

A Blind Man Cured

J.C. Ryle:

"And they came to Bethsaida. And they brought a blind man to him and entreated him to touch him. And taking the blind man by the hand, he brought him out of the village; and after spitting on his eyes and laying his hands upon him, he asked him, Do you see anything? And he looked up and said, I see men as trees, walking. Then again he laid his hands upon his eyes; and he looked intently and was restored and began to see everything clearly." (Mark 8:22-25)

We do not know the reason of the peculiar means employed by our Lord Jesus Christ in working the miracle recorded in these verses. We see a blind man miraculously healed. We know that a word from our Lord's mouth or a touch of his hand would have been sufficient to effect a cure. But we see Jesus taking this blind man by the hand, leading him out of the town, spitting on his eyes, putting his hands on him, and then, and not till then, restoring his sight. And the meaning of all these actions, the passage before us leaves entirely unexplained.

But it is well to remember, in reading passages of this kind, that the Lord is not tied to the use of any one means. In the conversion of men's souls, there are diversities of operation, but it is the same Spirit which converts. So also in the healing of men's bodies there were varieties of agency employed by our Lord, but it was the same divine power that effected the cure. In all his works, God is a sovereign. He gives not account of any of his matters.

One thing in the passage demands our special observation. That thing is the gradual nature of the cure which our Lord performed on this blind man. He did not deliver him from his blindness at once, but by degrees. He might have done it in a moment, but he chose to do it step by step. First the blind man said that he only saw "men as trees walking." Afterward his eyesight was restored completely, and he "saw every man clearly." In this respect the miracle stands entirely alone.

We need hardly doubt that this gradual cure was meant to be an emblem of spiritual things. We may be sure that there was a deep meaning in every word and work of our Lord's earthly ministry, and here, as in other places, we shall find a useful lesson.

Let us see then in this gradual restoration to sight a vivid illustration of the manner in which the Spirit frequently works in the conversion of souls. We are all naturally blind and ignorant in the matters which concern our souls. Conversion is an illumination, a change from darkness to light, from blindness to seeing the kingdom of God. Yet few converted people see things distinctly at first. The nature and proportion of doctrines, practices, and ordinances of the Gospel are dimly seen by them and imperfectly understood. They are like the man before us, who at first saw men as trees walking. Their vision is dazzled and unaccustomed to the new world into which they have been introduced. It is not till the work of the Spirit has become deeper and their experience been somewhat matured that they see all things clearly and give to each part of religion its proper place. This is the history of thousands of God's children. They begin with seeing men as trees walking; they end with seeing all clearly. Happy is he who has learned this lesson well and is humble and distrustful of his own judgment.

Finally, let us see in the gradual cure of this blind man a striking picture of the present position of Christ's believing people in the world compared with that which is to come. We see in part and know in part in the present dispensation. We are like those that travel by night. We know not the meaning of much that is passing around us. In the providential dealings of God with his children, and in the conduct of many of God's saints, we see much that we cannot understand and cannot alter. In short, we are like him that saw "men as trees walking."

But let us look forward and take comfort. The time comes when we shall see all "clearly." The night is far spent; the day is at hand. Let us be content to wait, watch, work, and pray. When the day of the Lord comes, our spiritual eyesight will be perfected. We shall see as we have been seen, and know as we have been known.