

THE PRAYER OF FAITH

A SERMON

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“And Jesus said unto him, Go your way; your faith has made you whole.” Mark 10:52

IT appears there were in connection with the Savior going to Jericho and returning therefrom, three, if not four men that were released from that affliction of blindness under which they labored. Hence, in the 18th of Luke you read of his opening the eyes of one as he entered into Jericho, and the language is very similar to that used in relation to the one with whom our text stands connected; but it was not the same, because that one was healed as the Savior entered Jericho, and this one as he returned from Jericho. Then again, in the 20th of Matthew, you find that he opened the eyes of two blind men on his departing from Jericho; Matthew names two. Now if the one in our text be one of the two, then the one that he healed as he entered and the two that he healed as he returned would make three, and only three; and if when he had healed three, he went a little further on, and then met with the one in our text, then there would be four. But be that as it may, between the accounts of Matthew, of Mark, and of Luke, there is no contradiction. And yet infidels in bud, as well as full-blown infidels, delight in the thought of producing what they call a contradiction, a self-contradiction, in the testimony of these three Evangelists; for, say they, one tells us that the man was healed as the Savior entered Jericho, and the other tells us that he was healed as he left Jericho. But the reason is, that they were not the same persons. And therefore, if these infidels in bud and full-blown infidels knew as well what they were about as the Evangelists did, they would not speak as they do. What a depth of degradation it is for a man to be brought to, to read the holy Scriptures, the word of the great Creator, to see if he can find some fault with the book, to see if he can find some fault with that which is faultless, with that which is infallible. And these same persons of course read the people of God very diligently, and as they do in imagination find out many faults in the Bible; so, they read the people of God to find out all the faults they can in them. So it is that where Satan leads a man captive, he is sure to get into that spirit by which he will go lower and lower, deeper and deeper, but still is never contented; and we know not to what depth Satan would drive us, if left to him. It is a great mercy to have the fear of God before our eyes; it is a great mercy to be able to come forward and bear testimony to what the word of God says about us as sinners, and feel that is just what we are, and what the word of God sets forth as the remedy, we are led to see is just what we need; and as we seek that remedy, sooner or later, before long, the Lord will say to us what he said to this man, “Go your way; your faith has made you whole.”

Before I enter upon the subject, I may just observe that the same Greek word here translated “whole” is more usually translated “saved;” and so it is given in the margin here; and then it would read, “Go your way your faith has saved you.” I shall perhaps as I go on avail myself of both these readings. Then again, I should say that in going through this subject I shall not merely take what the text expresses. but also, what it suggests. There is no doubt but that these circumstances are recorded to instruct us into something beyond themselves. In this sense they are like Sarah and Hagar, a kind of allegories; that is to say, they have a meaning beyond the mere letter.

We may look at our text as being divided into two parts, and they concern every one more or less; that is to say, we are either the character here commanded to go our way, because our faith has saved us, or we are not. There are then two things we have to attend to: first, *the faith of this man by the way-side*; and secondly, *the Saviors command*; “Go your way your faith has saved you.”

