

Matthew 15: 10-20 and Luke 6: 39 and 40; “The Blind Leading the Blind”, Sermon # 42 in the series – “Astonished at His Teaching”, Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall on January 24th, 2016, in the Morning Worship.

The theme of the last 3 messages that I have given to you has been this: It is the responsibility of every believer to so cultivate the grace that they have been given by Jesus Christ, that they will become more sensitive to the issues of sin and righteousness which dwell there in their heart. “Guard your heart with all diligence for from it flow the issues of life.” These are issues which each of us faces every day in our heart. This kind of sensitivity is glorifying to God. If you have this kind of sensitivity you will be praying to go on to cultivate the fruits of righteousness in your heart; those fruits which will come from and through Jesus Christ. These responsibilities are what you should fill up your life with, after you come to know the Lord. This morning, however, I want you to think with me of the implications of spiritual blindness. Our Lord Jesus says here in verse 14 – “If the blind leads the blind, both will fall into a ditch.” They will fall into the ditch because of all the consequences of their spiritual blindness. And the result of this blindness, when realized, will only lead to misery, sorrow, and despair. On the other hand, “A disciple is not above his teacher.” And so, “Everyone who is perfectly trained will become like his teacher” when the Lord is working in their heart, when He is leading them into the truth of His word. If this is the case with you, you will more and more come to realize experientially the beauty of having righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit as you live your life, because you are seeing spiritual things clearly. So here are 3 questions that I want to ask this morning, from these two texts which I have read to you. 1st – What are the implications of spiritual blindness to the unbeliever? (Verses 13 and 14) 2nd – What are the implications of spiritual blindness to a believer who does not see as he should? (Verses 15-20) And 3rd – What are the implications of spiritual sight and discernment for the true believer who is faithfully following Christ? (Luke 6: 39 and 40)

1st of all - What are the implications of spiritual blindness to the unbeliever?

Verse 13 says, “But Jesus answered and said, ‘Every plant which My heavenly Father has not planted will be uprooted.’ “Let them alone.” “They are blind leaders of the blind.” “And if the blind leads the blind, both will fall into a ditch.” The life of every person is a plant, Jesus is saying. But some plants are planted by the heavenly Father, and some are not. This is speaking of the doctrines of election and calling. It is the Father who draws you to Christ and who plants you in His grace based upon His blessed eternal purposes. If you have not been planted by the Father into the rich soil of Christ’s grace, your life will eventually be uprooted, and the implications will awful for you if you cannot find Him as your Savior. But when a person believes in the Lord Jesus Christ, they are planted in the good soil of His finished work of righteousness and sufferings on their behalf. You will not come into judgment because you have received the gift of grace. And when you believe, you will also want to respond to all of what Christ has done for you by pursuing holiness in the way that you will live your life. Christ comes into your heart and into your life. And Christ’s life in you produces a change in your thoughts and desires. In your heart this grace takes root downward and it bears fruit upward.

And you should know that when a person does truly believe in the Lord Jesus, that their heart is planted forever in the work of Christ. Turn over with me to Romans Chapter 6 and you will see this. There are sometimes when I think that the King James translation should have been left alone in our newer translations. This is one of them. In our New King James, verse 5, says, “For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection....” The NAS is the same. But in the King James it says, “For if we have been planted together in the likeness of Christ’s death, we shall be also in the likeness

of His resurrection.” The word in the Greek is *σὺμφυτος* (*sumphutos*); the first part of the word a preposition which means union with, in terms of companionship. Our verse in Romans certainly can be translated “united in the likeness” of His death. But the second part of the word (*phuo*) with it, means “grown together with”, or as the King James has it, “planted together” in the likeness of His death. It seems to convey more than simple union. It conveys the meaning of being planted; the seed of righteousness placed within the heart that will grow up to eternal life in the believer in Christ. There is a root that grows from that seed, and because of it the righteous shall not be moved even in the worst of trials. The root of the righteous shall not be moved. Proverbs 12: 3 says, “A man is not established by wickedness, but the root of the righteous cannot be moved.” Let me ask you this morning; do you have the root of the matter in you? Have you taken Christ Jesus to be your only Savior from sin, and has this faith that you have exercised in Him, really produced a change in you so that you love righteousness and pursue it, and you hate lawlessness and shun it? If not; the heavenly Father will uproot you root and branch in a coming day. Your worldliness, your pride, your selfishness, and the things that you boast in now, will all come under His holy scrutiny and you will remain under His wrath forever. Very often, people fail to enter in to eternal life, because they have followed others who were blind. Only a person who really sees spiritually, can lead others to the One who can give spiritual sight.

