

STRANGE THINGS

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A SERMON
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DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
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*"We have seen strange things today."
Luke 5:26.*

THE world is growing very old, dull and commonplace. One takes the newspaper and, often, after glancing through it, has to say, "There is really nothing in it." The reason probably being that there is nothing fresh or new happening on the earth—it is the same old sad story of sin and sorrow constantly repeated. The world seems to be like a cluster from the vine when all its generous juice has been pressed out. Life, to many persons, has come to be excessively humdrum. The human mind is always craving after novelties and, to find these novelties, it makes "much ado about nothing." It runs raving mad over that which is not worth thinking of and whips itself up into an intense excitement about a matter that is of no more importance than a drop in a bucket, or the small dust of the balance. The fact is, man wants something really fresh and strange and if he can get it, he feels delighted! I hardly think that when our good friend, Mr. John Ashworth, brought out his book, he would have achieved so great a success with it if he had not called it *Strange Tales*. But the strangeness was the attraction. The stories in it were strange tales to the mass of mankind, though to some of us they are very familiar things—but the *strangeness* was the point that attracted readers.

No man ever spent a day with Jesus Christ without being filled with the sight of strange things! No man ever entered into communion with the Lord Jesus without being delighted with wonders of love, of mercy, of Divine Grace, of the Truths of God, of goodness for, while His Gospel is the old, old Gospel, yet it always has a new face upon it and is continually fresh and new—it never gets stale! We read of our Lord that when John saw Him, "His head and His hairs were white like wool, as white as snow," to denote His antiquity. And yet the spouse said of Him, "His locks are bushy and black as a raven," as if to indicate His perpetual youth, His unfailing strength and His unfading beauty. Believe me, dear Friends, if you want to see that which is truly strange, you must get into that spiritual realm where Christ is acknowledged as King, the new Heaven and new earth wherein dwell righteousness.

If you want to continue to be astounded, amazed, astonished, filled with holy awe, you must come and be familiar with the Savior, His person, His work, His offices and everything that has to do with Him and, when you have become familiar with all these things, then you will have to say constantly, "We have seen strange things today. Something has occurred that has surprised even us who have grown used to surprises. Our Lord has seemed to outdone Himself, though we thought Him to be higher than the heavens—and His mercy has appeared to go deeper than ever before, though we judged that it had already gone deeper than the abyss, itself!" "O world of wonders! I can say no less." He that enters this spiritual world where Christ is adored as God and King has unlocked a cabinet of marvels that shall astonish him during all his lifetime here and even throughout eternity! I am going to speak about strange things and I pray that God will make what is said to be of service to many.

I. First, I ask you to MARK THE STRANGE THINGS OF THAT PARTICULAR DAY which are mentioned in our text. It was so full of wonders that the people said, "We have seen strange things today." Well, what did they see?

First, they had that day seen *Christ disturbed in preaching*, greatly disturbed, and yet delighted to be so disturbed and accepting the disturbance as part of His usual experience and the means of doing further good to men. The Lord Je-

sus has gone into the square covered court of a house—the people have pressed in behind Him, one after another, till they are packed in a dense mass—and there are still others around the door vainly trying to enter. Here come four men—it is rather remarkable that there should be four such earnest men—who have brought a sick neighbor on his bed, with ropes tied to the four corners. But they find that they cannot get in through the crowd. They push, they squeeze, they struggle, but there is no getting in! And their poor paralyzed friend seems to be effectually shut out from Christ. They go up the outside stairs of the house. They get on the roof which covers the square where Christ and the people are—and they begin ripping off the tiling! And now, look! The man is being let down by the four ropes right before the Savior's face! There must be some measure of dust, even if something still heavier does not come tumbling down upon the Preacher's head, but here comes the bed with the man on it! The people are sure to make room for him, now, or else he will be supported on their heads! They seemed to be squeezed as tightly as they could be, but they feel that they must, somehow or other, get a little more closely together and so the man is gradually let down by his four friends who carefully let out the four ropes at the same rate, keeping good time together, lest one end of the bed should be too high and he should fall.

