

“WHAT WILT THOU THAT I SHALL DO UNTO THEE?”

A SERMON

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Preached by Mr. HAZELTON,  
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AT MOUNT ZION CHAPEL, CHADWELL STREET, CLERKENWELL,
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“ And Jesus stood, and commanded him to be brought unto him : and when he was come near, He asked him, saying, What wilt thou that I shall do unto thee ? And he said, Lord, that I may receive my sight.”— {Luke 18: 40, 41}.

Every branch of the mediatorial work of the Lord Jesus Christ is of unspeakable importance to all who are concerned therein :—to God, to angels, to all that are in heaven before the throne, and to all God's dear children now living on the earth; and since there are perhaps millions of the objects of God's love not yet in existence, the mediatorial office and work of Jesus Christ are important in relation to them. Salvation is one great whole, and God is accomplishing His merciful purposes in relation to that glorious work. The operations of Divine power are advancing, and our great God, seated on his throne, says, “ I will work, and who shall let it ?”

The sufferings of our dear Redeemer on Calvary constitute a divinely important part of our salvation; and the Saviour's intercession in heaven is an equally important branch of His work. It is a most encouraging fact that He ever liveth to make intercession for all that come unto God by Him, In the intercessory prayer of the Son of God

addressed to His Father just before He left the world, He said, "Thou hast given Him power over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as Thou hast given Him." It appears, therefore, that Jesus Christ has been communicating eternal life ever since these words were uttered, and that fact was expressed by Him. There are not many of us who fully appreciate the marvelous truth, that the stream of eternal life is perpetually flowing from the throne and heart of God. With our mortal eyes we see things that are visible, and with our mortal ears we hear the sounds that are round about us; but how seldom do we contemplate the sacred spiritual mystery referred to! Our dear Lord loves to communicate those blessings He has obtained for His people, and the right to distribute which He has acquired ! In the days of His flesh His salvation was occasionally very manifest; but now as it reaches the hearts of sinners, it is, for the most part, a blessing invisibly communicated.

When the poor man, to whom my text refers, was made experimentally the subject of faith, I do not know; it is, however, certain that he was a believer; for the Master said, "Thy faith hath saved thee;" and therefore he was a spiritually living person. He was, however, tried with poverty, and afflicted with blindness; for he was a blind beggar, sitting by the way-side, asking alms. Hearing a crowd of persons approaching, he inquired what it meant, and was told, "Jesus of Nazareth passeth by and he cried, saying, "Jesus, Thou Son of David, have mercy on me; and they which went before rebuked him," Bartimseus, as Mark tells us he was named, is not the first that has been rebuked by his fellow-men for calling upon God in prayer ; we

are prone to injure one another, and there is something very solemn in wounding the heart of an individual who has been touched and saved by grace. That friend near you may not express himself as you do, his language may be somewhat strange ; but deal kindly with him, it may be that there is a little grace in his heart; and although he is awkward in his expressions, do not cut him off, nor rebuke him because of that fact. Notwithstanding all rebuffs, the blind man cried so much the more, "Thou Son of David, have mercy on me!" Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh; and if the water is dammed up, the banks will be overflowed, and the country flooded. He cried so much the more, "Have mercy on me!" His religion was not to be quenched; his wants were not to be supplied by any other person than the Saviour; he had an experience which was at that time peculiar to himself; and he said, as it were, mine is an urgent pressing case. And Jesus heard his cry, and stood, and commanded him to be brought unto Him. He did not request His disciples to do it; neither did he invite the poor blind man to find his way to Him ; but he commanded him to be brought; and when he was come near He asked him saying, " What wilt thou that I shall do unto thee ?" and he said, " Lord, that I may receive my sight."

The words to which I would more especially draw your attention this morning are these: "What wilt thou that I shall do unto thee?" In offering a few observations upon them, let me first call your attention to the character of the Speaker. "What wilt thou that I shall do unto thee?" In the second place, let us look at the character of the person addressed, for though he was poor, and a beggar, we shall have

something to say of the excellency of his character; and thirdly, let us look at, the importance of the question put to him by the Lord.

