

THE SPIRITUAL RESULTS OF THE WORKS OF GOD IN A MAN.

NOTES OF AN ADDRESS BY F. LOCK AT
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(JOHN IX. 1-3 ; XI. 40 ; XII. 36 ; XX. 17, 18 AND 21.)

I HAVE in mind a few simple thoughts in connection with the scriptures we have read. The first is the manifestation of the *work* of God, the second the manifestation of the *glory* of God, and the third suggests *relationship* with God.

In John ix. I think we get a turning-point that leads on to things which are extremely precious. Therefore, the man who is taken up here is to be regarded in the light of one who was there in order that the Lord might in passing that way take account of him. I think that we should all have a distinct consciousness that the meeting of the Lord Jesus with us was no accidental circumstance. We might get an idea, sometimes through the way in which the gospel is apt to be presented, that on some particular night or special occasion

it so happened that the Lord met with us ; but when we come to John's gospel and John's writings in general, we have to take account of things from the side of the purpose of God, and we cannot entertain the idea of chance or anything of that kind when we are considering the purpose of God.

We read : "And as Jesus passed by, he saw a man which was blind from his birth." That is, the Lord took account of him. The way in which the disciples took it up with the Lord suggests that He had, so to speak, paused over the man. The Lord had just moved, and every movement of the Lord in John's gospel is deeply expressive. He had moved, and in His moving He had come to the spot where this man was who had been blind from his birth, and the attitude of the Lord suggested to the disciples that He was taking account of that man ; and the disciples in their turn speak to the Lord and ask Him a question which was not intelligent. They say, "Who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind ?" It was not intelligent to ask if the man had been born blind because of his own sins, but the Lord answers according to what was in His mind and

not according to what was in their minds : “Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents.” The Lord would say, it is not a matter here of taking up and dealing with the question of what man has done, there is another and much more profound point of view. The Lord wanted them to see that, and so He says, “Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents : but *that the works of God should be made manifest in him.*”

If I look upon you as a fellow-believer, I am entitled to look upon you as one who has been in the mind of God, in spite of your past history, past state or condition ; I am entitled to look upon you as one who has been marked out in the mind of God that the works of God should be made manifest in *you*. The suggestion is that none of us should regard either ourselves or others as being taken up merely that we might have the forgiveness of our sins and be saved from being involved in the ruin of a perishing world in order to have a place, in the goodness of God, in heaven ; but the very fact that you and I are here involves in the mind of the Lord a bit of material competent and intended to manifest the works of God. You may already have learnt this,

and if so, it is my happy task simply to revive in your heart what you have already learned on that line; but perhaps some younger ones here have not considered it, and I would ask you to think about it now.

The Lord brings in here what is involved from His own side in respect of the place of blessing in which you find yourselves in connection with Christ, and that is that the works of God may be manifested in you. I think the reason will be found if we follow through the course of the divine work until it is finally consummated in the company of the Lord's brethren in chapter xx. I think the man in chapter ix. is taken up and he is not dropped, speaking morally, until we see him in his place where the Lord comes into the midst in the wondrous association of that little company. I would like to be able to stimulate myself and all of you on that line. The work of God goes right through, so that the man there in his blindness is first of all to be regarded as a bit of raw material without shape or life, but the blessed Lord comes in contact with him, and touches him, and starts him on his course. What a course that is! The gospel is declared to be the gospel of God concerning His Son, Jesus

Christ our Lord. If we are to reach the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ, if we are to reach the knowledge of the Son of God, we must go that way.

I remember the distinct impression made on my soul when I first apprehended that the Spirit of God, in naming the name of the blessed Lord, always had in view what was specifically connected with the Lord for the development and enlargement of the soul; so that, looked at in that light, the first impression that the man in John ix. had was "a man that is called Jesus." That name is very blessed, and there are myriads of our brethren in the world who have reached the knowledge of One who has, under the name of Jesus, met them in their need and saved them from their sins and brought to them the knowledge of forgiveness of sins, but they stop there. I wish it were not true, but it is so. Though we would wish that there were ten times as many with that knowledge, yet it is serious to stop at that point.