First, *the faith of this man by the way-side*. I will not here notice the ordinations of providence with Bartimaeus. And if we, as we go along, can realize the delightful truth, that we possess the same kind of faith, then just as sure as that man is now in heaven, we in a little time shall be there also. Now let us see what his faith took hold of; it was Jesus Christ. He heard that Jesus of Nazareth passed that way. And in connection with this just see what his plea was. His plea was simply mercy, “Jesus, you Son of David, have mercy upon me.” But we will first see what it was his faith had got hold of. His faith had got hold of something infinitely better, no doubt, than he at the first thought he had got hold of. And so, some of us, when we first believed in Jesus Christ, and first pleaded for mercy in the name of Jesus Christ, we did not know then that he was such a glorious Jesus Christ as now we know him to be. Some of us, that have followed him and walked with him for a long time, have found out to our happy experience that while at the first we saw that he was good, we have found out that he is infinitely better than we thought he was, that his grace is very much greater than we thought it was, that his word is very much surer than we at the first thought it was, and that he delights very much more in mercy than we at the first thought he did; so there is no danger, in our living to all eternity with him, of his being lowered in our estimation, for there is an infinity of worth in him, and the longer we live with him, the more we see two things, our own worthlessness, and the infinite worth of the Lord Jesus Christ. But let us just look at him for one moment as Jesus of Nazareth. I am not going to insinuate that this man then had all the views of him which I shall set forth this morning, but then he would afterwards come into the same things. First then, Jesus of Nazareth. what does that mean? That, historically is very soon settled, for he lived in Nazareth, that it might be fulfilled that was written, he should be called a Nazarene. That matter is very simple: and therefore, the meaning would be that he heard of the Savior of Nazareth; “Jesus” meaning “Savior;” a Savior has risen among us, and he has resided in Nazareth; therefore, he is called the Savior of Nazareth. One said, (and no doubt he turned around and almost smiled at his simplicity afterwards, when he came to know the secret,) “Can any good come out of Nazareth?” Why, that same person, Nathaniel, afterwards found that all the good the world ever knew came out of Nazareth; that everything that God could give, that man could receive and enjoy to all eternity, was embodied in that little town. But then we must notice the higher sense in which he was a Nazarene, in order to show the propriety of this man’s plea; he pleaded for mercy. Now Jesus Christ was a Nazarene also, spiritually; we must not lose sight of this. He took wine, and therefore he was not a Nazarene literally or ceremonially, but he was a Nazarene spiritually. The wine from which the Nazarene, in the 6th of Numbers, was prohibited, is evidently a figure of error,

of lies, of sin, all of which are intoxicating. Now the Nazarite was to entirely abstain from wine, and everything fermented; and if he in any way broke his vow, which sometimes happened, he had to begin again. And you will observe towards the end of the 6th of Numbers the blessings pronounced that were to be by that Nazarite-ship. As the word Nazarite, in its original form, simply means consecration or devotion to God, apply that thought to the dear Savior, and if it does not please you, then I don't know what will; it does please Christians, namely, that the Lord Jesus Christ never drank one drop of error, that the Savior never received one falsehood, never drank in one sin or one fault. David was delighted with this when he looked forward to the dear Savior as keeping clear of any and everything that should at all corrupt his pure mind; therefore David said, "You are fairer than the children of men; grace is poured into your lips; therefore God has blessed you forever;" and you know the prediction was that he should be of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord. See how he withstood error; there could no error get at his pure mind to get him, shall I say, into an intoxicating state; he always had perfect self-possession. Error is wonderfully intoxicating. What is it but the intoxicating nature of error that makes those that are the farthest from God the most zealous for their religion? In this spiritual sense, then, Jesus was a Nazarite; that is to say, he was consecrated to God, and did no sin; and by his perfect consecration to God he has brought in eternal righteousness, and by his dying the death he did he has put away sin. And now let us just look at the blessings that are by him, just to see how right the man was, as a proof that this poor man by the wayside was taught of God, for the Savior said "Every one that has heard and learned of the Father comes unto me." His faith centered in this consecrated one, in this devoted one, in this substitutional one, as I love to call him, in this surety of the better covenant. Just see what is by him. "The Lord bless you," that encourages the poor sinner. His plea was mercy, and we know that all mercy comes by Jesus Christ, "The Lord bless you and keep you." And so, he will keep all such; he has kept some of us now for a long time as the apple of his eye; and we are happy in his hands, in his love, in his Spirit, in his kingdom, and exceedingly happy when he gives us his presence. The mountains then flow down, the valleys are filled, and we are exceedingly happy, "The Lord bless you and keep you, make his face shine upon you and be gracious unto you, lift up his countenance upon you, and give you peace; and they shall put my name upon the children of Israel, and I will bless them." Now this new name, you see, takes away their old genealogy, it cuts them off from all connection with the first Adam, from all connection with their sinner-ship, with a violated law, with death and hell. "They shall put my name upon them." "This is the name wherewith He shall be called, Jehovah our righteousness." "And I will bless them." Now here the man's faith centered, and his plea was for mercy. Is it, then, a matter of concern with us whether Jesus Christ died for us; or rather, are we brought thus to see our need of this substitutional one? For although the first concern, or one concern, with this poor man was that his eyes might be opened, we must not take it to stop there; it unquestionably has a further meaning than that.

