

# In Relation to Spiritual Sight

by T. Austin-Sparks

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*The sermon emphasizes the necessity of actively seeking spiritual sight through faith, persistence, and a heartfelt cry to God.*

**Scripture:** Matthew 11:12, Mark 10:46, Luke 19:10, John 17:3, 1 Corinthians 2:9, Ephesians 1:17

**Topics:** "Spiritual Blindness", "Divine Revelation"

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## Description

T. Austin-Sparks preaches on the spiritual blindness inherited by the whole human race from Adam's sin, emphasizing the deep longing within every heart to see the face of God. He highlights the significance of regaining spiritual sight through Jesus Christ, who came to seek and save the lost, including the lost sight of God's glory and grace. Using the story of blind Bartimaeus, he illustrates the need for a desperate pursuit of spiritual enlightenment, emphasizing the importance of persistent prayer and violent faith in seeking a deeper revelation of God's eternal truths.

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## Transcript

Reading: Mark 10:46-52.

### THE WHOLE RACE IN ADAM BORN BLIND

What is in view here is the question of sight. In our earlier meditations we were occupied with the matter of seeing the face of God. In different ways we have sought to show that, in Adam's sin in the garden and his unholy attempt to see what God had hidden from him - hidden from him, as it proved afterward, in great love and mercy - in his unholy grasping after that seeing, Adam lost his sight, and the whole race in him has been born blind, blind as to the face of God. The race has, deep down in its very constitution, a cry and a sigh. Although it is not expressed in words, or understood for what it really is, it amounts to this: 'If only we could see the face of God - if only we knew that God's face was toward us!' The Son of Man came into the world, and He said, "The Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10). One of the great things that was lost was that sight, that conscious enjoyment, of the face of God.

As with all blindness, when that loss occurred, a whole world, a very wonderful world, was lost, was closed, was shut up. The reality of things, things as they really are in that world, was understood no longer. It is a very wonderful thing when anyone who has never seen receives sight - when something is done by an operation to give sight. What a wonderful new world! It had been a world of surmise, of imagination, of ever straining to understand, to know, and now that whole world is suddenly opened up.

What a wonderful day! Sight is a marvellous thing; but if this is true in the natural realm, it is infinitely more true in the spiritual.

When we were in America a few years ago, we met our dear old friend Mrs. Lemmel, who wrote the chorus:

Turn your eyes upon Jesus,

Look full in His wonderful face,

And the things of earth will grow strangely dim

In the light of His glory and grace.

Mrs. Lemmel was practically blind; she had to be led everywhere. But she was fulfilling a marvellous ministry. Because she was blind, hosts of people were visiting her, thinking, perhaps, to console or befriend her; but she was ministering Christ to them, and it was they who were getting all the benefit and the blessing. Then a surgeon offered to perform an operation with a practical certainty that he could restore her sight. She weighed this up before the Lord in prayer for a long time, and then, she told us, 'I decided not to have the operation: by my blindness many are seeing what they would never see if I had my natural sight; I have chosen that they should see that greater world than the natural sight can see.' Well, that was a noble decision; but my point is that to her the seeing of the things of the Spirit, the things of heaven, the things of God, infinitely transcended the having of her natural sight.

#### CHRIST CAME TO RECOVER LOST SIGHT

Oh, yes, there is a world - a world that God wants us to see, in the light, glory and fullness of which He wants us to live, ever making fresh discoveries of what is there. He wants us to have eyes that can see the tremendous values of His own eternal things. Yes, the value and importance of spiritual sight is so great that the very Son of Man came from heaven to recover it - "to save that which was lost". It was a very costly thing, in heaven's estimation, that kind of knowledge. If we want further confirmation of it, we have only to take account of how fiercely and maliciously the enemy fights against the people of God coming into any further knowledge of God's eternal thought, or of any soul being enlightened as to its salvation. How bitterly the enemy contests that! You know something of that; I need not dwell upon it. I am simply saying that from heaven's standpoint there is a tremendous value bound up with this question of sight.

