

## Gospel Words — Ninth Series.

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A Series of 4pp. Gospel Tracts by W.K. for distribution after preaching.

### 1 The Demoniac Mute

Matt. 9: 32-34.

(B.T. Vol. N1, p. 326-327. Gospel No. 9-1.)

This chapter as a whole shows us not only divine power in goodness displayed in Jesus as in Matt. 8; but how it was received by those who had religious reputation among the Jews. The more He wrought in grace, the less acceptable was the Messiah. Did He forgive the sins of the paralytic? Scribes within themselves resented it as blasphemy. But He who read their hearts answered their wicked unbelief by bidding the man arise, take up his couch, and retire to his house.

So the call of the tax-gatherer to follow Him, and the defence of the disciples to the fault-finding followers of John and the Pharisees, vindicated God's grace. New wine needs new skins. The condition of God's ancient people was, like that of the ruler's daughter, one. of death; but He Who went to raise her up, and at length did so, was open to the touch of faith which got healing at once. Two blind men that appealed to His mercy as Son of David received their sight at His hand and word. These were but samples of what He could and would do for Israel, if there had been faith; but the leaders were increasingly hostile, whatever might be the marvel of the crowds, and His fame spread in all that land.

There remained a final proof. "But as these were going out, behold, they brought to him a dumb man possessed by a demon. And the demon having been cast out, the dumb spoke; and the crowds wondered, saying, It was never seen thus in Israel. But the Pharisees said, He casteth out the demons by [or, in the power of] the prince of the demons" (vers. 32-34).

Nothing slackened the gracious dealing of our Lord, so long as the door was open. The blind who now saw were no sooner going out, than men brought to him a man not only dumb but a demoniac.

Luke 11: 14 presents the awful peculiarity of the case yet more precisely: "And he was casting out a demon, and it was dumb." It was not simply the human infirmity: a dumb demon possessed the man. This made it altogether beyond ordinary resource. A spirit evil or good has power that man cannot resist. As with the unhappy man, so with the unhappy people and especially their religious chiefs. At length the people had not a true word to utter of their divine Messiah. His great grace, and their great need, drew out first from the leaders the imputation of blasphemy. Now it reaches a lower depth still opening to devour them. For what can be more heinous than to impute to the Holy One the power of the wicked one? Blasphemers themselves they charge blasphemy against Him, and under Satan's power they impute it to the energy of the prince of demons that He cast out the demons.

Before they were carried to Babylon, Israel had totally failed as Jehovah's servant. Their witness was not to Him but to graven and molten images, to which they said, Ye are our gods. Who so blind and deaf as they to whom Jehovah had laid bare His mighty arm and from the heavens made them hear His voice as no other people ever did? And therefore Jehovah gave Jacob for a spoil, and Israel to the robbers. Now they had Jehovah Messiah present in their midst in the power of beneficent goodness, and in a grace which anticipated the kingdom; and their alienation became yet more deadly. The same unbelief which sought after strange gods (only not nonentities because they were demons), rejected and blasphemed their Anointed, Who was in truth Jehovah. Where not thus active, the people were just as the demoniac mute. Under the power of the enemy they were dumb for Him Whose praise fills the heavens as it will the earth and all the creation.

How is it with you, dear reader? Are you confessing with your mouth the Lord Jesus? Blessed is it, when also the heart believes on Him to righteousness; for then, and not otherwise, is confession made to salvation. He Who created man is Lord and Redeemer. God calls you to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. Thus shall you be saved — thus only; for there is none other name under heaven to save. Other refuge is vain. Other means are a snare and a lie. He is the true God, and eternal life. For the sinner, under Satan's power, only He can avail; but He avails at once and unfailingly. It is true that He is not here, but risen. It is true that the Jews slew Him, hanging Him on a tree; but God exalted Him by His right hand as Leader and Saviour, accepting His death as sacrifice, the only efficacious sacrifice, for sins. The grace now shown exceeds; it reigns through righteousness unto life eternal through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Do you speak of your subjection to Satan's power? Looking to Jesus, life is given. He also Himself likewise took part in blood and flesh, that through death He might annul him that hath the might of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who in fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. In His name, then, resist the devil; and he will flee from you. He is a conquered enemy through Him Who bore your sins and brings you every spiritual good.

Believing in Him, how immense is the change! As living stones, you are being built up, a spiritual house, a holy priesthood (which Aaron's sons were only in outward form), to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. What is the worth to God now of sheep or oxen? of incense, or of first-fruits? All such things had their place before He came Who makes us to see that they are no more than the beggarly elements of the world, and that the body is of Christ. The Christian is a true worshipper, he only. They all can worship the Father in spirit and truth in the hour that now is. The multitude keeping holiday, without knowing the Father, without faith in the truth, without having the Spirit, are spurious and in the dark. The true worshippers the Father seeks at this time, who must worship God in spirit and truth, for they alone walk in the light as He is in the light. Assuredly they are no longer dumb. Does any among them suffer evil? Let him pray. Is any cheerful? Let him sing praise.

May this be your lot! Grace alone can make it yours, the saving grace of God which appeared in our Lord Jesus, and blesses through faith in Him.

## 2 The Withered Hand healed

Matt. 12: 9-14.

(B.T. Vol. N2, p. 341-342. Gospel No. 9-2.)

The sabbath like everything else was turned by Jewish unbelief against the Messiah. But like everything else the sabbath only told to His glory against man's sin, shame, selfishness, and pride. At that time (Matt. 12: 1) the Lord went through the cornfields on the sabbath, and His disciples, being hungry, began to pluck and eat. Seeing this the Pharisees reproached Him, but He vindicated them by David's act in 1 Sam. 21 generally, and in particular by the priests who do their work in the temple blamelessly on the sabbaths. What value had the show-bread if the anointed of Jehovah and his men were hunted for their life? Yet says He, "a greater thing than the temple is here." Had they known too what Hosea 6: 6 means, they would not have condemned the guiltless. "For the Son of man is lord of the sabbath." The rejected Christ is the Son of man about to come from heaven in judgment. They were guilty not only of transgressing the law, but of refusing Jehovah's Anointed. So He enters on a higher and larger glory which supersedes their boasts and judges their sins.

On a subsequent sabbath he exposes their evil state, hypocritical and murderous.

"And when departed thence he went into their synagogue; and, behold, a man having a withered hand. And they asked him, saying, Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath? that they might accuse him. And he said to them, What man of you shall there be who shall have one sheep; and if this fall into a pit on the sabbath, will he not lay hold and raise it up? How much then doth a man exceed a sheep! Wherefore it is lawful on the sabbath to do well. Then he saith to the man, Stretch out thy hand, and he stretched it out; and it was restored sound as the other. But the Pharisees went out and took counsel against him, how they might destroy him" (vers. 9-14).

