

A
WORD
IN ITS
SEASON

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EYESIGHT

WHAT IS TO BE SEEN

THE CHILDREN'S FEELINGS

EYESIGHT

Luke 4: 18-21; Acts 26: 15-18; Ephesians 1: 15-18

N.S.B. I am impressed with the way that sight - eyesight - is so prominent in the Scriptures, and I wondered if it might be profitable for us to inquire together into this matter that occupies such a place in the instructions that God has given us. It is remarkable that at the very beginning, in the garden of Eden, it says of the various trees there that they were pleasant to the sight (see Gen 2: 9): it says that before it says anything about their value as food. It is interesting that that should be the order there. I had never noticed until this morning something about this passage in Luke 4: no doubt others have observed it before. We often remark that, in quoting Isaiah 61 here, the Lord omits "the day of vengeance of our God", but I was never myself aware that He adds something that is not found in Isaiah 61, and that is "to give the blind sight". We do find it in Psalm 146 which the Lord may have possibly had in mind but prominent in the Lord's ministry and His service amongst men was the giving of sight. I thought it was instructive also that that, in taking up the great servant Paul to minister, the Lord deals physically with this very matter of sight in his conversion. He blinds him first of all by the glory of what shone from heaven, and then he is helped, through the gracious service of Ananias whom the Lord sends, "that thou mightest see, and be filled with the Holy Spirit", Acts 9: 17. Paul's ministry was characterised by that. It is interesting to see, in this third of the three accounts in the Acts of his conversion, that he was sent to the "nations to open their eyes, that they may turn from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God". I wondered if the culmination of his ministry, the highest point in Ephesians, does not bear the same stamp, and if it might be for our interest and profitable inquiry that he was charged with a mission of enlightening all with the mystery. It enters into his prayers that the Father would, in relation to all the saints, enlighten us in the eyes of our hearts. I wondered if the consideration of these matters might yield something that will be for our blessing.

L.McF. It is one of the senses. It says of Isaiah: "These things said Esaias because he saw his glory", John 12: 41. Do you think that this matter of bearing testimony involves what we see?

N.S.B. I am glad you refer to that. He says "I saw the Lord ... high and lifted up", Isa 6: 1. I wondered whether the divine purpose in giving us sight is that we should behold the glory of the Lord.

Stephen went out that way; he saw "the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing at the right hand of God", (Acts 7: 56) and he bore witness to what he saw. What a witness that was! Saul of Tarsus was infuriated by that, until the Lord in grace stopped him in his tracks and then opened his eyes so that he had a sight of the Lord in heaven. That is really the purpose of our being together at any time, that is the purpose of our having sight, and may the Lord help us to see something of His glory today.

L.McF. Blindness has come in consequent on sin. It is what is moral in Luke; the Lord is seeking to liberate persons from the power of the wicked one.

N.S.B. It is interesting in Genesis that, when Satan brought in the influence to disobedience, what happened was that their eyes were opened: but I suppose we could say that, while in the loss of innocence there was the awareness of sin, moral blindness accompanied that, and the service of the Lord has been to undo the works of the devil, to bring about a condition of eyesight that involves seeing things more and more clearly. Eventually we will see things perfectly, we will see clearly face to face, but for the time being the Lord is working graciously to correct our eyesight. So what is in view, I suppose seen particularly in Paul's prayer, is that we should see things the way God sees them.

G.H. I think of a man like Job; he was sitting on a pile of ashes, and he did a lot of talking, but then at the end of the book he says: "I had heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee" (Job 42: 5) and that made all the difference.

N.S.B. That is a very fine section to refer to. How gracious of God to take up that man - he was an outstanding person, was he not? -

and to put him through all that suffering and discipline. What for? For our instruction on whom the ends of the ages are come. These things are written for that purpose, and it is in view of our arriving at the same sort of state of things where our eyesight becomes clarified. We may, like Job I suppose, have been on the Christian pathway (to bring it forward typically) for a long time and yet not really have seen things clearly yet. But he did, and the accompaniment of that was a depth of repentance that he had never before known. And following that was a range of blessing, a quality of blessing, that he had never before known - twice as much as he had before.

J.A.P. I suppose that what is in your mind is the eyes of faith. Peter says, "Whom, having not seen, ye love", 1 Pet 1: 8. That is the great test in this city and my city, whether all of us have faith to see what God is doing and not being overcome, as counting on God. We do not see Jesus now in that sense but we see by faith. Maybe you had that in mind.

N.S.B. I am glad you refer to that because Moses was like that too; "he persevered, as seeing him who is invisible", Heb 11: 27. That is a kind of a conundrum but it requires faith, does it not? Do you think that that enters into the Lord opening our eyes? It is when He gives us faith to see things that we have never seen before. And that is required today, a continual process with us, beginning initially in our conversion, in which we begin to see God and we begin to see Jesus and we begin to see ourselves in a way that we have never seen before. We say that in our ordinary everyday language: I never saw that before. Well the Lord intends us to get a sight of things. But that requires faith, to see things that are otherwise invisible, to see God. But you had something in your own mind to add I am sure.

J.A.P. To anticipate your thought a little, we see Jesus first, but in Acts 26 (perhaps you had that in mind) "what I shall appear to thee in" - that refers to the assembly. Do I have faith to see that in a broken day?

N.S.B. Well, we are surrounded by darkness of a character that, because of the day in which we live, is a very thick and deepening darkness. The Lord said, "If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great the darkness!", Matt 6: 23. I think that refers to an apostate condition of things. Now those are the conditions in which we live. Apostasy is rapidly growing, the darkness is deepening all the time and it requires faith and the Spirit on our part to get a right perspective on all that and to view it as the Lord views it.

G.D.P. Of the two on the way to Emmaus it says: "their eyes were holden so as not to know him" (Luke 24: 26), but later on, when He was at the table with them, their eyes were opened. Is that not the way it works with us sometimes?