The blind man in John ix. did not stop there; an exercise was set up in his soul that kept him in constant movement. He did not stand still a moment. When he took the next step of confessing that Jesus was the Christ, out he had to go,

and might you too go out ! It meant some thing for that man. He was cast out of the synagogue ; he was cast out socially, politically, religiously, and by his relations. There was no half-way house, no mutual ground, no soft stopping-place—to be cast out meant the loss of life in this world. If we understand what it is to come under the headship of Christ—to pass from Adam to Christ—that is what will follow. There is no opposition, so far as I know, in the world to the name of Jesus. On the contrary, a good christian man, as people call him, is very much valued ; he is made chairman of philanthropic societies and put at the head of charity organisations, but such an one has not parted company with the first man ; he has not yet taken the place which involves that God in the death of Christ has done with the first man : “If any one be in Christ, there is a new creation.” The promise of life is in Christ Jesus. “All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.”

So that man was cast out ; but Jesus finds him and says to him, “Dost thou believe on the Son of God ?” And he answered and said, “Who is he, *Lord*, that I might believe on him ?” That

man in whom the works of God are to be manifested first appreciates Jesus as the One who met him in his need, then he knows Him as God's Anointed—the Christ—and being cast out in consequence, and met by that One who has done him good, there bursts forth from his lips that name which came from the thief on the cross, and from the lips of Saul of Tarsus—*Lord*—and therein lies salvation from this present evil world. To own Him as Lord is the acknowledgment that there is a supreme will in the universe for the control of the people of God—the will of the Lord. “And Jesus said unto him, Thou hast both seen him, and it is he that talketh with thee. And he said, Lord, I believe. And he worshipped him.” Now he has reached the Son of God. That blind man with whom we started has come through like Saul of Tarsus (though Saul was converted in a moment)—not like some of us who do not reach it for twenty or thirty years or more; he has come to the apprehension of the Son of God. What is there now? A bit of finished material—the glorious product of the work of the Son of God—one competent for anything in the sphere of God—one fit for anything in relation to the assembly—in relation to service, priest-

hood, sonship. He who has reached the knowledge of the Son of God has reached perfection according to the Epistle to the Ephesians, and he is competent to fill any place in the sphere of God.

What I have before me is to appeal to some of you younger ones. One does not cease to say that if the Lord leave us here, the future of the testimony will depend upon the younger ones. Now, in coming amongst you from time to time, one is conscious sometimes of an atmosphere of desire to know the mind of the Lord, but then again one is conscious at times of an air of slackness and indifference. Perhaps the world rides a bit easy; you may not have much in the way of trial and pressure, and spiritual energy dies down. One has noticed that there is a distinctly deeper spiritual movement amongst you younger ones sometimes than at other times, and it is for this reason that I would emphasise the fact that the intent of the Lord in taking us up and leaving us here is that the works of God might be manifested in us. If that be not true of us, we have missed the mark and failed as to what is in the mind of God, and that is a serious thing. I would ask you to bear with me in pressing this, because you will

never reach what follows unless you are right at the foundation.

The next chapter suggests that what is formed in connection with the work of God is not to be left in isolation. I think the mind of the Lord is always to put us together, so we find in chapter x. He brings in the thought of the flock, and Himself leading His sheep in and out to find pasture. John brings in the thought of the flock; Peter gives us the idea of a spiritual house, and Paul the truth of the body or assembly; but whether John, Peter, or Paul, the material is the same in each instance, and things are held in power by the spiritual man or woman who in soul apprehension has reached Jesus as the Son of God.

Then in chapter xi. it is as if the Lord would say, What about this man who has been taken up that the works of God may be manifested in him? Where is he? He is in the sphere where the power of death is known; that is most apparent. I am sure you will agree that it is a bitter experience when we have the sense in our souls and spirits of being under the power of death. I think the spiritual history of the man we get in chapter ix. is carried along all through the succeeding chapters.

