

Bryan Station Baptist Church

INDEPENDENT

ORGANIZED 1786

MISSIONARY

THE PIONEER BAPTIST

"Preaching The Same Truth We Preached Before Kentucky Was A State"

VOL. 10

LEXINGTON, KENTUCKY

FEBRUARY, 1979

NO. 5

Spiritual Blindness

By the late: C. D. Cole

"But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost:

In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ who is the image of God, should shine unto them.

For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake.

For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (II Cor. 4:3-6).

Of the physical senses, I suppose that we are all agreed that the sense of sight is the most valuable and precious. If we had to give up one of the five senses, and could have our choice in the matter, we would give up any one of the others before we would surrender the sense of seeing. A blind man is a pathetic figure, groping and feeling his way, in a world that is so brilliantly lighted by the sun. But the blind man is in a state of physical darkness and cannot see objects, however bright the sun may be shining, and regardless of how plain the objects may be revealed. He is darkness dwelling in light.

But there is another kind of blindness that is far worse than physical or bodily blindness. The verses before us speak of a spiritual blindness—a blindness of the mind, or inability to

see spiritual things. Seeing is often used in current speech as well as in the Bible as a metaphor for the mind or the understanding. We explain something to a person and then exclaim, "Can't you see that?" We mean to ask if he can't understand what we have explained.

Spiritual blindness is far more terrible in nature and extent than is physical blindness. It is sad for a man not to be able to see the beauties of nature, but it is much sadder for him to be unable to see the glories of grace. It is bad to have no eyes for the field with its flowers and fruit; for the sea with its restless and awe-inspiring waves; for the animal creation in its wide variety of size and form and color; but it is far worse to be blind to the glorious gospel of Christ, which is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth. Spiritual blindness is far more prevalent than physical blindness. Only a comparative few of earth's inhabitants are physically blind, while every man, in his natural state, is blind to the gospel of Christ and other spiritual truths. Spurgeon said that all of us in our natural state were as blind as bats to the things of divine truth. Paul said that there is none that understandeth. "There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God" (Rom. 3:11).

Darkness is a Bible symbol of ignorance and man, in his natural condition is ignorant of the things of the Spirit of God. The Lord Jesus said, "Except a man be born from above, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3). He cannot understand the things of the king-

dom. The gospel Paul preached was hid to the lost, that is, they could not understand it and appreciate it. The gospel of Christ is a great and glorious light; it is the light of salvation; it shows how to become righteous; it points the way to heaven; but the lost man does not understand it. Paul preached the gospel to all classes—to the natural Jew it was a scandal—a shameful story; to the Greek it was foolishness. Neither class understood it. It was hid because their minds were blinded. Paul prayed for the salvation of his brethren in the flesh. They were zealous of God, but ignorant of how to become righteous through faith in Christ, and were trying to establish their own righteousness (Rom. 10:1-3). This is the condition of all who are trying to be saved by their own works. They are lost. The gospel is hid to them. They are blind.

SATAN IS THE AUTHOR OF SPIRITUAL BLINDNESS

In the garden of Eden, Satan promised our first parents opened eyes if they would do as he said. They obeyed him, and their eyes were opened to the fact of sin, but their minds were blinded as to how to cover it. In ignorance, they thought they could provide a covering for their sinful and shameful condition. They thought their fall was something they could remedy. They failed and then God clothed them. And man is still trying to fix up and patch up and cover up and work up to where God will be pleased with him and accept him. The natural man ever thinks that he can clothe himself in the garments of his own making. He depends upon his own record for acceptance with God. Or, his mind may become so darkened that he will think there is no God for him to meet. And Satan, the god of this age, is behind all such thinking.

The mind of the sinner is the devil's fortress or stronghold by which he aims to keep the sinner in his possession. As long as the devil has the mind of the sinner, he will have the sinner's soul. Here is a sinner; why isn't he saved? Is he too bad to be saved? No, a thousand times, No! Christ died for the ungodly, and some of the worst men have already been saved. Paul reminds the Corinthians that some of them had been idolaters, adulterers, drunkards, thieves, etc. "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God" (I Cor. 6:9-11). No man is too wicked to be saved. There is not a single sin in all the catalogue of iniquity that is too great for

a man to be saved from. And there is no sinner too old to be saved. Any sinner of any age and any color can be saved if he will come to Christ. And whosoever will may come. Christ will turn none away who comes to Him for salvation. Then why do sinners, in this gospel land, remain lost? It is because the gospel is hid to them. They do not understand and appreciate the gospel of a crucified and risen Christ.

