

THE SAVIOR'S CHARITY

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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“Jesus answered and said unto him, What do you want Me to do for you?”
Mark 10:51.

THE story of this miracle is wonderfully attractive. It has always been a favorite theme with preachers. From the days of the Apostles and the fathers of the Church they have delighted to dwell upon any single item of it as it is described by the three Evangelists who record it. We have frequently spoken of the incident as a whole—let us, therefore, now confine our attention to the question which Jesus asked of the blind man, “What do you want Me to do for you?” He asks the same question at this good hour—He asks it of blind men and, I think, He asks it of partly blind men, too. There are some of us whose eyes are opened, but whose vision is obscure—we cannot see afar off. Our blessed Lord and Master says to us, as well as to the blind ones, “What do you want Me to do for you?”

Let us consider this question attentively, *first on our Savior's part—the disposition it shows.* And then *on our own part—the appeal to which we should respond.*

I. THE QUESTION, AS PUT BY OUR SAVIOR, is expressive of much tenderness. *There is a beautiful delicacy in its manner.* The absence of any distinct allusion to the privation the poor man suffered from, is kind. I have noticed, in many cases, that to afflicted persons, any allusion to their infirmities is very distasteful. You could hardly do anything that would be more ungracious to a blind person than to be perpetually reminding him of his blindness, or to a person who was lame than constantly referring to his misfortune. Such people are hopeful that, bearing the evil patiently, themselves, it will not be detected by others and they are anxious to avoid the pity which is grievous when it becomes obtrusive. Now our Savior did not say to this man, “Alas, poor Creature, what a sad state you are in!” There was not a word concerning the man's blindness to wound his sensibility. He was a beggar, to boot, and his dependence on alms for his subsistence would be, of itself, humiliating enough without referring to that poverty which, if keenly felt, is apt to crush a man's spirit and shear him of self-respect. There is not a word about poverty here. Christ did not say, “How long have you been sitting by the wayside begging? How much have you obtained from the cold hand of charity during the last few days?” You would not know that the man was a beggar and blind by the question which the Savior addressed to him. “What do you want Me to do for you?”—that might have been spoken to a prince or to a king as gracefully as it was spoken to the poor blind beggar of Jericho!

I do not know whether you see much to admire and appreciate in this tenderness. I think it needs a man of fine feeling and generous sympathy to fully estimate it. Very characteristic was it of the way in which Christ deals with souls, as other instances show. The parable of the prodigal son is a correct picture of our Heavenly Father's dealings with His returning sons. In that parable we are told of the youth's nakedness, poverty, hunger and so on, but the father never mentions any one of these things—but he fell upon his son's unwashed neck and kissed his yet filthy face—and received him to his arms, all ragged as he still was! To anyone else he would have been a loathsome object, and yet to his father's heart he was still lovely, for he was his own dear child! He perceived the jewel, though it was lying on a dunghill. He did not say, “My dear Son, how sad a thing it is that you should have left my roof! How could you be so foolish as to spend your living with harlots? Alas, my dear Son, to what a degradation have you been brought in feeding swine.” No, there must be no sort of allusion at all to the plight in which the prodigal youth returned. He was acknowledged and welcomed just as he was—in his sinnership.

Neither does the Gospel of Jesus Christ come to you with taunts and upbraiding, continually reminding you of your sin. That is the work of the Law of God. The Law is like a sharp needle. It must go through the fabric and draw after it

the silver thread of the Gospel. The Gospel's message is not so much about your sin as it is about the remedy for it! And when it comes to deal with your sin, it deals less with it as a crime than as a disease. It looks upon it as an affliction. It takes the most merciful view that is possible—and how little does it say to you even of disease? It gives you many invitations, “Ho, every one that thirsts.” Nothing about sin there. “Come unto Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden.” Nothing about sin there. You remember that hymn of Rowland Hill's, which says—

“Come filthy, come naked, come just as you are.”?

