

## MIRACLES NOT CEASED

Preached at Zoar Chapel, Great Alie Street, London, on  
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"Jesus answered and said unto them, Go, and shew John again those things which ye do hear and see: the blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them. And blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me." Matthew 11:6

A question has been raised, whether in sending this message to the Lord Jesus, John the Baptist wished to satisfy his own mind, or the minds of his disciples. Some have thought that John the Baptist could never have entertained any suspicion in his mind whether Jesus was the Messiah. And thus to vindicate John's honour, they have supposed it was the unbelief of his disciples that John wishes to remove. I do not profess to have a decided opinion upon the matter; but I cannot see why John, considering the circumstances in which he was placed, might not have had suspicions working in his bosom. Was he not a man like ourselves? Did he not carry in his bosom the same unbelieving and infidel heart that we are possessed of? And considering his circumstances, that he was shut up in prison, that the Lord did not appear to release him, might not a suspicion of this nature have crossed his breast—'Am I the Forerunner of the Messiah, and will he not come to release me out of this dungeon?' I do not see that it impairs the character of John to allow he had these suspicions, these doubtful thoughts in his mind, knowing what unbelieving hearts we all possess.

But, whether it was to satisfy the mind of John, or whether it was to satisfy the minds of John's disciples, the answer of the

Lord was, "Go, and shew John again those things which ye do hear and see." It appears from a parallel passage (Luke 7:21), that the Lord wrought several miracles before their eyes: "In that same hour he cured many of their infirmities and plagues, and of evil spirits; and unto many that were blind he gave sight." Thus, he could appeal to their own senses, and say, "Go, and shew John again those things which ye do hear and see." Does he doubt my mission? Does any suspicion cross his bosom whether I am the Son of God? Tell him what ye have seen, what ye have heard, that these things may support his wavering faith, that they may strengthen his faltering feet. Tell him the miracles which you have seen performed by my hands, "the blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them;" and then, as an intimation adapted to the wavering faith of John the Baptist, or of his disciples, he adds, "and blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me."

The miracles of our Lord were not merely testimonies of his mission from God, not merely manifest evidences of his almighty power, not merely temporal blessings to the objects of those miracles; but they had also a spiritual bearing; they were typical and figurative of spiritual blessings communicated from the same gracious hands. And in this way I shall this evening, with God's blessing, consider the words. I shall not speak of the miracles here spoken of as miracles wrought upon the body, but as miracles wrought upon the soul.

Miracles wrought on the body have, for the most part, ceased. The Lord of life and glory is now at the right hand of the Father in majesty and power, and has ceased, as once upon earth, to drive away sickness by a word or a touch: but

he puts forth that power in men's souls that he once put forth in men's bodies. So that though miracles are changed as to their character, yet miracles have not ceased as to their existence. We behold indeed no natural miracles now; we see no blind Bartimeus restored to sight; we view no dead Lazarus come out of the tomb. But wherever a work of grace is begun and carried on in the soul, there are blind eyes opened, there are the lame made to walk, there are the deaf made to hear, there the leper is cleansed, the dead raised up, and to the poor the gospel is preached.

I shall therefore, with God's blessing, take up the words as they lie before me in this spiritual sense, endeavouring to trace out one by one **the character** first; and then, **the miracle wrought upon that character.**

I.—"**The blind receive their sight.**" This is by the putting forth of the power of God in their souls. For in what state and condition are we by nature? Are we not blind to our state as sinners before God? blind to the spirituality and condemning power of the law? blind to the majesty, greatness, holiness, and purity of God above? blind to the beauty and preciousness of Immanuel? blind to the personality and operations of God the Spirit? And is not this blindness a feature that universally prevails? Are we not, in a spiritual sense, born blind? Do we not grow up in that blindness? And can any natural power remove it? Can any light in the judgment, can any doctrines received in the mind, can any profession of religion, can anything that nature has done or can do, remove that blindness? It may be increased, and it is increased, when darkness is put for light, and light is put for darkness; but it cannot be removed by any power of man in himself, or for others. It is the special work, the grand prerogative of the only-begotten Son of God, to remove this blindness by communicating spiritual eyesight. And this is

done in a moment. We may not indeed be able to trace out the very moment that quickening grace visited our souls, though we shall, for the most part, be acquainted with the period within certain limits. But it was done in a moment of time; there was an instant, though we may not be enabled to recollect it, when divine light was brought into our dark minds, and the blind received sight.