We get him as the man born blind, and then in this chapter we get morally the same man in Lazarus who tasted death. What is to be done about it? Some of us perhaps more than others have in an actual way proved the bitterness of the sphere of death. The helplessness, hopelessness, and despair of death have been proved by us in its shame and guilt; it is the power of Satan. But here we see the Lord coming upon the scene in its worst days. Martha intercepts Him, and it is to her that the Lord says, "Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?" There is something unspeakably great about that. The Lord visited the place where man was in the corruption of death—there with the stone on the mouth of the tomb which, if opened in a natural way, would disclose nothing but the corruption of death. "Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?" Keep your eye on that stone, the Lord would say. Then they rolled away the stone, and out from the tomb came forth a man in the newness of life; that is the glory of God. God is competent and has the mind to come in where man lies in the helplessness and corruption of death and

to bring out of it what is the power and witness to us of His supreme glory—life working where death has reigned. As one sees Lazarus emerge from that tomb and the divine power competent to bring him out, the whole question is settled. It matters not if it be one man or millions; whether he has been dead four days or four centuries; the same power would raise a man who has been dead one minute, one day, or a thousand years. If He can raise Lazarus, He can raise everything that belongs to God. We can stand there, and what fills our eyes is the outshining of the glory of God in the scene where outwardly the power of death is known.

Now to follow our man along characteristically, that same man who was sitting by the wayside begging, whose eyes had been opened, who had learned Jesus as the Son of God, is now in resurrection power made available for God in this scene of death. God has great glory in one who, in the spirit of his mind, has reached Christ on the resurrection side and walks here in newness of life. This is not the future glory of God, but the present glory. The Lord had said to Martha, Keep your eyes fixed on the opening made by the rolling away of the stone and

you will then and there see the glory of God.

In chapter xii. we see the same man as a companion of Christ. People take notice of a man who has been raised from among the dead. It is a wonderful position; he sits down with Christ. In like manner we see our man as a servant of Christ; he serves Christ as Martha did, and he is also seen as a worshipper of Christ—he pours out the ointment upon the feet of Jesus, as Mary did.

We sometimes speak about a funeral as being a time for testimony, but one has often said that many a man walking in the power of resurrection down here is a much greater testimony. You may stand over one who is dead and speak of the power that will work in that body of humiliation to raise it “like unto his glorious body,” but I like to see a man or woman shewing forth the present power and glory of God in resurrection life, walking in newness of life in the companionship and service of the Lord and worshipping Him—that is testimony for the glory of God.

Well, to follow on and see the further manifestation of the works of God in a man, the next thing is that he is set up in relationship. In the verse which we

read (chap. xii. 36) there is an expression which is peculiar to John's gospel and is only to be found in that one place—"While ye have light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children [*sons*, it should read] of light." Now we have the man in company with his fellows, set up in the dignity of sonship, in a dignity to be understood in relation to God. It is a generation of light that takes character from Him—He is the Firstborn, and it is only as belonging to that generation that we can appreciate the wonderful place of blessing into which the Lord brings us in relation to Himself. "These things spake Jesus . . . and did hide himself from them." It is as if He said, I have done with the world outside. He went away and departed and hid Himself from them, and immediately He is re-discovered to our sight, and where is He discovered? As the One who is conscious that He is about to depart to be with the Father.

Now you see the way which the man who has been the subject of the work of God has been led. First his eyes have been opened; he is brought to the knowledge of the Son of God; he is placed in the power of newness of life; he is in relationship and association with Christ; and now

the Lord is discovered as the One about to depart to the Father, "Having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end." Now we begin to get on to ground which in its terms and expressions, if not in the power of it in our hearts, is very familiar. There is hardly a Lord's day morning passes when we come together to the supper without those words dropping from the lips of some one, "Having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end." It is helpful to see how the Lord is turning His own into a sanctified company, and causing them to emerge in the light and dignity of a relationship which He Himself has with the Father. It is as though the Lord would say, Having taken you up to manifest the glory of God, having put you where God has come in in resurrection beyond the power of death, having put upon you the character and dignity of sons of light, now comes the question of your position. Where are you to be? And so in chapter xiii. the Lord says, I am going to give you part with Myself. "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me." So the Lord takes the feet of this man (I am still following the same man through, characteristically) and He

says, as it were, You are clean for the passover; and there is nothing higher on this earth than the passover, but I am going to enter into a scene that the passover could never fit you for, but I am not going to leave you behind—"If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me." And so the man—spiritually the same man—is to be viewed as fitted, without any impropriety or sense of unfitness, for the dignity of the Father's house.

