

The Day of Power

by J.C. Philpot

The sermon emphasizes the power of God to save his people from spiritual darkness and to bring them into a deeper understanding of his word and salvation.

Scripture: Psalm 139:23, Ecclesiastes 8:4, Isaiah 2:3, Isaiah 29:18, 1 Corinthians 1:30, 2 Timothy 3:5

Topics: "Spiritual Revival", "Gods Intervention"

Description

J.C. Philpot preaches about the spiritual conditions of the professing church, highlighting the dangers of general slumber, ignorance, hypocrisy, perversion, and rebellion. He emphasizes the need for God's intervention to open the ears of the deaf to hear His words and to enlighten the eyes of the blind to see His truth. Philpot describes the characteristics of the meek, who find joy in the Lord, and the poor among men, who rejoice in the Holy One of Israel, as those exempted from the general woe pronounced against the unfaithful. He encourages self-reflection on whether one aligns with the deaf, blind, meek, and poor among men, who are blessed by God's grace and mercy.

Transcript

Preached at Zoar Chapel, London, on July 7th, 1844, by J. C. Philpot

"And in that day shall the deaf hear the words of the book, and the eyes of the blind shall see out of obscurity, and out of darkness. The meek also shall increase their joy in the Lord, and the poor among men shall rejoice in the Holy One of Israel." (Isaiah 29:18,19)

What a picture does the Holy Spirit draw in this chapter of a professing church "having a form of godliness, and denying the power thereof!" (2 Tim. 3:5) And with what a solemn woe does it open: "Woe to Ariel, to Ariel, the city where David dwelt!" Ariel means "the light of God," and is the name given to Jerusalem, as being the place where the Lord specially manifested himself; for "out of Zion went forth the law, and the word of the Lord out of Jerusalem." (Isa. 2:3) But the Lord saw into what an dreadful state Jerusalem had fallen; and therefore, though the Holy Spirit still calls her by the name of Ariel, "the light of God," viewing her according to the position in which he had originally placed her, yet he pronounces a woe on her, because that light was become dim, and burnt not as brightly as when David dwelt there. He therefore says, "Add year to year"--go on still in your dead and lifeless profession; "let them kill sacrifices"--let all the forms still be observed, but do not think that these things are acceptable in my holy eyes, or that I can be satisfied with the form while the power is lacking.

The former part of this chapter is obscure, and probably contains much that remains to be fulfilled; but the latter part is sufficiently plain. God the Spirit files in it a dreadful bill of charges against the professing church. Let us see what they are.

We read, then, of a general sleep. (v10) "The Lord has poured out upon you the spirit of deep sleep, and has closed the eyes of the prophets and your rulers, and the seers," and the effect of this general slumber, which the Lord thus solemnly declared to have proceeded from himself in a way of judgment, was, that neither the learned nor the unlearned knew the power of God's truth. "For you this whole vision is nothing but words sealed in a scroll. And if you give the scroll to someone who can read, and say to him, "Read this, please," he will answer, "I can't; it is sealed." Or if you give the scroll to someone who cannot read, and say, "Read this, please," he will answer, "I don't know how to read." (v11-12) The learned could not read the book, for it was "sealed;" and the unlearned could not, because they were "not learned," and thus, secondly, the effect of general sleep, was general ignorance.

The third charge which the Holy Spirit files against the professing church, is general hypocrisy. "These people come near to me with their mouth and honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. Their worship of me is made up only of rules taught by men." (v13)

The first step then, in the apostasy of the professing church, was judicial sleep; the second, as its effect, general ignorance; and the third, as the fruit of general ignorance, was general hypocrisy; they drew near to God with their lips, while their hearts were far from him; and their fear was not the godly, filial fear which is a fruit of the Spirit, but a base counterfeit, taught by the precept of men.

The fourth charge is general perversion and confusion; "You turn things upside down, as if the potter were thought to be like the clay!" (v16) Right and wrong, bitter and sweet, good and evil, light and darkness, were all confounded; truth was perverted, and error substituted for it; and thus universal confusion prevailed.

The fifth charge is that of general rebellion. "Shall what is formed say to him who formed it, He did not make me? Can the pot say of the potter, He knows nothing?" (v16) The creature dared to arraign God's power, "He did not make me;" "My own will and power made me a Christian;" and to doubt God's wisdom, "He knows nothing;" "Man's wisdom outshines the Lord's."