Now when his faith thus centered in Christ, and he cried for mercy, there were many that charged him that he should hold his peace. Let us take this figuratively. The fact itself is easily understood, but let us take it figuratively. And when he was charged to hold his peace, he cried the more, a great deal the more. And what are the things that will charge us to hold our peace, and tell us it's no use to seek, that it's no use to cry to God, that it's no use to pray, we shall never succeed? Hence some of you have been seeking a long time, and you have not succeeded yet, not to realize what you want to realize, but you will by and by; for "then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord, that his going forth is prepared as the morning;" and by and by he will come to these seekers as the rain, and as the latter rain upon the earth. Therefore, still go on, for his word is true, and if

your faith be in God, by the substitutional work of Christ, you will in the Lord's own time be sure to realize all that you need. Now there are many things that seem to charge us to hold our peace. Shall I once more name what I have named lately, our sins? Ah, such a sinner as you! Well, upon this I will only make this remark, that we in our right minds, as the man turned his blindness, his beggary, and his wretched position into reasons why he should still cry to Jesus the more, just so should we; let us turn our sins, let them be what they may; let us turn our circumstances, let us turn our troubles, whatever our humbling's or mortifications we may have to undergo before men, let us turn them all into reasons why we should cry to God; for his grace is all sufficient, Jesus is able to save to the uttermost. Therefore, the Lord enable us, amidst all that may seem to discourage us, still to plead his mercy. "You Son of David;" Ah, the same wonderful person; and in the 89th Psalm the Lord said that his faithfulness and his mercy should be with David, namely, with Christ; and in the 2nd of Hebrews you read the fulfilment of it, that he is a merciful and a faithful high priest. Therefore, let us turn all our sins and troubles, even death itself, even hell itself, into reasons why we should cry unto him. "They charged him that he should hold his peace." I will not enter into the reasons here, which anyone with a little reflection can easily understand; I keep to the spiritual department; "and he cried the more a great deal." Just so, friends, we pray very poorly as it is, and we should not pray so much as we do were it not for the opposition we have within especially, and opposition without as well. What do these things do? Why, they make us feel that woe be unto us if God is not on our side. Woe be unto us if his mercy be not towards us; what will become of us if he is not our friend? Uh, upon this part I hardly know what to say to set forth what I want to set forth; but it is this, that as Jesus Christ did in his humiliation righteously, for in righteousness he judged and made war, as Jesus Christ did in his humiliation, righteously, substitutionally, and atoningly overcome sin, the world, and trouble, Satan, and death; that name of Jesus has in it all the same powers now; so that if you gain the victory, it must be by receiving his victory, it must be by the victory he has gained; and there never was an instance yet and there never will be of any poor sinner thus believing in Christ, pleading in his name, and being enabled to answer in the affirmative the Savior's question, "Do you believe that I am able to do this;" there never was an instance yet of such an one being lost. If you were deluded then you would set up your own works in part; you might take the name of Jesus, but you would take it only just to bring it in at the fag-end of your prayer saying, or at the fag-end of your creed; or take it as a mere matter of form. But if you know you are condemned by the law of God, how you stand there as a lost and ruined sinner, and see the exact adaptability of Christ's substitution, lay hold of his name and plead that such an one never did fail, and never will. I will say all I can in this part to encourage you that are seeking the Lord. Ah, my hearer, what is like it? Everything under the sun is as uncertain as the wind, but everything in God is certain, everything in Christ is certain; everything in our God is glorious, and that to the last degree. I could say a great deal more here. It is a bad sign, when our sins or our troubles, whatever they are, are able to destroy our hungering and thirsting for God; to destroy or to move us in our decision for God. "He cried the more a great deal, You Son of David, have mercy on me." And so, the man prevailed. Now I only want these two things in you this morning to prove that you have the same faith; first, that your faith should be rightly grounded, namely, in the all-prevailing power of the Savior's name. Shall I again repeat the sweet thought that as he overcame everything, and wrought the victory, his name still continues, embodying all that he did while here below; so that you have in prayer the same power with God as Christ himself. "As a prince has you power with God and with man, and has prevailed." Christ prevailed with God by his obedient life and atoning death, and you are to plead the same. If your faith be here, and your prayer to him or to God by him, be here, then you certainly will not be cast out. Why, God's