But how do the blind know that they have received sight? The way of the operation of the Spirit of God is hidden from us. This is the Lord's own testimony, "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit" (John 3:8) "As thou knowest not what is the way of the Spirit, nor how the bones do grow in the womb of her that is with child: even so thou knowest not the works of God who maketh all" (Eccl. 11:5). The way, therefore, of the Spirit's operation is to us unknown. But we begin to know that we see, by having objects presented to our mind, and by having an internal perception of those objects. Our natural eye sees everything but itself. A child when it begins, what is called, 'to take notice,' that is, to observe and understand objects, does not reason, perhaps lives and dies without ever reasoning, as to the process whereby it sees. But when objects are presented to the eye, there is a perception of those objects, and a feeling connected with them. So it is spiritually. A child of God cannot understand how. or why it is. but he knows that "whereas he was blind, now he sees:" that there is in his soul an inward perception: and that this inward perception is attended with certain sensations, to which sensations he was a stranger in times past.

1. For instance. He sees that there **is a God above, the holy, invisible, and eternal Jehovah, who looks into the**

**secret chambers of his soul,** whose penetrating eye searches through every veil, and pierces into the depths of that heart that is hidden from all eyes but that of a heart-searching God. This is what a man never sees by nature; this is the special work and act of faith; for by faith we endure, "as seeing him who is invisible."

2. But again. Whenever the blind receive sight, they see **the purity and spirituality of God's character.** Before the blind receive sight, they think that God is such a one as themselves; they have no idea of, no internal acquaintance with, the infinite purity, holiness, and spirituality of Jehovah. They therefore never bow down before him; there is no trembling of heart at his great name, no bringing down of proud imaginations at his footstool, no inward shrinking into self before the loftiness of the Most High, no perception of his glory, no yielding up of the heart in subjection, no adoration nor admiration of his eternal Majesty. But wherever spiritual eye-sight is given, and the purity and holiness of Jehovah are made known to the heart, there will be, as we find all through the scripture, self-abasement. "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth thee; wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes" (Job. 42:5, 6) "Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts" (Isai. 6:5). The purity, holiness, and spirituality of God's character, produced in the saints of old this prostration of soul before him.

The Lord God Almighty reveals in the soul these perfections to drive it from a broken covenant: he makes known his purity, spirituality, and holiness to bring guilt upon the soul, drive it out of every lying refuge, and beat out of its grasp every hope but that which he himself implants. I cannot

define—who can?—how much we shall know of God's purity, how much our hearts shall be broken within us by a sense of his majesty, what sensations of inward reverence, what feelings of guilt, fear and condemnation shall be produced by his holy law. But I am sure of this—if they do not beat us out of every false refuge, if they do not strip us of every natural hope, if they do not remove from under our souls every creature prop, they have not done their work yet. And why God displays his terrible majesty, why he sets our secret sins before our eyes, why he lays them with weight and power upon our conscience, and why he searches the very bottom of our hearts—why is all this preparation, but to bring us near the Son of his love, to draw us to the bosom of the Lord of life and glory, and make him dear and precious to our souls?

3. In due time, therefore, the blind receive sight to see the **Person, blood, righteousness, glory, and beauty of Immanuel.** "But we see Jesus." Did your eyes ever see him? Do look into conscience—did your eyes ever see Jesus? I do not mean your natural, your bodily eyes; but the eye of faith, the eye of the soul. I will tell you what you have felt, if you ever saw Jesus. Your heart was softened and melted, your affections drawn heavenward, your soul penetrated with thankfulness and praise, your conscience sprinkled with atoning blood, your mind lifted up above all earthly things to dwell and centre in the bosom of the blessed Immanuel. Do you think, then, you have seen Jesus by the eye of faith? Then you have seen the perfection of beauty, the consummation of pure loveliness; you have seen the image of the invisible God; you have seen all the perfections and glorious character of the Godhead shining forth in him that was nailed to Calvary's tree. I am sure such a sight as that must melt the most obdurate heart, and draw tears from the most flinty eyes; such a sight by faith of the beauty and

