

On the Gospel

St. Cyril of Alexandria

Translated by M.F. Toale, D.D.

(PG 72, 863-866.)

Our Blessed Lord, by foretelling to His Disciples the events that were now about to come to pass, anticipated both wrongful judgements and any ground for taking scandal. For these men who had beheld the wonders He had wrought, and had been made strong in courage by His words, were now to see Him mocked by the Jews, crucified, and dishonoured. It was therefore possible, that scandalised by this mockery they might think to themselves: He that possessed such mighty power, working wonders by as it were a simple nod of His head, and Who has been wont to say that the providential care of His Father reached even to the sparrows, this the Only-Begotten and the First-Born, how is it He has not known what was about to happen? How is it that He was seized by His enemies, Who had promised He was about to deliver us?

That therefore they might learn that He both foreknew the coming of His passion, and that when He could easily have avoided it, of His own will, He went forth to meet it, He now makes known what is to come to pass. And of necessity He also told them that all these things had been foretold by the holy prophets, God having disposed that when these things should come to pass no one should be scandalised. For beyond any doubt He was free to avoid the passion He had foreknown was to come. No one compelled Him: He suffered of His own free will; knowing fully that His passion would be salutary for the whole world. He suffered death, in His flesh; overcoming corruption, He rose again; and by His resurrection from the dead, He poured His own life into the bodies of men; for in Him the whole nature of man is turned back towards immortality.

And the common Saviour of all men foretold these things to the holy Apostles; but they did not, as the Evangelist says, *understand the things that were said*. For they did not yet know precisely what the prophets had foretold. For which reason the Prince of the Apostles, not yet perceiving the depths of the mystery, had so withstood the Master as to say: *Lord, be it far from thee, this shall not be unto thee* (Mt. xvi. 22). Which saying was chastised with a rebuke. But after He rose from the dead, Christ opened their eyes, as one of the holy Evangelists says (Lk. xxiv, 31); since their minds were enlightened through having received an abundant sharing of the Holy Spirit, they could say: *And we have the more firm prophetic word: whereunto you do well to attend, as to a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts* (II Pet. i. 19).

This man draws near to Him, as to the Omnipotent God: Whom however he calls Son of David. For being reared in Judaism, and a native of the country, he could not have been ignorant of what was foretold concerning Him in the Law, and by the holy prophets, and that He could be born, according to the flesh, of the House of David. Therefore, already believing that this was the Word of God, Who, of His own will, had been born according to the flesh from the holy Virgin, he comes before Him as God, saying: *Son of David, have mercy on me*. And that it was in this belief he offered up his prayer, Christ Himself bears witness, Who said to him: *Thy faith hath made thee whole*.

Let those who divide Christ in two imitate this blind man, for he drew near to Christ, the Saviour of all men as unto God, and called Him both Lord and Son of David. He bears testimony to His power, when he asks of Him an act that only God can perform. Let them admire likewise the steadfastness with which the blind man proclaimed his belief, for there were some who, while he confessed his faith, cried out to him to be silent. But he did not cease, nor lessen the confidence of his prayer, because of those who strove to forbid him. For faith knows how to combat all things, and to overcome all. They indeed rebuked him; but in him faith did not waver, but steadfastly pursued the Lord; believing that courage was desirable in defence of belief. For if there are many who are daring in the cause of gain, ought not a man be courageous for the cause of his soul's salvation?

At the voice of the man crying out in faith, the Lord stands, and the faith of the blind man was well rewarded. The Lord stands, and He called him to come to Him, so that he who had already drawn close to Him in his heart through faith, might now come near to him in his body. Faith brings us likewise into the very presence of Christ, so that by it we also become worthy to hear His voice.

And when the blind man was standing in His presence, He asked him, saying: *What wilt thou that I do to thee?* Was the petition of the blind man unknown to him? How can we think this? Foreknowing, and of purpose, He questions him, so that those who stand about and were accompanying Him, might know, that the blind man was not seeking money, but rather a manifestation of divine power, as from God.

And Jesus said to him: receive thy sight: thy faith hath made thee whole. And being delivered of his blindness, did the blind man fail to give fitting thanks? By no means, He was therefore healed of a twofold blindness; being delivered of the blindness both of the eye, and of the heart and soul. For he could not have honoured Him as God, unless he could truly see. And to others also he became an occasion of giving praise to God, *for all the people, when they saw it, gave praise to God.* Amen.

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