I. In the first place, let us make a few observations on the character of the Speaker. Jesus is the Speaker, and He is represented in the context as the " Son of David," and " Jesus of Nazareth the poor man himself called Him, " Lord and therefore it will be important, and I trust somewhat profitable, for us to contemplate the character of the Speaker here. I notice in the first place that the poor man who cried to the Saviour regarded Him as the promised Messiah, as the Son of God, as He concerning whom Moses and the Prophets had written; and when the people said that "Jesus of Nazareth passeth by," he did not address Him by this title, but at once said, "Thou Son of David, have mercy on me!"

Now there is something very significant and important in the fact that Jesus was not called the Son of Abraham, Isaac, or Jacob ; He is said to be the seed of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and David ; but not in so many words the Son of Abraham; and yet He was one of his descendants. How was it that He was addressed as the Son of David? Abraham was never a ruler and a king; Jesus Christ is King, and Lord of all. I want to call attention to the fact that He who addressed the poor man on this interesting occasion, was a complex person, He was the great God-man and Mediator,—the Lord Jesus Christ,—bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh; and it may be said of the circumstances recorded in the text, "God was manifest in the flesh." Jesus appeared on that occasion as a man, "clothed with a body like our own," dressed in our human nature. He did not assume

any other nature, for no other one was interested in his doing and dying; but "He took upon Him the seed of Abraham." How, this is a great mystery, and it will remain infinitely deep to all eternity, how two dissimilar natures are united in one great and glorious person. He did not assume an angelic nature, nor another nature differing from the human; He might have created another nature for Himself, but had He done so He could not have saved human sinners, and therefore He assumed human nature; the God appeared in the man,—the perfect God appeared in the perfect man; and we have the words of a God here speaking through a man's lips. "What wilt thou that I shall do unto thee?"

Unmediated Deity, God out of Christ, can do nothing for sinners; and the sinner can have no consecutive or comforting ideas in his own mind concerning unmediated Deity. God out of Christ is indeed a consuming fire, and can never say to a guilty wretch, "What wilt thou that I shall do unto thee?" Ho, He took the nature that had sinned, and veiled His majesty and divinity behind it, and came as the great healing God of heaven and earth, and addressed Himself to that poor wretched beggar, and said, "What wilt thou that I shall do unto thee?" He did not appear to him as a legislator, or as a judge; for it is never the business of a law-giver or judge to consult the will of a criminal. What would be thought of a judge if he said to a prisoner on trial, "What wilt thou that I shall do unto thee?" It is the business of a judge to administer and enforce the law, and to consult, not the criminal's will, but the law and righteousness, and justice concerning the case. No, had Jesus appeared to him as a Law-giver, or in His

judicial character, the will and feelings of the poor man would not have been referred to; he would have been told to go his way, into utter darkness. But having assumed the nature of the man, and having resolved to save him; and having, in fact, already done so, and created spiritual life in his soul, He appeared to him in a human form, full of attractions, excellences and beauties; and checked the impetuous feelings of the suppliant's rebuke's. The blessed Jesus is human and divine; all the majesty of God is in Him, all the omnipotence of Jehovah is in the Man Christ Jesus, for He is the everlasting fullness of heaven and earth, and His divine excellencies constitute that consuming fire before which the wicked cannot stand; but all that majesty is softened and modified by His humanity, and all the glories of Deity fall in saving power and influence upon blind beggars, and lost and ruined sinners.