glory of the only-begotten Son of God must kindle the warmest, holiest stream of tender affection. It might not have lasted long. These feelings are often very transitory. The world, sin, temptation, and unbelief soon work: infidelity soon assails all: the things of time and sense soon draw aside: but whilst it lasted, such, in a greater or less degree, were the sensations produced. Now, if you have ever seen Jesus by the eye of faith, and ever had a tender affection going out toward him, you will see him in glory. But you will never see him in glory, if you have not seen him in grace; you will never see him eye to eye in the open vision of eternal bliss, unless you have seen him now upon earth by the faith of God's elect in your heart.

But we must not tarry over this portion; we must go on to consider the other parts of the text.

II.—"**The lame walk.**" By the word "lame" here we are to understand, not one who is generally understood by the expression, that is, one who has, in a measure, the use of his limbs; for if so, it would not be applicable. The lame often do walk, though feebly. The word "lame" rather means a **cripple**—one unable to move his limbs—unable, however feebly, to use any motion whatever of the body. Now, does not this set forth the state and condition of Adam's fallen progeny? and of the elect as springing from the loins of this sinful parent? Has not Adam's fall crippled every faculty of our soul? Has it not blinded our eyes? Has it not withered our arms? Has it not maimed our legs? Has it not dried up our hearts? Has it not affected our memory, our understanding, and our imagination? In a word, has it not so crippled every faculty of our souls, that they are altogether dead Godward?

Now, when the Spirit begins a work of grace upon the heart, God's people are made sensible that they are in a crippled

state. Not merely lame, for that might imply that they could shamble a little forward, that they could get hold of a crutch or a strong staff, and by that means manage to walk in the strait and narrow road; but that they are more than lame, that they have lost more than the use of one limb, that they are crippled, paralytic, bedridden, unable to lift up a leg or a finger. And this is what exercises and tries many of God's people. We know the fall in theory better than we do in practice. We know the fall in our head better than we know it in our heart. We say that man is dead in sin, that his faculties are all crippled, that he is utterly helpless in the things of God. This is our creed. But when we come to carry this out, we are exercised, perplexed, troubled, often distressed, because our creed is so true. We believe with our judgment perfectly, that we are altogether crippled; but when we begin to feel how unable we are to move forward, and how thoroughly we are what we say we are: when the light in our judgments descends into our heart to become life there, how it shackles the mind! Crippled in prayer, so as to be unable to pour forth the heart; crippled in reading, so as scarcely to understand, or feel a single portion of scripture: crippled in hearing, crippled in speaking, crippled in thinking, crippled in acting; all blighted, all withered, all torpid, all unable to move forward. When a feeling of our helplessness thus lies upon our conscience, how deep it cuts! But the promise is—and there is a sweet fulfilment of it sometimes—that "the lame walk." How? In their own strength? No; not in their own strength. In the strength of the Lord. We read, "they shall walk up and down in the name of the Lord;" that is, in the strength of the Lord. "My strength," said Christ to Paul, "is made perfect in weakness." "From me," says the Lord to his church, "is thy strength found."

Sometimes, then, the Lord enables the soul to walk on in his paths. The crippled state is for a time removed. Prayer is



sweet—the word of God is precious—the heart is enlarged—the soul is enabled to move cheerfully on in God's ways (**"I will run the way of thy commandments, when thou shalt enlarge my heart;"**)—religion and the things of God are no longer a burden—the heart and conscience, the memory and feelings are no longer paralysed and crippled; but sweet life is poured into the soul—the vigorous sap that flows out of the stem penetrates and reaches to the remotest twig in the branch. And as the mighty sap penetrates through every branch, and as the life-blood from the Head pervades every limb of the body, there is power to walk cheerfully in the Lord's ordinances, to walk in sweet communion with a Three-one God; to walk in light, life, and liberty, in the enjoyment of gospel means, and in the shinings of God's uplifted countenance. When this is fulfilled, when we leave our bed where we have lain, perhaps, bedridden for months; when the limbs are supernaturally strengthened, and we move cheerfully forward; when the Lord himself lays the everlasting arms underneath;—then, like the cripple at the beautiful gate of the temple when his ankle-bones received strength, there is a leaping, praising, and blessing the Lord. Have you not felt this? You are not always crippled and lame, if you are child of God. It may be your experience, say, nine times out of ten: but the tenth time, is there not some feeling in your heart, some life in your soul, some sweet enlargement, some heavenly love, some divine sensations? This is walking: and wherever this is felt in the heart, there is a fulfilment of the miracle, that "the lame walk."