I am not quite certain that that is precisely the style of the Gospel invitation, for that seems to say, “Come unto Me, all you who will. Whoever will, let him come and drink of the Water of Life freely.” There is as little allusion made by the Gospel, itself, to the sin of the sinner as possible. Of course, the sinner must be called a sinner, and the Gospel never says, “Peace, peace,” where there is no peace—and at the same time it does not expose the disease without prescribing the remedy. The Gospel does not appeal to us so much in tones of thunder to acquaint us with our peril as it admonishes us to fly without delay to a place of safety! The Gospel does not speak from Sinai, but from Calvary! From Sinai you hear the voice of rigid justice—from Calvary you hear the voice of tender mercy and gracious pardon.

There is something, I think, then, in this omission of the Savior's which has a blessed tenderness in it. Do you ask, “Why such tenderness to the sinner?” The reply is, “Because he is one who needs to be tenderly dealt with.” It has been said that the good surgeon should have a lion's heart and a lady's hands. He should have the courage to do anything that is of vital moment to the physical frame, be it to set a joint, to amputate a limb, or to uncover a sensitive nerve, yet he should have the utmost delicacy of touch, and the most tender of hearts in performing an operation that involves pain to the patient. To have his bones set with downy fingers is the injured man's desire. The awakened conscience is extremely sensitive. The Law has been using its cat-o'-ten-tails upon the sinner's back until it has been furrowed with deep gashes. “The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint—from the sole of the foot, even unto the head, there is no soundness in it, but wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores.” Such a man needs to be gently handled! The Physician of souls knows this! The Savior of sinners acts thus. Not a harsh word is spoken, but Grace is poured out from His lips. Not threats, terror, rebuke, but Grace, and peace, and love!

I revel in this thought—commonplace it may be, but practical and precious it certainly is! What instruction is afforded us! How it teaches us wisely to deal with the tender conscience! Like the Savior, Himself, we ought to minister to those who feel their need of help and healing very lovingly and gently, lest we break the bruised reed, or quench the smoking flax. The hypocrite and self-righteous need have no tenderness shown towards them. Caresses would but nourish their conceit. The Savior addresses them with loathing threats—“Woe unto you, Scribes, Pharisees, hypocrites!” What indignant epithets does He use! With what utter contempt does He assail them, calling them, “fools, and blind,” “serpents, and a generation of vipers!” Yes, “whitewashed sepulchers,” and I know not what besides! But when He comes to deal with the shorn lambs, how tenderly He carries them in His bosom! How gently He addresses those whose broken hearts need gentleness! Let us do the same. Let us try to bring out the sweets of the promise. Let us seek to break the promise into small pieces, that it may give them the meaning and sense, so that they can understand it. Let us pray that the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, would effectually make us the instruments of comforting every soul that is depressed and dejected.

Not less remarkable is the *wisdom of the Savior*. You notice the question, “What do you want Me to do for you?” It is a rule with Christ never to do for us what we can do for ourselves. He did not tell the man that he was blind, because the man knew that himself. He did not undertake to do the work of conscience. In vain you look to Jesus Christ or to the Holy Spirit to do for a man that which it behooves the man to do for himself! This poor fellow could tell that he was blind, hence our Lord asked him a question which set his own mind to work. Now, dear Friend, if you are desirous of being saved, Christ asks you, “What do you want Me to do for you?” Your own conscience, if it is at all enlightened, will tell you that you have many sins that need to be forgiven. Why should Christ tell you that? The inward monitor, when fully awakened, knows that there is much sin that you have committed which requires absolution—and much sin cleaving to your nature from which you require to be cleansed. You have much depravity to overcome. Your conscience tells you so. Christ does not come to you in the Gospel and tell you this. He does not accuse you or excuse you in this way. With all mildness and gentleness, He puts the question thus, “What do you want Me to do for you?”—as if to make the blind man really think of the darkness in which he had lived so long, of the scales that were over his eyes and the disease

that affected his optic nerve. It was well to make him think of all this, that his conscience should be naturally and thoroughly exercised. It seems to me to have been a salutary lesson, without which he would never have felt the gratitude that the gift of sight should inspire. Full many a mercy we receive and inadequately appreciate because we have never known the lack of it. People who have never been sick in their lives are not so grateful for health as those who are restored after a long illness, or those who have often been cast upon a bed of languishing. Those who have never known the pinch of poverty are seldom so grateful as they ought to be for food and raiment. While this man could see nothing, he could discern a great deal with his inward consciousness. His privation would suggest such manifold disadvantages that when he got the light, he would be sure to bless Christ for it! With the power of vision, once more to gaze upon the outward world, he would have a song in his mouth, as well as light in his eyes! It was wise in Christ thus to exercise his conscience that he might evoke his gratitude.