As with all others mentioned in the Bible, this man about whom we have read is not there just by chance, as something that just happened in the way. They are all here in the sovereign orderings and movements of God; they were moved into these positions to stand out as examples, parables and indications of great spiritual things. This man Bartimaeus comes before us in connection with something more than his natural sight. It is a parable of what Jesus has come to do for blinded sons of Adam. The crowd surged, he heard the tramping of their feet, the feet of the multitude, and asked what it was all about - 'Who is it?' And they said that it was Jesus of Nazareth who was passing by.

Jesus of Nazareth. I think that name and the word 'Nazareth' bring Him very near to us. It was a place of no great importance and of no very high reputation. It represents something very ordinary, common, without repute, without honour, without glory, and Jesus has in history become associated with Nazareth. Jesus of Nazareth - how often He was called that. But you see, it is JESUS of Nazareth. There were, I expect, thousands of Jesuses in Palestine. There had been thousands of Jesuses in the history of Israel.

Jesus - Jeshua, Joshua, Hoshea - was a very common name. And God came right into the midst of that which was common and humble and degraded and said, "Thou shalt call his name JESUS". Oh, surely He ought to have a better name than that - He ought to be more distinguished than that! But with God the name given to Jesus meant what it did mean. "Thou shalt call his name JESUS; for it is he that shall save his people from their sins" (Matt. 1:21).

Nazareth - "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" (John 1:46) - Jesus of NAZARETH. You see the point. It is Jesus touching the depth of human degradation, coming right into association with our fallen humanity, into touch with that which has lost its Divine significance. Jesus - 'Jehovah saves', 'the Lord saves' - that is the meaning of the name. But look at all the Jesuses of Israel's history and see how many of them were saviours. No, the name has lost its value and meaning. It was everywhere but it meant nothing. Here the name has recovered its meaning, come right down into the midst of that which needed saving, as represented by or typified in Nazareth and in all the other Jesuses who needed saving. He had to go right down into that, in closest touch with our poor, fallen humanity, in order to save. Jesus of Nazareth.

This man heard that. Oh, it is wonderful; there is so much in that answer of the Lord to him. "Thy faith hath made thee whole." This man knew where Jesus came from, but he believed that He was something more than an ordinary Jesus, an ordinary earthly association, He was more than that, and he cried out, "Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy on me" (Mark 10:47). They tried to silence him, to sit on him, to make him be quiet, and he cried out so much the more, "Jesus... have mercy on me." They commanded him to hold his peace.

#### THE NEED FOR VIOLENCE ON OUR PART

There are two things in that connection that are, I think, very clear and obvious. One is this, that this wonderful blessing of an open heaven, that we have been talking about - this recovery of the face of God, this entering into that world of Divine fullness, this apprehending of the thoughts of God which means so much - is not just going to happen to us while we sit passively, hoping something will happen. The Lord Himself said, "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and men of violence take it by force" (Matt. 11:12). This man had entered into that spirit. He had inwardly perceived what a tremendous thing it would be to have his eyes opened. And if you are concerned about a "spirit of wisdom and revelation", "the eyes of your heart being enlightened" - if this to you is of any concern at all, you will not be passive about it. You will get on your knees, and say, 'Now, Lord, this has got to be made good.' You will cry and cry aloud. Are you doing that? It is not enough for us to attend meetings and hear things said, whether they be more or less wonderful, and just think that we have got it. We have not got it, and a very great deal of the failure of so much ministry to have a real outworking is because we do not go at once to the Lord and say, 'Now, Lord, I have heard that: mentally I know it, I am informed about it; but that thing has got to become a living revelation in my inner man.' I have to SEE it, and I can only see it by a Divine touch, by the finger of God, by a miracle from heaven.