That must have been a great disturbance to our Lord! I know some preachers who cannot bear to have even a baby crying during the sermon. I do not feel especially delighted with that sweet music, yet I rejoice that the good woman did not stay away from the service! As far as I am concerned, she may bring her baby, even if it should sometimes cry—I am glad to have her here that God may bless her. Perhaps a friend has just dropped his cane in the aisle and made a loud noise just when the preacher was trying to be very earnest. Well, that is a pity, but the dear Savior was much more rudely interrupted by all the falling stuff from the ceiling and the sick man coming down into the midst of the crowd before Him! If there had been any “thread” in His sermon, He certainly would have lost it—but His discourses were made of better material than that. They were made, indeed, of fire, and fell like fire-flakes on men's heads and hearts. He still spoke on, after He had paused a while to attend to this man's case, and He did attend to it very sweetly. He looked at the four men who had brought him and He saw that they had great trust in Him. And, seeing their faith, He worked the cure upon the sick man.

It was a strange thing that it should be so, but how much I would like to see more of this strange kind of work! I don't know where I am to find four men who are so in love with one of their friends that they will break up ceilings and roofs to get him where Christ can bless him! They will probably be four very imprudent and rash men, in the opinion of others—the Lord bless the imprudent and the rash! They are generally the best sort of men for such a task as this. Your more prudent men would have stopped till the service was over and the people had come out and, very likely, they would have waited till Christ had gone out at another door—and so their friend would have missed Him. But these rash, head-strong, ardent lovers of their sick neighbor must somehow get him to Christ! So they break up the roof and there he is, right in the Presence of Christ! It was a strange thing to do, but, Brothers and Sisters, do not hesitate to do strange things in order to save souls! Hardly mind what you do, so long as you can get them to Christ. Your Lord will not blame you. He is so strangely loving—so strangely full of goodwill to men—that even should you be guilty of an indiscretion in your zeal, He will not upbraid you for it. Oh, labor for the souls of your children, your servants, your neighbors—and the Lord will accept that service, and you may yet have the delight of seeing them made whole by Christ! That was a strange thing to begin with. I am bound to say that the people who witnessed it talked all their lives about the man coming down from the ceiling and Jesus Christ healing Him!

But now they saw a greater wonder than that—the Christ of God forgiving this man his sins! We talk about the forgiveness of sins, I fear, rather glibly, without always realizing what a great thing it is. You know that when Martin Luther was in deep distress of soul, a good old monk said to him, “Brother, can you not say the Credo?” “Yes,” said Luther. “Well, then,” replied the old man, “in the Credo you say, ‘I believe in the forgiveness of sins.’” “Yes,” said Luther, “I know that. I have often said it.” “Then,” enquired the other, “do you believe in the forgiveness of your own sin? For, if not, how can you say, ‘I believe in the forgiveness of sins?’” This great Truth is sometimes spoken of as though forgiveness were an impalpable something that was done and yet not done, but Christ never meant it to be so. His death was not a shadowy, vague Atonement that might possibly be available for sinners, but a real and complete putting away of sin and, as many as believe in Him may know for sure that their sin is put away and is as completely gone as if it had actually ceased to be, seeing that Christ bore the punishment of it. Yes, and the sin, itself, was, by imputation, laid upon Him, as

it is written, "The Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all." "He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities. The chastisement of our peace was upon Him and with His stripes we are healed."

Whenever a sinner has his sin forgiven, it is a strange, a wondrous thing! Never think of it as a mere commonplace matter of no account, for it is a marvel of marvels. The angels—a far nobler race than men—fell from their first estate, but never has any of the devils been pardoned for his rebellion against the Most High. No Savior has espoused their cause, no sacrifice has been offered for their guilt, no Gospel is ever proclaimed in their ears! When they sinned, they fell finally and now they are "reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day." Yet man, who was not a pure spirit, like the angels, but a spirit allied with materialism, an inferior being, fell—and for him God left His throne to come and bleed on earth to offer up an expiation! For men, sin became pardonable! No, more, to multitudes of the sons of men sin has been forgiven and an act of amnesty and oblivion has been passed concerning their rebellion! What a wonderful Truth of God is this! Whenever you feel a sense of pardoned sin, or whenever you know that your fellow man has received absolution from the great High Priest, the Son of God, you may at once say, "We have seen strange things today."

