

# Christ's Last Word to His Church SERIES: Challenge # 6: Beware of Self-Induced Spiritual Blindness Revelation 3:18

One of the greatest works of God in salvation was opening our blind eyes to see.

Protecting spiritual sight is the final of the three elements we are to deliberately pursue, according to Christ's Last Words. Jesus counsels His Church in life-long, spiritual vision-care, promoting healthy eyes.

## **Christ Desires Us To See Clearly**

Please open with me to Rev. 3, and listen again to Jesus, telling the church at Laodicea what they needed to have lives that pleased Him. Please stand, as we give attention to the public reading of Scripture.

Revelation 3:14-20 (NKJV) "And to the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write, 'These things says the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God: 15 "I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. 16 So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth. 17 Because you say, 'I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing'—and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, **blind**, and naked— 18 **I counsel you to buy from Me** gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and **anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see.** 19 As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent.

When Christ's birth was announced, He was comin as the One who would save sinners from their sins, and be God with us. That is the message of Christ's Birth.

## **Salvation Reaches: Blind Sinners in Darkness**

We were each born sitting in the darkness, heading towards the precipice of sin; but we didn't even know it because we were blind. That's how we each were found by Jesus Christ, when He saved us.

So at the moment of salvation, we are given spiritual sight as a gift from God. The Christmas story gives the clearest picture of how all humans appear in their unsaved state, from God's perspective.

The Gospel is when Jesus Christ shines into our sin-darkened night life with a Sunrise of forgiven Life & saving Light. Listen anew to the wonder of what we celebrate this Christmas Season from the last few verses of Luke 1:

Luke 1:76-79 (NKJV) " And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Highest; For you will go before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways, 77 To give knowledge of salvation to His people By the remission of their sins, 78 Through the tender mercy of our God, With which **the Dayspring** from on high has visited us; 79 To give light to **those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death**, To guide our feet into the way of peace."

When we were saved we were given the gift of spiritual sight. We can hear God's Voice, and see Him in His Word, and His Creation. We can feel His Spirit at work within us.

In fact, when Jesus explained salvation to Paul at his conversion, Jesus told Paul that He had "opened" Paul's eyes. That was the very first element of the miracle of salvation, in a list with seven miraculous elements. That means:

## **Salvation Brings: The Gift of Spiritual Sight**

As we turn now to Acts 26:15-18, which captures Christ's explanation of salvation to Paul, and defines the very first step of salvation being "opened eyes". We see that from God's perspective, salvation is all about going from being spiritually blinded in sin, to opened eyes and forgive.

Acts 26:15-18 (NKJV) So I said, 'Who are You, Lord?' And He said, 'I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. 16 But rise and stand on your feet; for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to make you a minister and a witness both of the things which you have seen and of the things which I will yet reveal to you. 17 I will deliver you from the Jewish people, as well as from the Gentiles, to whom I now send you, 18 to **open their eyes**, in order **to turn them from darkness to light**, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me.'

So that means that:

## **Lost People Are Still Spiritually Blind**

When Jesus spoke to people who rejected His Gospel message He told them plainly that they were spiritually “blind”. Turn back to Matthew 15 to see just one of these incidents<sup>1</sup>.

Matthew 15:12-14 (NKJV) Then His disciples came and said to Him, “Do You know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this saying?” 13 But He answered and said, “Every plant which My heavenly Father has not planted will be uprooted. 14 Let them alone. They are **blind** leaders of the **blind**. And if the **blind** leads the **blind**, both will fall into a ditch.”

So everyone was born sitting in the darkness, heading towards the precipice of sin; but they don’t even know it because they are blind. Only the Light of the Gospel and the power of salvation can open spiritual eyes.

But opened eyes is just the beginning. Jesus goes on to describe what happens when we use and maintain our newfound spiritual sight.

Turn back to Matthew 5. Jesus started His longest sermon, called the Sermon on the Mount, with a startling statement that only the pure in heart can see God.

Matthew 5:8 (NKJV) Blessed are the pure in heart, For **they shall see God**.

This verse in the Beatitudes is a profound truth. The depth of this single verse and simple declaration by Christ is far beyond what we can even begin to comprehend, it speaks of eternity invested in the wonder of seeing and knowing God. But on a practical daily level, here is what Jesus said to them that day, and to us today.

## **Spiritual Purity Opens Spiritual Sight**

The word “pure” in Matthew 5:8, is the translation of the Greek word: **katharos**, which means “to make pure by cleansing from dirt, filth, and contamination”.

This word was used often in the world of the Bible describing metals that were refined until they were “unmixed, unalloyed, unadulterated”. When we apply this word from daily life back then, to our spiritual lives, we see that Jesus is calling for us to have pure motives, to keep single-minded for Him, to offer Him undivided devotion, and to live in spiritual integrity.