If you turn over to John Chapter 9, verse 35, and you will see this. The man who had been born blind had been healed by Jesus so that he could see physically. The Pharisees did not like this because Jesus had performed this miracle on the Sabbath, and they believed, and they were teaching others, that anyone who performed a miracle on the Sabbath, as Jesus was doing, was a sinner because He was breaking the Sabbath in doing this good work. In verse 24, they say, “Give God the glory!” “We know that this Man is a sinner.” To them, doing work of any sort on the Sabbath, even if it was a good work, was seen as sinful by these Pharisees. This was the blind leading the blind. They cast this man who had been healed out of the Synagogue because he wouldn’t agree with them; that Jesus was doing a sinful thing in his healing of him on the Sabbath. In verse 35 it says, “Jesus heard that they had cast him out; and when He had found him, He said to him, ‘Do you believe in the Son of God?’” “He answered and said, ‘Who is He, Lord that I may believe in Him?’” “And Jesus said to him, ‘You have both seen Him and it is He who is talking to you.’” “Then he said, ‘Lord, I believe!’” “And he worshiped Him.” “And Jesus said, ‘For judgment I have come into this world, that those who do not see may see, and that those who see may be made blind.’” “Then some of the Pharisees who were with Him heard these words, and said to Him, ‘Are we blind also?’” “Jesus said to them, ‘If you were blind, you would have no sin; but now you say, “We see.” “Therefore your sin remains.”

Now I hope that you can see what Jesus is saying here. The Pharisees who thought highly of their own discernment of spiritually truth were, in reality, blind. They were leaning to their own understanding in spiritual things. They were not willing to receive Jesus’ words as the Son of God, and yet they prided themselves on being able to do and keep the words of the Scriptures plus their own traditions. They were those who justified themselves in the sight of God. This, Jesus is saying, is blindness. They were not really submitting to God or the Scriptures and the proof of it was, that they would not submit to Jesus’ judgment of them that they were blind. Ask yourself this morning if you are submitting your mind to God? Are you submitting the way that you look at things, to the Lord Himself? The man who had been blind and was healed, immediately submitted himself to receive Jesus’ words that He was the Son of God. He would worship Jesus immediately upon His being healed and knowing who Jesus was. You must ask yourself, “Am I doing this?” This is what Jesus came into the world to do; to save sinners, to give sight to the spiritually blind, to give eternal life to those who would receive Him. Can you confess that Jesus has done this for you? The Pharisee’s sins remained with them and God’s

wrath remained upon them because they would not believe that Jesus was the Son of God. They thought that they saw clearly that He was a sinner. It was they who were the sinners. All this will be proved to them on the Day of Judgment. I believe that they already know it now, in the reality of their experience. But what about you, my friends here this morning? Do you see or are you blind? If you are blind and confess your need of Jesus, you will come to see. And the grace of repentance, the grace which leads to holiness and good works which glorify God, will be yours.

Now 2ndly - What are the implications of spiritual blindness to a believer who does not see as he should? (Verses 15-20 of Matthew 15)

“Then Peter answered and said to Him, ‘Explain this parable to us.’” “So Jesus said, ‘Are you also still without understanding?’” “Do you not yet understand that whatever enters the mouth goes into the stomach and is eliminated?” “But those things which proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and they defile a man.” And then He lists the sins. The implications of spiritual blindness to believers is found in their not understanding that they need to deal with the sins of their heart, in a specific way, on a regular and on-going basis. 1st John 1: 8 says: “If we say that we have no sin (singular) (that is, indwelling, remaining corruption in our hearts) we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.” “If we confess our sins (plural) (that is, the actual sins of our heart and our outward actions), He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

If you ask a believer if he is a sinner, he will usually confess that he is, unless he has believed the falsehood that the old nature has been entirely removed in his regeneration. He knows that by the grace of Christ he has become one of the saints, but he also knows that he is far from perfect. The dominating and ruling power of sin has been broken in him, but he also finds another law waging war against all the good impulses of his heart. He knows that God sees him as complete and forgiven and righteous in His sight. He knows that by God’s grace in Christ that he is seen by God as one of His holy ones. And it is his greatest desire to be holy even as God is holy. And so, if he is wise, if he has spiritual sight, his desire turns into action. He purposefully learns to guard his heart. He knows that he constantly needs to be on the lookout for specific sins which he may be tolerating in his heart. A Christian who wants to make progress in holiness does not rest satisfied with a general confession of the sin of his heart before God. He will, in his private prayer life, and in his thought life, every day examine his heart to think about what evils may lurk there. And when he finds evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, or blasphemies, he does not tolerate their activity in his heart. He confesses them and he asks for grace to repent of them, and to forsake them. It is in the heart that these things begin, and for the believer it is in the heart where these sins should be put to death in the presence of God, before they ever come out on his lips or in his actions. It is blindness in the Christian if he does not see that he needs to do this.