Here it is not the authority of His person in which He will judge not the Jews only but all the nations; it is the character of Him Who is good and doeth good, let His people be as false and faulty as they may to their ruin. In vain for His people to plead the sabbath against Him Who is lord of it; still more vain to forbid on that day His active goodness for needy suffering man. The poorest Jew was not debarred by the sabbath from extricating his sheep from the pit. God had compassion, if they had none, for their brother fallen under a worse calamity; and here was He anointed of Jehovah to bind up the broken-hearted, let Pharisees rage and plot as they might. "Lo, I am come to do thy will, O God."

Mark presents the scene yet more vividly; for he tells us that the Saviour directed the man to "Stand up" before He uttered His fuller and withering questions: "Is it lawful on the sabbath to do good or to do evil? to save life, or to kill?" And when they held their peace but with malice to the uttermost, He looked round about on them with anger, distressed at the hardening of their heart. What right had selfish murderous men against God's grace? Such they showed themselves; for they went out of the synagogue to plot, Pharisees and Herodians, deadly enemies of each other, against the Son of God, His servant among sinful and suffering men, to minister as none else could, to save souls as well as life.

Oh! how is it with you who read these lines? Is not your case still more deplorable than his of the withered hand? Is not your heart withered Godward? Is it not active only as the source of uncleanness in every kind which defiles you? Do you love your own will and way? and what is this but sin, hateful to God and destructive to you? Yet for you Jesus, the Son of God, came; for you He died. And He died

not for any imaginary good in you, but for your sins, too many and too real. Fear not then to commit yourself, just as you are to the Saviour. Hide not any thing of your evil from the eyes of your heart; let your conscience confess all out to God: Christ is the only meeting-place between the sinner and Him. He is all-embracing for such as come as sinners; and as surely a Saviour as they are lost.

Therefore of God's word doubt not, but look to Jesus in your guilt and unworthiness. Seek only to be in the truth of your sins before God; and you will find Christ in the truth of divine grace toward your soul.

If it be so with you, this is true repentance toward God, and true faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. The merit, the grace, the efficacy, the power are in Him. The pardon and peace, the life and blessing, are yours on believing the glad tidings of God about His Son. Till you believe on Him for life and salvation, you have nothing to do with practical love and holiness, incumbent as they are on the Christian. First be settled in faith.

### **3 The Blind and Dumb**

Matt. 12: 22-30.

(B.T. Vol. N2, p. 357-358. Gospel No. 9-3.)

Sometimes demoniacs met the Lord, as in Matt. 8: 28; sometimes as here and in Matt. 9: 32 one was brought. This made no difference to the Saviour's gracious power: He cast the demons out. In the case before he was dumb; now it is one blind and dumb, who was healed all the same.

"Then was brought to him a demoniac blind and dumb; and he healed him, so that the blind [man] spoke and saw. And all the crowds were amazed and said, Is this the Son of David? But when the Pharisees heard, they said, This [man] doth not cast out the demons but by Beelzebub, prince of the demons. And knowing their thoughts he said to them, Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand. And if Satan casteth out Satan, he is divided against himself: how then shall his kingdom stand. And if I by Beelzebub cast out the demons, by whom do your sons cast them out? therefore shall they be your judges. But if by God's Spirit I cast out the demons, then hath come upon you the kingdom of God. Or how can one enter into the house of the strong [man], and plunder his goods, unless first he bind the strong [man], and then he will plunder his house. He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth" (vers. 22-30).

Aggravated as the malady was, it only furnished the fuller occasion for the Lord Jesus. The growing rejection by Israel, and especially by their chiefs, made more clear Who He was, and what they were. It is hard at first to learn that God's people on earth may be slaves of Satan, spiritually as blind and dumb as the demoniac brought to the Lord. But He that healed the man in circumstances so desperate is yet more willing as He is able to deliver from the still deeper and worse captivity through sin and Satan's power.

"All the crowd" were amazed and said timidly, It is not the Son of David, is it? But the Pharisees repeated yet more strongly the deadly slander which they had uttered before (Matt. 9: 34), "This man doth not cast out the demons but by Beelzebub, prince of the demons." It was not unbelief only, but its darker form, when the beneficent power of God cannot be disputed, and is imputed to the evil one as its source. Such is the inevitable lot of such as enjoy religious reputation as orthodox and righteous without living faith. If they encounter Christ, as here, they must either be subject to the testimony given to His person, or attribute the power of God's Spirit He wields to the arch-enemy. The more people

know of divine things, the more fatally they sin against the truth if they brazen out in unbelief; for it then takes the shape of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, which shall not be forgiven either in this age or in that which is to come.

Here the Lord pronounces the mind of God. Consciously knowing their thoughts He exposes their malicious absurdity. Whether for kingdom, city, or house, to divide against itself is ruin. If Satan therefore casts out Satan, as they said, he is divided against himself: how then shall his kingdom stand? But as no Jew doubted for a moment its subsisting till Messiah come in power and glory to judge and destroy it, such a plea refutes itself as untenably inconsistent and false. The Lord did not anticipate that glorious day, but was then bearing witness that He is the destined vanquisher of Satan by this sample of the powers of the age to come. When it comes, Satan will be cast into the abyss, as he will be into the lake of fire and brimstone when it ends. But Jesus proves Himself always opposed and superior, though it be only as then in the day of witness.

Further, the Lord appeals to the evidence of God's power in opposition to Satan in Israel; for never has He left Himself without witness. By what power did they act? "If I in [the power of] Beelzebub cast out the demons, in whose [power] do your sons cast them out? Wherefore they shall be your judges." Their folly was as clear as their malice. Were they now and definitively to become God's enemies? "But if I in [power of] God's Spirit cast out the demons, then hath come upon you the kingdom of God. Or how can one enter into the strong one's house and plunder his goods, unless first he bind the strong one? and then he will plunder his house."

Thus all turns on our relation to Christ. "He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth." Jesus is the standard. If I am not with Him as God's object and centre for me, I am against Him. He is not only Messiah but God and Jehovah, yet man. Such a One could not be here below without testing all that saw or heard of Him. If I receive Him, it is salvation, for He came to seek and save the lost; and as saved by grace, I am bound to serve Him all the more, His willing bondman yet His freedman. But He is no less the centre for all one seeks to gather. If it be not to Him in our service, we lack the divine centre. We may be earnest and busy; but the result is only "scattering" in God's estimate, which ought surely to be ours as believers.

How is it then with your soul, dear reader? Are you *with Christ*? Have you heard His voice, and do you follow Him? Blessed are you if you have thus received Him. It is life eternal, as He declares.