See then, what an dreadful bill of charges the Holy Spirit here files against Ariel, the professing church of God--general slumber, general ignorance, general hypocrisy, general perversion, and general rebellion. Can we find a counterpart to this picture? Do you think that any church ever existed since that time resembling the one which the Holy Spirit has here described? Yes! the professing church of the day in which we live presents a perfect counterpart to the picture here given; nor could we have a portrait of it more minute in all the details, or a more graphic, vivid, or powerful description of what the professing church is in the day and generation in which our lot is cast. Are not the five marks I have mentioned now so plainly stamped on its forehead, that he who runs may read?

Has God, then, abandoned his people? Has he forsaken his church? "Is his mercy clean gone forever? does his promise fail for evermore? Has God forgotten to be gracious? has he in anger shut up his tender mercies?" No! he has reserved to himself "a remnant." Therefore we read in the text, "In that day," (that day of general slumber, general ignorance, general hypocrisy, general perversion, and general rebellion), "in that day shall the deaf hear the words of the book, and the eyes of the blind shall see out of obscurity, and out of darkness. The meek also shall increase their joy in the Lord, and the poor among men shall

rejoice in the Holy One of Israel." We see here a gleam of sunshine breaking through the black cloud that overspreads the earth; the Lord still appears on behalf of his people, whom, that they may not be here mistaken, he here describes by peculiar marks.

If we look, then, at the words of the text, we see four characters mentioned in it--the deaf, the blind, the meek, and the poor. And we find certain promises addressed to each and all of them--the "deaf shall hear," the "blind shall see," the "meek shall increase their joy in the Lord," and "the poor among men shall rejoice in the Holy One of Israel."

In speaking, therefore, from these words, I shall attempt to trace out, as far as the Lord shall enable me, the characters mentioned, and the promises addressed to them. And as it might create confusion if I were to separate the character too far from the promise, I shall endeavor to take up the text as it lies before me, and, following God's order, examine the separate clauses as the Spirit has here revealed them. And may he give me "the tongue of the learned," and you the ear of the wise, and crown the whole with his special savor and blessing to my and your consciences.

The text commences, "In that day." It cannot have escaped your observation, if you are an attentive reader of the Scriptures, that the phrase, "in that day," is much made use of by the prophets, and especially by Isaiah, and that great and glorious things are usually connected with this day. Now, if you will look carefully to the connection where the phrase, "in that day," is used, you will find, for the most part, that two distinct things are spoken of as taking place in it; and that it is either a day of TROUBLE, or a day of joy. For instance, we read, (Isa. 2:11,12) "The day is coming when your pride will be brought low and the Lord alone will be exalted. In that day the Lord Almighty will punish the proud, bringing them down to the dust." This day, we read, is to be "upon all the towering cedars of Lebanon, the lofty oaks of Bashan, the proud ships of Tarshish, and upon every stately vessel;" and the effect of that day is, that "the loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be made low." (Isa. 2:17) Again, we read, (Jer. 30:7) "Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it; it is even the time of Jacob's trouble; but he shall be saved out of it." We read also of "the day of Lord" sometimes as a day of darkness, as Amos 5:18-20, "Woe unto you that desire the day of the Lord! to what end is it for you? the day of the Lord is darkness, and not light. Shall not the day of the Lord be darkness, and not light? even very dark, and no brightness in it?"

But, in other places, we find "the day of the Lord" spoken of as a day of deliverance, and therefore connected with JOY, praise, and thanksgiving. "In that day shall this song be sung in the land of Judah." (Isa. 26:1) "In that day you shall say, O Lord, I will praise you; though you were angry with me, your anger is turned away, and you comforted me." (Isa. 12:1)

But some might ask, "How does it come to pass, that the same expression, "that day," can refer to things so opposite? Why does the Holy Spirit speak of one day, when the things that occur in it are so completely different? How can darkness and light, sorrow and joy, affliction and consolation, all happen in the same day?" It is not so. That is not the meaning of the Holy Spirit. But by the expression he means a day of power. It is not the same day as to time, but as to operation; "the day of the Lord" is different from every other day; for it is the day in which the Lord stretches out his hand, makes bare his arm, and conspicuously appears. The same expression is therefore used when the Lord lays low, or when he raises up; when he makes poor, or when he makes rich; when he condemns by the law, or justifies by the gospel. Each is "the day of the Lord," because it is a day of power; either power to kill, or power to heal; power to pull down, or power to build up. When, therefore, we find the expression, "in that day," or "the day of the

Lord," we may assign to it this meaning--a day of power, because it is a day which the Lord calls his own.

