

Sermon by Philip C. Herrmann, January 20, 1974

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My burden is to speak the word of God, and your burden, your responsibility is to decide whether it is the word of God. And it will be the word of God if it's in keeping with the Scripture that is read and spoken upon. But the apostles, in the apostles' days, when things were bright, when there were conversions by the hundreds, and there was the tremendous testimony going on, the physician Luke writing his book, the book of the Acts, incorrectly stated as the Acts of the Apostles, because it was the Spirit of God working, and so it was the Acts of the Holy Spirit, working through men, through the Apostles.

Their commendation of the Bereans, in the land of Greece, was that they received the word of God, as it is, in power. And they were more noble, that's the only time I believe the word noble is used in the scriptures, but this is the sign of nobility, with the Spirit of God, that those who received the word of God, and studied it, and checked the Apostles to see whether what they were saying was true, that's nobility with the spirit of God.

Well I have three passages to read, a little bit of three different chapters, and I'd like to connect them if I may, and you are there to listen and to see whether this is truly the word of God. The first one I would like you to turn to is the ninth chapter of John. It's the chapter that tells of the conversion of a man born blind, something that I don't think we read of any other in the gospels, in the four gospels, although there may have been others that are not recorded. But at least this man thought that he was the only one, because he deliberately says that and makes a remarkable statement which you will very shortly see. It's in the 30th verse, [John 9:30] and I'll give the background of this a little later.

The man, that is this man born blind, who is now healed, who has perfect vision, said unto them, "Why here is a marvelous thing, that ye know not from whence he is," from where he is, the "he" is the Lord Jesus Christ, of course, "and yet he has opened mine eyes. Now we know that God hears not sinners." They had said previously in the chapter that this was what the Lord was, because he didn't keep the Sabbath, he didn't conform to their ideas of what the Law required. But he had previously said that he was the Sabbath. He was the one who had appointed the day of rest.

Well the man goes on to say "but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth his will," or does his will, "him he heareth." Now this is the verse that I have particularly in mind, because it is so unusual. "Since the world began," or since the ages began, "was it not heard that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind. If this man were not of God, he could do nothing." It's a remarkable statement, and this man, and as we read through the chapter, and I hope you'll read it for yourselves this afternoon perhaps, you'll find that he is progressively given sight, divine sight, spiritual insight, into not only his condition, but the condition of the men around him. He has turned from a beggar, who was sitting by the wayside, perhaps begging, when the Lord passed by, and he was now a man in full possession of his sight, something that he had never experienced before. He had lived through perhaps some 20 to 30 years, and I say this because the Pharisees had called upon his parents to verify the fact that he was born blind and that he now saw.

But he would have been closer to the truth if he had said "this man was God, or else he couldn't do anything." However, we can't put words in a man's mouth, can we. We have to take him as he is, at

what he said, and from then on the Lord finds him, and brings him into full possession of eternal life, which is more than just the blind seeing. A divine life is when men are given divine light.

Well my second passage is in the tenth chapter of the gospel of Luke. And there we read another astounding statement that is only given us in two of the gospels, and in different connections. And so I think it's possible that the Lord said this to his disciples on several occasions, because if we were to read, beginning with the first chapter of Matthew and continuing to the 21st chapter of John, the four gospels, we read them through in one sitting, it would probably take quite a number of hours. But just think that what is recorded of the Lord in these four gospels was taking place over a period of three and a half years, and the Lord as we heard this morning, previously, was a constant worker. He was constantly speaking, he was constantly doing his miracles, he was authenticating his work. He was making men see that here was someone in the world, whose words were far higher than any that had been given in the Old Testament. In times of old, God was using men who were transmitting his message, and they were saying "Thus saith the Lord" but here was a person speaking from God, and saying "I say unto you," divine words.

Well in the 10th chapter of Luke, we get the Lord saying to his disciples, after he has dismissed the 70 disciples, or the 70 speakers for him that were going out two by two, and he had given them authority to cast out demons, to restore life, to tread upon serpents and scorpions, although I believe that was just a picture of his work in defying Satan. But he says that "rejoice not in the fact that these spirits are subject to you;" or that you have been able to do these works for me, "but rejoice in this, that your names are written in heaven." That's the tremendous thing. And I would ask everyone here, are you sure, do you know, are you positive, that your name is registered in Heaven as one of the believers on the Lord Jesus Christ, the ones he came to seek and to save. Are you sure that your name is registered in Heaven, that it's in the Book of Life, because in the book of Revelation we read that "whosoever was not written, whose name was not written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire." Now I don't believe that the lake is a literal lake, but it is a picture of the unending, the eternal judgment that must come to those who deliberately have refused, have rejected the son of God, has rejected the record that God has given of his son.

