

- ***READ John 9:1-12*** Within this section of John's Gospel, we find our Lord interacting with a man who had been blind since birth. He is questioned as to who it was that sinned so that this man would be blind, but Jesus responds that this man's blindness was going to be used to bring glory to God. Jesus then spits on the ground, makes mud from the spit and clay, and then puts it over the man's eyes. He tells the man to go and get washed up. Upon his return, the man was healed of his blindness, and those who knew him to be blind were quite confused. He looked like the man that had been blind all of his life, but now he could see! How could this be the case? The man explains that Jesus was the one that told him what to do in order for this result to become a reality.
- What happens from this point on is quite frustrating when we consider what this man goes through. He is taken to the Pharisees and accosted for what Jesus graciously does to him because it all took place on the Sabbath. He is accused of being a liar, and his terrified parents are summoned to give the answers that the Pharisees wanted to hear. After a number of questions the man finally has enough and gives a great response in **John 9:30-33**. However, the Pharisees will hear none of it. They lob false allegations at him and banish him from the synagogue.
- Jesus hears of this man being thrown out of the synagogue, goes to him, and asks of him whether or not he believes in the Son of Man. The now seeing man affirms that he does believe in such and even requests to be able to see Him. Jesus states that He is Him, and the man falls down in worship before Jesus. Our Lord then makes the key statement within this text. *"I came into this world for judgment, in order that those who do not see will see and those who do see will become blind."* (**John 9:35-39**)
- These words of Jesus reveal a key truth that remains even until this day...Jesus causes the blind eyes to see! While Jesus literally did this while on the earth, the meaning of this statement is also a figurative one. Jesus causes those who have **spiritually blinded by sin, who are unwilling to see the goodness of God, who are unwilling to see their own brokenness, and who are unwilling to submit to Him in their lives** to be able to see so that they might come to God and become one of His children. This is basically to say that Jesus came to show mankind the way back to God from their sin. While this ought to be news of the most joyful sort, we must recognize that there is much differing on how exactly Jesus opens the eyes of the spiritually blind.
- I want to consider these things this morning because these truths are foundational to a lesson that I want to do tonight on the question of whether or not we can fall short of reaching eternity with God as disciples. There are some who would say that no Christian will ever be lost, and that belief is rooted in their understanding of salvation and how God opens our eyes to come to Him. I hope that you will make a good effort to be back this evening so that we can build upon our study over the next few minutes, but for now let's consider some incorrect understandings and beliefs concerning how Jesus goes about opening the eyes of the spiritually blind so that they might see.

I. Incorrect Beliefs Concerning Spiritual Blindness.

A. We are born into a state of total spiritual blindness (totally depraved) towards God & His will in my life.

1. Those who subscribe to the theology of Calvinism would actually agree with the thinking of the Pharisees in **John 9** in saying that this man and in fact all people are born in a state where it is impossible for them to approach God in faith. John Piper puts it this way, *"Apart from the grace of God, there is no delight in the holiness of God, and there is no glad submission to the sovereign authority of God."* (<https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/what-we-believe-about-the-five-points-of-calvinism>)
2. Different texts are used to support this idea, but one that ought to be familiar to those of us who are currently studying through Romans is in **Romans 5:12-15** where Paul writes concerning Adam, *"Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, in*

this way death spread to all people because all sinned." The general understanding of those who hold to this belief is that Adam's sin and rebellion against God created an environment where everyone who is born into this world is born completely depraved and unable to do that which is good. Everything we do is sin.

B. We have no ability (disabled) to personally choose to submit to God in faith.

1. Because of this depraved nature, we are therefore unable or disabled from being able to seek God on our own. We are spiritually blind to the point that our very hearts are like stone and refuse to acknowledge God or His will in our lives in a true sense. Even if we do things that are considered "good" they are not good because they are done with self-gratification at heart. We truly have no ability to seek God in the sense of seeking to be saved from our sins.
2. Piper would go on to write, "*Ephesians 2:1 says that we Christians were all once "dead in trespasses and sins."* The point of deadness is that we were incapable of any spiritual life with God. We had physical life, but our hearts were like a stone toward God (Eph. 4:18; Ezc 36:26). Our hearts were blind and incapable of seeing the glory of God in Christ (2 Cor. 4:4-6). We were totally unable to reform ourselves." (<https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/what-we-believe-about-the-five-points-of-calvinism>)

C. We are only able to have faith in God once He specifically calls us through the Holy Spirit's irresistible action by opening our eyes to the goodness & grace of God.