By means of this question, *Christ was giving the man lessons in prayer*. A schoolboy is encouraged by his master to apply to him if he finds any difficulty in his exercises that he cannot grapple with. Suppose it is the translation of a sentence from Latin into English. When he asks help, does the master at once take the matter out of his hands and do it for him? Certainly not! He says, "Where is your difficulty? Is it the meaning of that noun, or the construction of that verb, or what is it that perplexes you? Put your finger on the point that distresses you, and I will give you the assistance you require." When the blind man said, "You, Son of David, have mercy on me," his request was valid, but vague. He craved mercy, but what particular mercy was he in need of? He had need to learn the sacred art of pleading. The most advanced Christian has still need to pray, "Lord, teach us how to pray." I have noticed that though the disciples often heard Christ preach, they never said, "Lord, teach us how to preach"—but when they heard Him *pray*—you recollect the passages—"As He was praying in a certain place, the disciples said to Him, Lord, teach us how to pray." They were so astonished with such praying as the Savior's, that though, perhaps, they thought that they might emulate His *preaching*, His praying seemed too masterly, too infinitely above them, and they could not help exclaiming, "Oh, God, show us how to pray like that!" They felt that the majesty of His prayer was a great thing if they could but attain unto it. They desired to be taught how to pray. This is what Christ was doing with this man—He was teaching him how to pray! He did not at once open his eyes, but encouraged him to ask what he needed done for him. When the child first begins to walk, it runs, eager to catch hold of something. The mother gets a little farther back, and a little farther, and the child goes tottering onwards to reach what it desires—and so it learns to walk. So is it with the mercy of God—He holds it out a little farther, and yet a little farther—that the soul may pray yet more. It was wisdom on the part of Christ, then, for this reason to propound the question.

And oh, what marvelous generosity this question implies! The Savior's liberality knows no bounds. "What do you want Me to do for you?" If the Messrs. Rothschild, or some other eminent capitalists were to place in one's hand a book of blank checks, and say, "There, draw what you like," it would be a liberality unheard of! To whatever extent a man may be willing to benefit his fellow man, there must be a limit. But when Jesus says, "What do you want Me to do for you?" there is no limit to His resources, or His readiness to bestow! The will of the person of whom the question is asked may limit the petition, but as the Savior put it, He gave, as it were, a sort of challenge to the poor beggar to ask whatever he liked. Now, Brothers and Sisters, this is much the way the Savior deals with all His people. "What do you want Me to do for you?" Whatever your desire may be, He will hear you and attend to it. I say not that He will grant it to you if it is not for your profit, but He would have you tell Him what it is you are desirous to ask. We have an example in this Chapter of this kind of limitation—when James and John asked for something which our Lord thought it would do them no good to have. Nevertheless, if it is truly for your benefit and for His Glory, you shall have it, ask what you will! You are not to dictate—you entreat pressingly. You are not Omniscient and, therefore, your will can never be wiser than His—but you are God's child and, therefore, your desire shall be very prevalent with Him. "Ask what you will, and it shall be done unto you." Take this Book—the promises in it are exceedingly great and inestimably precious—so great that no man need ever complain that they are not large enough for him to stretch himself upon them! There are promises of God in this Book, the bottom of which no man can ever touch—streams of mercy which flow on with such a volume of Grace that it is impossible they should ever be exhausted! Even though we should be like that mighty one who drinks up Jordan at a draught, yet should we never exhaust the mighty promises of God! I wish we could really feel how freely Christ gives.

When we consider that He spared not His own self, but gave up His whole heart and emptied out His whole soul unto death for us, we can well understand that, having given Himself for us, He will also freely give us all things.

