

# EXPOSITORY THOUGHTS ON THE GOSPELS.

FOR FAMILY AND PRIVATE USE.

WITH THE TEXT COMPLETE,

*And Many Explanatory Notes.*

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LUKE XVIII. 35–43.

<p>35 And it came to pass, that as he was come nigh unto Jericho, a certain blind man sat by the way side begging:</p> <p>36 And hearing the multitude pass by, he asked what it meant.</p> <p>37 And they told him, that Jesus of Nazareth passeth by.</p> <p>38 And he cried, saying, Jesus thou Son of David, have mercy on me.</p> <p>39 And they which went before rebuked him, that he should hold his peace: but he cried so much the more, <i>Thou</i> Son of David, have mercy on me.</p>	<p>40 And Jesus stood, and commanded him to be brought unto him; and when he was come near, he asked him,</p> <p>41 Saying, What wilt thou that I shall do unto thee? And he said, Lord, that I may receive my sight.</p> <p>42 And Jesus said unto him, Receive thy sight: thy faith hath saved thee.</p> <p>43 And immediately he received his sight, and followed him, glorifying God: and all the people, when they saw <i>it</i>, gave praise unto God.</p>
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THE miracle described in these verses is rich in instruction. It was one of the great works which witnessed that Christ was sent of the Father. (John v. 36.) But this is not all: it contains also some lively patterns of spiritual things, which deserve attentive study.

We see, for one thing, in this passage, *the importance of diligence in the use of means*. We are told of “a certain blind man who sat by the way-side begging.” He sought the place where his pitiful condition was most likely to attract notice: he did not sit lazily at home, and wait for relief to come to him; he placed himself by the road-side, in order that travellers might see him and give him help. The story before us shows the wisdom of his conduct. Sitting by the way-side, he heard that “Jesus was passing by;” hearing of Jesus he cried for mercy, and was restored to sight. Let us mark this well! If the blind man had not sat by the way-side that day he might have remained blind to the hour of his death.

He that desires salvation should remember the example of this blind man. He must attend diligently on every means of grace; he must be found regularly in those places where the Lord Jesus is specially present; he must sit by the way-side, wherever the Word is read and the Gospel preached, and God’s people assemble together. To expect grace to be put into our hearts, if we sit idling at home on Sundays, and go to no place of worship, is presumption and not faith. It is true that “God will have mercy on whom He will have mercy;” but it is no less true that He ordinarily has mercy on those who use means. It is true that Christ is sometimes “found of those who seek him not;” but it is also true that He is always found of those who really seek Him. The Sabbath breaker, the Bible-neglecter, and the prayerless man are forsaking their own mercies and digging graves for their own souls. They are not sitting “by the way side.”

We see, for another thing, in this passage, an *example of our duty in the matter of prayer*. We are told that when this blind man heard that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by, he “cried, saying, Jesus, thou Son of David, have

mercy on me.” We are told further, that when some rebuked him, and bade him hold his peace, he would not be silenced: he only “cried so much the more.” He felt his need, and found words to tell his story. He was not to be stopped by the rebukes of people who knew nothing of the misery of blindness: his sense of wretchedness made him go on crying; and his importunity was amply rewarded. He found what he sought: that very day he received sight.

What the blind man did on behalf of his bodily ailment, it is surely our bounden duty to do on behalf of our souls. Our need is far greater than his: the disease of sin is far more grievous than the want of sight; the tongue that can find words to describe the necessities of the body can surely find words to explain the wants of the soul. Let us begin praying if we never prayed yet. Let us pray more heartily and earnestly, if we have prayed in time past. Jesus, the Son of David, is still passing by, and not far from every one of us: let us cry to Him for mercy and allow nothing to stop our crying; let us not go down to the pit speechless and dumb, without so much as a cry for help. None will be so excuseless at the last day as baptized men and women who never tried to pray.

We see, for another thing, in this passage, an *encouraging instance of Christ’s kindness and compassion*. We are told that when the blind man continued crying for mercy, our Lord “stood and commanded him to be brought unto him.” He was going up to Jerusalem to die, and had weighty matters on His mind, but He found time to stop to speak kindly to this poor sufferer. He asked him what he would have done to him? “Lord,” was the eager reply, “that I may receive my sight.” At once we are told, “Jesus said unto him, Receive thy sight; thy faith hath saved thee.” That faith perhaps was weak, and mixed with much imperfection; but it had made the man cry to Jesus, and go on crying in spite of rebukes: so coming with faith, our blessed Lord did not cast him out. The desire of his heart was granted, and “immediately he received sight.”

Passages like these in the Gospels are intended for the special comfort of all who feel their sins and come to Christ for peace. Such persons may be sensible of much infirmity in all their approaches to the Son of God. Their faith may be very feeble, their sins many and great, their prayers very poor and stammering, their motives far short of perfection; but, after all, do they really come to Christ with their sins? Are they really willing to forsake all other confidence, and commit their souls to Christ’s hands? If this be so, they may hope and not be afraid. That same Jesus still lives who heard the blind man’s cry, and granted his request. He will never go back from His own words: “Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out.” (John vi. 37.)

We see, lastly, in this passage, a *striking example of the conduct which becomes one who has received mercy from Christ*. We are told that when the blind man was restored to sight, “he followed Jesus, glorifying God.” He felt deeply grateful: he resolved to show his gratitude by becoming one of our Lord’s followers and disciples. Pharisees might cavil at our Lord; Sadducees might sneer at His teaching: it mattered nothing to this new disciple; he had the witness in himself that Christ was a Master worth following. He could say “I was blind, and now I see.” (John ix. 25.)