But which of these two meanings does it bear in the text? Evidently a day of deliverance--a day of mercy for the church of God. "In that day shall the deaf hear the words of the book."

I. The DEAF. We come, then, at once to one of the characters before hinted at as descriptive of a living soul, and to a promise suitable to such. But what are we to understand by the expression, "deaf?" Whom does it represent? I think it describes the elect of God in two points of view--what they are before, and what they are after the quickening work of God the Spirit on their consciences. The elect, in common with all men, before God gives them spiritual life, have no ears to hear what the Lord speaks; are utterly inattentive to all he has declared in his word of truth; are deaf to his providences, promises, warnings, and precepts. But the promise runs, "In that day the deaf shall hear the words of the book." "The ears of the deaf shall be unstopped;" (Isa. 35:5) and then, and not until then, have they ears to hear what God speaks.

But there is another sense, and that which I think the Holy Spirit means here, in which a person is called "deaf," and that is feelingly and experimentally so, according to these words, (and striking words they are,) "Bring out the people who have eyes but are blind, who have ears but are deaf." (Isa. 43:8) What a strange people must these be. Blind people that have eyes, and deaf people that have ears. And they are to be brought forth conspicuously as a strange and peculiar people, that they may be "wondered at." Naturally it would be a contradiction, and they would be monsters; but spiritually, no contradiction exists, for they feel their blindness and yet see, and feel their deafness and yet hear.

Now, it is with us spiritually, as it was with Paul literally and actually--the first entrance of light makes us feel blind. Did not the light from heaven which shone round about him as he was journeying to Damascus blind him? and was he not three days without sight? So spiritually, we never feel ourselves blind until we begin to see--as long as we think we have light, we are in darkness--but immediately that we begin to see, we begin to feel blind; and when we begin to hear, we begin to feel deaf. The reason of this is, that a new faculty is given to us to see and hear with; and this faculty being as yet weak and feeble, and yet we being able to see and hear with no other, are made to feel how blind we as yet are to the blessed truths of the gospel, and how deaf to hear anything for our peace, joy, and comfort.

Now, the Lord says, "In that day," the day of power, when he stretches forth his hand to do his own work, "shall the deaf," the feelingly and experimentally deaf, "hear the words of the book." What is "the book" here mentioned? It is the book on which I now lay my hand, the sacred Scriptures, the revelation of God's mind and will to the children of men. In this book are "words;" and those words the experimentally deaf are brought to hear, "in that day" when God the Spirit unstops their ears.

But what are the words which the deaf hear? The expression "words" has a very comprehensive signification; for in God's book are words of thunder, and words of "a still small voice; words that terrify and alarm, and words that comfort and console; words from Mount Sinai, and words from Mount Zion; words like a two-edged sword, and words that drop like the dew and rain into the parched soil. "The deaf shall hear the words of the book."

And the first words which they hear are from Mount Sinai; those words which when the people heard them, they "entreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more, for they could not endure that which was commanded; the words that manifest the spirituality of God's law, the holiness of God's character, the sinfulness of sin, and the vengeance due to the transgressor." These words of the book the

deaf hear "in that day" when the Lord puts forth his hand, and unstops their ears. And they find, as king Josiah did, when the book of the law was discovered in the temple, that they are "living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword;" and have a power "to pull down and to destroy," according to one branch of Jeremiah's commission." (Jer. 1:10)

But the words of the book which the deaf hear "in that day" are for the most part comfortable words--for they are usually quick enough to hear all that makes against them, but are deaf to what makes for them. The words, therefore, which they need to hear are those which bring peace, pardon, love, and salvation into their conscience; and because they cannot hear these words of the book to their soul's comfort, they feel to be deaf.

How often has the case of the poor, tried child of God been described from the pulpit, and yet he could not receive the testimony to his soul's comfort! How often have the very invitations and promises suitable to his case been laid before him, and yet he could not hear them for himself, because he felt his need of the power of God to apply them to his conscience.