Take care then that you have Him as your centre, God's centre, not only for your soul but for your work. It is on God's part for gathering to, as well as for saving. No other name but His is revealed of God for both purposes, which indeed meet in Him.

## 4 The Five Thousand fed

Matt. 14: 14-21.

(B.T. Vol. N2, p. 372-373. Gospel No. 9-4.)

Only one Gospel connects our Lord's retirement with tidings of John the Baptist's death. The herald's lot only precedes that of Jehovah Messiah's Whose time was not yet come. In the Gospel of Mark (Mark 6: 30, 31) He would give a little rest apart with Himself to His sent workmen. Those who serve Him need not look for better things. In Luke there is no such account, but the fact of John's execution alluded to, as the effect of the report which reached Herod of the Saviour's gracious power.

But Jesus was the same in the desert as in the city, the compassionate healer of the sick. Nor this

only; for when the disciples at evening would dismiss the crowd to buy themselves food, He says to them, They need not depart: give ye them to eat. But looking not to Him they were powerless.

"And they say to him, We have here but five loaves and two fishes. And he said, Bring them hither to me. And he commanded the crowd to recline on the grass, took the five loaves and the two fishes, looked up to heaven, and blessed; and having broken he gave the loaves to the disciples, and the disciples to the crowds. And they all ate and were filled; and they took up what was over of the fragments, twelve baskets full. And the eaters were about five thousand, apart from women and children" (17-21).

He was the true Solomon, though Israel did not yet sing the son. of Ascent. Yet He was there, and not David's Son only, but Jehovah Who chose Zion and will there dwell. Was He not in their low estate giving the manifest testimony that He would abundantly bless her provision, and satisfy her poor with bread? Their unbelief might and did put off the kingdom; nevertheless He was there, the King, and no failure in Him of grace or power. How little those nearest to Him drew on either by faith! How promptly He met the need beyond all thought of men or saints!

This however is revealed for you, my reader, as it was then shown to the needy, that they and you might look to Him and be saved. Beyond doubt the soul is more than the food; and none ever pressed this so much as Himself. None warned as He to fear Him Who is able to destroy both soul and body in Gehenna. But who like Him assured guilty man that God so loved the world as to give His beloved Son, that whosoever believes on Him should not perish but have life eternal?

The day comes fast when He will make good every promise, as He will also inflict the judgment which in every form the Father committed to Him, because He is Son of man. As such He was despised and rejected; as such He suffered to the utmost and is exalted on high. But if His sufferings will bring vengeance on His foes, they do also bring salvation to those who believe, and none the less, because they like all others were lost till they believed.

It is not yet the day when He will ask nations for an inheritance, and break them with iron sceptre, as a potter his vessel. Then shall His name be excellent in all the earth, as well as His majesty above the heavens. But it is given now among men, and none other under heaven, wherein we must be saved. He alone is worthy; He is God as well as Jesus Christ the righteous Man. The Word became flesh to glorify His Father and God, Son of man to save the lost. Such a sign as He then wrought was proper to show His compassion to the needy and distressed in Israel. Was it not meant to let you know who read or hear the word, that He pities your deeper need, and is no less ready to bless you with the bread of God, in order that you, believing on Him, may never hunger or thirst more?

This, His discourse to the crowd that followed after Him, as we read in John 6: 1, clearly points out. It is His express application of it to you who read now as to those who then heard. Why then should you doubt that He will make good His word? He declares that the believer has life eternal; He declares elsewhere that His sheep shall never perish, and that none shall pluck them out of His hand. He and the Father are not more one in divine nature than in divine love, to keep His sheep, however exposed in this world to the enemy's malice.

The grace of Christ is sufficient for you, great as is your weakness; indeed it is made perfect in weakness. Fear not therefore to trust in Him. Believe God Who sent Him, that those who receive Him may live eternally, and that those who believe not may be judged everlastingly. He is the giver of life because He is Son of God; He is the executor of judgment because He is Son of man. One or other must be your portion. He gives you life if you believe; He will judge you if you reject Him. It is unwise, it is full of danger, it is in the highest degree sinful, to reject the gracious and saving message

of God in Christ to your soul.

## 5 Jesus walking on the sea

Matt. 14: 23-33.

(B.T. Vol. N3, p. 4-5. Gospel No. 9-5.)

Bright was the witness, as it is still, to the rejected Messiah. This glory is great, but He is greater still, Immanuel and Jehovah; and it shines out the more that men despise Him.

"And having dismissed the crowds, he went up into the mountain apart to pray: and when even was come, he was there alone. But the ship [or boat] was already in the midst of the sea, tossed by the waves for the wind was contrary. And in the fourth watch of the night he came to them walking on the sea; and when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is an apparition; and they cried out for fear. But Jesus immediately spoke unto them. saying, Be of good cheer: it is I; be not afraid. And Peter answering him said, Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water. And he said, Come; and Peter, going down from the ship, walked on the water to come unto Jesus. But seeing the wind strong, he was afraid; and beginning to sink he cried out, saying, Lord, save me. And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand and caught hold of him, and saith to him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt? And when they had gone up into the ship, the wind ceased. And those in the ship came and paid homage to him, saying, Truly thou art God's Son" (vers. 23-33).

Whatever His own title, and it was truly divine, our Lord had become man, and loyally maintained His dependence on God, of which prayer is a signal expression. It is peculiarly prominent in the Gospel of Luke where His humanity is most brought before us in all its lowliness and sympathy, in all its piety and obedience. And it has its due place in Mark's Gospel of His service. But the disciples on the tempest-tossed sea were as distressed as their boat, and the wind was contrary, so that they toiled in vain at the oar. He waited long enough for them to realise their danger and their powerlessness, and came unto them, walking on the sea. Troubled at what they thought an apparition, they cried for fear, but immediately He bade them take courage. "It is I: be not afraid."

Reader, have you never heard His voice? It sounds in the written word in His own tones of love and compassion. It is for you to hear and live by believing them. The blessing is expressly for faith to receive. When you, judging yourself for your sins, look to Jesus at God's warrant, remission is yours. You are reconciled to God and justified by faith. You are called thenceforth to walk as a child of God and sealed by His Spirit till the day of redemption, when your bodies will have the power of Christ's life, as your souls have now (John 5). All other ways and means are a delusion. Baptism and the Lord's supper are His institutions, most expressive of His death, and of your blessing thereby. But faith is by hearing, and this by God's word. He is best honoured in His Son's honour.