Grateful love is the true spring of real obedience to Christ. Men will never take up the cross and confess Jesus before the world, and live to Him, until they feel that they are indebted to Him for pardon, peace, and hope. The ungodly are what they are, because they have no sense of sin, and no consciousness of being under any special obligation to Christ. The godly are what they are, because they love Him who first loved them, and washed them from sin in His own blood. Christ has healed them, and therefore they follow Christ.

Let us leave the passage with solemn self-inquiry. If we would know whether we have any part or lot in Christ, let us look at our lives. Whom do we follow? What are the great ends and objects for which we live? The man who has a real hope in Jesus, may always be known by the general bias of his life.

#### NOTES. LUKE XVIII. 35–43.

35.—[As *he was come nigh*, &c.] The miracle described in this passage is recorded by all the three first Gospel writers, but with some variations. Matthew speaks of two blind men. Mark and Luke speak of only one. Matthew and Mark say that the miracle was wrought when our Lord was “departing” from Jericho. Luke says that it happened, “as he was come nigh.”

With regard to the variation in the reports of the number of blind men, there is little difficulty. There were doubtless two blind persons healed. Mark and Luke, however, only report one case, which was probably that of the man best known at Jericho. Mark tells us that his name was Bartimæus.—Precisely the same variation may be observed in the accounts given by the three Gospel writers of the casting out of the devils in the country of the Gadarenes. Matthew says that two men were cured. Mark and Luke say that there was one. That one was evidently the most remarkable case, because he was the one who asked to be allowed to follow our Lord.—The same remark applies to both miracles. Two persons were healed, as Matthew says. One case only was reported by Mark and Luke, because it was for some reason the more noticeable of the two. In either miracle, to suppose that only one person was healed, because Mark and Luke were inspired to single out and report only one cure, is surely unreasonable and unfair. There was another cure, but for some wise reason, Mark and Luke did not report it.

The other variation is undoubtedly more difficult of explanation. Why Matthew and Mark should say that the miracle before us was wrought when our Lord was “going out of” Jericho, and Luke, that it was wrought as he “came near” to Jericho, is a hard knot to untie. At any rate the reconciliation of the apparent discrepancy between the two accounts has occasioned much difference of opinion among commentators.

(1) Some think that there were two cases of blind men cured, and that they were cured at two different times: one as our Lord entered into Jericho, the other as our Lord departed from Jericho; and that Luke reported one case, and Matthew and Mark another. This is the opinion of Augustine, Chemnitius, Barradius, Stella, Lightfoot, Gill, and Greswell.—Euthymius goes so far as to think that there were four altogether healed, and that the two in Matthew, the one in Mark, and the one in Luke, were four distinct cases!

(2) Some think that the words of St. Luke, “as he was come nigh,” only mean, “as he was in the neighbourhood of Jericho,” and that they do not necessarily mean, “as he was approaching, or coming to.” This is the opinion of Grotius, Doddridge, and Scott.

(3) Some think that the blind man began crying to our Lord as He was approaching Jericho, but was not healed until our Lord was leaving Jericho, and was accompanied by the second blind man at the time of his healing, though he was alone when he first cried. This is the opinion of Poole, Paraus, Bengel, Jansenius, Maldonatus, and Wordsworth.

(4) Macknight thinks that Jericho consisted of two quarters, an old and a new town, situated at a little distance one from the other, and that the blind men were sitting on the road between the two towns. Our Lord might then be truly reported as “going out “of one town, and “coming nigh “to another.

(5) Markland thinks that “as he came nigh,” means, “as he came nigh to Jerusalem,” and St. Luke only means that Jesus on His journey to Jerusalem was somewhere *near* or *about* Jericho, without determining whether He was leaving or entering.

I must frankly confess that none of the above explanations is altogether and completely satisfactory. The third appears to me by far the most probable. The other four seem to be either contradictory to grammar, or to common sense. I have no doubt whatever that the apparent discrepancy admits of thorough explanation, and is no fair argument against the plenary inspiration of Scripture. Some difficulties of this nature we might reasonably expect to find in such a book as the Bible. If we learn nothing else from them, they may teach us humility.

Everyone must allow that it is perfectly possible for two independent reporters of an event to differ slightly in their account of its details, without the slightest intention to deceive, and without any departure from truth. Occasional differences on slight points of detail are strong evidences that the Gospel writers are independent witnesses, and that in writing the Gospels they did not copy one another, but were independently guided by the Holy Ghost.

36.—[*What it meant.*] This would be rendered more literally, “What this thing might be.”

38.—[*Thou Son of David.*] This expression is remarkable, because the preceding verse informs us distinctly that the blind man was told that “Jesus of Nazareth “was passing by. To call our Lord the “Son of David” was a sign of faith, and showed that the blind man had some idea that Jesus was the Messiah. When the Pharisees were asked whose son Christ would be, they replied at once, “The Son of David.” (Matt. xxii. 42.) The fame of our Lord as a mighty worker of miracles had probably reached the blind man’s ears, and made him believe that He who could do such great miracles must be one sent from God.

41.—[*Receive thy sight*] Both here, and in the two following verses, the Greek word so rendered means literally, “look up,” or “see again.”

42.—[*Thy faith.*] This expression seems to indicate very plainly, that the blind man did not call our Lord, “Son of David,” as a mere appellation of dignity, and that he had some vague but real belief that our Lord was the Messiah.