1. At this point things probably seem pretty hopeless, but this particular line of thinking does acknowledge that there is hope. However, that hope only comes if you are one of the elect who God chooses to allow His Holy Spirit to miraculously act upon. Those whom the Holy Spirit acts upon are those that God has predestined before the foundation of the world to be saved. **(Ephesians 1:4,5)**
2. This acting upon by the Holy Spirit is necessary because of the evil that has been committed against us by Satan in his blinding us in this world. **(II Corinthians 4:4)** In their understanding, unless we are acted upon by the Holy Spirit...we can't see our own sin and seek God's forgiveness and grace. Piper states, "*Since men are blind to the worth of Christ, a miracle is needed in order for them to come to see and believe.*" (<https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/what-we-believe-about-the-five-points-of-calvinism>) Though all men are in the same condition, Calvinism teaches that not all men have the same opportunity to be saved. It is left completely up to God's will whether or not we will get that opportunity to turn things around. Our salvation rests in what God decides to do within us.

To briefly summarize: There are some within the Christian community who believe that men are born with a sinful nature that doesn't allow them to truly seek after the goodness and glory of God. Everything they do is evil, and it isn't until the Holy Spirit miraculously works upon them that they even have a chance to repent and turn their lives around. Therefore, while all men are spiritually blind, they don't all have the same opportunity to have their situation remedied. Whether or not I am cured of my spiritual blindness and saved depends on whether or not I have been chose of God. While this type of thinking fits within the framework of Calvinism/Reformed theology...I have some serious issues with how it fits with what is found within the entire scope of Scripture.

II. True Understanding Of Spiritual Blindness

A. Our spiritual blindness is a result of our rebellion & refusal to conform to God's will within our lives.

1. While it is true that Adam introduced something into the world, I would argue that he didn't create a world where people would be born into sin...but he created a world where people would have the opportunity for sin to be committed into their lives. **Romans 5:12** reads, "*Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, in this way death spread to all people, because all sinned.*" My spiritual blindness isn't a result of what Adam did in the garden...it is a result of what I did within my own and and body.

2. I am fully responsible for the sins that I have committed because I made the decision to turn away from God and rebel. Sure that choice might not have been there if Adam hadn't had his eyes opened to the knowledge of good and evil, but I still have a choice when it comes to who I will serve in this life through whom I offer obedience. **(Romans 6:15,16)**
 3. The sad truth is that many people make the decision to blind themselves to God. They not only become spiritually blind, but they would rather stay in that state than submit to God's will. Some people would rather be like the Pharisees of **John 9:40,41** and claim to be people who are well seeing when in fact they are the most blind around. Others decide to be like the Gentile world of **Romans 1:18-23** and purposefully suppress the truth and darken their hearts so that they can do what they wish without having a conscience looming over them.
 4. When we have this type of rebellious and obstinate attitude then we are truly in the pits of spiritual blindness. We care not for the will of God. We care not for the awful condition in which we find ourselves. We care not for the end results of this type of living. We are convinced that we are doing that which we enjoy the most and is best for us, but we don't realize that we are driving straight off the edge of the cliff that leads to hell. Such is the way of life for those who are spiritually blind towards God and His will.
- B. God desires for all men to be cured of their spiritual blindness, and He expressed this desire through the sending of His Son.**
1. Yet, God isn't just going to sit back and allow His creation to go to hell without any sort of effort to open their eyes to what He desires for them to be. Therefore, we find God being willing to do that which is unfathomable...He was willing to give of Himself in order for His creation to be redeemed. The well-known verse of **John 3:16** tells us that God loved the world to the extend that *"He gave His one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him will not perish but have eternal life."* God's love is for all people who were created in His image.
 2. Paul would later state in **Romans 5:6-11** that God sent Jesus to die for the ungodly, the sinners, and even His enemies. But which enemies? If we are all enemies of God through our sin and rebellion then which of us has the opportunity to are saved? Would it not have to be all who come to Him begging for mercy, grace, and life? Peter would seem to agree with this sentiment since he states that God doesn't wish for any to perish, but for all to come to repentance. **(II Peter 3:9)**
 3. And why would they come to Him anyways? Would it be because they happen to be one of the lucky few whose hearts were opened to understand the love of God? All of these texts seem to clearly indicate that salvation is available to all men. We each have the opportunity to be saved because God wanted for all men to have the opportunity to be saved. If this is the case then we recognize that our spiritual blindness is not a terminal illness, but that it can be remedied. However, are we willing to seek the treatment? That is the true question.
- C. God has given us the ability to choose whether or not we will humble ourselves & freely submit to the Gospel message in trusting obedience.**
1. It can be remedied through the free choice that God has given us in this life. This freedom of choice isn't something that is new to us, but it is a principle that seems to have been around since the very beginning and is seen time and time, again.
 - a) Adam had the choice whether or not to obey God's command. **(Genesis 3)**
 - b) Moses gave the people a choice about whether or not they would serve God as they renewed their covenant with God in **Deuteronomy 30**.
 - c) Joshua offered up a similar ultimatum when he told the Israelites to choose that day whom it was that they would serve. **(Joshua 24)**