Turn with me to Romans Chapter 8 verse 12. Here we see that it is Christ, by means of the work of His Holy Spirit, who gives the Christian the power to conquer the sins of their heart. “Therefore, brethren, we are debtors – not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh, for if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.” Notice that Paul is addressing brethren here, not unbelievers who do not have the Spirit. The deeds of the body are those things that you do with your body that proceed from the impulses and thoughts of sin at work in your mind and your heart. Selfish ambition and pride, sensuality, evil thoughts about other people and God; all these begin and proceed from the sin in our hearts. And they lead to our doing things which are contrary to the will of God as found in His word. And nothing stops them, and nothing checks them except the grace of Christ. Romans 7, verse 5 says, “For when we were in the flesh, the sinful passions which were aroused by the law were at work in our members to bear fruit to death.” That is how it is for the unbeliever. They are “in” the flesh. They are not “in” Christ. The Law of God, His holy and

righteous commandments, can instruct a person concerning sin and righteousness; it can and does convict us and condemn us when these thoughts and passions are at work in our hearts. But the Law cannot give us the power to prevent us from sinning either before or after we come to Christ.

When we come to Christ we are no longer married to the Law spiritually. The Law shows us our sinfulness, but it cannot help us with it. Our sinful tendencies are aggravated by the law (aroused by it) so that we actually try in many ways to justify ourselves in having these passions or thoughts before we are converted. But after conversion to Christ I come to see and to understand that I cannot justify a single sinful thought in my mind and heart. I think that I should be able to do and to keep God's commandments, because I have been given grace. But it is because of the fact that I have been given sight, that I know, as a believer, that I can't keep them perfectly. I realize that God's law is spiritual, and it is meant to instruct my heart, not just govern the actions that other people see. It is meant to govern my heart in the sight of God. And so what am I to do; throw out the Law after I come to Christ? No, we are to look to the Spirit for help in pleasing God and keeping His word. A self-righteous person will try to keep the law only in an outward sense. And they will try to justify themselves by this outward righteousness in a hundred different ways. They think to themselves, "These are the things that I do for God, and so because of that, God will accept me." "These are the spiritual activities and ceremonies that I engage in, and so I must have spiritual sight." "These are the good works that I do for God and for other people, and because of that, God will be pleased." But verse 4 of Romans 7 says, "Therefore, my brethren, you also have become dead to the law through the body of Christ, that you may be married to another – to Him who was raised from the dead, that we should bear fruit to God." Also, if you look at Romans 8, verse 8, you see these words. "So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God." "But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you."

So having spiritual sight is the gift of Christ's grace, but you must use what is given to you or you will become weak as a Christian. You must learn to walk in the Spirit and learn to see things through Christ's eyes. Being victorious in the Christian life is when you take up the armor of God and learn to overcome the sinful tendencies of your own heart. It is learning to overcome the world. It is learning to crucify the flesh with all its lusts and desires. It is learning to resist the Devil when he comes to tempt you to sin. Each of these, your enemies in regard to your Christian faith, must come to be fought and conquered by the grace of Christ. But Christ has not left you alone. He has given you His Holy Spirit. And in giving you His Spirit, He has given you the power to go forward to live a holy life. It is learning to do the will of God from a right heart.

Where does this begin? Well turn with me to 2nd Corinthians Chapter 10. "Now I, Paul, myself am pleading with you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ – who in presence am lowly among you, but being absent am bold toward you." "But I beg you that when I am present I may not be bold with that confidence by which I intend to be bold against some, who think of us as if we walked according to the flesh." "For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh." "For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, and being ready to punish all disobedience when your obedience is fulfilled." It is the phrase, "bringing every thought captive to the obedience of Christ" that I want to focus on. This is the essence of the Christian's life. This is the pathway to greater holiness and righteousness and sanctification. It is to see that our thoughts are brought to the touchstone of Christ's obedience. Was Christ's obedience a partial obedience? Was Christ's obedience done at every point from a right heart and right motives; all to the glory of God? Then if we will bring our thoughts "captive" to His

obedience, then we shall ourselves be more obedient. We bring every thought captive to his perfect obedience. By His grace we will attempt, day by day, to do this.