Now I think our man really merges into John. John (I mean the disciple whom Jesus loved) is not mentioned up to this point; he has scarcely come into evidence at all in the whole gospel, but now, if we view him characteristically in this man, he comes into view in a very important way that should appeal to every one of us. It is as though the Lord, still having His hand on that man whom He had started with, and having given him part with Him in that out-of-the-world, heavenly association, would now introduce him into the little company of sons of light in that chamber. But there was a Judas there, and there were things to pour out from the heart of Christ that could not be spoken in the presence of Judas. So after Judas had received the sop, he went

out immediately. The Lord has none but sons of light there in that little company of eleven, and as the eyes of the Lord rested upon them He would see the gift of the Father to Him; and in that favoured circle He saw you, and He saw me. How close that company of sons in the upper chamber were to Him! John is the expression of it. How near was John to the blessed Lord when he had his head on His bosom? If you have your head on the bosom of a person, how far are you from his heart? John is not called John here, but "the disciple whom Jesus loved," and he is characteristically the same man, and he has his head on the bosom of Jesus. One would ask the question, How far was John from God when he had his head upon the bosom of Jesus—that blessed One who could say, "The only begotten Son which is in the bosom of the Father"? How close that puts John to the heart of God, and that is just where the Lord wants us to be. He came into this scene and died to the very intent that we should come and rest our heads right on the very heart of God.

So a little later the Lord says to this man, as it were, "At that day ye shall ask in my name: and I say not unto you

that I will pray the Father for you : for the Father himself loveth you." It is not difficult to see that the intent of the Lord in taking up the blind man was to form him morally so that he might have the knowledge of the Son of God and be brought into the light and power of resurrection life, and then into the sphere of relationship, so that he should be at home in the immediate presence of God. Christ suffered for sins, "the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God."

How we could linger and feast upon all that the Lord pours out unrestrainedly of the rich affections of God as we get them in chapters xiv.-xvii. We get a sphere of radiant light and glory where not a single thought of God in the way of blessing for time or eternity is withheld. It is a wonderful place, and it is ours ; it was not only for that little company. Then in the last verse of chapter xvii. the Lord comes to the point where He says, "I have declared unto them thy name and will declare it : that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them."

When we come to the cross, where is the man whom the Lord picked up by the wayside, who was born blind that the

works of God might be manifested in him ? He is standing at the foot of the cross (I mean characteristically)—that disciple whom Jesus loved was there. And when the Lord at that last moment saw some one before Him who was extremely dear to His heart—the mother that bare Him—and the disciple standing by whom He loved, “He saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son ! Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother.”

In chapter xx. we find the Lord in resurrection on that first day of the week—the Firstborn from among the dead—solitary and alone in all the power of His victory ; no human eye seeing Him, but the eye of God alone resting on Him who contained in His glorious Person all the power of life which was to unfold and expand until He fill a universe taking character from Himself. It is on that morning that He says, “Go tell *my brethren*, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father ; and to my God, and your God.” It was to that man who was born blind, whom He brought to the other side of death, and upon whom He put the dignity of sonship, that He would declare the name of the Father.

Now, beloved brethren, the Lord unfolds

in that message what is absolutely unique—I mean ascension. Everything that lives to God lives on account of resurrection, but there is a family in this day of the Spirit whose place, whose dignity, whose privilege, whose spring of worship is that they are associated with Christ in ascension. I doubt if we realise the meaning of ascension. Many of us stop in our minds at resurrection. There could not be ascension without resurrection, but ascension is the peculiar dignity of sons before the Father's face. It is the bliss of this that is discovered to our souls when through the supper the Lord has softened and moulded us in His hand by the warmth of His love; He takes us to His own place before the Father's face. That is where the man who was born blind that the works of God should be made manifest in him has reached. He is in the sanctified company, a worshipping company, a company to which the Lord appears and says, "Peace unto you."

When the Lord goes to heaven, He leaves that company here, as though He would say, The work which My hands have dropped, the grace which has poured out of My lips, these things are now to come out in the company of My brethren,

so He said to His Father, "As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world."

But how can we answer to that unless we have reached in our souls Jesus as the Son of God? We must go beyond the point of knowing Jesus who gave us the forgiveness of our sins. We must accept Christ as Head, with all that that involves—the subjection in this scene of our wills to the will of the Lord, and to know Him as the Son of God. The works of God cannot be manifested in us, we cannot shew forth the glory of God, unless we know Jesus as the Son of God.

I commend these thoughts for your consideration, desiring that we might all be stimulated along this line. There is nothing new in them, but it is well to revive our memories in regard of them, to have our minds stirred up, as the apostle says, by way of remembrance. May the Lord graciously grant it for His name's sake.

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