N.S.B. I am quite sure that you and many others, perhaps all of us, have known something of that experience. What a thing it is! I have been thinking about that section a lot recently; it says, "having begun from Moses and from all the prophets" - all of them - "he interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself", Luke 24: 27. Then He used that in His ministry to open their eyes. He really did at the end of that gospel what He delineates in this passage in chapter 4 at the beginning. He opened their eyes, did He not? Well now, every occasion should have something of that character in it if the Spirit is free. Would you go with that?

G.D.P. I certainly would because in Mark's gospel the man sees men, as trees, walking (see chap 8: 24). He gets a second touch and that is what we need sometimes, do we not, to see things rightly?

N.S.B. Yes, and a third and a fourth maybe; we continually need adjustment. Even physically there is a considerable percentage of us here whose eyesight needs some assistance and thank God for His mercy that there are opticians and optometrists and so forth to help us. We would be greatly disadvantaged were it not for those physical assistances. That points to how the Lord uses the service of the ministry. What unfolding of the truth there has been by way of

opening up to our eyes and adjustment to our eyes. The Lord is very gracious; He continues this service of giving to the blind sight and opening our eyes.

L.McF. Mr Darby often referred to the unseen world. That is a reality to faith do you think?

N.S.B. That is exactly right; it requires faith and yet that unseen world is very real. God is able to make that so. Paul refers to that in Corinthians: "while we look not at the things that are seen, but at the things that are not seen; for the things that are seen are for a time, but those that are not seen eternal" 2 Cor 4: 18. Mr Darby and many another sovereignly received insight into that eternal world of things, and the Son of God is continually seeking to attract our attention to the existence of that world and to open our eyes to see the things that belong to it. If we get a sight of that we will be held here in a way that will bring us through, particularly against the background of the last times, the difficult days, in which we are.

L.McF. There would be stability.

A.S.H. The man in John 9 certainly appreciated the Lord's service.

N.S.B. Yes; and the whole process did not happen in one stroke, did it? It involved a very considerable process and he obviously received further light as he went along, great light in his soul, not only in his eyes. He is able to say to those blind leaders of the blind in the synagogue; "Since time was, it has not been heard that any one opened the eyes of one born blind", John 9: 32. That was light in his soul; and as he received that light and was affected by it then he received some more, and eventually he arrives at the Son of God.

L.D.P. Does what we see in Exodus fit in with what you are setting out for us? Moses' sister stood afar off to see what was going to happen; also Pharaoh's daughter saw the ark (see chap 2: 4,5). Then in chapter 3 we read of Moses turning aside and seeing this great sight and Jehovah saw that he turned aside. We know what followed. Would that fit in?

N.S.B. Very much so. I am glad you brought those points forward because it serves to amplify again how prominent this subject is with God. It is instructive to us to take account of it; that was really the beginning of Moses' history, he turned aside to see the great sight.

Do you think it would be fair to say that at that point he saw Him who is invisible? That is what put that foundation into Moses' soul, that held him, that caused him to refuse all the honours of Pharaoh's household and to choose to suffer affliction with the people of God, and it laid the basis for his perseverance. That is particularly something that we require in our day, perseverance and endurance.

Moses never lost sight of that, he persevered as seeing Him who is invisible; that sight just fastened his soul and held him in the pathway of God's will for those many subsequent years.

A.R.S. There was a man who was blind and received sight. The crowd said, "Jesus the Nazaraean was passing by", but he said, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me", Luke 18: 37,38. Then he received his sight and followed Jesus in the way.

N.S.B. That is very fine to refer to. Tell us more about your impression of that, why he would have said "Son of David".

A.R.S. The impression I have is that there was a work of God there which caused him to realise that He was not only the Nazaraean but He was the Son of David.

N.S.B. Yes, He was the One that according to God's promise would sit on the throne: "There shall not fail thee a man ... to sit on the throne", 1 Kings 8: 25. He was coming on that line of promise and He is soon going to bring everything finally in relation to God's thoughts for Israel. As you say, some light broke into that man's soul and the choice thing about him is that he seized the opportunity. Am I remembering correctly that he would not keep quiet? They tried to stop him but there was no stopping him because in character he was just like Moses, he persevered as seeing Him who is invisible. He was beginning to get some light in his soul and nothing would stop him until he obtained the blessing. Would it not be a wonderful thing if that character of things was found more with every one of us, if the

light was answered to? Mr Raven taught that what is light to us becomes law to us, that is, that divine light rightly recognised is to govern the soul.

K.N.P. Although Israel's eyes were dim physically do you think that he saw something in Ephraim that Joseph did not see at that point in time? He was able to guide his hands intelligently (see Gen 48: 14). Do you think it is God's mind coming through?

N.S.B. Yes: it shows that we always are in need of adjustment as long as we are here. I remember coming across a statement when I was in my teens that was made by the wellknown servant that the Lord had in this city; he said that even the most spiritual requires adjustment. Interesting, is it not? That is like it is when you go to get your eyes checked; you need a little adjustment and the prescription gets changed a little. Well, the Lord is continually working in that direction initially to open our eyes and then to adjust us. That would really run on to Paul's thoughts in relation to the Ephesians (not to go ahead at the moment but just to touch on it), to be enlightened in the eyes of our heart; that is a continual matter and involves the affections.

S.E.H. At the beginning of John's gospel there is a footnote as to 'lightens' as compared with 'enlightens'. It says in chapter 1 verse 9: "The true light was that which, coming into the world, lightens every man", and the note says, or 'is light to every man'; not 'enlightens' but 'sheds its light upon'. Do you think that the Lord Jesus as coming into the world brings about a certain responsibility with men, but then there is the side of enlightening which you are speaking of which involves opening the eyes of our hearts?

N.S.B. Yes. In verse 5 of that chapter he says "And the light appears in darkness, and the darkness apprehended it not". The light of Christ has been shining ever since He was here, particularly since Pentecost the light of Christ and the assembly has been shining. Not all have responded to that light but from God's side the light is there, it is continually shining. That is a matter of God's grace and His long-suffering. The gospel is still going out - how much

longer we do not know - but the light is continually shining and God is making it available. But then as you rightly draw attention to, from our side it is a question whether I am going to let that light break in.