Thus much have I spoken concerning the question of our text as it interprets the goodwill of Christ. Let us now turn it over again—

II. AS IT APPEALS TO OURSELVES.

What do you think it ought to say to us? Or what should we say in response to it? It strikes me that, as it shows Christ's tenderness, so, on our part, *it ought to prompt a corresponding tenderness*. Horrible is the state of that man's mind who can presume upon Christ's tenderness and yet love sin! I have heard some preach the Doctrine that God sees no sin in Jacob, neither iniquity in Israel, in such a way as to make you feel that they could not see any sin in the people of Jehovah's choice. But I would like to feel that His great forbearance excited my scrupulousness. Does the Lord say that He can see no sin? Then I will see it all the more. Does He say of His exquisite tenderness, "You are all fair, My Love, there is no spot in you"—shall I, therefore, treat sin as though it were nothing, trifle with it and call it a nonentity? Oh, no! I will weep because of the tenderness of Him who knows all about me! And though He is too gracious to throw my sin in my teeth, yet I will take care to bemoan it myself. God forgives me—and for that reason I cannot forgive myself. God casts my sin behind His back—therefore, I have it continually before my face. Such love as His makes me appear the more black, the more detestable in my own eyes. If I had a friend who knew that I had some besetting sin, some grievous infirmity, and if that dear friend, out of the tenderness of his heart for me, never mentioned it to me, though it had grieved him much, should I, therefore, treat it with levity? Suppose I had injured him in business, do you think I should forget it for that reason? Or had I been the instrument of his losing some dear relative, and yet he never said a word to me about it, never upbraided me, never looked as if he felt that I had wronged him—never even hinted in a side way that I was the cause of his pain—well, I hope I speak honestly when I say that his kind reticence would wound and cut me to the heart more than if he spoke bitterly to me! If you, as a servant, have committed a fault and your master never says a word by way of blame, I am sure you will feel the more sorry rather than the less concerned for the wrong you have done. If a man comes to me in a rage and calls me evil names, I consider, then, that whatever my fault may be, he has taken his revenge and I am not bound to humble myself—but when he says, "Ah well, I will say nothing about it," or when he passes it over in silence and is as quiet and tender to me as if I had never done him an injury, why, then I must chastise myself, even if he will not chastise me! I must blame myself, since he will not blame me. Dear Christian Friends, let us cultivate a holy sensibility. There is what is called the sensitive plant which turns up its leaves when it is touched. Let us be like that plant. If Christ has been tender to us, let us also be tender!

Did we not also say that Christ exhibits wisdom in the question which He put to this blind man? *Let us always seek to acquire wisdom*. The text suggests the idea of studying. "What do you want Me to do for you?" How few students among us are studious to do the will of the Lord! They may take to studying Ezekiel, and Daniel, and the Revelation—and they get a blessing out of those three Books—but I wish they would do a little more for the Master than they are ordinarily known to do! Some people are so busy studying the stars that they have no time to trim the lamps here below, and yet I think the stars would shine as brightly without their study, whereas the lamps below might give clearer light if only they gave them a careful trimming. But while this is the fault of some, the fault of others is that they are all for sowing, but they scatter seed out of an empty basket! They are all for working, but their tools are out of order! They would go fishing, but they forget to mend their nets. It were well if some who are teachers were but learners. Martha worked for Christ, but Mary *learned* of Christ. A holy mixture of these employments would be profitable. Would we have Martha and Mary in one—first *learn of Christ* and then *work for Christ*—this would be comely. Very familiar is that quotation from Pope—

"The proper study of mankind is man."

I am not so sure that it deserves the currency it has obtained. It is hardly standard gold. The proper study of mankind is God, but in order to get to God one must know something about man! It is well for us to know something of man's ruined estate, and especially to be acquainted with our own weakness, our own danger and our present exposure. Christian, study this! It is a very black book, but read on, for it is useful because of another Book which shall follow. For, in order to get wisdom, we had need study the Scriptures, too, with a view to the practical testing of what we learn abroad.