No doubt the enemy stirs up storms of every kind to alarm and endanger the disciples; but what of that, if the Lord sees all with watchful eye and fails not to give His guardian presence? This will be true and sure for His Jewish remnant in days to come as well as then when He was on earth; so is it assured to the Christian and the Christian assembly now, however few they may be. He, Who has His way in the whirlwind and in the tempest, with the clouds as the dust of His feet, was there in the person of Jesus walking the waves to say, Be courageous. It is I: fear not. They ought to have known already that winds and waves obey Him, their Creator.

Peter yields a little intimation of what was at hand. He quits the boat at the word of the Lord, and goes to meet Jesus on the sea; as the church did gathered to His name, apart from the Jews and the

Gentiles (1 Cor. 10: 32). But he quickly displays the instability of his faith. To the Christian also Christ is all. If we look away from Him, we begin to sink as he did. What, if the storm raged and the waves rose ever so high? Had the sea been smooth instead of rough, could Peter have walked across it? But he saw the wind strong and began to sink, with the cry, Lord, save me. And the Lord's outstretched hand was the answer, though there was the loving reproof, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt? Such is He to us now, faithful, gracious, and superior to all circumstances. But we have to walk by faith, not by sight. Yet if our faith fail, He does not fail to deliver.

By-and-by He will rejoin His Jewish disciples in their unequalled trouble at the end of the age, bespeak a calm which is not the church's portion while on earth, and bring at once the old ship into the desired haven. . . For heaven and for the earth, for the church as for Israel, Jesus is the same yesterday, and today, and for ever. "Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth."

## 6 The Canaanite woman

Matt. 15: 21-28.

(B.T. Vol. N3, p. 20-21. Gospel No. 9-6.)

It is in the First Gospel we find this most instructive incident, which reveals the Lord, not merely as minister of circumcision for God's truth, but as the display of His sovereign grace where God's curse lay, and Satan's power.

"And Jesus going forth hence retired into the parts of Tyre and Sidon; and, behold, a Canaanite woman coming out from those borders cried out, saying, Pity me, Lord, Son of David; my daughter is grievously possessed by a demon. But he answered her not a word. And his disciples came and asked him, saying, Dismiss her, for she crieth out after us. But he said in answer, I was not sent save to the lost sheep of Israel's house. And she came and paid him homage, saying, Lord, help me. But he said in answer, It is not good to take the children's bread and cast [it] to the dogs. But she said, Yea, Lord; for even the dogs eat of the crumbs that fall from the table of their masters. Then Jesus in answer said to her, O woman, great [is] thy faith: be it done to thee as thou willest. And her daughter was healed from that hour" (Matt. 15: 21-28).

The Lord withdrew from the proud religionists of Jerusalem, who made void the law of God for the sake of their tradition. He also laid bare to the disciples that only the plants of His Father take root, while all that issues from man's heart is defiled and defiling. The sinner needs God's grace to save him. This is shown in the otherwise desperate case of the Canaanite, and her daughter sorely possessed of a demon.

Here may many a soul learn why the Lord does not accede to its appeal. Hers was deep and earnest; yet He answered her not a word. What claims on the Son of David had a Canaanite woman? When He reigns, there shall be no more a Canaanite in the house of Jehovah of hosts (Zech. 14: 21). When the two blind cried early or late, saying, Pity us, Son of David, He touched their eyes, which were then opened according to their faith (Matt. 9: 27-30; Matt. 20: 30-34). But repentance has its place as truly as faith; and God will have the soul to judge itself aright. "Cursed be Canaan" is the word from of old; and yet was she not now asking His pity Who is to avenge and deliver Israel!

How many today have said the words, "Father, . . . forgive us our sins"! Yet they too have received no answer; nor would they assert, any more than they believe, that their sins are forgiven. They have gone on ground wholly untenable. They are not His sons by faith in Christ. They are not born of water and Spirit. They stand on law, supplemented by ordinances. They are unrenewed, serving divers lusts

and pleasures, a prey to the power of darkness. They do not cry to God in the truth of their estate, but imitate the language of disciples, which they might own they are not in heart, Have we not experienced it ourselves? Our state was below the Canaanite's.

The woman of Canaan evidently knew that no Israelite ever appealed to Christ in vain. She had faith in Him; but she had overlooked her own dismal position. Theirs were "the promises"; but what had she? Not promise, but curse. And He Who is the truth would have her feel it. Not so the disciples; they would have Him dismiss her. This was far from His heart. They disliked the discredit of her importunity, and wished to be rid of her. He meant to bless her; but it must be in the truth as well as the grace of God. For this He waited, and she as yet had no answer; but He answered them, "I was not sent save to the lost sheep of Israel's house."

Now faith where real perseveres; and the woman came and did Him homage, saying, "Lord, help me." He is indeed Lord of all: this is truth without assumption of privilege. To such an appeal He does reply, "It is not good to take the children's bread and cast it to the dogs."

Thus does His grace help her to see where she was lacking. The light of God shines into her heart; and she bows at once. For she said, "Yea, Lord; for even the dogs eat of the crumbs that fall from the table of their masters." She apprehends where and what she really was, and takes her true place before God. She had forgotten that she was not a "sheep" to claim the succour of Israel's Shepherd. She was truly a "dog" before Him, no better than a little dog or whelp. Yet while no longer hiding this from her soul but confessing it freely, she rejoins, "Yea, Lord; for even the whelps eat of the crumbs that fall from the table of their masters."

Oh what refreshment did such faith give to our Lord Jesus! She savoured the things of God. She appreciated, believed, enjoyed the grace of which she was the object. And the Lord owned her "great faith," and gave her all she wished.

How is it with you, dear reader? Have you learnt that you are no better than a dog before Him? Or are you, while in your sins, claiming to be His sheep? Own yourself a sinner, and Him the only Saviour, that you may be saved. He is the same Lord of all, and is rich unto all that call upon Him. Why should you stand without? A better voice than Laban's invites you to come in and *be* blessed. All depends on Him; but it is not yours save by repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. Till then we have no known divine answer to our cry.

## 7 The Four Thousand Fed

Matt. 15: 32-39.

(B.T. Vol. N3, p. 37-38. Gospel No. 9-7.)

The miracle here does not merely attest again the divine Messiah's presence and power on behalf of His needy people. Each has its own characteristics for our instruction. Both prove His ready and almighty resources. Had each miracle appeared in a different Gospel only, the sceptics would have insisted on discrepant accounts; but God has cut off such an objection, because Matthew and Mark record both, Luke and John only the first of them. The miracle wrought twice signifies, if one may apply Joseph's interpretation (Gen. 41: 32), that the thing is established by God, whatever be man's unbelief. The distinctions are marked, but in no way favour those of old who imagined a reference in the former to the Jew, in the latter to the Gentile. Both express Messiah's grace to the chosen people.