Jesus went on to say in Matthew 6:24 that we can’t serve two masters. The first New Testament book after Christ's ascension was by His earthly brother James, who taught about the dangers of an un-surrendered life, and says: double-minded people are

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<sup>1</sup> John 9 and the healing of the blind man at the Pool of Siloam was the climax of the confrontations over spiritual blindness.

unstable in every part of life; and that double-mindedness can only be cleansed away by the Lord (James 4:8).

Spiritual purity, as described here in Matthew 5:8, needs to be defined. First God is part of the very nature of God. So, when God created the universe, angels and mankind: all three were pure from His Hands; but as we know, all of humanity fell into sinful impurity, a third of the angels, and all of the universe has also been tainted and groans (Romans 8).

God offers all who come in faith to Christ, positional purity, which is imputed to each of us so that God sees Christ's righteous life credited to our account (Romans 4:5; II Cor. 5:21). We are a new creation, sanctified at our new birth (II Cor. 5:17). Then, all who are saved will someday see Jesus face to face and be glorified, perfect, and sinless forever (I John 3:2). So at the instant of salvation we are pure, seeing God, awaiting glorification.

## **Practical Purity Preserves Spiritual Sight**

The problem is, we don't immediately get glorified. There is one last form of purity in the Bible, and that is the one that makes up the vast majority of the pages of the Epistles and that is practical purity or progressive sanctification. Here is a simple explanation of the practical purity that God seeks in our lives:

*“Practical purity, is the hard part, the part that *does* require our supreme effort... Practical purity, though it too comes from God, demands our participation in a way that the other kinds of purity do not. That is why Paul implores, “Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God” (2 Cor. 7:1).*

It is why Peter pleads, “As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance, but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; because it is written, ‘You shall be holy, for I am holy’ ” (1 Pet. 1:14–16).

We are not saved just for future heavenly purity but also for present earthly purity. At best it will be gold mixed with iron and clay, a white garment with some black threads. But God wants us now to be as pure as we can be. If purity does not characterize our living, we either do not belong to Christ, or we are disobedient to Him. We will have temptations, but God will always provide a way of escape (1 Cor. 10:13). We will fall into sin, but “if we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9).<sup>2</sup>

## **The Blessings of Purity: Seeing God Clearly**

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<sup>2</sup> MacArthur, J. (1989). *Matthew* (207–208). Chicago: Moody Press.

Look back one more time at Matthew 5:8.

As I said this is one of the deepest and most profoundly impacting verses in God's Word.

God promises a special blessing to those who, by His grace, maintain their practical, daily purity. What is the blessing? Jesus says that: "they shall see God"!

The Greek text records the words for "see God" in the future, indicative tense, and the middle voice. Also the word "they" is in the emphatic form. That means that only they (autos in Greek), get the blessings of seeing God clearly.

To render this verse literally it would be: "Blessed are the ones with hearts kept unpolluted, for only they shall be continuously seeing God for themselves."

Jesus here declares simply that an intimate relationship of knowing God in a close, intimate way, on a daily basis, is reserved only for those who are pure (those without double-mindedness).

Salvation opens to us the daily joys of a purified heart. We like Moses (in Ex. 33:18) long to see more and more of God. Like David (in Psalm 42:1) we pant, longingly after more and more of God's beauty that satisfies our souls. Like Job (in Job 42:5) we go from just hearing things about God, to actually seeing Him each day.

Practical purity keeps us through life with healthy eyes so that we can see God clearly.

## **The Captivating Beauty of Our Great God**

Jesus goes on in the Sermon to say that our spiritual sight if maintained properly, will flood our life with God's light.

Matthew 6:22 (ESV) "The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light,

Jesus often used the Old Testament Scriptures as His source to illustrate truths He was teaching. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus may be pointing back to the monumental passage in Isaiah 33:14-18 about the necessity of a life of obedience in order to see Christ clearly in His beauty.

This passage has three wonderful truths:

1. The offer of seeing God continuously;
2. The description of pollutants that can blind us;
3. The indescribable joys of seeing God.

Note those three as we walk through these verses together. First here is:

## **The Offer to Experience God Continuously**

Isaiah 33:14 (NKJV) The sinners in Zion are afraid; Fearfulness has seized the hypocrites: " Who among us shall  **dwell** with the devouring fire? Who among us shall  **dwell** with everlasting burnings?"

