

“Seeing, You Will See and not Perceive”

By Paul R. Blake

“And seeing, you will see and not perceive...” (Matt. 13:14ff). Thus spake the Savior in the parable of the sower. He taught that people would hear the truth, but would fail to recognize and understand it; that folks would see evidence of the Divine, but fail to identify and distinguish it. They would hear with ears of flesh, but their souls had self-inflicted deafness. They could see with eyes of flesh, but the eyes of their hearts and minds were shut tight. The will of God and its attendant blessings were right in front of them, and they would not see either. How sad.

The apostle Paul told the Corinthians that “we walk by faith, not by sight” (2Cor. 5:7). They were having the same difficulty with this principle as did Christ's audience. How is it that one cannot see what is right in front of him? Perhaps he is not looking for it.

The human mind is a wonderful organ, perhaps the pinnacle of God's physical creation. We have been given the ability to focus our attention on one item, and at the same time screen out nearly all other activities, sounds, and input around us. Visualize sitting under a tree in the summer while studying the Bible. What is going on around you? There are birds singing, children playing across the street, a lawn mower at the end of the block, a breeze blowing, dappled sunlight shines through the leaves making spots on the pages, ants are a few feet away dragging a grasshopper home for supper, a robin is tugging a worm from the flower bed nearby. How do you get any studying done? Simple -- your mind filters out all of these distractions. You have decided to read, and your mind complies by screening out all of the extra things going on around you.

How does this work in spiritual matters? Quite the same way; in fact, Paul told the Corinthians that they were looking at and concentrating on the wrong things; they needed to shift their focus. Instead of looking at things that were visible, they should have been concentrating on invisible matters.

“Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal” (2Cor. 4:16-18).

This principle is easily understood when we realize that one of our five senses can distract the others from fully functioning. When listening to a particularly beautiful sound, we instinctively close our eyes for deeper appreciation; that way our mind can focus on hearing without the powerful distraction of vision. Likewise, when we are trying to see by faith, our physical sense of sight distracts our thinking. Our eyes get in the way of our faith. For example, when the evolutionist peddles his moldy bones in the classroom, our physical eyes see those bones as alleged evidence for Darwinism, and this distracts our vision by faith -- that God created all things. In a second example, our eyes see the factory being shut down and our jobs ending; this vision distracts us from seeing by faith that God has promised to care for His own. Therefore, when we focus our attention through our physical sense, our walk by faith becomes addled and confused by the extraneous input. We need to focus our attention and thinking on seeing the unseen by faith, and block out the senses of the flesh in spiritual matters.

Why should we direct our attention to the invisible while living in a physical world? First, for security. For precisely that reason -- that we live in a physical world. A physical world changes; it decays; it dies. God does not change; heaven does not decay; the soul does not die. In a short space of time relatively speaking, this world will be gone. In an even shorter period of time, our bodies will be dead. The physical is ephemeral, delicate, and limited. The spiritual is profound, powerful, and permanent. The body dies easily, but no force exists that can harm, let alone destroy, the soul.

Second, for encouragement. Paul said the outward man is perishing while at the same time the inward man was being built up. The eyes of flesh become discouraged when the outward man declines, but the eyes of faith are uplifted by the growth and strength received by suffering in the flesh. It is inevitable that the flesh will age and that the Christian will suffer. Our souls have been created by God in such a way as to derive power and health from the aging and privation of the body. By faith, we rejoice that our spirit grows as our body shrinks.

Third, for perseverance. With the eyes of flesh, we see only the trials and the effect that such pressure has on our lives and bodies. It makes us want to quit; after all, who wants to deliberately harm himself? Without the vision of faith, we would not see the reward that awaits us, and makes the suffering worth the sacrifice. The un-distracted eyes of faith allow us to see that our physical trials are "light" and "momentary," while our reward is "far more exceeding," "eternal," "weighty" and "glory." Seeing this way, we can put up with light, momentary afflictions in view of what is to come.

And fourth, for growth. One who can see only with his physical eyes is limited and spiritually impoverished. He cannot see beyond this earth and has no hope of the riches in Christ. One who walks by faith can see the unseen things and sets his affections on things above this plane of existence. To him, this world is a brief stretch of highway on his pilgrimage to the heavenly presence of God. Kind reader, walk by faith. Do not allow the eyes of flesh to distract you from the beauties of the eternal and unseen.

A Moments Wisdom

- The hardest person in the world to love is the one who needs our love the most.
- I don't blame folks for writing angry emails when they are offended; the wrong is in sending them.
- The only fellow who is truly unhappy is on who knows of nothing needing to be done.
- A preacher is an intellectual trucker, picking up thoughts and delivering them where they are needed.
- We need to get over the idea that we can develop pills for whatever is wrong with a man.
- The only good thing about the fast pace of today's world is that it doesn't leave much time for gossiping about what happened yesterday.
- Folks find it hard to thank God for what He has provided, when they think they deserve so much more.
- An honest man is one that won't take a can of pop from a broken vending machine.
- The best drawn plans are useless if the house is never built.
- Patience is often touted loudly as a virtue by those who haven't the courage to act now.
- We will never stop crime until we get over the idea that we can elect or hire people to stop it.
- How tired we are often depends on how eager we are to do the task before us.
- We all seem to want everything that others have, except the troubles that go with those things.