Now let us pass on, as time is going, and notice in the second place that the words of the Saviour implied His Divine fullness. Make known your requests; ask; open your mouth wide; ask for as much as you will; "What wilt thou that I shall do unto thee?" "It pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell and if all fullness dwells in our Lord all the fullness of nature must be there ; all the fullness of light is there else He could not have been the Light of the world, nor given sight to the sightless eyes of that poor man. All the fullness that saints require here, and all the fullness they will require hereafter dwells in that Man of sorrows, who was poor, and walked along the dusty roads of Judea, and who, sitting on a well, said to the woman, "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give

me to drink; thou wouldst have asked of Him, and He would have given thee living water." Great is the mystery of godliness; the Author of heaven sat on that well; the author of all heaven hung on that accursed tree. He it was who said to Peter, "Of whom do the kings of the earth take custom or tribute? Of their own children or of strangers? Peter saith unto Him, of strangers. Jesus saith unto him, "Then are the children free. Notwithstanding, lest we should offend them, go thou to the sea and cast an hook and take up the fish that first cometh up; and when thou hast opened his mouth thou shalt find a piece of money, that take and give unto them for Me and thee." As tribute was due, and He had not the money to pay it with, He had to work a miracle for the purpose of appearing honest in the sight of all men. That poor Person, who for our sakes became poor, contained within a poor human body all the fullness of the Godhead, all the fullness of the Christian's life, and all the fullness of heaven. I do wonder why ministers of the gospel and preachers of religion want any other theme to dwell upon, and that they should depart in preaching from the great and glorious person of our Lord. He is the wonder of heaven, the masterpiece of all the works of God. Angels can never explore the mysteries of His glory, for there is indeed everything that is unfathomably deep and indescribably excellent in the dear Son of God. He never experiences a difficulty in saving a soul. He speaks, and it is done; He commands, and it stands fast. He put on our body, and wore it at once, and will wear it for ever. He experienced no difficulty in fulfilling the law, and He experienced no difficulty when He met His heavenly Father. And when the curse was

inflicted on Him, there were no regrets on the part of Jesus Christ; He never said, The punishment is more than I can bear. Omnipotence was under that burden ; an omnipotent Saviour was underneath that withering, flaming, burning curse; an omnipotent Saviour was underneath the interests of countless millions ; and no difficulty was experienced by Him, for in Him all fullness dwells. And now He comes to sinners and saves them. To me it is most astonishing that men should misrepresent Christ in His saving work as they do in the day in which we live, saying that, He stands by the sinner and entreats him to be saved, and holds out His hands to him from hour to hour; and having sent out thousands of invitations which are not accepted, He turns away disappointed, and that because the sinner will not allow Him to save him. The Saviour spoke like a God, "What wilt thou that I shall do unto thee?" His fullness is Divine; He touches the will and the affections, and detaches them from sin and the world in a moment; He touches the immortal soul, and snatches it from the fire, and rescues it from the tyrant's hand, puts it into His precious blood, and washes it and makes it whiter than snow, saying, "Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee."

My dear brother and sister, has He healed you, and opened your eyes, and unstopped your ears? Can you grasp this idea, that your health and life are in the Lord Jesus Christ, from whom you have received your salvation, and that there is health enough in Him for you, and life, and pardon, and peace, and heaven enough in His dear person to fill your vast desires for ever and ever?

My friends, if there are ten thousand worlds in the material universe, Jesus contains more than they all contain; for He is their Creator, He made them all; and so the Saviour is greater than His salvation, as the Creator is greater than creation ; and therefore all fullness dwells in Him ; and this full Saviour, who has never out-promised Himself, and whose purposes have never proved larger than His power, took all His fullness to blind Bartimseus, and said, „What wilt thou that I should do unto thee ?” First, the Messiah, and secondly, His eternal fullness, appear in connection with His character.