That particularly would be in our hearts now as to what was brought up earlier, the light as to Christ and the assembly. Is it still shining or has the light been snuffed out? I do not think it has.

G.H. Would the eyes of our heart suggest what might be called the moral side? The heart is affected.

N.S.B. Yes. The moral side brings up the question of the conditions. In the days of Eli he was not seeing well and the light was about to go out (see 1 Sam 3: 2,3). That is very much like the conditions publicly in the church at the present time. Do we want to be like that or are we finding in our souls in some way that heavenly light is making all things bright. The Spirit is still here, the same Spirit that came at Pentecost, the same Spirit in whose presence we trust we now consciously are, and it is the same heavenly light that is shining. There is no diminution from the divine side whatsoever; we want to see to it that there is no diminution from our side.

H.J.G. Would it touch us to think of the way the Lord looks at persons who see things? I am thinking of what he said to the disciples: "Blessed are the eyes which see the things that ye see", Luke 10: 23.

N.S.B. I am glad you brought that forward because it shows the appreciation in the divine mind and heart of any feature of response on our side. When there is the least response from our side how delightful that is to heaven! So the feature of overcoming entering into the brethren gathering in days like this, in occasions like this, is delightful to heaven. I think we can say, without any presumption, that the Lord appreciates it when we are seeking to inquire of Him in His temple. Did not David say something about that? "One thing have I asked of Jehovah ... to behold the beauty of Jehovah, and to inquire of him in his temple", Ps 27: 4. I think we prove, notwithstanding the public conditions and the weakness and

breakdown and numerical reduction, that the Lord loves to give light and to answer the inquiry of His people.

T.E.D. While sight is your subject, can you say why the Lord refers to hearing as well? "To-day this scripture is fulfilled in your ears". Is there a link between the eyes and the ears, those two senses?

N.S.B. I think there must be. The hearing is of course very important too. Hearing is more important in a way - or takes priority rather - over speaking, does it not? James says, "Let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak", chap 1: 19. So those matters are very, very important. But I never noticed before the numerous references to sight.

T.E.D. Hearing is emphasised in all three sections relating his conversion, as if we need to be attentive to the Lord's voice. The man in John 9 was obedient to the word and then vision came. I was wondering if that would shed any light on it.

N.S.B. Yes I think it does. Faith, for instance, comes by report (see Rom 10: 17): we have to hear things first of all. Again the psalmist would confirm what you are saying: "The entrance of thy words giveth light", Ps 119: 130. The two are connected there.

Ques. What would you say about Revelation 4: 1? "After these things I saw, and behold, a door opened in heaven, and the first voice which I heard as of a trumpet speaking with me, saying, Come up here, and I will shew thee the things which must take place after these things". Would that relate to what you are saying?

N.S.B. Yes, I think it does. I suppose if we went through all the scriptures we would find that every person that God has taken up has had his eyes opened to behold something. Reference was made earlier to Moses, and to Miriam, and to Isaiah and to many others, and John is another, he had his eyes opened. He was given a special view of things. That is a burden at the present time, that the Lord would give us, including our young boys and girls, not excluding our older brethren too, a vision and a perspective on things that would keep us understanding and keep us bright as well. Paul had his whole perspective changed; so did John - he received a

new revelation, an opening up of things that he had never seen before. The Lord has unfolded much to us but I think He would give us a fresh touch in our sight.

A.G.S. I was thinking also of the Samaritan woman; she conversed with the Lord, in fact the Lord conversed with her, but she valued the Lord and saw that He was a Man, as she said later, "Come, see a man who told me all things I had ever done", John 4: 29. She immediately valued Him as the result of the conversation He had with her; she learned quickly, did she not?

N.S.B. Very; and what a changed perspective she had! Her eyes were opened in a most marvellous way in that conversation - the Lord's questions to her and His responses to her remarks: "Go, call thy husband", and the like. What a wonderful way He took! In John 9 the Lord made mud of the spittle and anointed the man's eyes.

But the Lord, I think we could say, opened that woman's eyes with questions. She saw something she had never seen before and it revolutionised her whole life and then she bore witness in a powerful way so that even the men of the city saw something and they said, It is not only because of what you say; we can see this for ourselves and we know that this is indeed the Saviour of the world.

L.McF. So in regard of Paul's commission it says "to whom I send thee, to open their eyes, that they may turn from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God that they may receive remission of sins and inheritance among them that are sanctified by faith in me". Would you say that was unique to Paul?

N.S.B. It seems to me it characterised his ministry in a most remarkable way. The Lord's ministry was primarily to Israel; of course it had its bearing on all men, but then the apostle Paul was taken up to bring enlightenment to the nations. The gospel of course was to the Jew first and also to the Greek, but Paul's ministry in particular had in mind the nations. In fact when he is recounting the same thing in chapter 22 it is when he bears witness to that that they refused to hear him any more: "to the nations afar off" (v 21); then they were mad at him. He is saying it again here: "taking thee out

from among the people, and the nations, to whom I send thee, to open their eyes". What was involved in that were the great operations of God in regard to the assembly; no longer limited to Israel, God was thinking about His assembly. I thought that that would be involved in what Paul says here in that he clearly defines what was to characterise his ministry, and the amazing way that the Lord used when He shone the light on him from heaven on the Damascus road. The effect of that was that he was literally blind and he had to have the service of the brethren to open his eyes; but in those times with the Lord what was happening was that in his soul everything was being opened up to him, the light of Christ and the assembly. I thought we would link that up with Ephesians. He says, "To me, less than the least of all saints, has this grace been given, to announce among the nations the glad tidings of the unsearchable riches of the Christ, and to enlighten all with the knowledge of what is the administration of the mystery hidden throughout the ages in God", chap 3: 8,9. So the assembly was clearly in view and the gospel involving the glory of the blessed God.

J.A.P. For our present help, what you have referred to as to how Paul himself received sight would bear reading. In his second account he says, "I could not see, through the glory of that light, being led by the hand of those who were with me, I came to Damascus. And a certain Ananias, a pious man according to the law, said to me, Brother Saul, receive thy sight", Acts 22: 11-13.

