want, boys and girls, to think specially of you, and the subject we have is the once-blind man. I know this sounds strange English but I have a verse of Scripture for it, and so we will turn to that verse in John 9, where we find one who is called by the Holy Spirit, "The once blind man". In verse 13 our translation puts it "Him that aforetime was blind", but really the simple words that God has put in Greek are "The once blind man". I like such a "name" for this man. I cannot tell you his other name, only - the once blind man. If you say, the seeing man, a lot of people are seeing men, but if you say, once-blind, you know what he USED to be, and you know he is not what he used to be. He has had a big change come over him, yes, into him. "Once-blind" means NOT blind now, and so this beautiful name, that comes in the Scripture itself, gives a wonderful description of this man. But before we see how he is made to look, - something he had never done before, - let us find out more fully what his condition really was. When you hear some more about him you will not think very much of him at first. If you had lived in Palestine in those days, you would not have liked to have had him for a friend. He was the man on whom many looked down, - we can see that from the way the disciples talked about him. They said, Oh that man has done something specially wrong, or his parents have done something specially wrong, there is something very bad; - that is what many people were thinking in those days. So that he was not what you would call a man very much liked. He was one who was very low down and looked down upon - but how was he brought to see? How was he brought to have that wonderful change? Let us go back in our thoughts to one Sabbath day, and to the neighbourhood of Jerusalem hundreds of years ago. The Lord Jesus Christ has been speaking to the Pharisees, they are very cross, and when He says to them, "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad," they mockingly

reply, "Thou art not yet 80 years old, and hast Thou seen Abraham?" But the Lord Jesus Christ never said in that verse that He had seen Abraham. It is true that He had, but THAT is not what He said. He said, Abraham rejoiced to see, which is the other way round, but they did not pay any attention to Abraham rejoicing to see, they only took up stones, for when the Lord Jesus gave them the beautiful little answer, "Before Abraham was born (or become), I AM", at once they had their stones ready. But "Jesus hid Himself". The people who thought they could see could not even see where He was. He hid Himself, and as they did not want to SEE His day like Abraham, He went on to find a blind man who should see His Day, and thus we have how the Lord speaks of seeing Abraham, - leaves the Pharisees who did not see, and goes on to cause a blind man to see. For you must never read one chapter without another chapter, or one verse without another verse. Division into chapters and verses is very useful for finding places, but very awkward for losing thoughts. We lose a number of precious thoughts through the dividing up into chapters and verses. So we must be careful to go over the divisions which men have put between different chapters, and read from one to the other. So we start John 9 and John 8. John 8:59 tells us of the Lord Jesus going through the midst of them, and they could not see Him, and as He passed by He sees a man which is blind. Those who brought the Bible over into English for us did a very very useful work, but do you see they put the name "Jesus" in a different kind of type here. That is because the word "Jesus" is NOT there, but they put it in to make it clear. Of course they have to do so, if they start a new chapter, but if only they would not start a new chapter we should not need the word added. Scripture reads straight on "Jesus hid Himself, and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by and as He passed by, He saw a man". So here we have the Lord Jesus Christ going up to a blind man and you will notice this - that the blind man did not see Him, but He saw the blind man. I suppose you will think that is a very, very simple thing to say. Even a very, very little boy