- d) As Jesus was going about through His ministry, everyone heard the same message and yet some people believed in Him while others didn't. What caused this to happen? It was all because they had a choice whether or not to humble themselves before Jesus as being someone who was truly great and sent by God.
- e) Even as Paul and other disciples went about teaching the Gospel and spreading the Good News in the book of Acts, there were some who accepted what they said and repented. There were some who flat out rejected the message. And there were others who wanted to hear more about it down the road. **(Acts 17:32-34)** Why wouldn't the Holy Spirit allow for all of them to see the goodness in Paul's message and come to faith in God? It must be that each of these groups of people or individuals had a choice in what they would do with what they heard.
2. As we noted earlier, there are going to be many differing factors within our lives that will lead us to whether or not we heed the message of the Gospel and turn our lives around to God. In making the decision to submit to God and His Gospel, we are not usurping God's sovereignty or making it all about ourselves. We must remember that we only have the opportunity to be saved because God allowed for such to be the case. He made the decision to send His Son to come to this earth and die for us. He didn't have to do that except of the fact that He loves us and He wants us all to be in fellowship and harmony with Him. He provides the way through the power of the Gospel message, and it all depends on whether or not we are willing to honor and glorify God through experiencing His forgiveness in our lives.
3. I believe all of this can be illustrated through what is seen in **Acts 2**. In the beginning of this chapter, we do see the Holy Spirit on the scene, but He is only active upon the Apostles. He enables the Apostle to preach the now revealed message of the Gospel to the Jews who were in Jerusalem for Pentecost. Peter takes the lead and reminds the crowd of the prophecies conceding the coming one, and he pronounces that Jesus is the fulfilled of all of the promises. This Jesus, whom they crucified, had been raised from the dead and was now sitting at the right hand of God. He is Lord, Christ, and Messiah. Those who heard this message and received it had their hearts softened to the point that they were able to be pricked by its truth. They asked, based upon the truth of the message they just heard, "What shall we do?" Peter responds that they needed to repent of what they had done, be baptized for the forgiveness of their sins, and at that point they would be receiving the Spirit. The Spirit came upon them after they were obedient to the Gospel. The Gospel is the power to open the eyes of the blind and soften the hearts that were of stone. That same Gospel is available to all people, and the Holy Spirit awaits to come into those who are willing to humble and submit themselves to the Gospel.

There is so much more that could be said along this line of thinking, but at this moment I really want for us to focus on the the Gospel's power to save and our willingness to either submit to that power or continue to live spiritually blinded eyes. It is truly only those who are blind who will see the message of the Gospel and come away unconvinced that they are in need. We are all in need of God's Gospel and the grace and mercy that are available through it. Praise be to God that though we were all once blind... we are now able to see because of the great light that shines in our lives...Jesus our loving Savior. He came to offer sight to those who were lost, dying, and blind. He came so that the blind eyes might see.