Does that not show that the brethren may have to serve us? There are those who are discouraged by the smallness of things and persons like Ananias are needed to get this matter of sight by faith in the brethren.

N.S.B. I think that is very good because there were the two things.

First of all "Who art thou, Lord? ... I am Jesus whom thou persecutest". That gave the light into the soul of Saul of Tarsus that the body of Christ was here. But then do you think what you are referring to reinforced it by personal experience, that it was through the brethren, a brother particularly, Ananias, that he was served and able to get his sight. The Lord could quite easily have opened his

eyes without that intermediary service but He chose to use Ananias who was helped by the Lord to overcome his fear and he says to him; "Saul, brother, the Lord has sent me". So he immediately had a touch as to the value of the brethren. I think what you say is very important because (let us be honest) who is there of us who has not found great discouragement in viewing the present circumstances of the testimony? What is the answer to that? The answer to that is to get our perspective changed, and, as you say, the brethren can help us to see things in a different light. There are those whom the Lord provides, brothers and sisters near to us, in all our settings wherever' we are, who have a view of things that has changed their lives and is causing them to persevere because they see Him who is invisible.

S.E.H. In the second account the Lord says "it shall be told thee of all things which it is appointed thee to do"; and then Ananias goes and speaks to him: "for thou shalt be a witness for him to all men of what thou hast seen and heard", Acts 22: 10,15. In the third account it is the Lord directly who speaks to him of all these things. So in a sense what Ananias says to him is viewed by Paul as the Lord speaking to him directly in his third account. What do you say about that?

N.S.B. Do you think that that fits in with the whole pattern of the Lord's dealings with him? The Lord uses persons but we would attribute it to Himself as the source, would we not? In fact it is interesting that in Ephesians Paul takes it right up to the Father. It is not quite so much the Lord (of course the Lord is involved, the Spirit is involved) but he traces it to the Father, the source of all things. He says the Father of glory would give you these things, "the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, would give you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the full knowledge of him, being enlightened in the eyes of your heart". The Father is really the source of all, is He not?

G.D.P. You made reference earlier to the invisible world. Is it not right that Mr Darby took issue with those who said there is the invisible church? There is something tangible, is there not? It has already been mentioned that so many are staying home saying there

is no collective expression of the assembly at the present time. But as you just mentioned, we are encouraged to meet together and find there is something even though it is in days of weakness.

N.S.B. Certainly so. "We all, looking on the glory of the Lord" (2 Cor 3: 18): how would you experience that if you stayed at home?

G.D.P. You could not experience it by staying home.

N.S.B. Now that is not in any way to diminish what the Lord can give us individually, and perhaps it may be that a great deal of the difficulties that have arisen in the testimony and the extent of the enemy's gains has been due to weakness on the individual side in being in the presence of the Lord. We need that strengthened a great deal. But do you think that the more we enter into the presence of the Lord privately the more it will cause us to wish to be with the brethren. Would you go with that?

G.D.P. That is very well put. We need the individual exercises and contemplation of the Lord and our own communion, and then that, as you have said, leads us on to enjoy it with others.

N.S.B. When we are together, particularly at the Supper and the service of God, but also extending into every occasion of gathering, if the Spirit is rightly recognised there is an unfolding of things and a shining of things that is beyond all that can be experienced individually.

C.S.E. I was just thinking that we would get some help in our prayers in regard to the young that the Lord might open the eyes of their hearts that they might see His great and glorious things. At the present time the reduction in numbers might be a discouragement to them but do you think we would seek help to pray constantly that their eyes might be opened that they might see the glory of what the Lord is doing and what there is in the local assembly?

N.S.B. Yes. How fine that is! You remember that Elisha prayed and there was a young man with him; all he saw was what was visible.

Elisha asked God to show him what was invisible, to open the eyes of the young man; and God did open his eyes and he saw the divine

resources that were really controlling the whole situation (see 2 Kings 6: 17). I think what you say is right, though I am sure you would also agree that while the young ones would be specially on our hearts, there are many older ones for whom we would earnestly desire the same. I was thinking about someone who reached this past few days a very advanced age, ninety years of age, who has been on the Christian pathway probably seven decades and still is having difficulty seeing. To remain unenlightened is a very tragic thing, is it not? I am talking about a believer, one who belongs to the Lord and has a link with the Lord but has difficulty seeing, reaching that advanced age and yet still needing a great deal of eye-opening. Generally we find that young ones have acute senses but maybe persons such as Eli are more of a concern than the Samuels. What do you say about that?

C.S.E. In a sense there is more hope for the young; there is time. The Lord Himself would come in in time and change their view. He has done that with most of us over a period of time. When some are old I guess it is harder, persons' views are more fixed. But then the Lord can work, maybe just a glimmer in an elderly age, but still the Lord can work and we can count upon Him to come in, do you think?

N.S.B. Yes. The Lord can do anything and we want to have faith about that too. What we learn from Paul in this letter to the Ephesians is love to all the saints without qualification of age, of gender, of nationality or anything else - love to all the saints. Do you think that that is expressive of seeing things from the divine viewpoint? But I must say I do share your exercise about our younger brethren. Thank God for the Josiahs, thank God for the Samuels of Scripture and others like them; thank God for the Simeons too. There was an old man and he says, "mine eyes have seen thy salvation", Luke 2: 30. That is the way we would like to finish our days, is it not?

C.S.E. Anna too.

N.S.B. Yes, indeed.

C.S.E. It is remarkable, two elderly persons in Jerusalem at the time. Anna was so concerned for what was coming in, and in all the difficulties she faced in her life she was just, as it were, helping those who were in Jerusalem awaiting the consolation of Israel. The elderly saints have been an encouragement and a help to those of us who are younger; we just pray that the Lord will strengthen them further to continue to be an encouragement to us.

N.S.B. I go with that fully.

G.H. In John's gospel much is made about seeing; chapter 9 brings out about a man getting his sight. We have been taught that John brings before us the moral side.

