

BLINDNESS REMOVED (Mk. 8:22-26)

Mk. 8:22 And he cometh to Bethsaida [*‘house of fish’*]; and they bring a blind man [*τυφλός*] unto him, and besought [*παρακαλέω*] him to touch [*ἅπτομαι*] him. **23** And he took the blind man by the hand, and led him out of the town; and when he had spit [*πτύω*] on his eyes [*ὄμμα*], and put his hands upon him, he asked him if he saw ought. **24** And he looked up [*ἀναβλέπω*], and said, I see [*βλέπω*] men as trees [*δένδρον*], walking. **25** After that he put his hands again upon his eyes [*ὀφθαλμός*], and made him look up [*ἀναβλέπω*]: and he was restored [*ἀποκαθίστημι*], and saw every man clearly [*τηλαυγώς*]. **26** And he sent him away to his house, saying, Neither go into the town, nor tell it to any in the town.

Fanny Crosby is one of our best-known hymn writers. Throughout her lifetime she wrote over eight thousand hymns ... such as “Blessed Assurance”, “Pass me not, O gentle Saviour”, and “To God be the Glory”. She also wrote over one thousand secular poems, and had four books of poetry published, as well as two best-selling autobiographies. She was related to a certain Harry Crosby, who became better known as Bing Crosby!

When she was only six weeks old she caught a cold and developed an inflammation in her eyes. It was probably a congenital condition, but ‘back in those days’ her parents would not have had access to such an advanced diagnosis. So they decided to apply to her eyes a ‘homemade’ remedy, - a mustard poultice (a plaster made up out of mustard seed powder. Apparently, it damaged her optic nerves and blinded her permanently.

It did not deter her spirit though for in many of her hymns she emphasises how she is looking forward to *seeing* the Lord Jesus in Glory. She wrote, “When I get to heaven, the first face that shall ever gladden my sight will be that of my Saviour”.

A blind man was brought to Jesus, - he wasn’t able to find his own way so his friends had to bring him. In those ancient times, diseases of all types were rife and remedies were very scarce. Yes, they would have had their ‘cures’ made often from dubious concoctions but basically with the lack of sanitation, multiple infections were ‘par for the course’ and simply had to be suffered.

Blindness, of course, would not have killed this man ... but he would have had a miserable existence. Added to it was the awful sense of social condemnation because people would have judged him, **Jn. 9:2** *who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind?* It was seen as some kind of punishment for a

wrong that had been committed somewhere in the family. It was like a curse ... and most people did not want to have anything to do with him.

Now, this is not just another story about Jesus healing, - He healed multitudes of people, and the most of them we don't read about ... But this healing is recorded because of the very personal nature of the meeting with Jesus, and it is one of only two miracles Mark tells us about, that is not mentioned in the other three Gospels. The other miracle we have already studied in 7:32, when the deaf man was healed.

Actually, it is interesting comparing the two, - the healing of the deaf man in chapter seven, and the healing of the blind man in chapter eight ...

1. Notice the way Mark records how the deaf man was *brought* to Jesus (Mk. 7:32), as was this blind man (Mk. 8:22).
2. Also, with the deaf man in Mk. 7:32 they *besought* Jesus to touch him ... as was the case with the men who brought the blind man, **Mk. 8:22** *And he cometh to Bethsaida; and they bring a blind man unto him, and besought him to touch him.*
3. Another similarity is seen in how the Lord Jesus took the deaf man **Mk. 7:33** *aside from the multitude*, ... and that is also what He did to the blind man, **Mk. 8:23** *And he took the blind man by the hand, and led him out of the town.*
4. Then, He spat on the blind man's eyes, and put his hands upon him. That is also similar to what He did to the deaf man, **Mk. 7:33** *And he ... put his fingers into his ears, and he spit, and touched his tongue.* He touched the affected area.
5. The fifth similarity was that He bid both men not to tell anyone (7:36; 8:26).

Another reason why this miracle 'stands out' is because the healing of the blind man in Bethsaida is the final miracle recorded by Mark as Jesus moves out of the central district of Galilee, **Mk. 8:13** *And he left them, and entering into the ship again departed to the other side.* This was a very significant day because the public ministry of Jesus in Galilee was drawing to a close.