word would really come to the ground if such a one as this should be lost. "He that believes on me has everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation." I am fully aware that depends entirely upon the kind of belief it is; but then if you do not believe in him as the end of the law for righteousness, if you do not believe in him in the completeness of his atonement, then you do not believe in him scripturally; but if you believe in him as making his people like himself, my text says, "Your faith has made you whole." Now Jesus Christ is a whole Christ, and carries the idea of completeness; and so, our faith is complete; it gives us a standing in Christ; "you are complete in him." This is the Jesus Christ in whom his faith centered, here his prayers centered, here he sought the Lord, and the Lord heard him.

I will now notice the answer. The first part of the answer is, that "Jesus stood still." This seemed encouraging. "Jesus stood still." Now it is wonderful how much this simple circumstance suggests, his standing still. Some have thought it a greater miracle than the sun standing still, but I do not see anything miraculous in the Savior standing still, I see an infinite condescension, I see an intention to show mercy, I see a determination to answer the prayer of this poor man; so it's not a miracle, except a miracle of grace; in that sense of course we freely admit it is a greater miracle than the sun standing still, because it wrought something more permanent. But let us have a scripture to illustrate this standing still. Here is a sinner crying to God, and the Lord stops, and as though he should say, Now I'll wait a little, until the moment shall arrive, and then you shall know the meaning of my standing still; 30th of Isaiah; "Therefore will the Lord wait, that he may be gracious unto you, and therefore will he be exalted, that he may have mercy upon you." You see he must be first exalted. What do you say? Can you say that Jesus in his substitutional work stands to you before everything; that he is the chief among ten thousand and altogether lovely? Ah, then, if this be the case, mercy is not far off, "for the Lord is a God of judgment, "blessed are all they that wait for him." Now it goes on to show what blessedness these people shall come to that thus look to the Lord, and on whose behalf the Lord, as it were, stands still. "For the people shall dwell in Zion at Jerusalem; you shall weep no more." You have got hold of a friend that will terminate all your troubles; you have got hold of one that will abide by you till the last tear is wiped away. As the Lord stood by the Israelites when the sun and the moon stood still the victory was complete, so the Lord will stand by such until the last trouble is gone. Oh, what a blessed religion! Some of you have plenty of silver and gold, and that silver and gold may mitigate and take away some of your troubles; but you have some troubles that silver and gold can do nothing towards alleviating? not anything whatever. But here stands the declaration, "You shall weep no more." That time is not yet come, but it will come. "And he will be *very* gracious unto you, mark that, "he will be *very* gracious unto *you*, at the voice of *your* cry." Why at the voice of your cry? Because it is the voice of faith in Christ, it is the prayer of faith, and without faith it is impossible to please God. "He will be very gracious unto you, at the voice of your cry; when he shall hear it, he will answer you. And how gracious will he be? He himself tells us; the definition stands like this: "My grace is sufficient for you." And if you think yourself the worst that ever did ask mercy, then let the emphasis lie upon the pronoun *you*, setting forth the object, "My grace is sufficient for *you*." Black as you are, vile as you are, devil as you have been, "My grace is sufficient for *you*." "He will be very gracious unto you at the voice of your cry." But their cry is not the Pharisee's cry, but the publican's cry: their cry is not Cain's cry, having no faith in the substitutional perfection of Christ, but Abel's cry; and the Lord was very gracious unto his cry, and he obtained witness that he was righteous. And while he will thus deal with you, it goes on to say, showing the time is not yet come for us to leave off weeping, or for our troubles to cease, "Though the Lord give you the bread of adversity," that