How easily we take the record that is given us in the papers, and in the magazines, We take them to be true, because if they're not true, the competitors of these newspapers and magazines are going to expose it. And so they're very careful what they print, although a good many of them are just charges, or intimations, or insinuations of what may be the truth. But God has given us a perfect record of his son, of himself, and of his prophets, and those who spoke for him in the Old Testament as well as the New. And we must either reject or refuse them, and to reject the record that God has given of his son is to reject Him, is the greatest insult, the greatest indignity that you can offer Him.

Well now in this remarkable passage, which I believe he must have repeated several times, he says in the 23rd verse, "he turned to his disciples," these are the twelve, "and said privately, Blessed are the eyes which see the things that ye see: For I tell you, that many prophets and kings have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them." What a remarkable statement. This shows the importance that the Lord attached to the words he was speaking, and to the works he was doing. The works were the physical expression that he was God, the proof that he was really a divine person who had come into the world to save it from the

coming judgment, and the words that he was speaking, they were words that would give life to dead souls, to blind souls, like this blind-from-birth man.

And then a passage in the first epistle of Peter, I Peter, first chapter, There the Holy Spirit caused Peter to write something that he couldn't have understood of himself, that he couldn't possibly have known. But as he says in his second epistle in the first chapter, about the men in the Old Testament that wrote, as David, and Solomon, and Ezra, and Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, all the prophets, Moses too, first of all, that they were writing by the power of the Spirit of God. David says "The spirit of God spake by me, and his word was in my tongue." We know that the Spirit of God came upon men at times, and enabled them to speak God's message, and they were under orders, they were not allowed to use their own language, they must use God's language, "Thus saith the Lord."

Well now in the 9th verse of this first chapter of I Peter, we read that, it's too bad to have to break into the middle of the sentence, but for purposes of saving time, "Receiving the end" or purpose "of your faith, the salvation of your souls." That's what the apostle Peter was writing to Jewish Christians, those who had believed on Christ, apart from the rest of the nation, these were hereafter known as Christians.

"Of which salvation." Now here, from here on, the apostle Paul is writing under the power of the Spirit of God, for he couldn't possibly have known what is said here. "Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ who was in them did signify, when he testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow." Here he goes on further, in the twelfth verse, "to whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but to us they did minister the things, now reported to you by those that have preached the gospel to you with the Spirit of God sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into."

So we have two classes of persons in this twelfth verse that are interested in divine things. This is the prophet and kings, as the Lord said, and others, I believe perhaps persons like Job, who had a great deal of spiritual knowledge, but were not Jews, were not of the chosen family of Abraham, but they had a vision, they were interested in the things that God was revealing to them by the spirit of God, but they realized it was not just for themselves, but they were speaking, and writing, and thinking about future generations, and they were thinking and speaking of persons that were still to come, most of all the divine person, who was prophesied as coming into the world to be the chief messenger for God, his beloved son.

You remember in the eighteenth chapter of Deuteronomy that Moses is told by God that the Lord would raise up a Prophet, and it's always capitalized, that word prophet, capital P, a divine being who was to come into the world and be like Moses, be a messenger for God, but this messenger would speak the words of God, and that anyone that refused it would have to be dealt with, would suffer the consequences, because God has given men natural life, as the Apostle Paul told the Athenians, I think I spoke on that some time ago, he told them that God has given to all men life, physical life and breath, that's the thing that continues our life, we need breath every moment, and all things, and all things there I believe are things that are connected with the natural life that we live.

So we are dependent creatures. We are given a gift by God throughout the length of our life that we owe to Him, he is the giver and we are the receivers, and we ought to be very thankful every moment

that we have good health, because that depends upon him, he could take it away from us in a moment. The blood that's coursing through your veins and mine, could very readily change. The power that keeps it flowing at its tremendous speed, is dependent on Him.