But, "in that day," the day in which the Lord speaks, "shall the deaf hear the words of the book;" the book of divine revelation, that shows forth the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ; the book where God has unfolded his love in the Person and work of Jesus; the book gemmed and studded with promises, like the stars in the midnight sky; the book written for the consolation and edification of God's living family. "In that day," that day of general profession and darkness to the church--but of power to God's people, "in that day shall the deaf hear the words of the book." And when they hear the words of the book, so as to have them sealed on their conscience and applied to their heart, they find a new Bible, a new God, a new heaven, and a new salvation.

To "hear the words of the book," coming with divine power into their souls from the lips of God becomes all their desire. It is not eloquence, nor wisdom, nor learning that they care to hear, but the words of the book sealed with a divine power. Let God only speak out of the book, it is enough, for "where the word of a King is there is power." (Eccl. 8:4) A promise is sweet, if he but speaks it; a rebuke is felt, if he but applies it; a precept is obeyed, if he but lays it on the conscience; and every truth is precious, if he but makes it known.

II. The BLIND. But another character is spoken of in the text, and another promise is connected with that character, "The eyes of the blind shall see out of obscurity, and out of darkness." What a strange thing it is, that, according to the Lord's words, "the blind will see--and those who see will become blind." (John 9:39) What a strange display of God's sovereignty that all professors nearly think themselves right but the people of God, many of whom are harassed with fears lest they be wrong altogether. What a strange display of divine sovereignty, that many who think themselves going to heaven are going to hell, and many who fear they are going to hell are going to heaven; that many who think themselves wise and in the light, are in ignorance and darkness, while many who feel themselves ignorant and foolish have true knowledge and wisdom.

But what a painful thing it is to feel ourselves blind; to want to see, and find a veil over our eyes; to walk in darkness, and not see those things which we most desire to behold. How the soul at times groans under felt darkness and blindness. How it longs to look into, and thus realize the precious things of Jesus. Now those who thus groan and sigh under a sense of felt darkness and blindness, are the people to whom the promise is applicable, "the eyes of the blind shall see out of obscurity, and out of darkness."

You observe two expressions here made use of, "obscurity" and "darkness." Some of God's people are in "obscurity," and some are in "darkness;" "darkness" being a deeper shade of "obscurity". And "obscurity" a lighter shade of "darkness." Thus, some of God's people are as if in early twilight, or the first faint dawn of day; others "walk in darkness, and have no light;" they have not yet reached obscurity, that being a midway term between light and darkness, the breaking up of the night, the first symptom of the morning.

But what do those in "OBSCURITY" see? After God the Spirit has made them feel their lost and ruined state, the first thing which they see is the way of salvation through a crucified Savior; how God can "be just, and yet the justifier of him who believes in Jesus." (Rom. 3:26) After they have seen "light in God's light," so as to feel and know the thorough wreck and ruin of creature righteousness and false religion, they see out of obscurity, in the light of the Spirit--the Person of Christ, as the Intercessor between God and man, "the Mediator of the new covenant," and, flowing out to him, they see "the blood of sprinkling, that speaks better things than that of Abel." But these views are at present feeble and dim, enough to break the darkness, but little beyond; enough to draw on, but not to satisfy; to see where the sun is, but not sunrise.

Many of God's people are here; they have seen and felt a sweetness and suitability in the blood and righteousness, love and grace of Jesus; but these have been like objects seen in the twilight, not perceived clearly and distinctly, the eyes being still in obscurity.

Others, again, of God's people are in DARKNESS, so as not yet to know and feel the way of escape from the wrath to come, or how God can be just, and yet save their souls. But the promise is given to each; their eyes (and if they have eyes, they cannot be blind) shall see "out of obscurity," and "out of darkness." As God the Spirit brings the precious things of Christ near, and drops a savor of these eternal realities into the soul, the eyes see, and the heart tastes the sweetness of the things presented to the sight. And what a wonderful thing it is to see, in the light of the Spirit, the way of escape from the wrath to come, pardon for the guilty, and righteousness for the sinner. What a glorious sight, when the eyes of the blind are first opened to see the way of salvation through the intercession of the Son of God. It is indeed at first "out of obscurity," they see dimly but truly, the glorious Person of Christ, in whom all the perfections of Jehovah harmonize; the blood of Jesus, as the blood of the Son of God, atoning for the most aggravated offences; his glorious righteousness, which is "unto all and upon all those who believe;" and they see that those who are accepted in his Person, washed in his blood, and clothed in his righteousness, shall assuredly escape from the wrath to come.