When these people around our Lord had seen that wonder, they saw something else which must have greatly surprised them—they saw an exhibition of thought-reading. I have heard and read many curious things about thought-reading. Some I have believed, and some I have not. That any man can read my thoughts, I shall take leave to question! At any rate, he may read this thought, for I will tell him what is on my mind—that I do not believe him! But our Lord Jesus Christ, as He looked at the Pharisees and the scribes, read their unexpressed thoughts and, at once, saw what was passing within their minds! It was not an easy thing, I should think, to read thoughts like these, "Who is this which speaks blasphemies? Who can forgive sins, but God, alone?" But our Lord Jesus read those thoughts and answered them, though the men before Him had not as yet spoken a single word! I have seen wonderful exhibitions of thought-reading in this Tabernacle—not by me, but by the Lord Himself! Many of you are witnesses of how I have uttered from this platform the very words you have spoken when you were coming here—and what you said in your bedchamber, where nobody heard, perhaps, but some one companion, has been repeated in this place and you have been astounded as you discovered that the Word of God, which is quick and powerful, searches the heart and cuts asunder, just as you have seen an animal split from head to foot by a butcher and its innermost parts laid bare to the view of every passerby!

The Word of God often does that—discovers the secret thoughts and intents of the heart and makes the man see himself as God sees him—and makes him stand astonished that it should be so! We have frequently seen this sort of thing happen as we sometimes tell to one another some of the extraordinary instances in which men's very flesh has seemed to creep as the things they said and did have been made known to them. It will probably happen in like manner to many others—and those to whom God will thus speak will say, as these people did—"We have seen strange things today."

There was another strange thing they saw and, with that, I will conclude this first part of my discourse. They saw a sick man who could not lift hand or foot made, in a single moment, to walk and carry his bed, at the word of the Lord, Jesus Christ! That must have been a strange sight to those who knew this poor paralyzed man, when they saw him stand up from the bed and glorify God as he did what Jesus bade him do. And when the Lord speaks with power to a soul, as He constantly does, and the man who knew not God learns to know Him, and the one who feared not the Lord is brought to trust and love and serve Him, what a marvelous thing it is! I sometimes wonder whether any person would doubt the Inspiration of Scripture and the Divine origin and power of the Gospel if he could live each day as I live and see what I see of the wonders that are worked by the Gospel. Last Sunday night there came into Exeter Hall a man who did not care for the things of God, but he sat and heard the sermon. His brother had brought him—and was praying earnestly for him. As he was going out, a friend, who had observed him during the service, said to this man who had entered the hall utterly careless and Christless, "You were interested in the sermon tonight, were you not?" "I was," he answered, "very much." "Do you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ?" The man at once replied, "I do believe in Him with all my heart and all my soul." His brother, who was with him, and who had been praying over him, said, "I was astonished beyond measure to hear him make such a declaration of his faith!"

Beside that one, there were 12 other persons who came forward when the service was over and distinctly declared that they had found the Savior that night under the preaching of the Gospel. Though they had not been religious people, and had scarcely ever thought of their souls, yet God had found them! And these strange things do not occur with us,

alone—they happen every day with our beloved friends, Moody and Sankey and, indeed, in a great measure, with all who preach the Gospel! It is its own evidence of its almighty power and, as it wins its way, men are saved, they are healed of the deadly paralysis of sin and made to leap with active obedience and joyful service in the cause of Christ! Whenever you see this miracle of mercy worked, you can say, “We have seen strange things today.”

II. Now, with great brevity, I ask you TO MARK THE STRANGE THINGS OF CHRIST’S DAY.

If you had ever beheld our Lord’s life and work with the eyes of faith, you must have seen many strange things. First, the Maker of men became a Man! *He that is Infinite became an Infant*—He that made all things was wrapped in swaddling clothes! He who fills all space was laid in a manger and the Son of the Highest was known as the Son of Mary! We have heard strange things when we have heard the Doctrine of the Incarnation! “The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His Glory, the Glory as of the Only-Begotten of the Father, full of Grace and truth.” Truly, this was a strange thing!