III.—But we go on to another case—a more desperate case than any that we have already handled. We have looked at the blind, and O how pitiful their state seems to be! We have viewed the crippled, and how helpless their condition appears! But what do you think of a man, not merely blind,

not merely lame, but also **leprous?**—"from the sole of the foot even unto the head, there is no soundness in it: but wounds and bruises, and putrifying sores?" Leprosy was a natural disease, but it was also figurative of something spiritual. The leprosy of the body was a significant type of the leprosy of the soul. If you remember, there were no means to be used in the Old Testament to cure leprosy. God himself reserved its cure in his own hands. But when the leper was cured, there were certain ceremonies to be performed, as we find in the fourteenth chapter of Leviticus. The leprosy, however, was a figurative disease—figurative of the deep-seated disease of the soul. Now, I believe in my conscience, that every child of God will, sooner or later, feel himself to be a leper. He will have the upper lip covered, he will dwell alone, and will cry, 'Unclean, unclean.' He will feel himself, sooner or later, to be a leprous wretch. He will feel the sores of sin, not merely externally, but internally. He will have the 'quick, raw flesh,' and every symptom in his soul corresponding to the symptoms of the leprosy in the body.

The Lord of life and glory, when he was upon earth, shewed forth his almighty power in cleansing lepers. We read of several instances. We read of one who came and knelt before him, saying, "Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean." And we read of his cleansing ten lepers at once, though one only, and he a Samaritan, returned to give him thanks. Now, this was typical and figurative of the cleansing power of the Lord of life and glory in the soul. Am I a leper spiritually? I can no more cure myself of my leprosy, than the leper could naturally. Was leprosy a disorder that kept spreading, deepening, and increasing, till, unless God cured it, it brought its victim to a premature death? So spiritually. If I live and die with the leprosy of sin uncleansed, where God is, I cannot come. The leper must be cleansed—cleansed, not merely by the shedding of atoning blood upon the cross,

which is the actual cleansing of him from filth and guilt in the sight of God: but he must be cleansed also by the application of that atoning blood to his soul, by having his heart sprinkled from an evil conscience, and thus enjoying a testimony of the everlasting favour of God.

Now, when a man is convinced in his soul that he is a leper, to whom can he go for cleansing, but to the Lord of life and glory? We may try a thousand remedies: they will all prove insufficient: but "the blood of Jesus Christ, which cleanseth from all sin," has never proved—no, not in one case—insufficient. Do not some of you think, sometimes, your wound incurable—your heart so hard, that it seems nothing can soften it—the disease of sin in you so desperate, that it seems at times to you utterly impossible you can be anything else but a sinner? Now, the deeper we sink into a spiritual knowledge of our leprosy before God, the more do we seek after, the more do we cleave unto, the more do we value, and in due time, the more do we prize that balmy blood which cleanseth from all sin. What else can take out the stains from so deeply-dyed a soul? What else can present it pure before the eyes of infinite Purity? What else can pluck a sinner out of the depths of the fall, and make him whiter than an angel of light before the throne of the Most High? The blood of the Lamb of God revealed in the heart, applied to the soul, and sprinkled upon the conscience, takes out the deepest stain of guilt. Whatever our sin has been (**except the unpardonable one, which cannot be committed by a child of God**), however deeply ingrained our iniquity is—if it be of the most awful nature, the blackest dye—the blood of Jesus, applied to our soul, will take it all away, and purge the conscience from guilt, filth, and dead works to serve the living God.