These things they see not merely in their judgment, or by the exercise of their natural intellect, but in the light and teaching of God's Spirit, making it known to their consciences. Now this is the only light that can satisfy a man who feels himself blind. Thus the sensation of blindness makes him prize spiritual eye-salve; the feeling of ignorance makes him value spiritual knowledge; groaning under darkness makes him prize the least gleam of spiritual light. And thus, in God's mysterious dealings, previous darkness and obscurity, make the light dear to the eyes, and the things presented in that light sweet and precious to the soul.

How suitable are such promises to those who stand in need of them. Do I feel myself a poor deaf creature that can hear nothing to my soul's comfort but what God speaks with power? Do I find all that words from the mouth of man to be utterly powerless to do my soul good? Do I want the Lord to preach his own gospel to my heart, and proclaim his own mercy, grace, and truth to my soul? If I were not often thus deaf; if I could hear every voice, listen to every word, grasp every promise, close in with every invitation, I would not need God to speak. It is, then, because we feel our deafness, that we need a supernatural voice to

speak to us; and we thus learn to prize the words of the book, when God the Spirit is pleased to speak them home to the heart.

Again, would I need spiritual eye-salve, to have my eyes opened, to feel the veil taken off, if I did not often feel blind? If I never walked in darkness, if I had no obscurity; if I could see what I pleased and when I pleased--what interest could I have, what interest could I wish to have in a promise like this? Is it not, then, worth being deaf to have an interest in such a promise? Is it not worth not hearing a single word for years, if God speaks at the last? Is it not worth groping for the wall like the blind for months together, if at the end God fulfills the promise, and gives the blind to see out of obscurity and darkness?

These lessons, my friends, we cannot learn from man but from the special teachings and leadings of God; and that is one grand reason why the Lord permits his dear people so often to feel deaf and blind, that he may have all the honor of giving them ears and eyes; for he will not give his honor to man; he will not share his glory with the creature; he will have it all his own, for he is "a jealous God." Is not this the reason why you so seldom hear with power? Is it not to teach you what power is? Why do we often painfully feel ourselves to be such blind ignorant wretches? Is it not because we are deaf to every voice but his, and blind to every sight but the light of his countenance, and the revelation of his blessed Spirit? It is very profitable, then, to feel thus deaf and blind.

There are some here perhaps who have been hearing ministers for years, and yet have never heard to their soul's joy. But is not this far better than to hear anybody and everybody? Now you cry to God, "Speak, Lord, to my heart through your servant, let the whole earth be still, and you alone speak; do speak, Lord, for you know my case." And perhaps, there are some here that have been sighing and groaning day after day for months, who feel there are none that can exceed them in ignorance and folly; and of all who have made a profession for years, they think none can have made so little progress in divine things as themselves. But these painful exercises make us prize the Lord's light; and what a sweet and cheering thing light is, when it comes with divine power into the conscience!

III. The MEEK. But we pass on to the next verse of the text, "The meek also shall increase their joy in the Lord, and the poor among men shall rejoice in the Holy One of Israel." There is a very sweet and experimental connection between the two verses of the text: "the meek" and, "the poor" are closely connected with, and in fact are the same people as "the deaf" and "the blind." But what is it to be meek? It is not to be meek by nature (for such there are), but to be meekened by God's grace, by the dealings of the Spirit in the conscience. To be meek a man must be brought down in his spirit, made humble, broken, and contrite before God; his proud thoughts must come down, his towering spirit be laid low in the dust, and his heart be softened by the grace of God.