we don't like, but the Lord likes us to have it, he sees its needful, "and the water of affliction, yet shall not your teachers be removed into a corner any more, but your eyes shall see your teachers." And who are our teachers? Why, the holy prophets and apostles, and the blessed God by them. But, ah, there are men in the world, calling themselves popes and priests, that would put these prophets and apostles aside, and they themselves would guide us, they themselves would teach us. But the Lord sent these teachers all over the world, and now the Pope would have a job to gather all the Bibles together and all the Scriptures, translated into so many hundreds of languages, and burn the whole. Poor old gentleman, he is done at last. There stands the promise, "your teachers shall not be removed into a corner anymore." May dear old England still prize her Bible, still love her Bible, and still hold the Bible to be the birthright of every man, of every woman, born into the world. Everyone should thus judge for himself. Man shall judge for me, man shall dictate to me, man shall govern me in these eternal things, when he can take my accountability from me, when he can take my sins from me, when he can quench my hell for me, when he can swallow up death in victory. None but such a person as this can I trust, and Jesus Christ is that person; therefore, our confidence is to be in him, and in him alone. And then this standing still, this waiting, (and they are blessed that wait for him,) what does it lead to? Why, this standing still in the faith leads to victory. If you are brought into this path of faith by Jesus Christ, he says, "He that follows me shall not abide in darkness." You may be in the dark about some things now, but keep close to him; he shines upon everything that pertains to our eternal welfare. Hence this being brought to him, and to wait for him, leads on to victory. "And there shall be upon every high mountain, and upon every high hill," that is a high doctrine people, you see; God's love is a very high mountain, eternal election is a very high mountain, the promises are high mountains, the settlements of heaven are high mountains; "there shall be upon every high mountain, and upon every high hill, rivers and streams of waters in the day of the great slaughter, when the towers fall." Isaiah, I should think, was at times almost as happy on earth as he is now in heaven. What revelations that man was blessed with! "In the day of the great slaughter." He saw the Savior slay the great leviathan of sin; he saw the Savior slay the monster, death; he saw the Savior slay the dragon of hell, take away his power from him, and he saw the Savior returning with dyed garments, with the keys of heaven and hell at his girdle, having conquered hell, taken possession of the whole territory, turned the devil into his servant. Hence the devil now "goes about seeking whom he *may* devour;" obliged to ask Jesus Christ whom he *may* touch. If he wants to injure Job, he is obliged to ask God how far he *may* go. "Hitherto," I have got the keys of your territories, I am your master; Isaiah saw this, saw the mighty victory, "In the day of the great slaughter, when the towers fall." Ah, all the towers and fortresses by which Satan held men in his own territories virtually fell when Christ died, and so the glorious gospel has travelled on, brought poor sinners out of where they were as sinners, into this knowledge of God by Jesus Christ. "Moreover, the light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun;" that has nothing to do with the moon literally. The moon and sun are there used as figures, and that is all; and that verse describes simply the progress of light into which all that thus look to Christ shall be brought, till everything is made right. "The light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun;" that is, you shall be brought more and more into the light of God; "and the light of the sun shall be sevenfold, as the light of seven days," in which God completed his work; therefore the light shall go on till you come into this perfection. When shall it be? "In the day that the Lord binds up the breach of his people." He did that at Calvary, a breach great like the sea; the Savior threw his infinite self into the breach, and his righteousness and his atonement filled up the mighty gulf, filled up the breach; and he turns round to the poor sinner on the continent of hell and death, and says to him, "I am the way." He is the way of escape from the continent of sin, and hell, and

death, into the happy realms where the mourners cease to weep. Then it was he made up the breach of his people. But he hasn't yet healed the stroke of their wound, he has got that to do. When will he do that? At the last great day. Will it be a painful process? It will not; but if it were it wouldn't matter, for it is all to be done in a moment. Ah, what will the Socinian say then, when our incarnate God shall descend the parting skies, and gather up the dust from all the continents and islands of the world, and from the bottom of the sea, of every one of his children, and that in the twinkling of an eye, and present them, ranged in thousands and thousands of miles, their ranks will no doubt reach between earth and heaven, upheld by his omnipotence, and filled with his glory, and ready to take possession, with, "Come you, blessed." Then will be the last magnificent demonstration of the Godhead of Christ, when time shall close its course; then shall he heal the stroke of their wound. Eternal perfection shall reign and the people be happy.