Further, He who was Lord of All, became Servant of All! “Being found in fashion as a Man,” He lived a life of perfect obedience to His Father’s will and went about healing the sick, raising the dead and ministering to all who came near Him. Most marvelous of all, on Him who knew no sin, the sin of man was laid, and the righteous God meted out to Him, the Innocent One, the chastisement due to the guilty! This is the ground of our hope and the only foundation of hope for sinners, that He, the innocent Christ, was made sin for us, “that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.” But what a wonder it is! The guilty go free because He who is free from guilt suffers in their place! Tell all men that wonder of wonders!

Yet that was not all. Jesus died on the Cross! And loving friends laid Him in the tomb. Death had conquered Him, but, in that moment, Death was conquered—

“He Death by dying slew.”

That day He led Death, itself, captive to His own supremacy. Wonder of wonders—Death put to death by death! Jesus Christ, by His dying, puts dying out of the way for all His people. Yet, even that wonder is not the last. Look, there He lies, for a while, wrapped in the grave clothes and Death appears to have the mastery over Him. But that Scripture must be fulfilled—“You will not leave My soul in Hades; neither will You suffer Your Holy One to see corruption.” He must wait there till the appointed hour strikes and then, early in the morning, before the break of day, He was up and away! An angel rolled away the stone, for He that had been dead was alive, again, and Jesus left the abode of Death, no more to die! What a wonder it is that He who was dead worked out our resurrection! And now, since He rose from the grave, so all His followers must.

You may take what point you please in the history of the Lord Jesus Christ and, if you really understand it, you will say concerning every part of it, “We have seen strange things” in this matter. It is a chain of miracles! It is like Alps on Alps and more than that, for the mountains of mercy tower above the stars and reach even to the Throne of God and God, Himself, was never more lofty and glorious than when He was occupied in the stupendous labors of His Son Jesus Christ. Only spend your time in the company of the great Wonder-Worker, and you will continually be able to say, “We have seen strange things today.”

III. Now I must close by asking you to MARK THE STRANGE THINGS STILL TO BE SEEN IN THOSE IN WHOM CHRIST WORKS. If He comes and blesses us, we shall often say, “We have seen strange things today.”

First, we have seen *a self-condemned sinner justified by Christ*. I can tell you what I saw, one day, and I never shall forget the sight throughout eternity! I saw a sinner whom I know right well—and I can say no good of him, but much, very much that is evil, without at all slandering him. He had been proud and haughty in his opinion of himself, but there shone a light into his soul which unveiled to him his deep corruption and depravity, the sin that mixed with all his best things, and the still more dreadful sin that fermented in his worst things. I saw that sinner—for I know him well—self-condemned. He wrote his own sentence and he handed it to the Judge. He said that he deserved to be cast away forever from the Presence of God and the Glory of His power. And, as he passed up his own death-warrant, he dropped a tear upon it and he said, “I now trust myself to the Sovereign Mercy of God in Christ Jesus.” I remember it well and I saw that self-condemned sinner pardoned in a moment! The Lord said to him, “Your sins, which are many, are all forgiven,” and his face changed from darkness and gloom into shining light and joy! And he has never lost the impression of that blessed day—and, as he stands here to tell you the story, he can truly say that he saw strange things that day! But, Brothers and

Sisters, there are hosts of you who have undergone the same blessed operation! Self-condemnation brought you where the Savior absolved you and, though it seems so easy to talk about it now, oh, how blessed it was when first we felt it! My heart did leap for joy! I was never so happy before and I sometimes think that I have scarcely ever been quite as jubilant as I was on that day of holy excitement and exhilaration!