Two things work together to make a man spiritually meek--a knowledge of God, and a knowledge of himself; a sense of his own deafness, and God making him to hear "the words of the book;" a feeling of his own blindness, and the Lord enabling him to see "out of obscurity," and "out of darkness." Do you think there is a greater pride to be found anywhere than the pride of knowledge in one, and the pride of profession in another part of the outward church? You may find greater heights of worldly pride, but not more towering castles, not stronger bulwarks, than those of dead religious profession. But until these two castles are laid low in the dust, we shall be proud of our understanding and of our attainments; of our gifts, or of our profession; and the more we walk in this path, the prouder we get. In order, then, to meek us, this pride must be abased; and how better can this be done, than by being made to feel how deaf we are when God does not speak, and how blind we are when he does not give light? Suppose I, or any other

minister, could always go into the pulpit with light and life, power and feeling, thoughts and words at our command, would it not make us proud? How humbling, then, are barren and unfruitful seasons! But when the Lord gives light to see out of obscurity and darkness the things that do our souls good, this enlarges and strengthens our hearts. Do not, then, these alternations and changes meeken the soul? Can pride live in such an atmosphere? Can the pride of profession, of knowledge, of piety, and so on, those great sins of the professing church, live and reign in the heart where deafness and blindness are felt alternately with God's power? If these things are but known in the conscience--our deafness, and God speaking in that deafness,--our blindness, and God giving us light in that darkness,--they lay the pride of profession and of knowledge low.

But what a blessed grace the grace of meekness is--to feel meek and soft in spirit before God. There are many people towering I know not where, above all darkness and ignorance, but do we find meekness in them? The Lord give you and me meekness before him, for he delights us such: let them enjoy their vain confidence, "He dwells with the lowly." But what a great deal of discipline it takes to bring down our towering pride, and at all meeken our heart.

What a series of sorrows, trials, temptations, and afflictions do we need to break us down. What a succession of spiritual dealings is necessary to bring true meekness into a man's conscience, to soften and humble his spirit before God. Now you will observe these meek have their peculiar joy, "the meek also shall increase their joy in the Lord." We know nothing of joy in the Lord, until we know this; for what communion can there be between a proud professor and a broken-hearted Jesus? or what fellowship between unhumbled, uncircumcised hearts, and the "Man of sorrows" groaning in Gethsemane's garden? There can be no communion with him, no participation of his spirit, until we are brought down in meekness and contrition to his feet; and then there will be a sacred joy in the Lord, which we can know nothing of until we are meek, humble, and broken-hearted, and until we feel that we have nothing and are nothing. Until we feel ourselves the vilest of the vile, and as such creep to his cross, and lie humbly there, we can know no "joy in the Lord." We may joy in our knowledge, in our profession, in our attainments, in our vain-confidence; but we can have no "joy in the Lord" until he reveals himself, manifests his love, discovers his glorious perfections, and makes known his atoning blood. And until we are meekened, we are not fit for it; the vessel must first be emptied of its poisonous contents, its venomous ingredients, before the real wine of God's grace can be poured in. So that the meek who "joy in the Lord," can only joy in him as they are brought down into a resemblance to him. They must be meekened before they can feel his presence, taste his love, or know the power of his resurrection; and in proportion as they are thus meekened, sweetness and blessedness. And it is observable, that these meek and broken-hearted ones, who have some joy in the Lord, (it is not defined how much) are connected with, and indeed are the same persons as those who are deaf, and yet hear the words of the book, and the blind who see out of obscurity, and out of darkness.

But it is said that "the meek shall increase their joy in the Lord." They may not have much joy, but if they have any at all, it is "in the Lord:" it may be little, but it is real. Now you know, if we are honest men naturally, we would rather have one real piece of gold, one sovereign from the mint, than a thousand counterfeits. So our "joy in the Lord" may be feeble and weak, but we cannot take up with any base imitation of it, can rejoice in nothing else, cannot take pleasure in sin, or in having a name to live while dead. If we ever have any joy, any sweet sensations, any meltings of heart, anything to comfort or encourage our souls, it is "in the Lord," and not in ourselves; in what he has done for us, and not what we have done for him.