So, almost at the conclusion, along came a company of men with a man who was blind. ... "Just one more Jesus, before You go!" They implored Him, - they made a specific call to Him to heal their blind friend, **Mk. 8:22** *And he cometh to Bethsaida; and they bring a blind man unto him, and besought him to touch him.*

The word Mark uses for ‘touch’ is a very significant one ... It refers to a ceremonial word relating to a levitical law. For example, Lev. 5:3 instructs, *Or if he [i.e. a member of the public] touch the uncleanness of man, whatsoever uncleanness it be that a man shall be defiled withal, and it be hid from him; when he knoweth of it, then he shall be guilty.*

Basically, the blind man would have been considered unclean. Therefore, if anyone was to touch him, they would also become unclean. Nevertheless, the men with the blind man, - whose name we are not given, - call upon Jesus to *touch* this cursed and ceremonially unclean man. ... *They* would not touch him ... but they called upon *Jesus* to touch him.

Would He do it? Would Jesus *touch* the man? Yes, He would, and He did! He is the Friend of sinners, - He ‘went down’ to their level when they could not get up to His! He never shied away from identifying with the lowest, - He repeatedly demonstrated how He did not come to call the righteous, but the sinners to repentance (cf. **Mk. 2:17** *When Jesus heard it, he saith unto them, They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.*)

He never stayed away from people who needed Him and called out for Him. He didn’t keep His distance, like the religious leaders in Israel did. Just as the hymn says, “Shackled by a heavy burden, ’Neath a load of guilt and shame, Then the hand of Jesus *touch*ed me ... He *touch*ed me and made me whole” ... That is the personal touch of God that reaches down to the sinner.

It is not religion that saves a person ... because religion would have left this man, and would not have touched him. It was not even his friends, for we are not told *they* touched him, - they *brought* him, but there is no indication they *touch*ed him for if they had, they would have been unclean ... But *Jesus* touched him!

On His way out of the region of Galilee, the Saviour set aside the time to meet this blind man ... this man who lived under a perceived curse. ... That is the kindness of God in paying particular and personal attention to this blind man in his hopeless state. ... Indeed, every man and woman, boy and girl whom Christ has saved has received His personal, particular, and exclusive attention. Jesus sought you out and made the arrangements in eternity whereby He would meet *you!* ... And this blind man came into personal encounter with the Saviour for Mark specifically states, **23** *And he [Jesus] took the blind man by the*

hand. ... Jesus did not stand at a distance. Instead, He came alongside and *touched* the needy man ... and *kept* holding on to him. ... That is particular and 100% attention!

Have you ever had much to do with vagrants? One of the things they want you to do is shake their hand ... just to feel you are willing to accept them. It means so much to them to know you have an affinity with them. I used to have many homeless and vagrant friends, - who would have done anything for me, - and some of the greatest hugs came from them! They long to be loved ... They long to be accepted ... and Jesus *touched* this man who had been rejected by virtually everyone else.

He would have had nothing. His clothes would have been rags. He would have had no job. His family would have been strangers to him ... and yet Jesus went up to him and *took the blind man by the hand, and led him* ... What a beautiful picture! And do you see how it relates to you? ... Jesus came to where you were, and He went up to *you*, and what were *you*? You were a lost Hell-deserving sinner who did not merit receiving anything from God, and neither were you looking for Him. You were *blind* to his mercy. You were a stranger to His grace. There was nothing in you that warranted His salvation, and yet, He came to where you were, and *touched* you with His saving grace, and He led you out. He took you away from where you had been, - this blind man spent his days of blindness and poverty in the town ... but the Lord *took the blind man by the hand, and led him out of the town*.

Would Jesus do that for me? Yes, of course, He would for he careth for you (I Peter 5:7). ... “Does Jesus care when my heart is sad ..., As the burdens press, and the cares distress ... Does He care enough ...? ... Does He see? O yes, He cares, I know He cares ... I know my Saviour cares”. ... And that is why Jesus came and died on the cross of Calvary ... because He cares for you ... because He loves you! God loved the world so much that He sent His only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ, to die on the cross, and through the shedding of His precious blood, the sins of every sinner who repents are forever forgiven and forgotten!

He came to where you were, and He took you by the hand, and you *believed/trusted* in Him. You were like this man, - spiritually-speaking, - you were blind and you could not see Him ... but *He* saw *you*, and He led you by the hand and brought you ‘out’ to salvation. The disciples didn’t do it. No

synagogue or church did it. Religion did not do it. Only Christ knew where to find you and had the power to change your life and make you into a new creature so the old things would pass away and all things would become new.