I remember, also, *a natural heart renewed by Divine Grace*. I have gone into my garden and I have seen a great number of trees that have new branches which have been grafted into them, but I never yet saw a tree get a new heart. I have seen it get new bark and many changes have happened to it, but it cannot change its heart. There are some living creatures that shed their claws and grow fresh ones, but I never heard of a living creature that grew a new heart. That must be a strange, a wondrous thing, to change the very center and source of life! Yet the Lord Jesus Christ is constantly doing it—giving men new motives, new desires, new wishes, new habits—changing them entirely and, especially, creating in them new hearts and right spirits! Whenever you see that miracle of Grace worked, you can say, “We have seen strange things today.” A woman came to see me and cast herself down at my feet. She said that she had been such a sinner that she was not fit to speak with me. I bade her rise, for I said I, also, was a sinner. And she told me what she had been—I will not tell you the sad story, for I should have to use words of shame if I described her. But she is among us now, washed and sanctified—and she delights to serve her God and honor and glorify Him! What changed that woman? Was it fear? No, she was a brave spirit who would have dared any kind of devil, but the Grace of God changed and transformed her, and made her into a loving servant of the living Savior. Oh, whenever we see this deed of Grace done—and we see it continually—we say, “We have seen strange things today.”

Another marvel is, *a soul preserved in spiritual life amid killing evils*. Did you ever see a bush burn and yet not be consumed? Did you ever see a spark float in the sea and yet not be quenched? Many persons here are, to themselves, just such wonders. They are living godly lives in the midst of temptation—holy in the midst of impurity—serving God in spite of all opposition. These are strange things!

Did you ever see *evil turned into good*? There are many of God’s children who constantly see it. “All things work together for good to them who love God.” They are made rich by poverty, made healthy by sickness, made strong by weakness, made alive by killing, made to go up by going down! You who live the new life know the meaning of these paradoxes and understand how these strange things make up a Christian’s progress to the Eternal City of God. Strange things do the people of God see in their own lives as they find Heaven on earth! It is a singular thing for anyone to be on earth and yet in Heaven, but we have proved it to be so! We have seen men sick and we have seen men dying—and yet as full of bliss as they could hold, as thankful in their room of poverty—and almost as joyful, as if they had been among the angels before the Throne of God above! There are surprises all the way along the road to Glory, but what will it be when we come to the end of it?

Did you ever try to picture the first half-hour in Heaven? Have you ever thought of the sensations that will pass through you in the first few days there? I think that we can very well judge what they will be, for they have been revealed to us by the Spirit. We shall have the same joys as we have here, only carried to a far higher pitch, for the life of God in Heaven is the life of God *in the heart* on earth! Heaven is but the outgrowth of a holy consecrated life and he that lives with Christ below is already in the lower chamber of the Father’s House. He has but to climb a pair of stairs and be in the upper chamber where all the glorified meet together with their Lord! Still, I doubt not that it will be passing strange to go from earth into Glory.

Whenever I begin to talk about this matter, I always wonder who will be the first among us to be called away, for it happens every week that some out of our great congregation go Home. Sometimes, in a single week, six or seven of our Church members go to the great Father’s House—whose turn will it be to go next? We have not the choice, otherwise some of us might venture to put in an early claim that we might enjoy our rest. I know some old folk and some sick ones, and some who are greatly beset by Satan, and some who are sorely troubled with doubts and fears who would gladly say, “Would God it were time for us to go!” Well, dear Friends, rest assured that you are not forgotten—the messenger will come to you, perhaps soon, and he will say to you, “By tomorrow, you shall see the King in His Glory.” You will have to go down into the flood—to cross the dark river, as they call it—but I do not believe that it is dark at all. I have seen the light shining on the faces of many of the pilgrims as they have looked back at me, when I have stood upon the river’s brink to comfort them—and it has not seemed at all dark. The happiest company I ever keep is that of dying saints! I

come away right merry, sometimes, from their bedside, for they say to me, “O dear Pastor, the Truth of God you preach is good to live upon and good to die upon!”

I saw a man and his wife, both of them very ill, lying in bed, together, but not a syllable of sympathy did they appear to need from me. And they seemed delighted to say to me, “We learned Christ from your lips. We have lived on the Gospel you preached and it holds us up, now that we are lying here. We are glad to go home to Heaven—we are full of life and full of immortality even now!” Oh, yes, these are strange things—except to those who form part of this strange company with God, who is, to many, a stranger in His own world, and with Christ, who is a stranger, sometimes, in His own Church! We can say, and we shall say at the close of our lives, “We have seen strange things today.”