If you turn over now to Galatians Chapter 5 you will see this again. In verse 24 Paul says, “And those who are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.” “If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.” “Let us not become conceited provoking one another, envying one another.” We should ask ourselves; why is it that the past tense, “have crucified the flesh” is used here, instead of the present tense, “are crucifying the flesh”? I believe that it is because our taking every thought captive to Christ is dependent upon the work of the Spirit in our hearts and lives. And the giving of the Spirit and the entire work of the Spirit in our salvation is based upon the finished work of Christ at the cross. When we come to Christ we are believing into His death; His sufferings to purchase grace for us. And that purchase includes the power for us to overcome the sins of our heart and mind. When we believe in Him we are crucified with Him. We are agreeing that our fleshly thoughts and lusts must die so that we can live and bear fruit unto God. When we believe, the Spirit give us life and that life is defined for us in verses 22-24. “Love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.” These are the graces that the Spirit gives. But the injunction is given, “If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.” The implication is that we might not; and thus we might dishonor God. We might become conceited, we might try to get what we want by provoking others. We might fall into envy. We might fall into spiritual blindness; we who have started well, might finish badly. I trust that you do not want this. And so, let us pray for more of the Spirit’s good influences in our hearts.

Then 3rd - Let us ask, what are the implications of spiritual sight and discernment for the true believer who is faithfully following Christ?

(Luke 6: 39 and 40)

“And he spoke a parable to them: ‘Can the blind lead the blind?’ ‘Will they not both fall into the ditch?’ ‘A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone who is perfectly trained will be like his teacher.’ The implication of having spiritual sight, for the true believer who is attempting to follow Christ faithfully, is that you will become more like Christ. The more that you see clearly, and the more that you are led by the Spirit to do God’s perfect will, the more you will become like Christ. God sees this, but other people, even other Christians, may not see this. They may even think wrongly of you, the more progress that you make. Will you not learn what the Lord would have to learn here? God hides pride from those who He is building into Christ likeness. He won’t ultimately let His saints boast in themselves. But He will let them boast in Him. Turn with me to over Job chapter 19 and you will see this. You remember that Job was being severely tried by terrible afflictions which God permitted him to go through; afflictions which were instigated by Satan to attempt to prove to God and men that Job was really not the man of integrity that God insisted that he was. But Satan could not prove this, even though he was trying to destroy Job without a cause.

Why couldn’t Satan succeed? Because Job was planted in Christ. In the most dark point of Job’s trial, when even his own friends were attempting to prove that he was a hypocrite, this is what he said in verse 23. “Oh, that my words were written!” “Oh, that they were inscribed in a book!” “That they were engraved on a rock with an iron pen and lead; forever!” “For I know that my Redeemer lives, and He shall stand at last on the earth; and after my skin is destroyed, this I know, that in my flesh I shall see God, whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another.” “How my heart yearns within me!” “If you should say, ‘How shall we persecute him?’ – Since the root of the matter is found in me, be afraid for yourselves; for wrath brings the punishment of the sword, that you may know there is a judgment.” What was Job saying? He was saying that the root of Christ’s grace was in Him which caused him to continue hoping in God even though all had been taken away from him. He knew that His Redeemer

lived. It caused him to hold fast his integrity when his friends were against him. And even further, he could say to his friends that they should not persecute him, calling him a hypocrite – since “the root of the matter was found in him”. He was the planting of the Lord, that God might be glorified. He had assurance of his salvation, even at that point. He knew that his friends would eventually be proved wrong. I believe that Job’s friends were true believers even though they were very wrong in the way that they treated him. They “went and did as the Lord commanded them”. They offered the sacrifices and “the Lord restored Job’s losses when he prayed for his friends.” A person who knows the Lord, when they find out that they were wrong will always go and do what the Lord commands them to do, in order to make things right with those whom they have sinned against.

But the thing I want you to see, as we close this sermon, is that even though Job had great spiritual sight, he still had some blindness attended with it. And this is often the way that it is with all of God’s dear people. Job still had to be brought to the point where he would focus more upon justifying God rather than His own moral integrity, in the sight of men. He had to be brought to the place when he saw that God’s plans and His purposes were greater than he could comprehend. He did not realize that his words would be inscribed in the very word of God, for all generations to see. God was building Job into the image of Christ, but Job couldn’t see it. Job thought that God had become His enemy in this trial, when all the while He was behind the scenes, working to prove to Satan that he was a righteous man, and that there was none like him on the earth. God was interested in Job becoming more like Christ, and God succeeded in doing that very thing, through this trial that he passed through. Will you not remember this? “A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone who is perfectly trained will be like his teacher.” Jesus, by His giving all those who believe in Him His Holy Spirit, has them all in His training program. Good leaders are those men who are willing to be taught to be like Christ. They are those who guard their hearts and their tongues. They are those who are trusting that Christ will make them over into men and women that will manifest the fruit of the Spirit. They are those who see that they may have to suffer misunderstanding, and even persecution, in order that God might be glorified, and they be built into His blessed image. Is this your greatest desire; to have the eyes of your heart enlightened so that you might know the hope of your calling, and to know the exceeding greatness of His power toward you who are believing in Him, to be holy? Then God will give it to you.