IV.—**"The deaf hear."** Who are the deaf? Are they not spiritually and figuratively those who, in a state of nature, have no ears to hear the voice of God, and live? Yes: by nature we are all deaf—deaf to warnings, deaf to condemnations, deaf to threatenings, deaf to precepts, deaf to promises, like the deaf adder, that stoppeth her ears, and will not hear the voice of the charmer, charm he never so wisely. Who can describe the deafness of man by nature to every warning, every threatening, every portion of God's word? It is indeed an awful part of the fall. But when the Lord the Spirit begins a work of grace upon the heart, he circumcises the ear. He thus opens it to receive instruction. He gives a new faculty to the soul, whereby the truth of God is received as from the mouth of God. Has not this been the case with some of you? When you heard the law, in times past, its threatenings rolled over your heads, like the thunder, without making any impression; when you heard of the love, blood, and sufferings of Jesus, there was no softening, melting, humbling of your soul. Were you not deaf, utterly deaf? Had you any one divine sensation in your soul? any one tender feeling? any breaking down of spirit? Not one.

But when God the Spirit mercifully removes this deafness to all the truth of God—then the deaf begin to hear. This is one of the first marks of life in the soul. They hear the threatenings of God's law, and every threatening reverberates in thunders in their hearts. They hear, and they believe what they hear, that he will bring the wicked to judgment; that there is appointed a day to judge the world; and that those who live and die in their sins will be swallowed up in an awful gulf of misery. When the Lord the Spirit opens their ears, they hear the voice of the Son of God; for he says, "My sheep hear my voice;" and again, "The hour cometh, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live." They hear the

"still, small voice" whispering in their souls. They hear the feeblest intimation of his mercy and grace. They hear what he says in his precepts, and obey. They hear what he says in his promises, and hope. They hear what he says in his invitations, and believe. They hear the voice of the Lord, which "shaketh the wilderness; the Lord shaketh the wilderness of Kadesh. The voice of the Lord maketh the hinds to calve, and discovereth the forests; and in his temple doth every one speak of his glory." This voice of majesty and mercy sounds through every chamber of the heart, and penetrates with almighty power, still and gentle though it is, into the most secret recesses of the conscience.

In hearing the word, have you not sometimes heard things that broke your heart all to pieces? Have you not sometimes had your sins turned up to view, and cutting convictions produced? Have you not sometimes had your evidences brightened, your hope encouraged, your affections drawn out, your path cleared up, and your souls graciously comforted and strengthened? If so, a miracle has been wrought in your heart. The Son of God, sitting at the right hand of the Father, has as much, by divine power, opened your ears spiritually (**or you could not hear**), as ever, in the days of his flesh, he opened the ears of the deaf naturally. O what a mercy it is to have the hearing ear, and the believing heart! Not setting ourselves against the majesty of the Most High: not rushing on the thick bosses of his buckler—but to be broken down and humbled; to kiss the Son lest he be angry, to touch the hem of his garment, and to hear, or to long to hear him speaking in soft whispers to the heart, "Fear not; thou art mine."

V.—"**The dead are raised up.**" The "dead" are those who by nature are dead in sin. These dead are raised up when life from God visits their souls. They are raised up to faith in

Jesus—raised up to hope in his name—raised up to a sense of his dying love to their souls—raised up from doubt and fear—raised up from the depths of despondency, to look unto him and be saved. What a mercy it is that the Lord of life and glory still puts forth the same power in the hearts of his people, that he once put forth in their bodies, and that he raises them up from their state of death and deadness! Do we not often feel so dead, as though we had not a particle of the grace of God? So dead, that it seems scarcely possible to have a sensation of spiritual life again? So dead, that we almost fear whether the power of God was ever felt in our hearts? Now, the Lord raises up life and feeling in our souls, by putting forth the same power that called Lazarus out of the tomb. And every lifting up of the heart towards him—every panting desire to know him, and the power of his resurrection—every breathing of tender affection—every sigh, cry, and groan—yea, every feeling, however short, however transient, Godward—is a proof that the Lord of life and glory is still putting forth his power in the hearts of his people.