All this, and a great deal more, is implied by Jesus standing still; because it implies that the Lord will stand by his people. The Lord will not go out of Sodom, he will stand by Lot until Lot is out. The Lord will not go up from the bed of the sea while there is one Israelite there. When they went through the sea the Lord didn't go first, and come out first, turn around and say, Now come along; you are a very long time; is the last out yet? He himself was their rereward; he himself followed them; so if there had been any that could not have walked, he would have brought them; Ah, if they had all fallen down lame together, he would have taken the whole up, carried them through the sea, and placed them on the vantage ground of victory; for he will stand still, he will stand by his people; and what shall move him? And they that trust in him shall be as Mount Zion, which cannot be removed, but abides forever. The first part of the answer, then, was, the Lord stood still; nothing done yet, only the Lord standing still. Just so, if you have faith in Jesus, and a heart to cry to him, God is standing still; that is, he is with you, and will be with you; he will not go a step further without taking you with him.

Now comes *the Saviors command*. "And Jesus commanded him to be called." This command was effectual. The same people that just before had said, Oh, don't make that noise, praying and crying out like that; we wish to be respectable; what will people think? That's it, you see; that's the idea; what will people think. Not what the Lord would think, or what this poor man needed, but what would people think? these same men now went and said, "Be of good comfort; rise, he calls you." If he had not called the man, they would not have been willing to go for him, and I am sure the man would not have come. So, the cull was effectual to him; "And he, casting away his garment, rose and came to Jesus." What does this casting away of the garment mean? Well, there he was, a poor dunghill beggar; "The Lord raised up the beggar from the dunghill" I will throw away this beggarly, old, ragged, patched-up thing, I will have no more of that now; I won't wear this any longer; I will no longer belong to the dunghill of this world; it is all a dunghill together in comparison of the throne of glory. So, he cast that away in order to be arrayed in royalty; the Lord Jesus Christ shall make all his people kings and priests to God. Then secondly, it means encumbrances. Wearing a great, long coat, you would almost think he was a Puseyite to look at him. Why, that is not coming to Christ; and whatever hinders me from coming to him, away with it; whatever would hinder me from receiving his truth, let it be thrown aside. Then it also of course will mean self-righteousness. I have wrapped myself up in this old coat, thought I was very warm in it, thought I looked pretty well in it, and did pretty well in it, and that it did pretty well altogether; but now, cast it away. So, Saul of Tarsus thought his righteousness was very good, his doings very good, wrapped up in them; but when Jesus called, all this was cast away; "he rose and came to

Jesus.” And then the Savior put a close question to him when he came. “What would you that I should do unto you?” Is it real? Is there really something to be done? Not that the Savior needed information; he knew all about it; you know my object in making these remarks. Are you a prayer saying man, thinking you have said your prayers, and there is nothing needed to be done? Is there really something the matter with you? Ah, says one, I go to church regularly; or I go to chapel regularly. You are satisfied with that, are you? Yes, my uncle died, and he said his prayers before he died. You are satisfied with that, are you? Yes, “What would you that I should *do* unto you?” not “*say* unto you,” but “*do* unto you?” The prayers of the saints of God are definite; there is an object, something to be done. And everything is included in the request, “Lord, that I might receive my sight,” It is not mere form, Lord; I have pleaded for mercy; and I know in that lower or merely natural sense nothing but mercy can reach me; how much less can anything but mercy reach me in my state as a sinner, “Lord, that I might receive my sight.” And if you just define this, you will see, Christian, you will see that everything is included in this, Lord, I want so to receive my sight as to see you have loved me, as to see you have died for me, as to see that I am in your covenant, to see that I am one of yours, that you are my God, and would be my guide even unto death. Open my eyes, Lord, that I may see this. There is something definite. Bless the Lord, if I am as dead as a post in prayer, whether in private or public, I always mean what I say, there is something to be done when I come into this pulpit to meet you in the name of the Lord. I say to the Lord in my own soul, Now, Lord, you know what a poor earthen vessel I am; therefore, don’t trust me for a moment, but give me your Spirit give me your wisdom, or else I shall make a fool of myself. Give me the spirit of power, of love, of humility, and of a sound mind, and grant that your Holy Spirit may bring such things to my remembrance that I may go on to speak in a way that not a soul that hears shall go away and say they might as well have not come. It is true this is the case sometimes, not because the minister does not pray to the contrary. Just so with you; Lord, I am going to hear your word; would you give your servant a word for me, just to revive my hope, my strength, my faith, and help me along, Lord.