There is one strange sight which I wish that you, dear Friends, if you are unconverted, would look upon—I wish that you would see Jesus as your own Savior. He is not far from any one of you. O look, look, look at Him and, as you look at Him, you shall live! That is God’s appointed way of salvation. “Look unto Me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth.” And, dear Heart, if you should see that strange being—yourself—a saved sinner, I would like you to see another strange sight, namely, all your family saved! It will be such joy to you to have your wife rejoicing in Christ with you, joining in your daily prayer, and your children, even in their childhood, loving their father’s God. There is a text for you to lay hold of, supposing that you are not yet converted. It was the middle of the night when, in Philippi, the jail began to rock to and fro. The jailer’s house was up above, and he knew that he had two strange prisoners down in the vaults below. They had been singing in the night and the other prisoners had heard them and, as the jail rocked and reeled, and the doors flew open, the jailer, a stern Roman legionary, thought that his prisoners must have escaped and that he would be put to death for allowing it.

So he was about to thrust his sword into his own heart, but Paul shouted to him, “Do yourself no harm, for we are all here.” Then, when a light was brought, that man fell down before Paul and Silas and said to them, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” And they answered, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved, and your house.” Do not leave out those last three words, “*and your house.*” Do not seek your own salvation without that of your household, also! Look up the passage in Acts 16:31-34—“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved, and your house. And they spoke to him the Word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night and washed their stripes, and was baptized, he and all his, straightway. And when he had brought them into his house, he set food before them and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house.”

It was a midnight service and Baptism of the whole household upon a profession of their faith! God send you a like blessing! You will see strange things, then! Many of us have seen already them in our families and we hope to see them repeated a thousand times! The Lord give you, every one, a personal blessing, and then bless your households, also, for Christ’s sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:

LUKE 5:12-32.

Verse 12. *And it came to pass, when He was in a certain city, behold, a man full of leprosy.* What a contrast there was between these two persons—the Lord Jesus full of purity—and this man full of impurity—full of leprosy! He could not be more than full. He had as much leprosy as a man could contain.

12. *Who seeing Jesus fell on his face, and besought Him, saying, Lord, if You will, You can make me clean.* This was splendid faith! Here was adoration of the noblest kind! No angel before the Throne of God could render the Son of God more honor than this poor leprous man did. He believed in Christ’s power at once to rid him of that otherwise incurable disease. “Lord, if You will, You can make me clean.”

13. *And He put forth His hand, and touched him, saying, I will: be you clean. And immediately the leprosy departed from him.* This is what Christ can also do in the *spiritual* realm. If a man is full of sin, let him but fall down on his face before Jesus and say, “Lord, if You will, You can make me clean,” and the Lord will put out His hand, touch him, and he will be clean in a moment. “Immediately,” not needing the lapse of a single hour—“immediately the leprosy departed from him.”

14. *And He charged him to tell no man but go, and show yourself to the priest, and offer for your cleansing, according as Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them.* As long as the Ceremonial Law was in force, Christ very diligently obeyed it and bade others do the same. That Law is now abolished and the Jewish priesthood has also ceased to be. But mark the modesty of our Savior. As Man, He sought no fame or honor, but, as far as He could do so, He suppressed the voices that would have brought Him notoriety. Yet grateful tongues could not all be silenced, even at His bidding.

15. *But so much the more went there a fame abroad of Him: and great multitudes came together to hear, and to be healed by Him of their infirmities.* There was a double attraction about the Lord Jesus—His sweet, instructive speech, and His gracious, healing hand. There is a still somewhat similar attraction in every true Gospel ministry, not the attraction of the mere words of human eloquence, but in the Truths of God which every faithful minister preaches and in that matchless soul-healing power which goes with the Word wherever it is believably heard.

16. *And He withdrew Himself into the wilderness and prayed.* That is just what you and I would probably *not* have done under such circumstances. We would have said, “We must seize this golden opportunity of publishing our message. There is a tide in the affairs of men which, taken at the flood, leads on to plenitude of blessing and we must take advantage of it.” But our Savior did not wish for fame, He cared nothing about excitement and popularity, so, “He withdrew Himself into the wilderness and prayed” for more of that real power which touches the hearts of men so as to save them, caring nothing for that power which merely attracts a crowd and excites momentary attention. O servant of God, when you are best succeeding in your service, imitate your Lord—withdraw yourself and pray!