What then is the true difference? It is defined in detail, as well as in broad features. There were

five loaves and two fishes in the first, seven loaves and a few fishes in the last, five thousand fed in one, and four thousand in the other; the surplus then filled twelve baskets, now seven. The very baskets employed had in each instance a differing appellation, meaning respectively a hand-basket and a creel, as expressed without confusion in each account, and maintained in our Lord's recall of both in Matt. 16. The larger distinction will appear presently, though it may here be added that the first was in the spring when the grass was green, the second some months later; and that in the second the crowd had stayed three days, whereas in the first we do not hear of more than one day.

"And Jesus, having called his disciples unto him, said, I have compassion on the crowd, because they continue with me already three days and have nothing to eat; and I would not let them go fasting, lest they faint in the way. And his disciples say to him, Whence should we [have] in a wilderness so many loaves as to fill so great a crowd? And Jesus saith to them, How many loaves have ye? And they said, Seven, and a few small fishes. And he commanded the crowds to lie down on the ground; and taking the seven loaves and the fishes he gave thanks and broke, and gave to his disciples, and the disciples to the crowd. And all ate and were filled, and they took up what was over of the broken pieces, seven baskets full. And those that ate were four thousand men, besides women and children. And having let go the crowds he went on board the ship and came over into the borders of Magadan" (vers. 32-39).

On the first occasion the disciples took the initiative, and proposed the dismissal of the crowds to buy themselves food in the villages. Their faith was weak indeed. How sad to overlook His presence who was pledged to satisfy Zion's poor with bread! Even His call that they should give them to eat failed to awaken any sense of His fulness. So He took the provision they despised, and abundantly blessed it to the five thousand, and more; yet there remained over of the broken pieces twelve baskets full. Now this answers to the twelve apostles, being the number of full administration by or in man. But it was only a sign in His rejected testimony to Israel; and sending His disciples to go before Him to the other side, on dismissal of the crowds, He went up into the mountain apart to pray, the figure of His priestly place on high. After this comes the wondrous scene of Peter leaving the ship to join Jesus on the water, which is peculiar to Matthew, as alone expressive of the divine design by that Gospel, and having nothing like it on the second occasion.

Here it is the Messiah yearning over His famished people. They were guilty; but He commiserated their distressful state, and gave His disciples a fresh opportunity of drawing on Him by faith. Alas! they were slow to learn. "Whence should we have in a wilderness so many loaves as to fill so great a crowd?" He was there, and full of compassion; but unbelief, even in believers, is ever blind. The seven loaves which He took and distributed through His disciples, and the surplus in the seven baskets here named, point to spiritual, not to administrative fulness. All was ordered of God, all is meant to teach man, if he has ears to hear. It is Jehovah-Messiah acting in His own perfection. Here there is no going on high to pray; nor is there a rejoining the disciples for the other side, when and where all who once rejected Him welcome Him and His beneficent power, as will be in the consummation of the age.

How is it with you, dear reader? Whatever engrosses you, whatever interests you, the first and deepest of all questions is, How are you treating Jesus? He is the Lord of glory, the Son of God Who became man to die for you. How do you regard Him? It concerns you now, and for all eternity. He died to save sinners; but the blessing is for those that believe. If you believe not who have heard His name, you are far more guilty than heathen who have not heard. God the Father resents all dishonour done to His beloved Son, and has given all judgment into His hands, because He is Son of man (John 5), to punish all men who despise Him. Is it not then of incalculable moment that you bow to Him Who will be your Judge by-and-by, if you refuse Him now as Saviour? Remember that His judgment is eternal.

Yet how righteous is it also! For the unbeliever in the gospel is not impenitent only but despises God's grace. How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?

## 8 The Transfiguration

Matt. 17: 1-9.

(B.T. Vol. N3, p. 53-54. Gospel No. 9-8.)

In the midst of His service of humiliation our Lord was for a little transfigured. It was not like Moses whose face shone from his nearness to the divine Presence. Our Lord was with His own here below. A week before He prepared them for seeing the Son of man coming in His kingdom. After it He takes with Him Peter and James and John his brother, and brings them up into a high mountain apart. "And His face did shine as the sun, and His garments became white as the light. And, behold, there appeared to them Moses and Elijah talking with them." It is a miniature of His kingdom wherein will be the risen and changed saints with others in their natural bodies, and the Lord the centre of all.

Yet it would seem that the divine aim of Moses and Elijah being there was to mark the surpassing glory of the Lord before Whom the chief representative of the law and the most honoured of the prophets gave place and vanished away. The personal glory of Jesus is most conspicuous as elsewhere in this Gospel. He is Son of God and Son of man.

Peter counted it a great thing to see His Master with saints so renowned and glorious. "Lord," said he to Jesus, "It is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, I will make here three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah." He made the natural but fatal mistake of equalising all three. Yet he who had only so short a time before confessed His Master to be not only the Messiah, but the Son of the living God, ought not to have so erred. So easy is it to forget what flesh and blood never truly knows, what is revealed by the Father; just as then too he could not bear to think of His going to Jerusalem, suffering many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and being killed but raised the third day.

Here it was not the withering rebuke of the Lord Who knew that all blessing for man and glory for God, in a ruined world, hung on His rejection. It was the Father's voice out of the excellent glory. "While he was still speaking, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them; and, behold, a voice out of the cloud, saying, This is my beloved Son in Whom I found my delight: hear ye him." The Father then displayed His jealousy for the honour of His Son. He would not allow the law-giver or the law-restorer to be put on such a level. They were servants and to be honoured in the place He set them. But His beloved Son! — there were His delights; and if Christ went down in love infinite to suffer as man, and as man to be exalted, the glory of the eternal Son was precious beyond all thought of man in His Father's eyes.

It is the Son Whom we are to hear. See how the great truth is attested in the Epistle to the Hebrews, both in Heb. 1: 2, and in Heb. 12: 25. Equally explicit is John 5: 25 for quickening, and in John 10 for every day; and not only for the sheep led out of the Jewish fold but for other sheep, Gentiles, not of this fold. Dear reader, does not this reach to you? If the blessing is immense, what is the loss? And what must be the fierceness of fire which shall devour the adversaries and the indifferent? For Himself has said, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me; and I give to them life eternal; and they shall never perish, and no one shall snatch them out of my hand." On the other hand "he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him."

