

## ***BLINDED BY THE LIGHT***

Sometimes it is just not the end we have trouble perceiving. It can be hard to see God's hand in anything in our lives.

After all, it's been a long hard journey, and we are getting tired. Our eyes especially hurt from the strain of trying to feel our way through the night. It has been so long since we were really sure of the path we are on. But there is a ray of hope. The sun is coming over the horizon and light, glorious light, begins to flood the path before us, illuminating everything. It is a gift from God and so we turn to the east. Directly into the sun. And again, we can see nothing.

There is a vast difference between glare and illumination. It depends on the direction of travel, relative to the direction of the source of light. If you travel in the same direction as the sun, your back is to it, and it lights the path before you. Move in the other direction, and you get blinded. This is also true of the light for living contained in the scriptures.

The Bible and its author are both described as sources of light. Psalms 119:105 declares that the word of God is to be a lamp to our feet and a light unto our path. That seems clear enough. Then Jesus, the light of the world, says in the first chapter of John, that He came both to shed light (for those who want to see) and to blind others. There is a separation in this world between those who can see and those who can not. The God of this world has blinded their eyes to this glorious gospel. Does the source of light choose to illuminate or blind, or is that left to the discretion of the recipient? Unfortunately, we often choose ways to be blinded.

We do this when we choose to travel contrary to the direction God is moving. Moving west as the sun does, allows it to light the path before us, while moving east blinds us. We find that if we move in tune with the way God is moving, His truth illuminates our path before us. Even if it is only one step at a time. Confronting God and moving against His will finds us facing a much harsher version of His truth. Paul discovered this on the road to Damascus when he found himself in the spotlight. It was a glaring mistake.

Another type of blinding is that of focusing on one spot for too long. Try it! Absolutely focus on one of these words and do not take your eyes off of whichever one you choose. Very shortly, everything around the focal point will fade away from view. What occurs is nothing new. This is why we have the saying, "You can't see the forest for the trees". When we get to the point where we focus on the details, the whole picture is sometimes lost. When we focus on details of the Law instead of their intent, we are chided by Christ as being whitewashed Pharisees. When we pick out solitary scriptures to build doctrine around, the result is tunnel vision.

Sometimes we simply choose not to see. All are born blind. All are shaped in iniquity. Then we hear that Jesus is passing by. The one who can make us whole, if we will only cry out to Him. We must choose to accept the revelation that He would willingly give us. We must decide whether we can stand to see ourselves as He does. Jesus said that He did not come to condemn us, but the words that He spoke, they would condemn us. Say that your spouse tells you that you look very handsome or pretty. Although the room is dark, their glasses are off, one eye is closed, and the other one is squinted, it is not a situation where you feel it necessary to turn on the brightest lights available and get a second opinion. Ignorance is bliss. When we are feeling good about our own righteousness, we have no interest in God's word illuminating us. The rags that we are wearing might turn out to be filthy.

We prefer the dim light of traditions. These are what we use to soften the glare when we confront God head on. Generation after generation, we pass on God's truths, filtered through our own interpretations to make them more comfortable. The problem with filters is that they alter both the quantity and the quality of the light passing through. This is one reason 2 Peter 1:20 warns that the scriptures are to be of no private interpretation. After a few filters, the light is so dim that you feel you are in one of those restaurants with "atmosphere." You feel great about being there. As far as you can tell, everyone around you is perfectly beautiful. It would be better though, if you could tell what it was exactly that you were being fed.

What then do we do with the glorious light of the gospel that shines forth when we get close to Christ? We need to be willing to see ourselves as He does so that we can recognize our need of cleansing. Rather than pit ourselves and our understanding against His, we move in sync with Him and allow Him to show us the obstacles and the path before us. We look at the whole truth graciously revealed to us, rather than the beauty of a few details. And we do our best not to tamper with, alter, or dim the light passing through us. In a dark world full of pits and snares, light is too precious to squander. Can you see what we mean?

### ***STUDY QUESTIONS***

1. What has occurred lately in your life that you cannot believe God's hand was in?
2. Have you ever been in a car, traveling toward a rising or a setting sun?
3. Do you feel that our confusion over God's will for our lives might have anything to do with our willingness to obey God's will for our lives? How about our confusion over the truths contained in His Word? Is it easier to understand what we are reading when we are doing our best to please God with our lives and the choices we are making?
4. Have you ever been involved in a situation where you tried to ignore the decision or direction you knew God wanted you to choose, but in the end, had to obey after all?
5. Why do you think God blinds some to the truth, but not others? What makes the difference in who is blinded and who is not?
6. Have you ever encountered major doctrinal beliefs that seemed to stem from just one phrase or scripture? Did they make sense when compared to the rest of the Bible?
7. Have you ever been so bothered by a particular fault of a person that you were unable to enjoy the many fine qualities you knew they otherwise possessed? How about one fault of a friend? A pastor? A church?
8. If you had the opportunity to look in a mirror and really see yourself the way that God sees you, would you take that look or really not want to know?
9. What is something that you feel you do or believe simply because it is the way you were taught or the way your parents do it? Is there biblical basis for it? Does your church have any traditions or doctrines for which you do not know the biblical basis? If so, why have you never checked? Do you know what Jesus said would judge us?
10. Where you hear something taught or preached that you are not sure is scriptural, rather than just the speaker's opinion, do you go to the scriptures to verify it? Why or why not?
11. How do you feel your life and service to God would change if you continually weighed the correctness of both against the scriptures?