Now, just in proportion as we know and deeply feel our state by nature, shall we experience and value these spiritual miracles. In the days of the Lord's flesh, who valued him? and who wanted miracles to be shewed forth? Was it not the characters whom he shewed to the disciples of John? the blind, the lame, the leper, the deaf, and the dead? And the more inveterate and the more irremediable these cases were, the more the power and the glory of Jesus were shewn in bringing them out of this forlorn state, and giving them health and cure. Is it not so spiritually? If I am not by nature totally blind—if I am not by nature thoroughly crippled—if I am not a leper to the very core—if I am not completely deaf—if I am not altogether dead—I cannot know, I cannot value when known, the power of the Lord in removing these diseases. But if I am deeply sensible of my lost and ruined

condition, and know that I am by nature a complication of maladies—that every disease meets in me—that I am not only blind, but also lame—and not only lame, but also a leper—and not only a leper, but also deaf—and not only deaf, but also by nature dead: then I learn to put an inestimable value upon every breath of life, every teaching of the Holy Ghost, every mark of God's favour, and every testimony that I am one of his.

VI.—But the Lord adds another word, which throws a sweet light upon the whole—"**The poor have the gospel preached to them.**" Why should the Lord mention this among his miracles? Was there any putting forth of miraculous power in this? Was there anything resembling, anything analogous to, giving sight to the blind, strength to the lame, cure to the leprous, hearing to the deaf, and life to the dead? There was, considering the circumstances of the times. The poor, in those days, as is too much the case in our own, were generally despised. We see what the spirit of the Pharisees was, in what they said to the blind man—"Thou wast altogether born in sins, and dost thou teach us? And they cast him out." The poor were looked upon more as brutes than men. The rich, the noble, the educated—these were admired; but the poor were looked upon as the common herd whom any oppressor might trample under foot.

But when the Lord of life and glory appeared upon earth, he came as a poor man. God was determined to stain the pride of human greatness: he therefore sends his only-begotten Son into the world, to be born in a stable, and cradled in a manger: to be the son of poor parents, and to work with his hands for his daily bread. Therefore they said, "Is not this the carpenter's son?.... How knoweth this man letters, having never learned?" The very parentage of Jesus. though

it was from David himself, was obscured by the low condition in which he was born. When he came into the world, poor men were his companions. He chose poor fishermen to be his disciples, and he associated for the most part with the poor. It was therefore a miracle that these poor people naturally should have the gospel preached to them. And being so contrary to every practice then known, it stood on the same footing, as a proof of his heavenly mission, as his raising up the dead, giving eyes to the blind, ears to the deaf, feet to the lame, and cleansing the lepers.

But there is a deeper meaning than that; there is a spiritual interpretation connected with the words. The "poor," understood spiritually, are the "poor in spirit," the broken in heart, the contrite, the lowly, the troubled, the emptied, and the exercised, who are nothing, and have nothing in themselves spiritually good.

Now to these the gospel is preached. It is their very poverty which makes the gospel received by them, and makes the gospel precious to them. As the blind needed eye-sight, and received eye-sight—as the lame and crippled needed power to walk, and received power to walk—as the leper needed cleansing, and received cleansing—as the deaf needed hearing, and received hearing—as the dead needed raising up, and were raised up: so the spiritual poverty of the poor in spirit prepared them for, and made them receive the gospel.

And what is the gospel? Is not the gospel a proclamation of pure mercy, of superabounding grace? Does it not declare the lovingkindness of God in sending his only-begotten Son to bleed and die, and, by his obedience, blood, and merit, to bring in a salvation without money and without price? Is not this the gospel? Not clogged by conditions, nor crippled by



anything that the creature has to perform; but flowing freely forth as the air in the skies? The poor to whom the gospel is preached, value it; it is suitable to them; it is sweet and precious when the heart is brought down. But if I stand up in religious pride, if I rest upon my own righteousness, if I am not stripped of everything in the creature, what is the gospel to me? I have no heart to receive it; there is no place in my soul for a gospel without money and without price. But when I sink into the depth of creature poverty, when I am nothing and have nothing but a mass of sin and guilt—then the blessed gospel, pardoning my sins, covering my naked soul, shedding abroad the love of God, guiding me into everything good, and leading me up into enjoyment with a Three-one God, becomes prized. When such a pure, such a blessed gospel comes into my heart and conscience, has not my previous poverty of spirit prepared me for it? Has not my previous beggary and necessity made a way for it, made it suitable to me, and when it comes, makes it precious to me? We must, then, sink into poverty of spirit, that painful place, in order to feel the preciousness, and drink into the sweetness and blessedness of the gospel of the grace of God.