## **We can dwell in the Presence of God, seeing and hearing Him in His Word. Next, we see: The Description of Six Choices to Preserve Healthy Spiritual Sight**

Isaiah 33:15 (NKJV)

1. He who walks righteously  **[Lifestyle of practical purity]**
2. and speaks uprightly,  **[Speech under control]**
3. He who despises the gain of oppressions,  **[Compassion]**
4. Who gestures with his hands, refusing bribes,  **[Honesty]**
5. Who stops his ears from hearing of bloodshed,  **[Pure audio]**
6. And shuts his eyes from seeing evil:  **[Pure video]**

## **The Six Indescribable Joys of Seeing God**

Isaiah 33:16-17 (NKJV)

1. He will dwell on high;  **[Endless delights]**
2. His place of defense will be the fortress of rocks;  **[True security]**
3. Bread will be given him,  **[Satisfied longings]**
4. His water will be sure.  **[Never-ending refreshment]**
5. v. 17 Your eyes will see the King in His beauty;  **[The Greatest Attraction]**
6. They will see the land that is very far off.  **[Heavenward gaze]**

Seeing God is the way that all the great men and women of the Old Testament lived such lives by God's grace. They kept seeking to see and follow Him. That is the clear teaching of the book of Hebrews.

This is the "pilgrim and stranger" mentality of Hebrews 11. This is what the Old Testament saints experienced, that kept them going through endless trials. This is what some of the greatest missionaries and martyrs have known.

We wonder how they were able to make it; but God has already explained what is available if we will just seek Him.

Now what do we know about this way of life seeing God? A good place to start is with:

## The Heroes of the Old Testament Faith

Hebrews is an inspired guide to help us interpret the lives of the Old Testament saints. What we find is that they did not all have the New Covenant, indwelling presence of God. Some of them had this blessing at times, but not all of them, all the time like we do. That is an ominous reminder that to us, to whom the unbroken presence of God in our lives has been given, we have much we will be held accountable for.

The patriarchs lived and died in a far away land, enduring many hardships because they saw far off the city of God.

Hebrews 11:13 (NKJV) These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but **having seen them afar off** were assured of them, embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.

The way that Moses made it in dark Egypt labyrinth of sin was by spiritual sight, seeing the invisible God by faith.

Hebrews 11:24-27 (NKJV) By faith Moses, when he became of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, 25 choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, 26 esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he looked to the reward. 27 By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he **endured as seeing Him who is invisible**

Spiritual sight is fundamental to the life of a believer. Just like physical sight, our spiritual eyes must be guarded at all times to protect them and preserve our ability to see.

## Beware of Self-Induced Spiritual Blindness

Peter goes on to describe a condition of those who are Christ's followers of becoming blinded because of not walking in the sanctifying power of Christ.

2 Peter 1:8-9 (NKJV) For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 For he who lacks these things is **shortsighted, even to blindness**, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins.

Back to Revelation 3 and v. 18, remember the three sections? I counsel you to buy from

Me:

- gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; **[spiritual wealth]**
- and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; **[spiritual clothing]**
- and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see. **[spiritual sight]**

We are on the third and final longed for commodity. We should plot, plan, and with full attention seek to keep our eyes healthy at all costs.

## Habit Six: Jesus wants us to Repent of any Spiritual **Blindness**

v. 18c and anoint your eyes with eye salve, **that you may see.**

There is a play on words here. Anoint comes from the same word as Christ. Christ is the Anointed One, so we are to seek that the Lord put Christ upon our sight. We want Him to give us sight, make us see, and keep our sight working and healthy.

- First, **practical purity** is possible. Whatever God desires from us, He provides the way for us to obey. The key to practical purity is confessing we have no power on our own to make it even for a moment. John 15: reminds us that apart from Him we can do nothing.
- Second, **spiritual blindness** is just that: blindness to things of God. We no longer see Him in His Word. The salve He offers is in a prayer for Christ to open our eyes each day:

Psalm 119:18 (NKJV) Open my eyes, that I may see Wondrous things from Your law.

Luke 24:45 (NKJV) And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures.

- Thirdly, **spiritual blindness** is when we stop noticing His Hand in our lives, extended to us to hold onto and follow Him through life. The salve Christ offers is to surrender daily to walking in the Spirit.

Galatians 5:16 (NKJV) I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.

- Fourthly, **spiritual blindness** is when we begin to stumble along, acting more and more like lost people who do not know, can not see, and do not follow the Lord. To allow neglected spiritual hygiene to slowly darken our spiritual sight is horrible. The only solution is the daily application of the sanctifying salve of the Word of



God.

John 17:17 (NKJV) Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth.

One of the greatest works of God in salvation was opening our blind eyes to see.

Protecting spiritual sight is the final of the three elements we are to deliberately pursue, according to Christ's Last Words.

Jesus counsels His Church in life-long, spiritual vision-care, promoting healthy eyes.

Spiritual **Blindness** is neglecting practical purity, avoiding the daily surrender to the Spirit, and skipping the sanctifying salve of listening to God's truth in His Word. Spiritual Blindness is sickening to Christ.

So Jesus Christ calls each of us to repent today of any Spiritual **Blindness**.