This leads me to the remark that *it would be profitable to us were we to study our prayers*. Does that sound strange? You do not think it right to come to the Lord's Table without some degree of preparation—why should you not prepare to go to the Mercy Seat and to the Throne of Grace? If you were permitted to have an audience of Her Majesty, I will guarantee you that if you intended to ask anything, you would weigh your thoughts and almost construct your sentences before you were ushered into her presence! Certainly you would not go without considering what you intended to ask! When a man sends up a petition to the House of Commons, he knows what he wants—it were idle to throw together a mere jumble of words. It is true that the Holy Spirit has promised to help our infirmities, but He will not do for us what we can do for ourselves! I love extemporaneous prayer, for I believe that when the thoughts are clear, and the emotions vigorous, fit words will not be lacking. But I am not so fond of extemporaneous prayer when the sentiment, itself, is extemporized. Let a sermon be delivered extempore, it will be doubtless more effective than the reading of an elaborate essay, but it would be a poor sermon which the preacher never thought about before he uttered it! I have heard of a certain Divine, who, after preaching, observed to some of his hearers that he had never thought of it before he went into the pulpit. The answer he got was, “That is just what we suspected.” They had noticed how void it was of meaning and method. We ought to well consider our prayers. Are we not told that we have not because we ask amiss? I fear we often ask amiss from lack of preparation! The archer, when he draws his bow, not only puts his whole strength into the effort, but he diligently takes aim before he actually discharges his arrow. So let the suppliant pray! “Unto you,” says David, “will I direct my prayer.” Follow David's example, my Friend. Be considerate of the requests you present before the Most High.

The generosity involved in our Lord's question, “What do you want Me to do for you?” supplies us with *a strong incentive to boldness at the Throne of Grace*. This is our last thought. Should we not seek much liberty in prayer when we are encouraged by such liberality, such a profusion of Grace? Let us not be so reluctant to ask while our Lord and Master is so ready to supply! “Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it,” says our God. A traveler thinks that this passage must bear an allusion to a custom which prevails in the East and was practiced not many months ago by a Persian Shah. The monarch told one of his subjects to open his mouth, and when the man had done so, he began to put into it diamonds, pearls, emeralds, rubies and all sorts of jewels! Well, though I suppose that these are not very pleasant things to have in one's mouth, I can readily understand that a man who knew he was to have as many of them as he could hold in his mouth would open his mouth rather wide! And are not God's mercies so rich that they are like diamonds of the first water and jewels beyond all price? Surely there should be no need to press the exhortation—we do not ask enough. This is a complaint which was never brought against any poor mendicant in quest of this world's comforts, and yet it is a complaint which God brings against us! Our puny souls do not crave so much as His infinite bounty is willing to bestow! Let us so account of God as that courtier whom Alexander bid to ask what he would. He asked for so much that the king's treasurer was staggered at the demand. Not so Alexander the Great! He said, though it was much for a subject to ask, it was not much for Alexander to give! Let the riches of God's Glory, rather than the meanness of your own estate, measure the compass of your requests, when He says, “What do you want Me to do for you?”

Now the Savior is present with us in Spirit. He will soon be here in Person. I think I hear His voice as He puts this question, in loving tones, to each one of us, “What do you want Me to do for you?” You aged folks who have passed your “best days” (as they are called, though I hope your best days are really now coming), what do you want Christ to do for you? You venerable saints, if you have little to ask for yourselves in this world, what will you ask for us who are bearing the heat and burden of the day? You soldiers of Christ, who are in middle life, what do you want Christ to do for you? Have you no children to pray for, no household mercies to seek, no troubles from which you would be delivered? And you young men and maidens, the Master says to you, “What do you want Me to do for you?” If you can, I trust you will put up a desire while you are in your pews. If not, let the question greet you at the bedside where you have bowed so often. Pause a while before you pray. Think what you shall ask. It may be that the Lord, who appeared unto Solomon and said, “I will give you whatever you shall ask,” may have appeared to you to make this the night of mercy. Ask not wealth of Him, ask not honor, ask not rank and station, but ask Him to give you His dear Son! Ask to have the Savior to be yours forever—and if you ask this, it will be a wide-mouthed prayer, but God will answer it, and you shall have this grateful response, “According to your faith be it done unto you.” Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:

MARK 10:13-27, 32-52.

Verse 13. *And they brought young children to Him, that He should touch them: and His disciples rebuked those that brought them.* They thought them too little, too insignificant, and that the Master had greater things to do. But He thought not so. None are too little for Him! He receives even childish honors to Himself.

14. *But when Jesus saw it, He was much displeased, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not: for of such is the Kingdom of God.* Many of them come into that Kingdom and all who come there must be like they. The child is not the hardest subject of conversion! No, rather—

15. *Verily I say unto you, Whoever shall not receive the Kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein.* Instead of growing wiser, in order to be fit for Christ, we must be more conscious of ignorance, more trustful towards Him, more dependent upon Him, more *childlike*.

