

Spiritual Blindness

Acts 28:17-27

By Phillip G. Kayser at DCC on 1-24-2010

Introduction – pervasive blindness (see Eph. 4:18; Rom. 11:25; 2Cor. 3:14-16)

We have come to a section of Acts that very vividly illustrates the spiritual blindness of Israel that Paul talked about in Romans 11. And there are a number of reasons why I want to preach on this: one is that it will make us love our Lord the more for having given us sight, and it will make us worship Him more for His kindness. A second reason is that it will hopefully give us humility with the realization that we too as a covenant community can experience blindness if we do not cling to the Lord. But another reason is to over-turn a very common (and very racist) interpretation of this passage (and of Romans 11) that says that *Jews* are blind, and *Jews* are resistant to Christ, and *Jews* are rejected because of blindness, all the while implying that the Gentiles are more worthy than the Jews; implying that the Gentiles are not as blind. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Ephesians 4:18 says that apart from grace, *all men are spiritually blind*. It says, they have, **“their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart.”** That spiritual blindness is the condition of every human being until God speaks to that heart and says, “Let there be light.” So let’s not misapply this passage as some have done to make Israel out to be a particularly evil people. Paul is not astonished by human blindness.

What astonished Paul was that there was such pervasive blindness *in the covenant people*. In Romans 11:25 he calls it a mystery. He doesn’t understand it. They had the promises of the covenant, the sign of the covenant, the Scriptures of the covenant, the blessings of the covenant. They had the presence of God, the temple, the Gospel portrayed so vividly in that temple system. They were surrounded by these covenant blessings, and yet they were spiritually blind to their Messiah and totally opposed to the Gospel. His conclusion in Romans 11 is not that you Gentiles are better than the Jews. His conclusion is not to give the Gentile community of God a false sense of security. His conclusion is to warn the Gentiles not to be proud because the same thing can happen to us. This is a passage that is very relevant to the Gentile Christian community. In Romans 11:25 Paul says, **“For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this**

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mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.” And then in the next verse he says that when the fullness of the Gentiles comes in, Israel will be converted as a nation. God is able to convert people out of blindness, and he will convert the entire nation in one day (Is. 66:8; some think Zech. 3:9 also says that). He will do with Israel just like He did with Nineveh. But in the meantime, Romans says that only a small remnant of Jews in any given age will become Christians. Why? He says, “I don’t know. It’s a mystery. But God is sovereign.”

2Corinthians 3:14-16 speaks of this blindness using the imagery of a veil: **“But their minds were blinded. For until this day the same veil remains unlifted in the reading of the Old Testament, because the veil is taken away in Christ. But even to this day, when Moses is read, a veil lies on their heart. Nevertheless when one turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away.”** And this passage speaks of both Jews who are blinded and Jews who have had the veil taken away and who embrace their Messiah.

And I think this is a great passage for understanding mankind’s desperate need for God’s invading grace to batter down the walls of resistance and to make His throne in the hearts of men, women, and children. The pervasive blindness in our nation is not too strong for our Lord. Amen?

And of course, I want to apply this to our own congregation. If Jews in the first century could be blinded to the truth of the Messiah, it is possible for us to become blind to Scripture through pride. 2Peter 1 lists several things that need to be in place in your life, and he goes on to say, “For he who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins.” So he is saying that even believers can fall into this nasty problem of blindness if we are not careful.

Don’t assume that the covenant saves you. Don’t assume that growing up in a covenant home saves you. Praise God that His grace pervasively goes from generation to generation. That’s an incredible comfort. But please turn with me to Romans 11 – just a few chapters forward. I think it’s important that we have this as background before we look at our text, because it has been so frequently misinterpreted. Listen to Paul’s caution to us in Romans 11:17-29.

Romans 11:17 And if some of the branches were broken off, and you, being a wild olive tree, were grafted in among them, and with them became a partaker of the root and fatness of the olive tree,

Romans 11:18 do not boast against the branches. But if you do boast, *remember that* you do not support the root, but the root supports you.