17. *And it came to pass on a certain day, as He was teaching, that there were Pharisees and doctors of the law sitting by, which had come out of every town of Galilee, and Judea, and Jerusalem; and the power of the Lord was present to heal them.* To heal the people? Yes, and to heal the doctors, too! And that was a far more difficult thing than to heal the ordinary folk. It must have been a time of great mercy and favor when Christ was ready to bless even the Pharisees and doctors of the law who were sitting by.

18. *And, behold*—For it was a great wonder—

18. *Men brought in a bed, a man which was taken with palsy.* A paralyzed man.

18, 19. *And they sought means to bring him in, and to lay him before Him. And when they could not find by what way they might bring him in because of the multitude, they went upon the housetop.* There was, no doubt, a staircase outside, as there usually is to Eastern houses. “They went upon the housetop,”

19-21. *And let him down through the tiling with his couch into the midst before Jesus. And when He saw their faith, He said unto him, Man, your sins are forgiven you. And the scribes and the Pharisees began to reason, saying, Who is this which speaks blasphemies? Who can forgive sins, but God alone?* Most true, O Pharisees and, therefore, He *is* God, for He can forgive sins and He has forgiven this poor sinner!

22, 23. *But when Jesus perceived their thoughts, He, answering, said unto them, What reason you in your hearts? Whether it is easier to say, Your sins are forgiven you, or to say, rise up and walk?* “Does not each of these require the same Divine power? If I am able to bid him rise up and walk, I am also able, by the same Divine authority, to forgive his sins.”

24-26. *But that you may know that the Son of Man has power upon earth to forgive sins, (He said unto the sick of the palsy,) I say unto you, Arise, and take up your couch, and go into your house. And immediately he rose up before them and took up that on which he lay, and departed to his own house, glorifying God. And they were all amazed, and they glorified God, and were filled with fear.* With a reverent awe!

26, 27. *Saying, We have seen strange things today. And after these things He went forth, and saw a publican, named Levi, sitting at the receipt of custom.* This Levi, or Matthew, was a tax collector. Not like those of our own day, but one who collected the taxes for the Roman governor and made what he could for himself out of them. At least that is what many of the “publicans” did.

27, 28. *And He said unto him, Follow Me. And he left all, rose up, and followed Him.* This was just a parallel case to that of curing the palsied man—it is precisely the same morally as the other was physically. The office of a publican was disreputable in the eyes of the Jews, and this Levi was probably making fast money at the cost of his own countrymen. He was *morally* paralyzed as the other man was *physically*, but as soon as Christ said to him, “Follow Me,” “he left all, rose up, and followed Him.”

29, 30. *And Levi made Him a great feast in his own house: and there was a great company of publicans and of others that sat down with them. But the scribes and Pharisees murmured against His disciples, saying, Why do you eat and drink with publicans and sinners?* It seems that there can never be a great wonder worked by Christ without somebody or other objecting to it! I suppose that the sun never rises without annoying thieves who would like a longer time to perpetrate their deeds of darkness. And no miracle of mercy is ever worked without somebody finding fault with it for some reason or other. Be not dismayed, therefore, now that in these modern days there have arisen many cunning objectors to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Let them object to it, as the dog barks at the moon—the moon still shines on in her silver brightness! So, when all objectors shall have howled themselves to silence, the eternal Gospel will shine on with never-failing splendor. These scribes and Pharisees murmured against Christ's disciples and said to them, "Why do you eat and drink with publicans and sinners?" Their Master did not leave them to defend themselves, but He took the case into His own hands.

31. *And Jesus answering said unto them, They that are whole*—"Such as you scribes and Pharisees claim to be

31. *Need not a physician; but they that are sick.* "You regard them as sick and I regard them in the same way and, therefore, am I found where these sick ones are. Why should I turn aside from them to insult you, who are so wonderfully healthy and think yourselves so good?"

32. *I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.*

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—289, 202, 570.

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