Now let us notice another point, viz., His deeds, or His operations. He has only to leave the sinner where he is, He has only to leave us in our sins, under a broken law, and we shall, as sinners, sink into eternal woe. If the Saviour should say, “Let him alone,” and pass on, and do nothing, hell, and perdition and eternal darkness are absolutely certain. It is not merely His thoughts about us, and the expression of those thoughts in the glorious gospel of His grace; it is not merely what we have done for ourselves, or what others have done for or against us ; but it is, “ What wilt thou that I shall do unto thee ?” My beloved friends, if Jesus has done anything for us, we shall never forget that blessed work? It is well to forget a good deal that our fellow creatures have done for and against us. I should like to forget hundreds of things, but though my memory is treacherous to good things, yet I can remember hard words, or blows, and cruelty from my fellow man; but I cannot always, remember all that the dear Lord has done for me.

There are some points, however, that can never be forgotten by me. When I was but a youth of sixteen years of age, I was dancing in the road that leads to hell, and was making as much haste to eternal darkness as such a boy could make. I well remember a dear old saint and his wife, who lived alone in a little cottage, and who were in the habit of reading the word of God and praying every night; and night after night I went and gathered up a handful of small stones, and threw them at their window to disturb them at their devotions. But subsequently that dear aged saint of seventy-two, and that boy of sixteen years, who had persecuted him, were baptized on the same occasion, and became members of the same church. And I well remember the dear old people pouring out the feelings of their hearts when I told them that it was I who used to trouble them.

Well, I shall never forget what the Saviour has done for me; how I lifted up my hand against Him, and He would not be wroth with me; and how I smote His people, and He loved me notwithstanding all; and by and bye He put the hand of His grace on my heart, and killed my natural enmity, and made me a friend; and now I rejoice that

*“Jesus sought me when a stranger,
Wandering from the fold of God,
He, to save my soul from danger,
Interposed His precious blood.”*

There is another thing in connection with the Saviour that will

never be forgotten by us, and that was the time when He proclaimed liberty to the captives, and took the chains off our souls, and the sting of guilt out of our consciences, and quenched the fire of apprehended wrath. Truly, we have abundant cause for sweet meditation upon this blessed question put by our Lord.

Many times have I been in the pulpit, full of doubts and fears, my knees knocking together, as if I had not the slightest strength in my legs, when suddenly all my doubts and fears have been removed, and as I have proceeded, I have been set at liberty. "True religion's more than notion; something must be known and felt." When this dear Saviour comes, and does something for us in trouble, we remember it all the days of our life, for the manifold works of our dear Redeemer can never be forgotten by us.

Lastly, as to His character, it is perfection. "He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." I will say for your comfort, if the Lord will be pleased to comfort you with the observation, that if He has laid the foundation of your faith, He will finish it; "and He shall bring forth the headstone thereof with shoutings, crying, Grace, grace unto it."

If you go about the suburbs of our great cities you will see carcasses of numerous houses that have not been finished, perhaps for lack of funds ; but there are none of the Lord's people, standing and waiting for further means and further ability in the dear Redeemer. He is full enough to satisfy all on earth, and to fill all in heaven; and if, therefore, He has given you a little faith, a little love and grace, He will give you glory by and bye. A sermon is delivered

by a preacher, and he is ashamed of it, or dissatisfied with it. There is a piece of work performed by another individual; it is like him, and it is not finished, and far from excellent. But here is a beggar, only he is blind, but not spiritually so. He is poor, and asks alms from door to door; but he is a believer, a child of God, one of the Lord's precious jewels, and there is a place for him in the Mediator's crown, and Jesus will bedeck Himself with that jewel, and will wear it among the rest. A great deal must be done before He can enter into bliss, but the Saviour has pledged Himself to finish His work, and glorify that individual. "And they shall be Mine, saith the Lord of Hosts, in that day when I make up My jewels."