Romans 11:19 ¶ You will say then, “Branches were broken off that I might be grafted in.”

Romans 11:20 Well *said*. Because of unbelief they were broken off, and you stand by faith. Do not be haughty, but fear.

Romans 11:21 For if God did not spare the natural branches, He may not spare you either.

Romans 11:22 Therefore consider the goodness and severity of God: on those who fell, severity; but toward you, goodness, if you continue in *His* goodness. Otherwise you also will be cut off.

Romans 11:23 And they also, if they do not continue in unbelief, will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again.

Romans 11:24 For if you were cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and were grafted contrary to nature into a cultivated olive tree, how much more will these, who *are* natural *branches*, be grafted into their own olive tree?

Romans 11:25 ¶ For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.

Romans 11:26 And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written:

*“The Deliverer will come out of Zion,
And He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob;*

Romans 11:27 *For this is My covenant with them,
When I take away their sins.”*

Romans 11:28 ¶ Concerning the gospel *they are* enemies for your sake, but concerning the election *they are* beloved for the sake of the fathers.

Romans 11:29 For the gifts and the calling of God *are* irrevocable.

Even though our children have grown up in the covenant like the Jews did, they too must know the reality of the Gospel. This is a passage that is very relevant for Christian congregations. There is always a danger of blindness.

I. **Blindness illustrated in the Jerusalem Jews**

A. *They falsely accused Paul (v. 17)*

Well, let’s look first of all at the blindness illustrated in the Jerusalem Jews in verse 17. Luke says, “**And it came to pass after three days that Paul called the leaders of the Jews together. So when they had come together, he said to them, ‘Men and brethren, though I have done nothing against our people or the customs of our fathers, yet I was delivered as a prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans.’**” The first evidence of blindness in the Jews back in Jerusalem was that they had falsely accused Paul in a Roman civil court. We won’t cover all the false

accusations – we’ve done that before. Here I just want to say that it is possible for people to willfully, and knowingly, bring false accusations against you. It happens all the time. You should never be surprised by false accusations from graceless hearts. What you should marvel at is that God has taken the blinders off your eyes by His grace. And pray, “Lord, please keep me near your grace, because apart from your grace I could easily do the same thing.”

B. They refused to be convinced by the evidence (vv. 18-19a)

The second evidence of blindness was that they refused to be convinced by clear-cut evidence. Let’s begin reading at verse 18: “**...who** [and that’s referring to the Roman court – “who”], **when they had examined me, wanted to let me go, because there was no cause for putting me to death.**” Paul said that a Roman court had examined all the details, and not a thing could be proved. Romans prided themselves in jurisprudence and careful examination of evidence. But these Jews would not be convinced even though all the evidence was against them.