The human mind has to be taken for God. Man's reasonings stand in the way of his salvation, for they are opposed to the truth of God. The sinner must repent, that is, he must change his thoughts about sin and how to be saved from it. His natural reasonings about sin and salvation are wrong, and they must be overthrown if ever he is saved. Paul was commissioned to go to the Gentiles. "To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in Christ." In II Cor. 10:4, Paul says that his weapons are not carnal but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds. This is called "casting down imaginations (reasonings), and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ."

Paul did not employ fleshly or worldly methods in his ministry. He did not use the tricks of psychology. He preached what he knew would be offensive to the natural man and depended upon the Spirit of God to cause the sinner to change his mind—to understand the gospel and believe it. This is why he says that his weapons were mighty through God. Apart from the work of the Spirit in changing the thoughts of the sinner, the gospel would never be understood and trusted. The gospel offers salvation for nothing, but the natural man wants to earn salvation. He reasons that he must deserve it, that he must make himself acceptable to God; that something he does must bring him into favor with God. Now, all such reasonings must be overthrown, for they are the devil's strongholds for keeping the sinner in his possession. All such reasonings reveal a distorted mind—a mind that is blind to the gospel—a mind that is ignorant of the righteousness of God by faith in Jesus Christ.

THE HOLY SPIRIT IS THE AUTHOR OF SPIRITUAL SIGHT

The sinner is in a state of darkness, but there is One who can give him light. The preacher need not despair of conversions, because the gospel is hid to the lost; there is One who can cause them to understand it. Paul said, "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (II Cor. 4:6). And to the

Ephesians he said, "For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light" (Eph. 5:8). Miners carry a lamp on their hats; the believer has a lamp in his heart.

The part of the text now before us takes us back to Genesis 1, where God said, "Let there be light..." The early history of this earth corresponds with the spiritual history of the believer in Christ. We are told that the earth became without form and void, with darkness upon the face of the deep. This has its counterpart in the fall of man. Adam did not remain in his primitive state of goodness. Like the earth before him, man became a wreck and a ruin. His understanding was darkened, and he was alienated from the life of God.

We are also told in Genesis that "...the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters, And God said, Let there be light: and there was light" (Gen. 1:2,3). There was first the activity of the Spirit and then the spoken Word. The same is true in human conversion—the work of the new creation. Light comes to the sinner through the Word applied by the Spirit. Sin has darkened the understanding of man; all his reasonings with reference to the things of God, are utterly wrong. He has wrong thoughts about himself, about God, and about sin and salvation. He needs light on all these things. And this light from the Holy Spirit works a change of mind, so that the sinner's thoughts are different from what they once were. This change of thought is very marked in my own experience. My present opinions about sin and salvation are as unlike my former opinions as day is different from night. And this change is the result of God having shined in my heart to give me the light of the knowledge of the gospel. To Peter, when he had confessed faith in Christ, it was said, "Flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 16:17).

Paul tells Timothy that the servant of the Lord must not quarrel with those who oppose his message, but preach in hope that some day God will grant them repentance (a change of mind) leading to the knowledge of the truth, that they may recover themselves out of the devil's trap. Satan has ruined the human mind, but God can repair it. Satan has brought darkness into the human soul, but God can shine into it and drive out the darkness.

The man who is spiritually blind does not know he is blind. He thinks his thinking is straight upon the question of sin and salvation. The man who is physically blind is glad to have a guide—someone to lead him from place to place, but the spiritually blind scorns a guide. This is why most any sinner will enter into a heated argument on the question of salvation in opposition to the Word of God. This is why men will contend that they must work for salvation when God's Word says that it is not of

works. "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast" (Eph. 2:8,9).

May it please God to shine in some darkened soul today, that he may see the gospel way of salvation. "Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures" (I Cor. 15:1-4). This is the glorious gospel!

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