So, we have the picture of this blind man with his hand in the hands of Jesus as he is led out of the town, - just the Saviour and him ... **Mk. 8:23** *And he took the blind man by the hand, and led him out of the town; and when he had spit on his eyes, and put his hands upon him, he asked him if he saw ought. ...* Indeed, if Jesus had not led that blind man, he would not have gone anywhere for in his darkness he would not have known *where* to go for he would have been lost, - he would not have known which way to turn! He no longer had the men who originally brought him to Jesus, - for Jesus had taken him away from them, - and neither would he have heard the noise of the crowds because Jesus had taken him away from all that too.

And then Jesus *spat* on the man's eyes ... and can you see the blind man *jerking* backwards?! He would not have expected that! ... When we go to the opticians and they sat us down in the chair and tell us to put our chin on the little rest, and then they squirt air into our eyes so the pupils dilate, - it is not a pleasant feeling, even when you *are* expecting it ... But here, this man was not expecting what Jesus did for one moment Jesus was leading him along a path out of the town, then they stopped and the Saviour *spat* on his eyes! Then He rubbed the spittle/saliva in, and He said to the man, "Do you see anything?"

Now, imagine how the man would have been somewhat *stunned* by what was happening, - surely he didn't expect this! He could have been angry with Jesus. He could have told Jesus to go away, and leave him in his darkness for he didn't want any more to do with Him ... but he didn't for God's grace was at work. God kept the man in the company of Jesus, **24** *And he looked up, and said [to Jesus], I see men as trees, walking. ...* I can make out 'something', a certain 'fuzziness' ... a degree of movement. It was more than he could see a moment ago, but it still was not clear. ... He 'looked up' (ἀναβλέπω), - he was 'squinting', trying to 'make out' what he could see ... but it was all so blurred.

It was definitely better than what it was, - at least he could make out something, - but it was not anything near-right yet ... it was not in focus. **25** *After that he [Jesus] put his hands again upon his [the blind man's] eyes, and made him look up: and he was restored, and saw every man clearly. ...* The 'fog' had

gone, and the man had been granted perfect vision. It is like how the hymn writer described it, “O now I see the cleansing wave!”

I see it now! Previously it had been hidden to me, but I see it now! ... That is what happens when God by His grace opens your eyes to accept His saving power in your life ... That is what happens when you realise for the first time that Jesus died for you in order to save you ... to realise that He took your sins upon His own body and He suffered and died in your place ... that He took all the punishment that was rightly yours and you are now a child of God, - cleansed and saved through the precious blood of the Lord Jesus Christ!

And this blind man had his sight completely restored, - no half-measures. No fuzziness, and no squinting. He could see perfectly, and he **saw every man clearly** ... and the word for ‘clearly’ actually literally means he could even see the people away in the distance ‘as if they were beside him’.

And then he went home, ²⁶ **And he [Jesus] sent him away to his house, saying, Neither go into the town, nor tell it to any in the town.** ... Go straight home. Don’t go through the town where all those people are gathered ... but go straight home. Previously, in Mk. 7:36 the man who was healed did not do what he was told ... but it seems this man *did* ... he *did* obey Jesus. ... He started as he intended to go on!

... And he had not to be led home for he could see perfectly to get himself home! That is because Jesus had done a miracle in his life, - a miracle of grace. He could now focus, and concentrate, and distinguish the details. ... Jesus healed him completely and fully, and the sight he had been given changed his whole life. ... He could go back to his family. He could work again. He could re-integrate into society ... He had a brand new life because of what Jesus had done for him!

What a meeting when we trust in the Lord Jesus as our Saviour! Salvation, - to be saved by the grace of God, - is the greatest privilege for it changes your whole life ... from top to bottom, from the inside out, and from time into eternity. Healing of the body only lasts for a while but when the Lord saves your soul, it is for eternity. It means that when you leave this life you will be with Him forever. It is the blessed hope of every born-again believer ... that not even death can take away the gift of salvation God has given you.

What a great illustration this man is for us ... Are you trusting in Jesus as your Saviour? Do you know He has died for you on Calvary and risen again? Are you looking ahead to the day when He will take you unto Himself for all eternity? ... If you haven't already, place your hand into His and He will lead you to the place where your soul will be healed of its sin.

Believer, do you feel the strength of His hold upon your life ... and the fact He will never let you go? This man was obedient to Jesus as he went to his home, and he brought away with him the great miracle of grace Jesus had achieved in his life. ... That was his testimony, and it stayed with him for the rest of his days, and even out into eternity.

May the Lord bless our study of His Word, for His Name's sake! Amen.