16-18. *And He took them up in His arms, put His hands upon them, and blessed them. And when He was gone forth into the way, there came one running, and kneeled to Him, and asked Him, Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life. And Jesus said unto Him, Why do you call Me good? There is none good but One, that is, God.* He did not here unveil His Deity to that young man, but if he had thought a while, he might have seen it. However, He answered his question. “If you are to be saved by your doings, this is what you have to do—not attend to sacraments and go through performances, but this.”

19, 20. *You know the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Defraud not. Honor your father and mother. And he answered and said unto Him, Master, all these have I observed from my youth.* And he probably had very cautiously and anxiously done so, yet, for all that, he had not really kept all those commands without a flaw. We are right well sure of that, but as yet his eyes were not open to see his own shortcomings.

21. *Then Jesus, beholding him, loved him.* There was so much that was amiable about him.

21, 22. *And said unto him, One thing you lack: go your way, sell whatever you have, and give to the poor, and you shall have treasure in Heaven: and come, take up the Cross, and follow Me.* He knew that there was a weak point in the young man's character—that he did not yet supremely love God, but loved his wealth—that he was living for this world, after all. And are there not many such—most correct in character? No one could point to a single flaw in their morals, but they are living purely for self—altogether that they may buy and sell and get gain. No thought of God, except a fear lest they should come under His rod—but no thought of serving Him, or laying themselves out for His Glory—nor much thought, either, for their fellow men. Christ had hit the blot—marked it out for him.

23. *And the disciples were astonished at His words.* For the Rabbis had pretty well taught that money would answer everything—that if you could give so much, and pay so much, it was all well with you. Christ went against all such teaching, and showed that, in this respect, money was of no service—in fact, that it often was a hindrance.

24. *But Jesus answered again, and said unto them, Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the Kingdom of God!* It is an impossibility. Only God can do it.

25-35. *It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the Kingdom of God. And they were astonished out of measure, saying among themselves, Who, then, can be saved? And Jesus looking upon them said, With men it is impossible, but not with God: for with God all things are possible. And they were in the way going up to Jerusalem; and Jesus went before them: and they were amazed: and as they followed, they were afraid. And He took the twelve, and began to tell them what things should happen unto Him, Saying, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of Man shall be delivered unto the chief priests, and unto the scribes. And they shall condemn Him to death and shall deliver Him to the Gentiles. And they shall mock Him, and shall scourge Him, and shall spit upon Him, and shall kill Him. And the third day He shall rise again.* From the number of these sentences it is clear that our Savior entered into a very detailed account of His sufferings, dwelling upon each particular which He plainly foresaw, wherein we see His Prophetic Character. But it is more to our point to see that He knew beforehand what it would cost Him to redeem our souls—

*“When the Savior knew the price of pardon
Was His blood, His pity never withdrew.”*

He knew not only that He must die, but He knew all the circumstances of pain and shame with which that death should be attended. They would condemn Him, deliver Him to the Gentiles, mock Him, scourge Him, spit upon Him and kill Him. Thus we learn that we also should dwell in holy, grateful meditation upon every point of our Lord's Passion. There is something in it. He would not, Himself, thus have divided it out, and laid it, as it were, piece by piece, if He had not intended us to do with it as they did with the burnt offering of old, when they divided it—a picture of what every intelligent, instructed Believer should do with the Passion of His Master. He should try to look into the details of the great Sacrifice and have communion with God therein. Now, albeit that this Revelation of His coming shame, and sorrow, and death afflicted the hearts of His disciples, yet, for all that, observe what they did.

35. *And James and John, the sons of Zebedee, come unto Him, saying, Master, we would that You should do for us whatever we shall desire.* Strange request! First of all, read those words, "We would that You should do for us." Now the genuine spirit of a Christian is not to ask that something should be done for him, but to ask his Master, especially in such a time as that, what they could do for Him! Christ was all unselfishness, but His disciples had not yet learned the lesson. "We would that You should do for us." And then see how much they indulged their ambition. "We would that You should do for us *whatever we desire.*" And yet I question whether we are, any of us, free from this spirit! For when the Lord reproves us a little and we have not everything our own way, how apt we are to rebel! The fact is, we have got this tincture—this gall already in us—we would that He should do for us whatever we desire! Should it be according to your mind? Should the disciple dictate to his Master? Should the child be lord of the family?