N.S.B. Yes. Does it not require continual selfjudgment? Mr Darby in hymn No.51 refers to clouds dimming our sight and yet when they are passed the brightness is still there. The enemy is continually seeking to becloud the issue. I was noticing about Balaam, the meaning of his name evidently is a confuser. How much we have known of that! The enemy will never cease trying to confuse the issue, to becloud things in our sight The Spirit would continually work to dispel the clouds and to let the brightness shine so that we see things in the glory of the heavenly light.

T.E.D. He was the man of opened eye, was he not?

N.S.B. I was pondering that. What do you think about it?

T.E.D. I only thought of it as you were speaking, that in spite of that confusing line of things which the enemy would bring in, if God is allowed His way, he will speak what is right. Even in our anxious thoughts within us, as the psalmist says (see Ps 91: 19), we need to have enlightenment from God, do we not?

N.S.B. There are two things, at least, about Balaam that we learn; one is that God is in control and His thoughts about His people are going to be expressed no matter what; the other is that it is possible to have great light and not to be inwardly in accord with it. That is a very sobering and challenging thing. I think it bears some relation to the exercises that we have been through, and of course of the whole

church all along, the possibility of having light and not being governed by it inwardly.

T.E.D. The appeal to Laodicea is, Buy of Me eye-salve that thou mayest see (see Rev 3: 18). We get help in our souls only as we come to the Lord, do we not?

N.S.B. How gracious of the Lord to bring that in. He says to Laodicea, "I rebuke and discipline as many as I love", and then He is saying that the eye-salve is available. Think of that, not only is the light available but the corrective remedy for any sight problem the Lord has to hand and is ready to dispense. He says, Buy of Me eye-salve. The Lord is prepared not only to stand at the door and knock to gain entrance but He has the prescription available.

C.G. "The eyes of Jehovah run to and fro through the whole earth, to shew himself strong in the behalf of those whose heart is perfect toward him", 2 Chron 16: 9. What would you say about His eyes running to and fro through the whole earth?

N.S.B. That is very fine. The writer to the Hebrews tells us that there is nothing hid from the eyes of Him with whom we have to do (see chap 4: 13). When Balaam was proceeding God saw everything; He even sent His angel. Even the animal that he was riding on saw things that Balaam did not see. There is nothing hid from the eyes of Him with whom we have to do. But he goes on to say "Wherefore let us ... serve God acceptably with reverence and fear", Heb 12: 28. How appropriate those elements are! Do you think that touches on the moral state already referred to? We are to serve God with reverence and fear, that is in self-judgment, and the deeper that is the more clearly we will see.

G.H. It says about God that He formed the eye and He planted the ear (see Ps 94: 9). Would there be a moral side to that?

N.S.B. The eye is an exceedingly complex organ. Well, God formed that. As Mr Taylor said once, God in the creation has furnished Himself with a language by which He can address us. That is a very instructive statement bearing on what you say. God is very gracious, He takes up terms of reference that are intelligible to His creatures.

So we think of things physically and then relate them to moral and spiritual realities and they become meaningful.

H.J.G. Does discipline help us in our vision? Everyone has discipline. Look around on the brethren and you can almost name what the discipline of each is; and the young people have it, their limitations are discipline. If God's intent is to bring us through to better vision, it says there that the ones that are exercised by it get the benefit (see Heb 12: 11). I wonder if that links with what you have suggested in Ephesians; we all have some discipline, some more than others, but what is coming out of it? Is our eyesight getting better and do we have the exercises to see what the Lord has in mind? It is near the end of the church's time here and - do we see what is happening, do we have a concern to know what is happening and to know what the Lord has in mind?

N.S.B. I think that is very helpful to bring forward because the objective, the end in view in the discipline, is the partaking of His holiness. Isaiah "saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up", chap 6: 1. "Holy, holy, holy is Jehovah of hosts", (v 3). That involves our seeing things in a different light: the holiness of God, His brightness and His glory and how that is to affect His people who are to be in nearness to Him, be His dwelling place, be a witness for Him, and so on. It produces an appreciation of the Father's loving ways with us because the tendency (and we are all the same) is that we either get crushed and become defeatists in our spirit or rebellious, one or the other. So the writer in Hebrews 12 says, Do not do either of those things; just go through it with God because the Father of spirits is the source of this discipline and it is beneficial, it is educational. It may be corrective, but corrective in the eyesight sense. I mean you and I go to the optometrist not because our eyes are doing bad things; it is just that they need adjustment, there is a deficiency there that can be overcome. Chastening in Hebrews 12 is largely, I understand, of that character; not so much like 1 Corinthians where it is a remedy in relation to very negative things; it is the necessary educational process that the Father's love has designed for us in view of a most beneficial result. As you say, if we

bow to that and seek to see it from God's viewpoint He will bring us to that.

J.A.P. The idea of 'looking' is in that passage in Hebrews 12: "looking stedfastly on Jesus the leader and completer of faith" (v 2).

Mr Darby's note to that is very interesting: 'looking away from other things and fixing the eye exclusively on one'.

N.S.B. I received that thought from Mr Raven, that discipline is to help us in our eyesight. It is the looking steadfastly on Jesus, that eyesight aspect, that the Father's discipline is related to helping us keep our attention focused. I do not know how you find it, but I find that my attention-span is like a little child's; it is very, very limited.

We get distracted all the time but the discipline is to help our attention-span, help our focus to be looking more and more steadfastly on Jesus and then to be preserved through that.

T.E.D. I have been thinking throughout the meeting of our brother in this city whose eyesight has been impaired. In visiting him a few weeks ago we were impressed with the joy resulting from the acceptance of discipline. I think your final scripture, "enlightened in the eyes of your heart", is something we would have great desire to understand and appreciate more.

N.S.B. The Father of glory will give us that as we are exercised, He will enlarge us. It is not just the intelligence. I thought that was really the answer to what came out in Balaam; it is "enlightened in the eyes of your heart"; the affections must be involved in that.

G.H. You say that the end of discipline is to result in our partaking of His holiness. What is involved in that?