Now getting back to the first passage that I read, about this strange man that was born blind, it's interesting to note the background of that. How did the Lord come to seek him out? Well, as always is the case, when a person is to be blessed, God finds a way to bless him. And here, though the mass of men had rejected the Lord, when he said "before Abraham was, I am" and there he used the sacred, the holiest name of all. The Jewish people didn't use the name of Jehovah, they spoke of him as Yahweh and thought of him as the one who was the El, the God of the universe, but when the Lord said that word "I am" the word that he had used to Moses in the desert, when Moses was looking at the burning bush, the Lord revealed himself as the I am, the one who is, and was, and ever will be, and when the Lord claimed that for himself they took up stones to stone him. There was no question about his being a sinner in their thought, they thought he was a blasphemer, though they didn't say that. But he passed by through the midst of them, he hid himself first, and then passed through the midst of them, and went his way. And in that he displayed the power of Jehovah, the I am, the one who is, and was and ever will be.

And as he passed by, as he passed through this crowd of would-be murderers, he saw this man. As he passed by, he saw this man blind from birth. And this time the disciples opened the questioning, they said "Lord, tell us was this man a sinner or did his parents commit sin, that he was born blind?" The Lord said, "neither did this man sin, nor his parents, but that the works of God should be manifest in him." It was for the glory of God that this man was born that way, and had remained for perhaps 20 to 30 years in that condition, so that the glory of God might be manifest in him.

Well, the Lord made mud of the clay, and annointed his eyes, and told him to go to the pool of Siloam and wash, and he came seeing. And a miracle was performed, like no other had been done. And this man evidently realized it, and spoke it. Well he was then confronted twice, and his parents once, about this wonderful change that had come over him. I won't go into the wonder of his seeing for the first time, colors, seeing people, seeing anything, seeing the wonders of nature. All of that we have to dismiss, but that must have been a great feature in his life that day.

But he was to pay for that; and he was confronted by the Pharisees, who were the Lord's implacable enemies. And first of all he had to tell them how it was done, and tell who it was that did it. And evidently it was done on the Sabbath day, because they immediately found fault with the Lord, found fault with the man having had this miracle performed, in that it was done on the Sabbath day, and they said "this man must be a sinner, because he doesn't keep the Sabbath day."

Well the man, after back-and-forth conversation, confrontation with them they're not satisfied and they go to the parents and ask whether he was born blind and how it is that he now sees. They give them no satisfaction, referring back to the man: "he is of age, ask him." Then they come back to this renewed man, the man born blind who sees, and ask him what he has to say, from whence this man comes that had done the healing. And all he can say is that, "Whether he be a sinner or not, I don't know, but one thing I know, whereas once I was blind, now I see." That's the beautiful condition of every one that has his sins forgiven. That is a saint that is on his way to Heaven, that's the one thing he knows.

And I don't think that that was the case with so many in the Old Testament. I believe it was true with some, for instance David. Blessed is the man whose sins are forgiven, whose sins are covered. But not many had that ability, not many had that assurance. You see the Old Testament was a partial revelation, It was not the full mind of God given. It took first the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the three and a half years of his ministry here upon earth, that told God out in full. That's what we're told in the first chapter of John, that the only begotten son, who is in the bosom of the father, he has fully told him out, he has declared him, made God fully known [John 1:18].

And so the forgiveness of sins, which is the requisite of every soul that is born again, was not fully known to them. But now, let us seek to apply the lesson of this blind man. He says, since the beginning of the world, it's not known that any one that was born blind was able to see, was cured, permanently cured. And how could he have known that? He was not perhaps, a student of history. A blind man can't read; he may be read to, but his education perhaps would be very limited. But he's speaking something that it is true, physically speaking this was true, there had been none, from the beginning of the world.

And that's typical, isn't it, of the Lord's miracles, they transcend any of those that were done In the Old Testament. The Old Testament miracles were mostly in connection with things, but when the Lord dealt with persons it was themselves that he cured. He cast out demons, he raised the dead, he made the blind man see, he gave the lame man the ability to walk straight. And how many other things that he did. There's only one, that was in connection I believe with things, and that was when he cursed the fig tree. The fig tree was the symbol of the nation of Israel and when the Lord came and found no fruit on this fig tree, and cursed it, and it withered away, it was a picture of the nation of Israel that had been given every advantage by God, but was still far from him.

