

**TWO KINDS OF BLINDNESS**

Mark 8:22-33

**Intro:** There are two specific events mentioned in the verses I have chosen for my text today. The first is the story of the healing of a blind man which is not found in any of the other Gospel records. Matthew did not record it. Neither did Luke, nor did John. As we read it we also notice that the healing of that blind man was different from any other miracle which is recorded in all of the four Gospels. It is different because it was performed in stages. All of the other miracles of our Lord that we read about in the four Gospels were completed at one time. In this one the Lord did a partial work, asked the formerly blind man if he could see, and when the man responded that he could see men as trees walking, the Lord completed His work and the man was able to see everything clearly. So John Mark must have had a specific reason for choosing this particular miracle because of this unique characteristic. Add to this the fact that there was some time period between the performing of this miracle and the question that the Lord directed to His disciples when He asked, “Who do men say that I am?” This blind man received his sight somewhere near Bethsaida; the Lord questioned His disciples thirty to forty miles north in Caesarea Philippi – which was probably the most northern point that our Lord ever reached in His ministry.

So there is much evidence to believe that John Mark brought these two events together because (1) he saw a relationship between the two, and (2) because he had a particular point that he wanted to make by relating the two with each other.

Now I don't think that we can always explain the order of events in the Gospels, or recognize the relationship that two events have to each other. But as I have studied these two events it seems to me that they both have to do with *blindness*. With the blind man we have a case of physical blindness. He could not see the light of day. Wherever he went he had to have someone leading him. That is how he came to the Lord. Verse 22 simply tells us that when the Lord came to Bethsaida, “they [not identifying who] bring a blind man unto Him [the Lord], and besought Him [the Lord] to touch him [the blind man].” We don't know anything about how this man became blind, if he was born blind, or if his blindness was the effect of some disease. We don't know if he wanted to be brought to the Lord, or if his friends insisted on bringing him. Those details are all omitted so that the emphasis could be placed just on the fact that he was

blind.

But, as we go on to read about what happened some time later at Caesarea Philippi, it occurred to me that we have an illustration of another kind of blindness. That is *spiritual blindness*. This is a blindness which affects every person who has ever lived. It is a blindness that has to do with the lack of ability to understand God, or the truth of God which He has given us in the Bible. Millions of people have chosen to live their lives without God, and millions more have turned to some other god just because they are blind to the truth. And they can't give themselves spiritual sight any more than a man who is physically blind can give himself physical eyesight.

I hope you are following me in your thinking so that you can see the relationship that these two stories in the Bible have to each other. Now let us consider:

### **I. THE BLIND MAN in Mark 8:22-26.**

We know that the Lord healed many blind people while He was here on earth, *but as far as the Gospels are concerned He never healed a blind man like He healed this blind man*. The Lord could just say the word, and he could heal anyone who was blind. Or He might touch their eyes, and give them sight. Once He put clay on a man's eyes, and told him to go wash it off. And when the blind man obeyed Him, he received his sight. Probably the men who brought this man to the Lord had seen the Lord touch other blind men who received their sight, and so they wanted the Lord to do that for this blind man.

Instead, what did the Lord do?

He took the blind man by the hand, led him out of town, put some of His own saliva on the man's eyes, *and then touched him and asked him if he could see anything*. The blind man responded in the affirmative, but then said that he saw men as trees walking. He had sight, but not good sight. And so the Lord again put His hands on the man's eyes, told him to look up, and we read that "he was restored, and saw every man clearly." He had 20/20 vision.

Many who have written on this miracle see in it a picture of salvation. Some of you may have wondered what salvation is. Well, one way to

describe it is that it is opening the eyes of people's hearts so that they can understand truth that did not make sense to them before. And it can only come about as a work of the Lord. It is like when you are explaining a problem in arithmetic to some child, and when he understands how you get the answer, he says, "Oh, I see!" He means that he understands.