When the disciples heard the Father's voice, they fell on their faces and were sore afraid. They

were far from knowing yet His love; but He, Who brought it in His own person, was at hand to strengthen their hearts. "And Jesus came and touched them and said, Arise, and be not afraid." Not less now but more does Jesus cause His word to come home in the power of redemption to those that believe. And the God Who sent Him would fill us with all joy and peace in believing, that we may abound in hope in the power of the Holy Spirit. Is it thus with your souls? Can you say that you have heard the voice of Jesus by faith, and that you are "not afraid"? This is His will, not only for the three who then heard, but for all that believe the gospel of God. Perfect love casts out the fear that has torment, and creates the fear of reverence. It is the effort of the enemy to work on the conscious guilt of man that he may distrust the words of Jesus; it is the work of the Spirit from the beginning to efface it all. The entrance of that word dispels darkness before the light of God to the soul, and enables the heart to receive "Be not afraid."

"Lifting up their eyes, they saw no one save Jesus only." Visions were always rare; such a vision is unique. But for the heart's comfort, and the right direction of the eye, there is nothing to compare with having Jesus the Son of God to hear. So has God the Father ruled: "hear Him." And He abides the same yesterday, and today, and for ever. May we by faith look to "Jesus only." It is not only at first that the soul may be saved by faith, but for every day and hour after we do believe. For the only right walk is by faith, and the fight of faith is the only good fight, in which Jesus is the one unfailing Captain. Other fights we may have to our shame, where flesh is not judged, and Satan gains advantage for the moment. To Jesus then may we ever look, to "Jesus only."

## 9 The Lunatic Son

Mark 9: 17-27.

(B.T. Vol. N3, p. 69-70. Gospel No. 9-9.)

What a contrast with the manifestation of the excellent glory on the mountain was the actual state of man even in the favoured people here below! Jesus the Son of God was there; yet that the disciples knew not so by faith, as to avail themselves of His victory over the enemy!

"And one of the crowd answered and said, Teacher, I brought unto thee my son having a dumb spirit; and whensoever it taketh him, it teareth him, and he foameth and gnasheth his teeth, and is withering away. And I spoke to thy disciples that they should cast it out; and they were not able. And answering them He saith, O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I bear with you? Bring him unto me. And they brought him unto Him; and when He saw him, straightway the spirit tore him, and falling on the ground he wallowed foaming. And He asked his father, How long time is it that this hath come to him? And he said, From a child. And often it cast him both into fire and into waters to destroy him; but if thou hast any power, help us in thy pitifulness toward us. But Jesus said to him, If thou hast power (is) to believe: all things are possible to him that believeth. And straightway the father of the child cried out and said, I believe: help mine unbelief. And Jesus, seeing that a crowd was running up together, rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it, Dumb and deaf spirit, I command thee, come out of him and enter no more into him. And having cried out and torn [him] much, it came out, and he became as if dead, so that the most said, He is dead. But Jesus laying hold of him by the hand raised him up; and he stood up" (vers. 17-27).

It was indeed a mighty deed: and so it fell to our Gospel above the others to give most details. There are differences in the evil spirits; and only to prayer and fasting did the kind in question yield. The lack in that respect was grievous in the Lord's eyes. The distressed parent did not despair, and

turned from the failing disciples to Him Who never fails. How humbling when believers thus dishonour their Lord! "O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I bear with you?" This was the overwhelming fact. That the crowd, that the scribes, should have no faith, was bad enough after such ample witness of the gracious power of God in His Son, servant of all need in man, marked out from the first in doing good and healing all that were oppressed by the devil. Did He not give the twelve, and more than the twelve, authority over the unclean spirits? How was it then that these put shame on His name by failing to draw on Him?

"Bring him unto Me" says the Saviour. Even so, He lets all see the depth of the child's need, the malicious power of the enemy. He manifests His interest in all that dismays the heart of man. He enquires, not as if He did not know the reins and the heart, but that the tried soul may learn the reality of His compassion. He teaches the feeble suppliant that the question of power turns on faith; for faith God will have, whatever may be His own grace. What possible good morally could power insure without believing? On the other hand, all things are possible to him that believes. So even the disciples had to learn; and the father, through his necessities believing the lesson at once, tends to the right way under the Lord's guidance. "I believe: help mine unbelief." How wholesome for the believer to feel and own his unbelief!

How is it with you that read these words? Have you found out what a deadly thing is unbelief? Have you received the declaration from God that you till brought to Him live in the lusts of your flesh, doing the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and are by nature children of wrath, even as the rest of mankind? Judaism did not hinder this of old, whatever its great privileges; nor does Christendom now with its still greater advantages. And has Satan no power over such as are dead in trespasses and sins? Do not such walk according to the age of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that now worketh in the sons of disobedience? If men but saw by faith, they would discern themselves thus in a plight more appalling than that of the lunatic child under the power of the dumb and deaf spirit. For in itself it was for the life that now is; whereas Eph. 2: 1-3 describes for both time and eternity.

But the Lord, as He wrought in power then, is also the Deliverer according to the rich mercy of God and the great love wherewith He loves. God is now showing the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus, as He assures us He will in the ages to come. Let me, following the apostle, entreat that you receive not the grace of God in vain; for vain it undoubtedly is, if you have not faith in God through our Lord Jesus for your own soul as a guilty sinner, powerless in yourself before Him. But He hearkens to the cry of need and distress; yea He sends His word and works in manifold ways to make souls sensible of their ruin, that they may cry and He may answer in the glad tidings of His gospel. Now too it is a day of salvation; and the casting away of Israel is the world's reconciliation. For their fall is our wealth, their loss is our rich gain.

How awful then for men in Christendom to live only for present enjoyment, money, ease, honour, power, like the heathen who know not God! He Who for sins suffered unutterably, not from man only, but from God's judgment on the cross, is the Author of everlasting salvation to all those that obey Him; and faith in God's testimony to Him is the beginning of that blessing which shall never end. Oh, take heed, and put not off the call of grace, which you may not hear again! The spirits, now in prison and awaiting, not another deluge, but everlasting judgment in the resurrection of the unjust, once heard the Spirit of Christ in Noah's preaching while the ark was in preparation. Beware lest you, who have heard a far fuller expression of divine mercy in the gospel of Christ, frustrate the counsel of God against yourselves. For God is not mocked in the end, however men cheat themselves in thinking that He heeds not their words and ways now. Today if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts as in the

provocation, throughout the day of the temptation in the wilderness.

## 10 The Fish, and the Temple-tax

Matt. 17: 24-27.

(B.T. Vol. N3, p. 85-86. Gospel No. 9-10.)

What had the Lord said in John 8? It is the Son only Who, being free in the highest sense, sets free those who are His disciples abiding in His word. All else, however boastful, are but slaves of sin, the lowest of all slavery. The slave passes; the son abides for ever; but this he derives solely from the eternal Son, though not without faith in the truth which He in grace tells out, as indeed He was it and came that we might hear and receive it. Grace and truth came through Jesus Christ."