IV. "And the POOR among men shall rejoice in the Holy One of Israel." What a strange expression is this--"the poor among men." How can I better illustrate it than by what is now before me? Here is a congregation of people; but all here present are not poor, naturally or spiritually; yet there are poor among them. So "the poor among men" point to a remnant out of a multitude, a few berries on the top of the uttermost bough. The professing church, as a body, is buried, as I before observed, in general slumber, ignorance, hypocrisy, perversion, and rebellion; and among these "men" the poor seem scarcely worth a thought; among those heroes and giants in their own opinion, what room is their for the "poor," who are nothing and have nothing in themselves but felt guilt, ruin, and wretchedness? But the Lord has promised, that "the poor among men shall rejoice in the Holy One of Israel." And who is this "Holy One of Israel" but the Lord Jesus, for he is "the Holy One chosen out of Israel," the Holy One who died for Israel, the Holy One in whom all Israel is justified and shall glory. "The poor among men" cannot rejoice in themselves, for they have nothing to rejoice in; and having nothing in themselves to rejoice in, they rejoice in "the Holy One of Israel," who of God is made unto them wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. (1 Cor. 1:30) Until men are made experimentally poor, they will never rejoice in "the Holy One of Israel."

Take it naturally. The wealthy man rejoices in his wealth, in the luxuries and pleasures that wealth procures; and the more wealth he has, the more scope there is for all that money commands. But the poor man cannot rejoice in these things; he has no luxuries, for he can scarcely get necessaries, and therefore he cannot rejoice in what he has not. So spiritually; some professors rejoice in their great knowledge, but "the poor among men" have none--others in their consistency, but these cannot glory in theirs, for they find sin tarnishing every thought, word, and action; others rejoice in a long course of good deeds, and active exertions; but these cannot, for alas, alas, they are poverty-stricken, they have never done anything that they can call good, and they can no more rejoice in their poverty than a poor man naturally can rejoice in the lack of all the necessaries of life.

But when the Lord is presented to their view, in all his glorious offices and covenant characters, as "mighty to save;" when they see Jesus by the eye of faith, and can embrace him in the arms of affection, feel a clinging to him and a looking up to him; if they rejoice at all, it is in such a Friend, such a Mediator, such an Advocate, such an Intercessor. But until they are made to feel themselves poor, they will rejoice in everything but him; nor can they rejoice in him until they have ceased to rejoice in themselves. See then how intimately these characters are bound up together in the bundle of life with the Lord the Lamb. The Lord give you and me to feel that we are spiritually such.

Let me, then, by way of summing up, notice, that these characters, the deaf, the blind, the meek, and the poor, all meet in the same person; and if God is our Teacher, we shall have the feelings of these characters internally and experimentally wrought in us. We shall be often "deaf," yet sometimes hear the words of the book with power in our conscience; sometimes we shall feel the reality and weight, and at others the sweetness of the words of truth; and shall only want the Lord to speak, to hear glorious and comforting words that shall raise us up, revive our heart, draw up our affections, and advance us heavenward. Can we find we are this character?

Then we shall find the next also in our heart, for they all meet in one person, and we shall be "the blind" brought to "see out of darkness and obscurity." Are our evidences, then, often obscure, and have we "to grope for the wall like the blind," not seeing our paths plain or clear, and yet sometimes have sweet views of Jesus as the only way of salvation; see his outstretched arm, his atoning blood, dying love, and something of his preciousness, beauty and glory?

And what as to "meekness?" What do we know of that? It is a part of meekness to feel and mourn over our pride, for the proud do not know it, nor are grieved about it. Are there, then, any seasons when we feel broken down, meekened, and softened before the Lord?

And as to the fourth character, "the poor among men," surely we can come in there. If the Lord be our Teacher, he has certainly brought us there, to know that we are poor and needy, having nothing and being nothing, and can find nothing to rest upon or boast in, but "the Holy One of Israel." Do we not sometimes feel a solemn joy and sweetness in looking to the "Holy One of Israel?" Are we wholly destitute of love towards him? Is there any joy in our souls that he should be the "Holy One of Israel?" Would we wish him to be any other than Holy, and love his holiness, though we are all polluted and filthy?

These, then, are the characters exempted from the general woe, "Woe to Ariel, woe to Ariel, the city where David dwelt," the woe pronounced in God's word against the professing church which is wrapped up in general slumber, ignorance, hypocrisy, perversion, and rebellion.

If the Lord has done thus much for us, given us ears to hear when deaf, eyes to see when blind, meekened our spirit, and given us to rejoice in the "Holy One of Israel," he pronounces no woe against us; he has exempted us from the threatenings denounced against the professing church; he has made us a peculiar people, and promised us every blessing that we truly need, though utterly undeserving of them. And what he has promised, will he not make good?

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/jc-philpot/the-day-of-power/>

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