Now when the Lord opens our understanding so that we know Who Jesus Christ is, the meaning of His death on the Cross, and that He is the only Savior from sin, we have spiritual sight. This is a gift from God. BUT, as we are going to see when we get into the next story, none of us has perfect understanding of the truth. A young Christian is in many ways like this blind man who could see, but he did not at the first have perfect vision. We need the Lord to give us better and better vision. It doesn't come as quickly as this blind man received his sight, but it gradually gets clearer and clearer as we understand more and more about the Bible.

The Apostle Paul spoke about this in 1 Corinthians 13. Let me read to you what he wrote in verses 9 through 12:

9 For we know in part, and we prophesy in part.

10 But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.

11 When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things.

12 For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known (1 Cor. 13:9-12).

So the way the Lord healed the blind man is a picture of the way we are saved. He always does the work of doing away with our blindness, but He doesn't always work the same way. He is always the One Who gives us the ability to understand spiritual truth, and by "spiritual truth" I mean the truth of the Bible. But He doesn't do it suddenly like He gave physical sight to this blind man. The Lord keeps improving our ability to see the Lord Himself in the Word, and to understand the truth of His Word. Then when we see the Lord, we will all have 20/20 spiritual vision.

If the Bible doesn't make any sense to you, it is because you are spiritually blind. Go to the Lord Jesus Christ for yourself, and tell Him that you want to see, you want to understand, you want to know Him. If you seek Him with all of your heart, He will respond to you and give you

the ability to see. He will save you.

But now let us go on with:

## **II. THE LORD AND HIS DISCIPLES TO CAESARIA PHILIPPI (Mark 8:27-33).**

The Lord and His disciples were ministering in this part of the land of Israel, and one day He asked them the question: “Whom do men say that I am?” Both Matthew in 16:21-23 and Luke in 9:21-22 record this event.

What answers did the disciples give the Lord? Their first answer was John the Baptist. Was it complimentary? Yes. Was it right? No! I hope that you remember that John the Baptist was dead. His head was cut off by the order of Herod. So many people believed that Jesus was John the Baptist, raised from the dead, with his head attached to his body. It sounds like they had a lot of faith to believe that.

What was the second answer? Elias. This stands for Elijah. Many years before Elijah had been taken alive into heaven in a chariot of fire. The Jews had been looking for Elijah to return. Was it complimentary for them to think that the Lord was Elijah? Yes, in one way; no, in another. If you are the Son of God it is not really a compliment for people to think that you are just a man, Elijah.

Others thought that the Lord was one of the OT prophets, but not enough were saying one particular prophet for the disciples to give some names.

They all thought the Lord was an extraordinary person, but if you think that the Son of God was either John the Baptist, or Elijah, or one of the OT prophets, you are dead wrong! *Why were they saying this about the Lord? One reason: They were all spiritually blind. And so they did not understand that He was the Messiah, the Son of God.*

But then the Lord turned the same question on His disciples: “But whom say ye that I am?” Peter spoke up and said, “Thou art the Christ.” Peter recognized that Jesus was the Lord, the Son of the living God. How was it that he could give the right answer? It was because the Spirit of God had opened Peter’s eyes so that he was able to recognize Who Jesus was. Concerning Jesus of Nazareth the Apostle Peter had perfect vision. I don’t mean by that that there was no more for him to learn about the Lord.

But he did know Who the Lord was. And it was for this very truth that the Jews charged our Lord with blasphemy. It would have been blasphemy if it had not been true. But it was true. So the charges which the Jews brought against the Lord were false charges. Why did the Jews bring that charge against the Lord? It was because with all of their robes, their training, their titles, and their authority, they were blind, totally blind. They could not see Who Jesus was.

People believed generally that there was something very unusual, very special, about Jesus of Nazareth, but to believe that He was the Son of God Who had come to earth as a Man, that was too much for them to accept. And it is too much for many people to accept today because the Lord has not given them spiritual sight. The Apostle Paul wrote these important words in 1 Corinthians 12:3:

3 Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed: and that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.