A few words only on the character of the person addressed. May I give you a test? There are two classes of persons in this world, and there are two classes of persons in the two worlds that are to come. There is a worse world than this, and the wicked are there; and there is a better world than this, and saints are there. There are two classes of persons here—saints and sinners. If the Lord Jesus Christ came to you with this question, "What wilt thou that I shall do unto thee what answer would you return Him? Would it be, "depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of Thy ways?" Oh, no I could not for ten thousand worlds say, Depart from me. But if you were a stranger to eternal things, a sinner dead in trespasses and sins, that is what you would be saying, and that is what you would mean ; and when anything like a Bible thought came into your mind it would disturb you, and you would crush it if you could. Nothing is so unwelcome as thought about the future to a natural man or woman ;

but if you are a living soul, such thoughts are welcome; so too is He that produces them, the Lord Jesus Christ, through the Holy Spirit. It is not, Depart from me, but,

*“Come nearer, nearer, nearer still,
I’m well when Thou art near.”*

When blind Bartimseus was brought to Jesus, how his heart thrilled with pleasure as He approached the Saviour, and when he heard those omnipotent words, “Receive thy sight,” and opened his eyes; how he leaped with joy, and with what heartiness he became a follower of his living, loving, and saving God!

I would say first, that he was a living character, because he was a believer: “Thy faith hath saved thee.” The Master knew that by the way-side, nigh unto Jericho, the poor man sat begging, and He was drawn to the spot by blind Bartimseus and his faith ; for faith attracts the Saviour, and faith and its Giver are sure to meet sooner or later. Bartimseus had not previously met Jesus; he had faith, however, in the promised Messiah, and when he heard that He was passing by, he cried, saying, “Jesus, Thou Son of David, have mercy on me.” And then we see grace and its Author meeting and embracing each other.

Secondly, he was willing to be saved, and willing to receive and experience the operations of God’s grace. I beg attention to a fact here. “What wilt thou that I shall do unto thee?” Is it not most unusual to consult the will of His creatures? No, not so unusual as you suppose, Does He consult our will? It seems so, “What wilt thou?” Well, if He consults the will of His creatures, and follows it, He first rectifies the will; for “Thy people shall be willing in the day of Thy

power." And having done this great work, He then places Himself before the needy one with, "What wilt thou that I shall do unto thee?" If you desire Him, He will receive you; for your will has been rectified by His Spirit, and your experience will be as described in the text.

*"Those feeble desires, those wishes so weak,
'Tis Jesus inspires, and bids you still seek."*

Lastly, he was a saved sinner. "Go thy way, thy faith hath made thee whole," or saved thee.

One word on the importance of the question. "What wilt thou that I shall do unto thee?" Why did the Saviour put it in this form? To discover character for the information of others, and perhaps for the further information of the poor man himself. The Lord had formed his character, and delighted to manifest the operations of His own hand. He put the question for the purpose of making it apparent what the man was in himself. And was not the question asked for the purpose of eliciting prayer? He did not put the question for His own information, He knew what the man wanted and what he was about to receive; but He will have His people, by prayer and petition, ask for the blessing. What wilt thou then, Bartimseus? "Lord, that I may receive my sight." Receive it, said the Lord; and his eyes were opened; and he glorifying God, followed his healing Saviour. Do you not in this see the authority for prayer? The Master says to you and me, "What wilt thou that I shall do unto thee?" Open thy mouth, "Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it;" do not speak as though there were any limitation. If you want things for the body, and mercies for the soul, and blessings for this life, tell me. If you want meetness and a

title for the world to come, open thy mouth wide.

*“He Himself has bid thee pray,
Therefore, will not say thee nay.
“Thou art coming to a King,
Large petitions with thee bring;
For His grace and power are such,
None can ever ask too much.”*

I do not know whether he was born blind or not; but his eyes were opened, and he saw. If he were born blind, he saw himself naturally in a new position, and viewed objects he had never seen before, and never realized in connection with their color, or form, or shape, before the opening of his eyes. It was this that gave him, for the first time communion with the world he was living in; for light and sight give us communion with the objects before us. In receiving spiritual sight, he saw sin, and the world, and its emptiness; he saw his Lord, and he saw his all in Him, and became a follower of his Benefactor and Saviour. The Lord add His blessing, for Christ's sake. Amen.