N.S.B. The impression I have about it is that God is holy and He says to His people, "ye shall therefore be holy, for I am holy", Lev 11: 45. Now that involves our arriving at things inwardly by way of repentance, by way of self-judgment, by way of apprehension of the nature of God and that we are to be like that. So John says, "And every one that has this hope in him purifies himself, even as he is pure", 1 John 3: 3.

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Key to initials

(All local unless otherwise stated)

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WHAT IS TO BE SEEN

N.S.Brien

Exodus 3: 1-6; Isaiah 6: 1-7; Acts 7: 54-60

We have been engaged, beloved brethren, with the matter of our sight, involving the faculty of sight. One would desire with the Lord's help to have something to say as we proceed, in regard of what is seen, as depicted in these three passages. One feels greatly tested about this because of the character of what is set before us here. It seems to be quite clear from what is set before us in Scripture that God would have every one of us to have a view of Himself, something that is distinctive to each one of us as to His own nature and Person. We read that God dwells "in unapproachable light; whom no man has seen, nor is able to see" (1 Tim, 6: 16), God in the greatness of His own Person being utterly beyond anything that human eye could behold. But He has in wonderful love and grace chosen to come within our range, and He has done that in this marvellous way in the Person of Jesus. It says of Him that He subsisted in the form of God (see Phil 2: 6). Think of the light of that coming into the apostle's soul, that he was able to write to the Philippians like that He subsisted in the form of God. That passage continues: "did not esteem it an object of rapine to be on an equality with God; but emptied himself, taking a bondman's form, taking his place in the likeness of men". We might, beloved brethren, just ponder that, let our souls be engaged with it, that the blessed God Himself chose to come within our range and to come in such a way as that, that He took a bondman's form.

Well, Moses was taken up to be a bondman, a servant, a great apostle, and it was necessary for him to have this experience of the presence of God. I wonder whether each one of us can identify something like this in our own souls, identify something of coming into contact with God Himself in the Person of Jesus. We spoke in the reading about those who wanted to meet Jesus, who wanted a blessing and were not content until they obtained it. What a

wonderful picture for us of the accessibility of our God! He made Himself available. We read that "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and today, and to the ages to come", Heb 13: 8. He has not changed, He is the same Person always. Moses had this marvellous impression that engaged his attention, he was turned aside by it, it occupied his interest. Is it not so, beloved, that God is looking for that kind of interest on our part today? We spoke about the light coming into the world enlightening every man and shining and continuing to shine. How it has shone, beloved! How John loved to write about what he had witnessed! He said we have been eye-witnesses of these things. John was a witness. Are you a witness? Am I a witness? What have you seen and what have I seen that we could give evidence about? That is what a witness does, gives evidence. Thank God for those who give evidence in their lives that they have had a transaction with God, that results in persons becoming like God. "God is light", we read (1 John 1: 5), and we are to be light bearers, we are to be lights ourselves. I was struck with that when coming in last night on the plane, looking down, this vast city enveloped in darkness and here and there a light shining in between darkness, our inability to discern what existed there, but light shining here and there. That is just like the saints; God looks down on the city of New York and all these places where we live, and what does He see amidst the morass of darkness that there is? He sees light shining; the apostle says, "among whom ye appear as lights in the world", Phil 2: 15. We used to sing a hymn about that, did we not? 'Jesus bids us shine ... Like a little candle burning in the night'. What a wonderful thing it is to shine for Jesus! Do you shine like that? Do I shine like that? "Let your light thus shine before men", Jesus said, "so that they may see your upright works, and glorify your Father who is in the heavens", Matt 5: 16. As having to do with God we can become luminaries, His own nature of light becoming effective in us, the darkness having been dispelled. John speaks about that; he says, "The true light was that which, coming into the world lightens every man" (John 1: 9), and he speak about the darkness: "the darkness is passing and the true light already shines", 1 John 2: 8. Oh, beloved brethren, let it shine more brightly!

Can we not in simplicity encourage one another to let our light shine more brightly? "The path of the righteous", the writer says, "is as the shining light" - it is like that - "going on and brightening until the day be fully come", Prov 4: 18. Our brother was speaking to us this morning about those who get discouraged and disconsolate about things, and we can all identify with that, beloved brethren, but can we not also identify the remedy? Jesus said "I am the light of the world; he that follows me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life", John 8: 12. How blessed that is! How simple that is! Whether we are nine or whether we are ninety, it makes no difference; there is that simple, beautiful, clear statement: "I am the light of the world; he that follows me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life". But is it not so beloved that as the darkness deepens, so the light that we have has opportunity to shine the more brightly? There is not much question about the deepening darkness, the moral darkness that is in the world, the thickness of it, penetrating. Think of a city like this, the things that go on in it, the darkness that has enveloped the minds of men, the wisdom of man working in these great metropolitan places that there are. Paul says that the wisdom of this world led men to crucify the Lord of glory (see 1 Cor 2: 8). So God is looking at the hearts of men. How God is searching about constantly, on the lookout we might say - like the Spirit of God hovering over the face of the waters - to see whether there is a spark of interest in you and me in relation to this great matter of God coming in in the Person of Jesus. How blessed it is. How rewarding it is. The writer of the Hebrews can speak about that: "he that draws near to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them who seek him out", chap 11: 6. How rewarding it is to seek out the knowledge of God.