And the proof of it was that they put him to the tree. When they had the opportunity and the power, when the Lord said to the assembled multitude, "this is your hour, and the power of darkness," from that moment he was subject to them, although he was God overall, blessed forever, he allowed himself to be taken and crucified, so that they might fully expose their hearts, and at the same time give God an opportunity for him to judge his son, make it possible for him righteously to forgive those who come to him in faith.

Well this blindness that the man was afflicted with from his birth, that he said there was none like it that had been made to see, was not altogether true in a spiritual sense. For the scriptures not only tell us that man is in a state of death, dead in sins and trespasses, and doesn't have a divine life that will give him the ability to stand in the presence of God forever, it does tell us that he is blind, and I'll just quote you that verse from Romans 1:21. It began very early after the flood: there were eight persons that came out of the ark into a new world, a cleansed world, to start life over again. And within perhaps a few hundred years they had gotten to the place where Romans 1:21 puts them. "When they knew God," as Noah, and his sons, and their wives knew him, must have known him, because God spoke directly to them, it says "when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, but were vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools." [Romans 1:21,22]

You see their hearts were darkened. And that's the blindness, the spiritual blindness that afflicts men, who know God, who know there is a God, but have nothing to do with him, pay no attention to

what he has said, don't come to him through the Lord Jesus Christ, the only one through whom they can come, but go on their way, and as II Corinthians 4:5 tells us, "the god of this world," that's Satan, the small g, "the god of this world," there are only two Gods, God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit, one person or three persons in one, and Satan, who was given perfection at the start, as all the angels were, when they were created, but who fell from that high place, he wanted to take over the place of God, "I will be like the most high" [Isaiah 14:14]. And he was cast down. But he has power over the world, and the Lord acknowledged this, he said the prince of this world, is judged, when the spirit of God comes. It will be shown that the prince of this world, Satan, is judged.

Well, the verse in Corinthians states "the god of this world has blinded the minds" note, it's not the eyes, but the minds, and that's a far greater, far deeper malady than blindness of the eyes. I suppose every one of us would agree that blindness, physical blindness is the most terrible handicap a person can have, to be unable to read, although some can do it through braille, but to have shut out from them the light, and the colors, and the glories of this world and the universe around them, it's a terrible handicap. But I believe that the spiritual blindness, "the god of this world has blinded the minds of those who believe not, lest the light" notice the contrast: the blindness, the darkness, and the light, "the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine to them."

And so Satan keeps men's minds occupied with things other than spiritual things, and gets them sidetracked, and has only one interest, and that is in getting them into Hell with him. Well the Christian, the Christian that is, is following the Lord, will appreciate the words of the apostle Peter in the second chapter. We quoted the part that gave us the gospel that was preached in the Old Testament but the gospel that we have believed, that is that Christ died, died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he rose again, that he is now at the right hand of God, calling on men to believe him, Peter tells us that we have been called out of darkness, into his marvelous light.

That's a tremendous transition, isn't it. Here the blind man, who was born blind, was enabled to see in a very few moments, but he went into death, like all of us will, unless the Lord comes first, but our transition from darkness to light is an eternal thing. Those who have been truly saved, those who have received divine life, the very life of God himself, for that's what God offers, will have that for eternity, while those who have refused it, rejected it, scoffed at it, made light of it, or thought that they could do it themselves, do their own saving, will endure the judgment of God forever.

Just what that judgment will be, I don't believe anyone could possibly say. Words couldn't describe it, the sorrow of it, the pain, the suffering, of those that will be in darkness for eternity, the outer darkness, the Lord called it, the "gloom of darkness forever" Jude says [Jude 1:13]. It's impossible to imagine the terribleness of it, and the one who spoke most of Hell, and most preachers evade the subject, it's too terrible, but the one who spoke of it most was the Lord himself. he is the one that speaks of Hell eleven times, and he knows perfectly well what it is, but even he could not describe it in other than general terms.

The apostle Paul also uses the expression of darkness, which is equivalent to blindness. He says "ye were sometimes once, darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord" [Ephesians 5:8]. And then this passage in the 10th of Luke that I read, where the Lord speaks of kings and prophets having desired to see the things that they saw, that the disciples saw, and to hear the things that they heard, because they were only given a partial revelation. That is the remarkable thing about the Old Testament, men were

under different conditions, at least the nation of Israel, the pattern nation, the smallest nation on the earth, and it still is one of the smallest, but that nation was chosen by God to be a mirror to mankind.