or girl would know that the blind man did not see Him, but yet there are thousands of people at the present day who think that in a spiritual sense the blind man sees first before the Lord sees. But the wonderful Gospel of the grace of God always shows it is the Lord Who sees the blind sinner first. The Lord in His wonderful love BEGINS the work, and so we rejoice in the wonderful love that is brought before us here, rejoice that the Lord Jesus saw a man who was blind. The disciples saw him too, but they thought - the wicked man. The Lord Jesus saw him with a view to saving him, with a view to giving him eyes to see. How differently the disciples looked at this man. He was waiting there, - I suppose at the side of the road. He was a blind man, blind from his birth. BOTH of his eyes were blind and BOTH of his eyes had never seen. He could not have been much more blind; if he could have seen with one eye a little, there would have been SOME sight, if he had seen for two or three years at first and then lost his eyesight, he would have had some seeing in his lifetime. But he could not be much more blind - two eyes blind the whole life. You could not have anything much more blind than THAT, yet THAT is where the man starts. Here then we have the ~~beginning~~ beginning, - the man with his eyes quite blind. We do not know much about him before. We simply know that he was born blind, and he lives blind UNTIL - the Lord in wonderful love opens his eyes. I like a word that comes further along. we read of OPENING his eyes. They said, How were thine eyes opened? Oh you say, "He had not any eyes to see at all, it is not a question simply of having the eyes opened". Why then is that word brought in to the Scripture? To give us another thought. The sinner is not only blind, but he has also closed his eyes. Not only he does not see, and cannot see, but he won't see. There is EVERYTHING wrong about the sinner, and so we have the man with the closed eyes, and the man with the blind eyes. The man who is blind from his birth is to be pitied; but the sinner is worse off than this man is, because not only is he blind, not only does he close his eyes, but he has something worse than eyes not seeing. If a man has ten pounds, he has some money. ~~£~~

If he has nothing, that is less than ten pounds; but if he has ONLY a debt of ten pounds, that is less than nothing. He HAS ten pounds, but it is ten pounds debt, and so with the sinner, he is blind, that is like having nothing, but he also has eyes that see wrong things so that is the ten pounds debt. This is worse than nought, and this is where the sinner stands. ^{So} ~~the~~ the sinner is worse off than the poor man. He sees wrongly, he looks on the things of Satan and of sin. Everything is altogether wrong with the sinner. He has no eyes to see beauty in the Lord Jesus, but he has the eyes of sin to see beauty in sin, as we read in one of the Epistles. Further, the man before us is a beggar. In verse 8 we read, the neighbours therefore and they which before had seen him that he was blind, said, Is not this he that sat and BEGGED? Nothing else; - he spent his time begging. Not a very high position - begging. He did not DO anything. He was simply an eastern blind beggar, and all that he thought was that he would like people to give him a little money or a little food, that he might just get through this world. He begged to have just enough of the things of this world, and so with the poor sinner, ~~he simply thinks of this world, and so with the poor sinner,~~ he simply thinks of getting a few things of this world, things that do not last. The beggar was in a very very low position, and the sinner is in a lower position still.

But as the Lord Jesus Christ looks upon him the disciples see this and they begin asking a question, and the Lord Jesus answers the question very beautifully. In verse 3 He explains how this man was blind that the works of God should be made manifest in him. The sinner is worse off than the blind man of ~~this~~ this verse, for of the sinner, we may say, this one has sinned and he comes of a sinful family, and his blindness is connected with sin. In this case the man was a sinner like others, but his blindness is all to do with sin. So he is worse off than this man, but if the Lord sees a poor sinner it is that the works of God might be manifest in him. Ah, boys and girls, salvation is not the work of man, the blind man could not do anything at all which would make himself to see. Grace would work, "That the works

of GOD might be manifest in him". And if any of you are to be brought to know God's way of salvation, it must be by the works of GOD. The verses go on with the precious story: - the Lord Jesus says, in verse 5, "As long as I am in the world I am the Light of the world," and so this man who is a blind beggar in darkness, is to see the Light of the world. When the Lord Jesus had spoken, verse 6 tells us that He spat on the ground and made clay of the spittle, and He anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay. Here is the beginning of the Lord's work, and it does seem strange. The first thing that the Lord does is to make some clay and put it on the eyes. Now I am sure that this looks an unlikely way of making the man see. But do you know that when God begins His work of grace in the heart of a poor sinner, it often seems a very, very unlikely way. The sinner feels he is farther off from God than ever he was, and so it must have been as to this man, and ^{his} eyesight. He must have felt, "Well, I am simply having lumps of something put on my eyes." If before he could just tell which way the sun was, he could not even tell that now. Anyhow, as far as it could be, it was making the blind man blinder. He has now, not only eyes that cannot see, but he has a thick covering over them, in order that the first thing he may see is that he cannot see, and that is a very, very important thing to see. When people see that they cannot see, it shows God has begun a work of grace. When the sinner feels he is dead, it is the most encouraging thing that there can be. It shows that God is making him begin to live, and so the blind man is to be made to see he cannot see, and these lumps of clay are put over both his eyes, not simply over one. He must feel this altogether, that he cannot see ONE TINY THING. Further, this way of healing was not the way that the man would naturally have asked. He would have said I do not want lumps of clay put on my eyes, and the sinner does not like God's way of ^{salvation -} ~~it~~ till God causes him to like it, - because it is so humbling, and is that which brings him down to the ground. In this case something of the ground is put on him to give a little picture of the experience when the sinner is