So Moses is struck with this amazing experience. He said, "Let me now turn aside and see this great sight". Do you not think God would engage your attention, beloved brother and sister, and mine, with this great sight, the contemplation of the coming into manhood of Jesus, the Person of God Himself coming down. How Satan has sought continually to confuse the issue and to becloud as to who

Jesus is, that in Himself He is nothing less than God at any time, yet here in perfect manhood in flesh and blood, exactly like you and me except sin apart. What consideration on the part of our God to come within our range in this way. What a wonderful glory it is, the glory of the incarnation, the mystery of piety. Paul speaks about that, does he not? "The mystery of piety is great. God has been manifested in flesh", 1 Tim 3: 16. It may well engage our interest and cause us to turn aside. We get so used to things, we might as well admit it to one another in honesty. Many of us have been brought up in these things from children; thank God for His mercy in the blessing of being brought up in the environment where holy things were the subject of conversation. But then has it engaged my interest? Has it caught my attention yet? Has it caught yours? Have we turned aside yet to see this great sight? God has the most marvellous things to set before us. You young ones, and older ones too, do you know that the apostle says - and he is referring to one of the Old Testament writers (Isa 64: 4) - "Things which eye has not seen, and ear not heard, and which have not come into man's heart, which God has prepared for them that love him", 1 Cor 2: 9? It is not for everybody but for those who love God. What a thing it is to be numbered among those who love God. What a precious privilege that is, to be numbered among those who love God. He has prepared things for you and me, prepared things for us to see and things for us to hear. How closely those two are allied, as our brother was saying. God has prepared things for those who love Him. Moses became a great lover of God, in such wise that he came to know how God loved His people. I think that is a wonderful thing, that as saints get to know God He unfolds to us what He feels about His people. So Moses, as we were thinking earlier, is able to say, "Yea, he loveth the peoples", Deut 33: 3. It is wonderful to think about how God feels about His people, how He feels about men, how He feels about Israel and how He feels about the saints of the assembly. Would it not be wonderful, beloved, as a result of our being together today, if our interest in these things was a little stimulated, so that we sought to draw near to God and to inquire of Him.

I would like to refer to that passage, "One thing have I asked of Jehovah, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of Jehovah all the days of my life, to behold the beauty" of Jehovah, and to inquire of him in his temple", Ps 27: 4. Magnificent, is it not? The psalmist says that: what is to stop you and me from showing those feelings? Would not the Spirit produce that in every one of us in concentrating our desires? Moses' interest was sparked in this.

He said, "Let me now turn aside", and he found that it was no ordinary matter and that the holiness of God was involved. How Satan has sought to bring the Lord Jesus Christ in the essence of His Being down to the level of ordinary men! You cannot do that.

God says, "loose thy sandals from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground". It befits us, beloved brethren, to maintain the constant awareness of that as we enter into the presence of God privately, and more so as we come together. What sorrows we would have been preserved from had the holiness of the presence of God been constantly maintained with us. It says, "Be careful in his presence", Exod 23: 21.

Now to refer to Isaiah. It is interesting that these episodes come at the beginning of the history of service of these men, of Moses the great leader, the great apostle, and here is Isaiah, the great evangelist. I think it was referred to in the reading, that Isaiah spoke of Him because he saw His glory. It says that in John's gospel: "These things said Esaias because he saw his glory and spoke of him", chap 12: 41. Isaiah received this impression of the glory of the Lord. He did not have exactly the same impression as Moses; Moses saw God coming down, Isaiah saw the Lord high and lifted up; but in both instances the holiness of God was stamped upon their impression. So he says, "I saw the Lord ... high and lifted up". There are these seraphim here: what wonderful beings they are, relating to the nature of God in His holiness! Isaiah immediately feels his own state. Is that not just like what the Lord does with us? It is just like what He did with that woman in the fourth of John that we touched on in the reading. What did the blessed Lord of glory do? There He was - "If thou knewest ... who it is that says to thee",

John 4: 10. He spoke to her, He referred to who He was in His Person and He brought out immediately the state that she was in.

That follows as a consequence. We have to do with God. Moses was afraid to look at God. How suitable that was: He had the fear of God and reverence in a right way. What we had in Hebrews is always befitting: "let us serve God acceptably with reverence and fear. For also our God is a consuming fire", chap 12: 28,29. He has the power and the ability, His very nature is such that all that is out of keeping with Him will be consumed. So Isaiah is concerned immediately about his state. Is that not what our brother referred to about Job? When Job came face to face, we might say, with God what happened immediately to him was that he had light as to his own state. He says, "But now mine eye seeth thee: wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes" , Job 42: 5,6. Isaiah has a similar experience, the very holiness of the One who was high and lifted up coming home to his soul in such wise that he said, I cannot have anything to do with this, "I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of people of unclean lips". How graciously the Lord would bring that experience home to us. He would convict you and me, and it does not matter whether we were converted ten seconds ago or whether it has been eighty years since we came to know Him and have been on the pathway, He would have us to have some understanding of the condition in us that had to be met. So it says, "And one of the seraphim flew unto me, and he had in his hand a glowing coal, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar; and he made it touch my mouth". How the Spirit of God would bring home to us the way in which your condition and mine has been met! He took this coal from off the altar; speaks of the sense coming into our souls of where Jesus has been in relation to the condition in which you and I are. Think of Him coming into the very conditions of flesh and blood but sin apart. Beloved brethren, is that not something for us to contemplate, the absolute holiness of Jesus in flesh and blood and then that He should be made sin? "Him who knew not sin he has made sin for us, that we might become God's righteousness in him", 2 Cor 5: 12. How blessed for our souls: to lay hold of that, that Jesus was the One in His absolute holiness that

went on to that altar! He offered Himself by the eternal Spirit without spot to God in view of redemption being accomplished, in view of you and me coming into the knowledge of God (see Heb 9: 14). It is to produce repentance in us. Job was a long, long time on the road. What a history he had - upright, nobody like him on the earth! What a wonderful man he was! Yet after all that time - how like each one of us - a long period of discipline, he finally comes to it as to what he is inwardly. Somebody said long ago that he wanted to get the brethren out of Romans 7, and I think perhaps it was Mr Darby who said, I am more concerned to get them into it. That is something for us to think about. It is possible for us to deal with the terms of the truth without getting to the core of the issue as to what was settled on the cross. It was not just a matter of my sins; thanks be to God for every one who knows their sins forgiven - a wonderful matter that! How blessed it is to know that my sins have gone in the cross because of the blood of Christ! Have you faith in that? Have you faith in His blood, not only faith in His Person but faith in His blood, that you are conscious that your sins, as to the guilt of them, are gone in the blood of Jesus Christ on the cross? You might be here today and not have that. Well, get it now. Exercise faith. It is always a propitious moment. The gospel is involved in that; "Now is the well-accepted time, now the day of salvation", 2 Cor 6: 2. Reach out if you have not done that before. You might have heard these words, as all of us have, for years and years and yet never grasped that in the depth of your own soul. Now is the time to do that; now is the well-accepted time, now is the day of salvation.