So here what ineffable grace! "Lest we cause them to stumble, go unto the sea, and cast a hook, and take up the fish that first cometh up; and having opened its mouth, thou wilt find a shekel: that take and give to them for me and thee."

Now it is His omnipotence that is proved; for what else could make itself forthwith obeyed by a fish passing through the paths of the sea? Who but God in man could or would have caused it to rise to Peter's hook with a silverling in its mouth of the exact amount for the temple? Whom but the Son did it befit to say in His grace, lest we cause them to stumble" . . . give to them for *me* and for *thee*"? The grand truth is breaking through the clouds of a self-destroying Israel and Judaism, that the Son was emptying and humbling Himself not only to rescue, but to associate with Himself every one that believes in Him. What grace!

This association, as the gospel tells, is based not only on the divine glory of His person, but on the accomplishment of an everlasting redemption. This He found, as Heb. 9 declares, by His own blood. And as it is attested by His ascension glory, so it is the glad message sent to you, my dear reader, if you have not already received it unto salvation. This, and no less, it bears, and, on God's authority and in His love, assures to every sinner who repents and believes the gospel. God is thus honouring His Son, as well He may; for He and He alone perfectly glorified Him, even as to sin on the cross, as before in all respects.

Oh! persevere not in that unbelief which is the most radical and hateful of all evils. Listen no more to the ancient serpent, who is the Devil and Satan: why die the second death? Christ is the way, the truth, and the life: are you so infatuated as to prefer the pleasures of sin for a season, and make shipwreck for eternity? Can it be that you turn a deaf ear to Him Who suffered once for all for sins, and will not come to Him that you may have life?

The New Testament presents no miracle more striking and instructive than the one before us. Its place too in the First Gospel and there only is precisely appropriate, if the Holy Spirit meant here to bring out the divine glory of Christ, along with His grace in associating the believer with Himself; when, rejected as He is by the Jews, the church and the kingdom of the heavens should replace the things even promised by new things.

"And when they came unto Capernaum, those that receive the half-shekels came to Peter and said, Doth not your teacher pay the half-shekels? He saith, Yea. And when he entered into the house, Jesus anticipated him, saying, What thinkest thou, Simon? The kings of the earth, from whom do they receive toll or tribute? from their sons or from other folk? He (or, Peter) saith to him, From other folk. Jesus said to him, Well then the sons are free. But lest we cause them to stumble, go unto the sea, and cast a

hook, and take up the fish that first cometh up; and having, opened its mouth, thou wilt find a shekel: that take and give to them for me and thee" (vers. 24-27).

Peter, like most disciples and like all naturally, was slow to distrust himself and to wait on the Lord and His word. He was quick, being zealous for the law, to assure those who took the redemption money (not the tax-gatherers so repulsive to Jewish feeling) that his Master was the same. He did not when questioned bear in mind, either what the Father had revealed to Him of the Lord's personal dignity (chap. 16), or of the glory conferred on Him for the coming kingdom (chap. 17): Jesus was too good an Israelite to neglect the heave-offering to Jehovah, the atonement for the soul! Peter forgot that Jesus was the true temple of God and the true God of the temple; he knew not yet that the visible temple was doomed, as ready to vanish away. He still savoured the things that are of men.

The Lord therefore anticipated him on entering the house by the question, From whom do the kings of the earth take toll or tribute? from their sons, or from other folk? He could not but answer, From other folk; and the Lord rejoined that therefore the sons are free.

The Lord had just shown His omniscience, as He showed every creature subject to Him. He proved to Peter that He knew what had not reached His ear. He graciously corrects His servant's mistake and leads him once more into the truth. He was God, the Son, equally with the Father and the Holy Spirit; but He speaks and acts in perfect grace; as indeed otherwise where could Peter or we be? He says, Then are the sons free. On Him, Who alone is the Son eternally in personal right and title, depends the blessedness of the sons. We are by grace sons of God by faith in Christ Jesus, not Peter only but now, once Jews or Gentiles, all God's sons, all one in Christ Jesus; and because sons, God sent out the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father. So that each can hear, Thou art no longer a slave but a son; and if a son, then an heir through God.

## **11 The Deaf and stammering man**

Mark 7: 32-37.

(B.T. Vol. N3, p. 100-101. Gospel No. 9-11.)

This is one of the two miracles peculiar to the gospel of Mark, the other being the cure of the blind man of Bethsaida (Mark 8: 22). They both illustrate the prophetic service of the Son of God. He had come to the lake of Galilee.

And they bring to him [one] deaf and hardly speaking, and they beseech him to lay his hand on him. And having taken him away from the crowd apart, he put his fingers to his ears; and he spit and touched his tongue; and looking up to heaven he groaned, and saith to him, Ephphatha, that is, Be opened. And straightway his ears were opened, and the bond of his tongue was loosed, and he spoke aright. And he charged them that they should tell no one; but the more he charged them, the more abundantly were they publishing [it]. And they were beyond measure astonished, saying, He hath done all things well; he maketh both the deaf to hear and the speechless to speak" (vers. 32-37).

The minute accuracy of the Holy Spirit in recounting Christ's miracles is admirable. This case differs from others, in that the sufferer is not said to have been absolutely mute, but to have had an impediment of speech, or speaking with difficulty, as well as deaf. Nevertheless the Lord takes especial pains with him. The manner reveals the divine Servant's grace. There was no question of His power. Ordinarily He healed all that needed it in a moment, no matter how extreme, as when an unclean spirit was the cause of the dumbness rather than physical inability or defect. Here He was pleased to manifest His tender interest in detail, and His compassionate love no less than His power to heal. He does much

more than what those besought who brought the patient to Him. Putting the hand on the needy one was the usual sign of blessing; and less than this, a word, would have been enough, if so the obedient Lord had seen fit to God's glory.

But He took him aside from the crowd apart. For here it is not the crowd He thinks of, any more than the haughty scribes and Pharisees from Jerusalem. Just before He had met the desperate need of the Syro-phoenician on behalf of her demoniac daughter on the borders of Tyre and Sidon. Now He had come through the midst of the borders of Decapolis, where, as the prophet had long before predicted, light was to shine for a despised remnant when darkness brooded over the mass with city and temple dead to the rejected Messiah (Isa. 9: 1, 2). So apart from the crowd He took the deaf man, and put His fingers unto, if not into (as the preposition may mean according to the sense required), his ears. But more than this; having spit, He touched the tongue of the stammerer.