brought right down to the dust. Yes, over this blind man's eyes there is put some of the ground, that he may feel he deserves to be buried in the ~~ground~~ ^{ground,} that he may know there is nothing good about him at all. That is how God in His wonderful love begins His work. So now you will understand why it was that we do long that boys and girls and grown up people too might see their sad condition, that they might see how very low down they are brought that they have nothing good about them, but that they deserve to be buried because they are all wrong. But next we read - He anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay and said unto him, Go wash in the pool of Siloam, which is by interpretation "Sent". He went his way, therefore, and washed and came seeing. He did not go seeing, but are you quite sure he was blind when he started going? I am not. He was the blind man before the Lord put this on his eyes, but was he the blind man when he went to the pool of Siloam? He is told to go there and wash. Some people will tell us that this passage shows the sinner did something of the work. He went and washed, and therefore he saw. Scripture does not say so. God in His wonderful grace gives a sinner to have faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and that sinner says, "When I had faith in the Lord Jesus Christ I came seeing, and some people will say, Then the faith made you see, and it was your faith that did it all. It is true that when there is the faith there is the beginning of the seeing, but I think the man had his eyes given him before that, only they are all covered up. There are two beginnings to this man's seeing. When the Lord touches him there is a wonderful work of grace begins, and so when God begins to save a sinner, the sinner does not himself see things at first. He begins to SEE when he has washed in the pool of Siloam. I will tell you what that means in a few minutes. But first of all notice that there are two beginnings to this man's seeing. The earlier is from God's side when the Lord begins the work, but the man cannot tell about it because he has those lumps of clay over his eyes. He cannot tell about it till he comes up out from the waters of Siloam, and then he says, Oh I can see, but he could not tell you just

when this new power began. He knows when he began to see further things, but when did he first begin to see those lumps of clay. I do not know. But I believe that the Lord began the work first, and so it is always, boys and girls. The first thing the man sees is a lump of clay. Something of the earth and he sees he cannot see. So when God in His wonderful grace lays hold of a boy or a ~~girl~~ girl or a man or a woman, he causes that one to GO. This is the beginning of a new life. A dead man cannot walk or work. "Go", and so he goes and washes in the pool of Siloam, and the Gospel says, "Which is by interpretation, Sent". Should we be told what that pool meant if there was not a lesson wrapped up in it? I am sure we should not be told. Everything of Scripture has a lesson wrapped up in it. "A lesson"? EVER SO MANY LESSONS. Every word of Scripture is as long as a book, and so the Bible is far and away the longest book in the world. It is all written in a most wonderful shorthand, with such a wonderful fulness of teaching. So we have brought before us here that the Pool of Siloam means "A pool of the Sent One". Ah, let us put that word "One" on the end. It really belongs there, for surely this refers to the Lord Jesus Christ, as the One Who has been sent into the world to save sinners, and this poor blind man (or am I to begin to call him "The once blind man"). This poor, - ah, I can hardly call him poor, - this once blind man is now brought down to that pool and he bows himself down in it, and he finds that when he comes to the Sent One he sees. It is when the Sent One comes to him that he has the power to see, but when he comes to the Sent One, He begins to see, and so we have beautifully brought before us here how the Lord begins the work, and to what this leads. Boys and girls, if you are to know that wonderfulness of belonging to God, and of being among His people, you must go to the Sent One that ~~precious~~ precious Lord Jesus, the only Saviour, and the only Hope. The pool of the Sent One was a pool of water, and in Christ there is Living water. ~~The pool of water, and in Christ~~
~~sheweth~~

The pool of the Sent One makes us also think that the sinner deserves to be drowned, but because of the Sent One he has a free salvation. We are told about Israel of old, how they did not want the waters of Shiloah that went softly, they did not want anything to do with the Sent One, but that they wanted their own way. Those who are brought by God's grace and led to the pool of Siloam, to the waters of Shiloah that go softly, and the name may not ONLY suggest "Sent One", but something else also. I do not say it MEANS something else but it SUGGESTS something else. Leave out the vowels and you have S-L-M - Salom - Peace. So that when you come to the Sent One you come to Peace. There is no peace with God except by that precious Sent One the Lord Jesus Christ.