But then the Lord would lead you further, and me further, to see that the whole question of what I am as a sinful creature has had to be put out of the sight of God for ever, and it was done there on the cross at the sacrifice of Jesus. So that God has begun again: "if any one be in Christ, there is a new creation", 2 Cor 5: 17. Isaiah must have had some impression of that. Job evidently got hold of it, did he not? "I had heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee", Job 42: 5. Have we reached that point, beloved? Have you and I reached that point of now. Now my eye seeth thee

and I repent in dust and ashes. It is the conscious sense that the holy Person of Jesus going to the cross at Calvary was necessary in order that everything that has offended God should be finished for ever and put out of His sight. Our Saviour did that, beloved; Jesus whom we love did that. Paul says, "I am crucified with Christ, and no longer live, I, but Christ lives in me", Gal 2: 20. Do you not think that is a real expression of affection for Christ, "I am crucified with Christ"? Do you not think that is an evidence of how Paul had come to love Jesus? It is one thing to know objectively that my sins have gone on the cross, but it is another thing to know that I belong there - "no longer live, I, but Christ lives in me". Let us ponder these things, beloved, let us seek the Spirit's help to be conscious of what He is working at with us to bring us to the awareness of the holy nature of God and that everything that is offensive to Him cannot be tolerated, and that was all concentrated on the cross when Jesus laid down His life there, taking His place there instead of you and me. "This man has done nothing amiss" (Luke 23: 41): - what a conclusion that malefactor reached when he was right beside Jesus at Calvary on the cross and he was able to say "we indeed justly". That is like Job; "now mine eye seeth thee: Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes", chap 42: 5,6. "We indeed justly" - there was nothing else for it but death. And Jesus came into flesh and blood so that He could go into death to end that whole condition of things in the sight of God. Do you believe it? You see that is a challenge.

Do I believe that? Do you believe that? Have I really grasped that in the faith of my soul, that God has finished with that condition for ever, and in the resurrection and ascension of Christ He has expressed His pleasure in the Man of His choice in Jesus. He has nobody before Him but Jesus. "Let me now turn aside and see this great sight", Moses said. What is it? What is God saying to me in this great sight which typifies Jesus coming into flesh and blood?

Isaiah had the consciousness in his own soul of his uncleanness, but Stephen sees Him in the glory. Beloved brethren, may we not encourage one another to look into heaven. What an experience Stephen's was! The very beginning of the history of the

apostle Paul was here. What was right in front of his eyes was a man who was totally occupied with Jesus in glory and he saw that man laying down his life for the Lord Jesus. What Jesus did was unique, but Stephen was following in the footsteps of his Master. He was witnessing faithfully; and what a scope of witness he had: "The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham ... " and he goes right through and sees "the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God". Oh, beloved, what a thing that is! How we should desire, every one of us, that the Spirit should have such liberty with us that He is able to give us such a sight! The hymn writer spoke about it:

'O the sight in heav'n is glorious!
Man in righteousness is there;
Once the Victim, now victorious,
Jesus lives in glory fair! ' (No.212)

Beloved, let us be engaged like this. Stephen was looking steadfastly on Jesus. That is what we are encouraged to do in Hebrews 12, to look steadfastly on Jesus. God has given us sight, let us use it; let us employ our faculties, beloved so that we hear better and see better than we have done before. How gracious of our God that He would set these things before us! He not only gives us the faculty but gives us the object on which to exercise it. We are to look steadfastly on Jesus the Leader and Completer of faith, the One who has not only left those conditions of the glory of deity and come down in the place of a servant but He was obedient, laid down His life, glorified God in the doing of it, opened up the way into heaven.

We are to go there; He has gone as a forerunner and He has made the way open. Stephen saw that; how brightly it shone for him, how exclusive was his view! Are we not, beloved, especially at the end of the assembly's history here, to get some fresh impressions that concentrate our view on Jesus, concentrate our view on what is there in heaven? Every one of us may say how feebly we apprehend it, but how gracious of God to engage us with what is there at His right hand, "the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God".

Well beloved, may we be stimulated to have our view more and more occupied with what is there, for His Name's sake.

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THE CHILDREN'S FEELINGS

In one of his epistles Paul wrote that, sadly, people of many nations had "cast off all feeling" in their pursuit of wickedness. In the next epistle he wrote of Timothy that he cared "with genuine feeling how ye get on". Feelings of this kind in a believer are not merely the natural sympathies which an all-wise God has given, in measure also to the lower animals and even to other creatures. They are rather an evidence of His work in the souls of believers by 'new birth', so that they should share His own feelings regarding His people, and indeed the whole creation.

You will be able to think of a number of instances in the Scriptures where God has used an expression of deep feeling such as "O Jacob" and, as the Lord Jesus said, "O ye of little faith". Also it is said of God that, in holy sympathy, He was afflicted in all the afflictions of Israel in the desert. We read, too, of the Lord Jesus being "moved with compassion" when He raised to life a youth at the gates of the city of Nain. Peter in raising from the dead a young woman expressed his deep feelings in prayer, recognising that God knew the special sorrow of the occasion.

Right feelings within us are indeed the result of the work of God, but they are not to take first place in the perfecting of His saints. For progress in the new nature of the believer feeling comes last, giving place to fact and faith. You can imagine these as three boys walking straight along in Indian file - fact in front, faith looking steadily at him and followed by feeling. All is then in order, but if faith turns round and looks at feeling, what happens? He cannot see fact, he walks crookedly and all is in disorder. The redeeming work of the Lord Jesus and the blessing of God's purpose are examples of fact which will always lead us straight on if our faith is active. The feelings thus produced will be for our own enjoyment and will, in their turn, rise up in praise and thanksgiving to the Giver of all good. Do yours?

J.C.Evershed