We often know the theory of the gospel before we know the experience of the gospel. We often receive the doctrines of grace into our judgment before we receive the grace of the doctrines into our soul. We therefore need to be brought down, humbled, exercised, stripped of every prop, that the gospel may be to us the gospel—more than a sound, more than a name, more than a theory, more than a doctrine, more than a system, more than a creed—that it may be soul sensation, soul enjoyment, soul blessing, and soul salvation. When the Lord the Spirit preaches the gospel, "without money and without price," to the poor in spirit, the humbled, stripped, and exercised—it is a gospel of glad tidings indeed to the sinner's broken heart.

VII.—And then the Lord closes his message to John, by pronouncing a blessing upon a certain character, "**Blessed is he whosoever shall no! be offended in me.**" What is the meaning of the word "offended?" It signifies stumbled. This is the meaning of the word in the New Testament.

Now there are many things in Jesus that stumble us by nature. Have you not been stumbled by his Godhead? Has not your reason been shaken to the very centre, and has not every sort of infidel suspicion crept over your mind concerning it? This was stumbling. Do not the precepts of the Lord of life and glory stumble most men? are they not too high for them to cross, and a stumbling-block in their path that they cannot get over? Is not Jesus generally a stumbling-block to the sons of men? When God laid the stone in Zion, was it not for two purposes—to be for his people a foundation, and to be for his enemies a stone of offence and a stumbling-block? All then, but God's people are offended in Jesus. They stumble upon that stumbling-stone. His precepts are too rigid—his yoke too heavy—his cross too burdensome. His precious gospel is distasteful to the carnal mind; therefore all natural men are offended, and stumbled. They like not the pure gospel. The unconditional gospel is not lowered sufficiently to their carnal heart. But the Lord's people are, by divine teaching, brought through these difficulties. They may be stumbled, and that painfully, at times, at the infinite Godhead of Jesus. They may be stumbled to know how his blood can cleanse from sin; a thousand difficulties may perplex their mind: but they will not stumble so as to fall. They may totter and stagger, but not stumble so as to fall entirely.

Now, do look at the blessing that the Lord has pronounced—  
"Blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me."

(Matt. 6:6.) What is the feeling of your heart toward Jesus? What is the solemn desire of your soul? that he would come and make your heart his abode? that he would visit your soul with the light of his countenance? that he would sprinkle his blood upon your conscience? that he would make himself very near, very dear, and very precious? Do you count one word from his lips worth a thousand worlds? a smile of his countenance worth thousands of gold and silver? Then you are blessed. You are not stumbling upon the dark mountains of error. You are not stumbling at the perfections of the Son of God. You are not offended at a free gospel, an unconditional salvation. No; the Lord in mercy has slaughtered your prejudices, subdued your enmity, and brought you to receive the gospel as a little child.

'Well,' but some may say, 'I believe all this; but then, I have doubts and fears whether the Lord has begun his work in me, whether I am one of his family. I cannot enjoy the power of truth as I would wish.' But, does not the Lord say, "Blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me?" You are not offended and stumbled at Jesus. No: your very lamentation is, that you cannot enjoy him, cannot feel him precious, cannot love him, cannot delight in him, cannot have sweet smiles from his countenance, cannot have a blessed revelation of his love in your heart. Now, if you were offended by a pure gospel; if you turned your back upon wisdom's ways: if you preferred the indulgence of some vile lust to obedience to the Lord of life and glory: if you were fighting against sovereign grace, and against the Person, work, and blood of the Lamb, you would be under the curse. But if there be in your heart, in spite of doubts and fears, in spite of suspicions and apprehensions, an earnest desire to know the Lord of life, and to breathe out all your soul into his bosom; if this be the reigning feeling within—that none but Christ revealed in your heart can do you good, and you

would sooner have a precious Jesus in your soul than thousands of gold and silver:—you are blessed, for you are not offended in Christ. You may be offended at many things in yourself, but he is to you, at times, the chiefest among ten thousand, and the altogether lovely. And he that is not offended in him, but is enabled to receive him as the Christ of God, to look to him, to believe in him, and at times to feel him precious—he comes under the blessing which "maketh rich, and he addeth no sorrow with it".