And now the man comes back, and as he comes, the neighbours say, "Is not this he that sat and begged? Some say, This is he, others said, He is like him, but he said, I am he". "He is like him" - when God saves a sinner, the sinner certainly looks like he was before, he has the same body as before, and yet there is such a change about him that people are not quite sure if it is the same one. "He is like him". That means he has something UNlike him, as well. Of course he has, he can see, and that is very unlike what he used to be, and he shows it. He sat and begged, now he walks and does not beg. He was blind, now he is not blind. It is all changed round, and when God in His wonderful love saves a sinner, it is all wonderfully changed. If you had tried to persuade that man that there was no change in his life you would have had a very very hard task. He had a change, he knew it, and he showed it, and so when God graciously saves a sinner, there is a change and the sinner knows it, and shows it. Then we find next they ask him how his eyes were opened, and he began in verse 11, "a MAN that is called Jesus," but in verse 17, he goes a little further. "What sayest thou of Him"? they ask, and the answer comes "He is a Prophet". A man, a prophet. The once blind man is going forward now. We think of John 4 where you find something very similar. "How is it that Thou being a JEW". That is where the

woman of Samaria starts. "Sir, I perceive that Thou art a Prophet", she goes on, and then when she goes away and leaves her waterpot to tell of that which is better than a waterpot, which runs dry; even of that which is a fountain of life, she says, "Is not this the Christ"? Will this man go forward in the same way? Yes. Come along further in the chapter. He has troubles, and these are the best things for him. When anyone is saved by God's grace, the best schooling, boys and girls, is to have a little trouble, and so we find that everybody is against him. But in verse 33 he says, If This One were not of God He could do nothing. This ONE, the word "man" is really not needed here. God did not put it. We have it in our English, but I think spoiling the lesson. If This ONE were not from God He could do nothing. "THIS One" - a beautiful name of the Lord Jesus. Here is One come from God, says the blind man, more than a prophet He is One Who has come in the Name of God. Will the man go further? Yes, ■ his trouble goes further, and he is cast out, and we read the Lord Jesus hears he is cast out, and in verse 35 says to 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 saith unto him, Thou hast both SEEN Him, - (What a beautiful expression to the once-blind man) - Thou hast both seen Him, and it is He That talketh with thee. And he said, Lord, I believe, and he worshipped Him". I cannot tell you what MORE happened to that once-blind man. But I do not mind leaving a man when he is worshipping. We find a very good finish to his history. We leave him worshipping. We find that he is cast out by people, but the Lord received him IN. He believes INTO, for that is the beautiful word used here. Dost THOU believe INTO? THEY had cast him OUT. They had not room for him in the synagogue. But there is room for him in the Saviour. "Dost thou believe INTO?" - and he is brought to know what it is to be brought near to that Precious Saviour; yea, into, and he says, Lord, and goes on believing, and goes on worshipping. Oh that the history of the once-blind man may be your history, boys and girls. You DO

start in the earlier verses just the same, but perhaps God has brought you here this afternoon that His works might be manifest, that you might be brought to see yourself ever so blind, and like the man who did not feel very happy with clay all over his eyes. Yes the first thing when God works in the sinners heart is to feel miserable, but THEN there is seeing. A happiness begun thus and it went on, and though if you are saved by God's grace, you will not find it easy to live as a Christian, yet when the man was turned out, the Lord found him, and so is it now. The Lord always comes to His people just at the right time, not a minute, ^{or less. Oh that you might} know the Lord Jesus Christ, not only as a Man, and a Prophet, but as the Son of God, and your Saviour, into Whom you believe, that you might be His and that your life might be a life ~~might be a life~~ of seeing (with new eyes) and of believing, and of worshipping.

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