And we cannot say anything “by the Holy Spirit” until we are saved, but it is the Holy Spirit by Whom we are born again. He enables us to see Who Jesus of Nazareth truly is.

Wouldn't it be interesting to know how Judas Iscariot would have answered that question?

But just a moment. What did the Lord begin to do at that point? Read verse 31. He began to tell them why He had come into the world. And I want to call your attention to the little word, “must. And it is even shorter in Greek, just three letters, δεῖ. “Must” is a good translation. Thayer in his Greek lexicon (or dictionary) explains that this word denotes that “constraint” which was upon the Lord “by divine appointment.” See p. 126. He says that this speaks of a “necessity established by the counsel and decree of God, especially that purpose of His which relates to the salvation of men by the intervention of Christ and which is disclosed in the OT prophecies” (p. 126).

Thus, for the Lord what He said as it related in verse 31 was inevitable.

Let me read to you what Bishop Ryle had to say about the truth of this verse:

Why did our Lord say “must”? . . . He meant that His death and passion were necessary in order to make atonement for man's

sin. Without shedding His blood, there could be no remission. Without the sacrifice of His body on the cross, there could be no satisfaction to God's holy law. He "must" suffer to make reconciliation for iniquity. He "must" die, because without His death as a propitiatory offering sinners could never have life. He "must" suffer, because without His vicarious sufferings our sins could never be taken away. In a word, He "must" be delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification.

Here is the centre truth of our Bible. Let us never forget that. All other truths compared to this are of secondary importance. . . . let us see that we have a firm grasp upon the atoning efficacy of Christ's death. Let the truth so often proclaimed by our Lord to His disciples, and so diligently taught by the disciples to the world, be the foundation truth in our Christianity. . . . let us lean all our weight on this mighty fact,—that though we have sinned, Christ hath died for sinners, and that though we deserve nothing, Christ hath suffered on the cross for us, and by that suffering purchased heaven for all that believe in Him (Ryle, J. C. *Expository Thoughts on the Gospels, Mark*, pp. 166, 167).

But how did our Lord's words set with the Peter? Read verse 32.

And how did the Lord respond to Peter? There probably is not a stronger rebuke in all of Scripture. How Peter must have regretted these words in later days when he really came to understand the Gospel. But why did Peter rebuke the Lord like he did? Because, to use the words of the blind man, there were still some areas in Peter's understanding where he was seeing men as trees walking. Peter was straight on who Jesus was, but he had much to learn on why Jesus had come into the world.

We can be thankful that the Lord enabled Peter to have his spiritual sight cleared up on this most important point. Later Peter would write in his first epistle these words which leave no doubt as where he stood on the suffering and death of the Lord Jesus Christ:

18 Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers;

19 But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot:

20 Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you,

21 Who by him do believe in God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God (1 Peter 1:18-21).

**Concl:** As I close let me attempt to answer a question that may be bothering you. It has bothered me. I don't know that I have the right answer, but let me tell you what I am thinking about why the Lord told the blind man not to tell anybody in the town what had happened to him, and why He told the disciples at this point not to tell others about Him.

I think it goes back to what we have been seeing about spiritual blindness and spiritual sight. Think of the confusion that the blind man who had received his sight would have caused if he had made it his business to tell people about the Lord. And think of the damage that Peter would have done by telling people about the Lord when it is clear that Peter did not really understand the Gospel himself at this point in relationship with the Lord. Was Peter saved at this time? How could he have been when he did not understand the Gospel. That came later, but here, while He knew who Jesus was, He did not understand His mission in the world. So he needed His sight made clearer, and when it was, he became a mighty instrument in the hand of God, reaching multitudes with the Gospel.

So let's concentrate on seeing things in Scripture clearly, asking the Lord to give us the knowledge and the wisdom that we need. Then He will begin to open doors of testimony for us where we can spread the truth to people who also need the Savior.

There are two kinds of blindness, but, thank God, there are also two kinds of sight. You have one; make sure that you have the other.