We shall never see Divine things by the aid of our reason. We shall never see things because they are put plainly to us by the one who ministers. No, it will only be as Jesus of Nazareth comes into touch with us and we with Him. And that applies to every stage of the Christian life.

If there are any reading these lines, who have never in the first place had their eyes opened to SEE, so that the result is life eternal - for knowing is only another word for seeing, and Jesus said, "This is life

eternal, that they should know thee the only true God, and him whom thou didst send, even Jesus Christ" (John 17:3); "that they should know" - another word for seeing - if you have not yet entered into life, received eternal life, remember that it will not just HAPPEN to you; it will not simply HAPPEN. You will have to become tremendously concerned about this and show the Lord that you mean business; you will have to be like Bartimaeus, cry, and 'so much the more', cry. Remember that the Lord does so often wait, delay, hold off, to see if we really place value upon this seeing. We are tested as to how much we esteem His things.

Here is a man of great possessions, called a rich young ruler. It was not that the Lord wanted him to become a philanthropist and give away his money. It was the question: 'Do you value eternal life more than all your worldly possessions? Let us see! What value do you put upon eternal life, upon having your blind eyes open? Do you cry and cry so much the more, become desperate about it?' The Lord waits to see that. We have known so many cases, when sinners have been seeking the Lord, and we would have thought that immediately they began to seek the Lord they would find Him - and yet very often the Christian worker has been greatly perplexed and distressed. Days and nights pass in agony. There seems to be no coming of the Lord to save. What is the Lord doing? He is just bringing out that desperation that represents a heart conviction that, unless the Lord does this thing, there is nothing else to live for. It is a matter of life and death, and it is not cheaply and easily got.

And what is true at the beginning is true all the way along. There is no end to Divine revelation; there is no end to our seeing. Oh, how little we have seen, how little we know, of the vast stores of Divine intention and thought and purpose and meaning. We stand and paddle on the shores of this vast ocean of God and of His purposes and meanings in our creation. How little we know about it! - and we are not going to know until we have deep heart exercise. But it is there, and it is there for us, and oh, we have got to come in this way - 'so much the more'. Are you like that after a conference, or after any meeting in which there has been a ministry of God's Word? Are you sure you have seen all that God meant you to see? Are you just hearing what is said? You agree - but what is the effect? The real effect waits upon this heart exercise, this crying out - and a crying out 'so much the more'. The Lord is not close and mean, holding it from you, but He is wanting to know that this is of greater price to you than all else; if needs be, of greater price than your sleep, your rest: you are going to give Him no rest until He opens your eyes.

That is very simple, but it is very important.

#### THE ENEMY'S ATTEMPTS TO SILENCE US

The other thing in this connection is that there will always be plenty of things to try to silence you, to make you be quiet, to 'shut you up'. There were those who commanded this blind man to hold his peace. There is always much to command you to hold your peace. But much may depend upon our not holding our peace. That applies in much larger realms than just this one of receiving Divine eye-opening.

Very often we never enter into the real value of a thing until we make a declaration of our attitude toward it. Very often we do not enter into the real value of our Christian life until we begin to proclaim something about it. I expect some of you know that. I was a Christian for some years; I had given my heart to the Lord. I believed that I was saved, and I am sure I was, but I was not enjoying it: I was not a free man, loosed inside, in the real joy of the Christian life, until one night I stepped right into the centre of an open-air meeting and gave my testimony and began to talk from that testimony, and from that day to this I have been a free man in the enjoyment of salvation. At the time I wondered if it was only then that I was

really converted - so real was the difference. That is very simple and elementary, but it applies all the way along. There are plenty of things that will keep us silent: shame, for instance - that will keep us silent. Fear will say, Be quiet; will keep us with our mouths shut. Despair is a terrible thing for quietening us, or preventing us from speaking. And oh, what a veto upon declaration is pride! Yes, there are many things that are saying, Hold your peace! This man stood up to them all, he resisted them all, and, although they said, 'Hold your peace, man, hold your peace!', he said, 'I am not going to hold my peace', and out it came - 'so much the more'. It is an impressive picture. It is almost humorous if it were not so serious - a man absolutely refusing to be bottled up, so much did he feel the importance of the matter in hand.