36-39. *And He said unto them, What do you want Me to do for you? They said unto Him, Grant unto us that we may sit, one at Your right hand, and the other at Your left hand, in Your Glory. But Jesus said unto them, You know not what you ask: can you drink of the cup that I drink of and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? And they said unto Him, We can.* Again, He might have said, "You know not what you say."

39, 40. *And Jesus said unto them, You shall indeed drink of the cup that I drink of; and with the baptism that I am baptized withal shall you be baptized. But to sit at My right hand and at My left hand is not Mine to give; but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared.* They are not content, you see, with being ambitious—they would fire Him with ambition—that humble, lowly Servant of God, who had laid aside for a while the power to distribute crowns and thrones! But He does not forget Himself, nor the position which He had taken up in reference to the Father, but said, "It is not Mine to give."

41-43. *And when the ten heard it, they began to be much displeased with James and John. But Jesus called them to Him, and said unto them, You know that they which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and their great ones exercise authority upon them. But so shall it not be among you.* However, how sad the contrast is—the Master's thoughts all taken up with His death for others—and their thoughts occupied with little petty jealousies as to who should be the greatest! It is a sad thing when this creeps into Christian Churches (and it still does), when souls are perishing, and this poor world needs our weeping eyes and our laborious hands, and we get to quarreling about points of precedence! This Brother thinks the other too forward. This one has not enough respect paid to him. This one has spoken sharply and the other cannot bear it. Oh, what poor disciples we are! What a blessing it is we have a patient Master who still bears with us, and will not leave us until He has infused His own spirit into us, which spirit is the spirit of self-denial, self-abnegation—the spirit which desires not its own, but looks on the things of others. God grant us all to be full of it!

43. *But whoever will be great among you, shall be your minister.* Your servant.

44. *And whoever of you will be the chief, shall be servant of all.* And that is the way to be truly great in the Church of God—it is to be less and less in your own esteem, and willing to be nothing! The way up is downward! That is not a contradiction, but it is a paradox. Sink, and you shall rise. Be willing to serve the very *least*, and you shall have honor among your Brothers and Sisters. Remember that the King of Kings was the Servant of Servants! "Whoever of you will be the chief, shall be servant of all."

45-49. *For even the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister and to give His life a ransom for many. And they came to Jericho: and as He went out of Jericho with His disciples and a great number of people, blind Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus, sat by the highway side begging. And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out, and say, Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me! And many charged him that he should hold his peace; but he cried the more a great deal, Son of David, have mercy on me! And Jesus stood still, and commanded him to be*

called. And they called the blind man, saying unto him, Be of good comfort. “Cheer up.” That would be a very exact translation.

49-51. *Rise; He calls you! And he, casting away his garment, rose, and came to Jesus. And Jesus answered and said unto him, What do you want Me to do for you?* Do you notice here a sort of gentle rebuke that the Savior gives to James and John? Read the 36th verse, and then read this again. “He said unto them, What do you want Me to do for you?” And now here is a blind beggar, and He sweetly puts the same question to Him, “What do you want Me to do for you?”

51. *The blind man said unto Him.* And here *he* might well have shamed John and James! He asked for no thrones or kingdoms.

51. *Lord, that I might receive my sight.* “Lord, that I might look up.” That is the exact translation, for no doubt he had been conscious that the light came from the sun as he felt its warmth upon him as he sat by the wayside! And, therefore, he thought that seeing must be looking up towards the place from where the sunlight came. “Lord, that I might look up.”

52, 53. *And Jesus said unto him, Go your way; your faith has made you whole. And immediately he received his sight, and followed Jesus in the way.* It is a very remarkable thing that you will not often find the Lord Jesus Christ granting a favor without ascribing it to some excellence in the person to whom He grants it. It is generally, “Great is your faith,” or something of that sort—“I have not seen such faith.” Now this is a very remarkable thing because we know there really was nothing whatever in the persons, that they should deserve His great favor!

—Adapted from the *C. H. Spurgeon Collection*, Version 1.0, Ages Software.

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