He marked in both acts how all depended on bringing Himself personally to bear on the actual wants. He who wrought was man, but no less was He God, the Son incarnate and on earth, in His pitiful love serving God and man. It was not only that He applied what came from within Himself to the man's tongue, but looking up to heaven He groaned, and saith to him, Ephphatha, that is, Be opened. Power truly went out of Him, and love was its spring in devotedness to God Who is as truly light in His nature as love is the character of its energy, which His own service was manifesting. And thus, if He deigned to touch the man so intimately, He looked up to heaven whence He came in a love that abides unchanging and above all evil, yet groaned in deep sense of it, whilst He said to him, Be opened.

The afflicted man was but an emblem of the state of Israel, unwilling alas! and unable through unbelief to hear God, or to speak out their own misery and His praise. But as brought to Him he set forth the remnant on whom light dawned in a region and shadow of death. And "straightway" (a word so characteristic in the Gospel of His service) his ears were opened, and the bond or tie of his tongue was loosed, and he spoke aright. If the unbelief of the people and its chiefs made their blessing impossible, the poor of the flock prove the all-suffering of His gracious power, and reap the great blessing of faith, be it ever so small. And the love which so wrought will encourage a remnant in a future day, who will re-commence the Jewish history in the land, till it become a strong nation in that faithfulness which is unwearied and will never forget the promise.

For the present all was vain; and He charged them to tell no one, but the more He did, the more a great deal were they its publishers. Yet, true as it might be in word, it was not faith in the heart, but rather extreme astonishment. Even so what a comment on Christ's service! "He hath done all things well; He maketh both the deaf to hear and speechless to speak."

But how is it with you who now read God's testimony to Jesus His Son? Have you heard His voice? For He still speaks in His word; and they live who hear Him; and they follow Him, for they know His voice. Amidst the Babel tongues of Christendom they know it, and there is none like it; for it reveals to their souls God, and God as Father in quite a new way proper not to man even innocent but to the Son already come Who has given us understanding that we may know Him that is true. Truth is in none other; but He is not only the truth, but the way and the life. "Believe on the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt be saved, thou and thy house." His word cannot deceive, His word only; and what he has done is according to the same perfection; above all is that work which He wrought on the cross, by which we that believe have now received the reconciliation.

## 12 The Blind Man of Bethsaida

Mark 8: 22-26.

(B.T. Vol. N3, p. 117-118. Gospel No. 9-12.)

This is the later of the two miracles peculiar to the Gospel of Mark. As in the former the Lord led away the deaf man, who could not speak aright, from the crowd apart, so here He took hold of the blind man's hand and conducted him out of the village. The mass of the Jews had already had ample signs in testimony of Who and what He was. It was but for greater hardening of their hearts to see more. They might get their sick healed, they might eat of the loaves He made and be filled; but even the most orthodox sought from Him a sign from heaven, tempting Him; so that He could only groan in His spirit and say, Why doth this generation seek a sign? Had He not given them countless signs? In the sense of their unbelief, which a Syro-Phoenician woman's faith rebuked, the Lord leads aside from the multitude, though He still acts in compassionate grace. This could not fail where they bring distressful need before Him, the Servant not more righteous than gracious.

"And they bring him a blind man, and beseech him that he might touch him. And taking hold of the blind man's hand, he led him forth out of the village, and having spit on his eyes, he laid his hands on him, and asked him if he beheld anything. And having looked up he said, I behold men, for I see [them] as trees, walking. Then he laid his hands again on his eyes, and he saw distinctly, and was restored, and saw all things clearly. And he sent him to his house, saying, Neither enter into the village, nor tell [it] to any one in the village" (vers. 22-26).

It is the gospel of His service; and here, at; throughout, we are made to behold the perfect manner in which His mighty works were done. It is not only the power of God ever ready to heal the sick and those oppressed by the devil. The way in which He answered every such appeal was worthy of the Son of God become servant to glorify God and win man. He put His fingers to the deaf man's ears, He touched the ill-speaking tongue. He laid His hands upon the blind man outside Bethsaida. There was no necessity for any such actions. He had but to speak, and it was done. But love is far beyond power; and when man has power to wield it in ever so limited a range, how little he thinks of love! Least of all does he, conscious however scantily of his sinfulness, look for love from the God he slights and dreads. The Lord in the way He wields divine power manifests divine love, and as Man in the midst of men. Nor is there the smallest ostentation but its marked absence: all is done in genuine simplicity as well as tenderness.

We may notice too that in the two miracles the Lord uses His own spittle, as He did also in the cure of the man born blind (told us in John 9). Whatever the reality and lowliness of the humanity He had taken up in His grace, there was divine efficacy in His person; and the sign of this He applies in all three cases, each having its own distinction. When He touched the tongue, He looked up to heaven with a groan, and says to the man, Be opened; and immediately the happy result follows. When He mixed clay with what came of Himself and anointed the born-blind man's eyes, He told him to go to Siloam and wash; and only then did he come seeing. Here the very intent was to mark by the twofold act of laying His hands on his eyes that the Lord would not have the cure partial. It was much to behold men, like trees, but walking. Yet the Lord would not let him go thus; He would give him to see distinctly. He therefore laid His hands upon his eyes, so that he was restored and saw all things distinctly. It was simply the way of love that the blind man might know the deep interest of His heart Who might have dispensed with any or all of these circumstances, and have effected the perfect cure with a word. But what a blank for the man and for our hearts, if it had been only so!

Indeed the instruction was great for the disciples who were then in a measure learning of His ways with Whom they were, and learnt far more when He was gone and the Holy Spirit come. The former was no unmeet emblem of Israel's state, and had a sample of the powers of the world to come when the weak remnant shall become a strong nation, with ears opened and tongue loosed to speak Jehovah's praise. The latter in the partial cure might well remind the disciples that they during His earthly ministry did not see more clearly than the man when His hands were laid on him once. How different when God raised Him up from the dead whereof they were witnesses! Then, He being exalted by the right hand of God, and having received the promise of the Holy Spirit, how great the blessing! Faith needs to have its perfect work, as well as patience. How often men stop short!

How is it with you who read these words? How are you treating Him, His words, and His works? You have to do with Him, whether you will or not. For the hour now is, when the dead have the voice of the Son of God sounding in their ears, and they that hear live. For this He when here prepared men. If He be the rejected Messiah, He is the Son of man and thus the destined Judge of mankind. How would it be with you if the hour of His judgment were come? Could you stand unabashed and unscathed before Him Whose eyes will be then as a flame of fire? Who searches the reins and hearts? Who will reward each according to his works?

What thanks shall one render, when one believes that the same Jesus is the Son of God, not only the true God but eternal life, ready and willing to give life eternal to you who can find it no where else? This is the way, the best way for a saint, the only way for a sinner, to honour the Son. It is to believe on Him; for indeed He is the way, the truth, and the life. Thus believing you do not come into condemnation, but even now have passed from death unto life. So He declares; so may you believe, and never be confounded.