It is just like that over everything that the Lord has for us. We are not to be silenced. We cry - and nothing happens. We cry to the Lord, and nothing happens. And then the enemy comes along and says, 'You may as well be quiet - He is not hearing you! Do you think He will have regard to you? He has got more important business than you! You must think yourself very important if you think He is going to turn aside from all His affairs to attend to you!' The enemy talks like that and tries, by making us feel our insignificance, to quieten us, to silence us. But you be in the company of blind Bartimaeus, and say, 'No, I am not going to be quiet! I believe that what I need lies in the power of that Man to give me, and I believe that, being Jesus of Nazareth, having come down to so low a level of association and fellowship, He will have respect unto my cry. I may be a nobody, but He will have respect to the cry of a nobody!' This is the kind of spirit that will not be silenced.

Is it too simple? It is important! As we get further and further on, there is so much more for the Lord to reveal to us of His fullness. It will always be the same - plenty of things to silence, to put to quietness, to tell us to hold our peace. You remember the Lord's parable of the importunate widow and the unjust judge. He hung the whole of that parable on this: that the man would not have regard to her for any other reason than that she worried the life out of him; and the Lord turns and says, 'If an unjust man will yield to importunity, how much more the just Man - how much more One who is not like that!' (Luke 18:1-8). And yet His Church must cry unto Him day and night, not because He is unjust and unwilling and unmoved, but because He must have in those who are in need a deep enough sense of the importance of these things. You say, 'Why speak like that? Don't we all feel that?' Dear friends, while one is more and more hesitant to say anything to criticize Christians or the Church, surely it is true that there is not sufficient of this downright earnestness to know all that God wants us to know. We are too contented, too complaisant, too satisfied with a little: we are not on full stretch for all that God means, and He is not going to give it until we CRY - and cry 'so much the more'.

"Jesus of Nazareth passeth by." With Him is all the power to give everything necessary to bring into all that God intended - and He may pass by. He might have just left Jericho and gone away. They were going out of Jericho; He might just have gone out of Jericho and gone on His way. But knowing, being informed - that was enough for Bartimaeus. Being informed that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by precipitated the whole matter. Oh, that we all were sufficiently aware of how needy we are of having our eyes opened to all God's meaning for us! Oh, that our hearts were sufficiently concerned to enter into everything God purposes for us! Oh, that we felt something more of the strong meaning of "Things which eye saw not, and ear heard not, and which entered not into the heart of man, whatsoever things God prepared for them that love him" (1 Cor. 2:9). It never will enter into our hearts, it never will be seen by our eyes or heard by our ears, until we realize, and lay to heart, how important it is and how valuable, and we begin to cry out, 'Have mercy upon me!' It is not only the cry of a sinner, but the cry of a mature saint. 'Have mercy still upon my lack of capacity, my limitation in apprehension, my smallness of sight! Have mercy upon me!'

Paul's prayer to God was "that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him; having the eyes of your heart enlightened" (Eph. 1:17-18). That was his prayer. It was not going to happen unless someone stood in between the need and the supply and mediated by prayer. It is a big matter. The Lord put that spirit into our hearts. Do realize that a great deal does hang upon this importunity, this seriousness, this laying hold, and not just coming and going to meetings and then wondering why we are so retarded in our spiritual growth, so easily a prey to the forces around us in this world. Perhaps it is because we have not yet expressed an adequate appreciation of Divine things by laying this matter to heart and constantly being before the Lord that we may receive our sight. If at this moment you are recognizing that "Jesus of Nazareth passeth by", you have only to cry from your heart - He has what you need. The Lord put the cry in our hearts.

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