No nation would have done better than they; perhaps many would have done worse. But the record of the nation of Israel all through the Old Testament is, that, apart from exceptions, and they probably were more numerous than we think, for you remember Elijah thought that he was the only one that stood up for God, that maintained testimony for God, and God had to tell him that there were 7000 that hadn't bowed their knees to Baal.

And so it is possible that we underestimate the number of persons through the Old Testament times that were faithful to God, that were trusting in him, although they didn't know too much, they knew that that was what God called for. It was that the just, the righteous, must live by faith; they must take God at his word. But God, in those days, from the time of Moses, when Moses ascended the mount and received the law, the basis for man's conditions with God were that he obey implicitly all that God had told him. And foolishly, they said, apparently the whole nation said, "all that the Lord hath said, we will do" [Exodus 24:3]. Little knowing how their hearts, little knowing the blindness of their hearts, that they could not possibly do it, they must have his help, they must have his forgiveness, and only those who realized this and came to him for mercy, for mercy that would preserve them from what they deserved.

But when the Lord came, in time, 1900 years ago, he brought with him a new condition, a condition that is illustrated in one word, grace. "The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ" [John 1:17]. Not that there wasn't grace and truth in the Old Testament, God was dealing partly in grace too, as well as by law, but the fullness of grace, and the fullness of truth, only came to be in the time when the Lord came here upon earth. And when the Spirit of God came down after the Lord went back to Heaven, that was when the fullness of truth came about. And we have it here, within the covers of this book, within the record that God has given us, we have the completeness of his mind.

Paul was commissioned to complete the Word of God. Not that he was the last writer, but he has given us the fullness of Christianity, what we know today as the Christian walk, the Christian doctrine, the Christian faith. All of this is contained in the New Testament. Not that the Old has no value, but it was a partial revelation that God gave, preparing men for the coming of his Son, for the abrogation of the law as a condition of righteousness, for Christ is the end of the Law, for righteousness, to every one that believeth.

How fortunate we ought to be, how glad and thankful our hearts should be, that we are living in a day, that we are still living in a day, when this grace and truth are ours for the asking. That we can have it, that we can know it, and enjoy it, for this is God's gift to us. Left to ourselves, I doubt that any of should have could come to the Lord Jesus Christ, it was the Spirit of God that moved upon us, just as the Lord coming into this scene that we have been looking at, as he passes by, he sees this man blind from birth, and then begins a work in his soul, that ended with that man, that same day he was healed, given sight, he became a worshipper of God. The Lord asked him to believe on the Son of God, for all he got for his pains with the Pharisees was to be cast out of the synagogue. He wasn't persona grata with them, he was cast out. The Lord found him, as he did previously, as he passed by, and asked him the question that made him a worshipper, "dost thou believe on the Son of God." He said "Lord who is he that I might believe on him?" And the most wonderful answer: "thou has both seen him, he's the one to

whom you owe your sight, and he it is that talketh with you.”

You see there’s the work, the works of God, and the word of God, right in that one sentence, in the answer to this man, and the man bowed down and worshipped, became a believer. And so simply, each one of us, if we have not done so herefore, what a wonderful thing to know that one instance transpired between your passing out of blindness and darkness into God’s perfect light. Once we were, sometimes we were darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord. Shall we pray.

Blessed God our Father, we thank thee for the lesson of thy Word, of all the lessons that are therein. We thank thee that thou has given it to us for our eternal blessing. We thank thee that the promise to Abraham, the unconditional promise, that in his seed, the Lord Jesus Christ, all the nations, all the peoples of the world would be blessed, but only those who have turned in faith to the one who hung for them on Calvary’s cross, will enjoy this blessing. We thank thee that it is ours for the asking, but we must realize our terrible need, like this blind man. We must be given divine sight, so that we may see Christ, get to know him, and in knowing him, know thee. We ask thy blessing upon each family here, upon the children downstairs, that they may learn something more each time of the Savior who came to save them as well as us, and who loves them, in view of the wondrous statement “permit the children to come unto me, for of such is the kingdom of God” [Mark 10:14]. We thank thee that one day this blessed person who is so meek and lowly upon earth will come back in greatest grandeur in all the glory of the divine person he is, and bring blessing to the earth. We pray that none here may go out without having the assurance of their salvation, for our Lord came to seek and to save, that which was lost. In his precious name, we ask all this, Amen. The meeting is over.