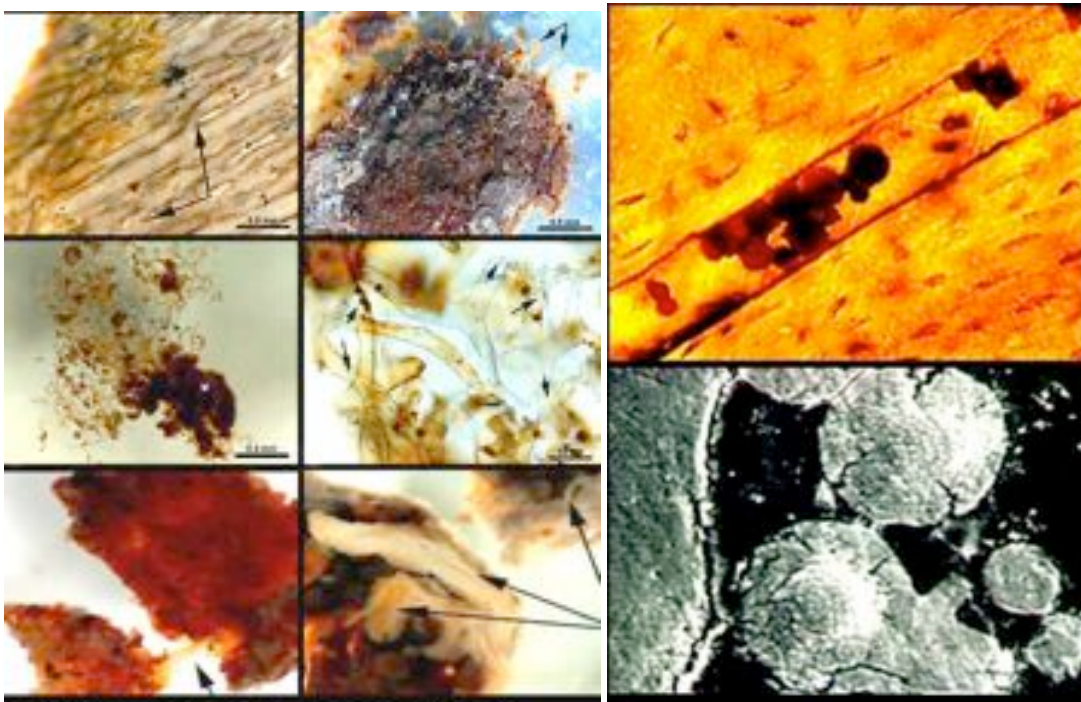
You might think that these Romans were pretty good. Maybe some unbelievers *are* objective and don’t have this spiritual blindness, but Scripture says otherwise. And it’s hinted at here. Paul is walking a careful line when he speaks here, but if there was no evidence, Rome should have let him go. The Romans did not let him go despite his innocence, or there would be been no reason for appeal. So even those who appear to be trying to be objective still have internal factors that keep them from submitting to the evidence. OK? It’s not just the Jews. The Romans had blindness too.

Earlier in the book of Acts Agrippa had told Paul, “**You almost persuade me to become a Christian.**” Yet he could not submit to the evidence. Why? Scripture says that apart from grace our affections are gripped by idols. They could be idols of pride, or lust, greed, desire for affection, money, or any number of other idols. But Scripture says that their wills are bound by a sinful nature. And it says that their minds are not subject to God’s law. For example, Romans 8:7 says, “**Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be.**” Christ presented overwhelming evidence of the Gospel, yet all but a handful forsook Him in the end. He healed a blind paralytic, and leaves through the crowd before the man can see Him. The authorities are upset that this man was healed on the Sabbath, and they ask him who did this. He didn’t know. Later, in John 5:14, Jesus finds the man alone and says, “**See, you have been made well. Sin no more, lest a worse thing**

come upon you.” What does the ungrateful guy immediately do? The very next verse says that he went to the authorities and reported on Jesus, and the authorities try to kill Jesus. I’ve often wondered what worse thing came upon that man for his ingratitude. The blindness is manifested in many different ways, but it is still true that “a man convinced against his will is of the same opinion still.”

We shouldn’t be surprised when unbelievers hold so dearly to their presuppositions that they refuse to let facts overturn them. It happens all the time. Let me just spend a few minutes illustrating this with evolution. Creationists have given mountains of evidence that evolution simply cannot be true, yet evolutionists doggedly hold onto evolution against all the evidence.

In 2005 some evolutionists found a Tyrannosaurus Rex thighbone that still looked like bone. Upon cutting it open they were stunned to find what looked like bone marrow, blood cells, soft and pliable tissue, including flexible blood vessels. They didn’t want to believe it. And even as they were looking through the microscopes they were saying, “I can’t believe it.” It seemed impossible, but it was staring them in the face.



Pictures of the soft tissue inside the T-Rex thighbone, and of blood cells.

When the results of the careful study were published, the fury of the evolutionary community was unleashed on this evolutionary research team. They were just reporting what they saw! But evolutionists knew that there is

no way that a 68 million year old bone could still have soft tissue in it! No way. It couldn't even be bone. Everything would be petrified into rock. And so a firestorm erupted. But every new study to disprove these conclusions, including injecting the soft material into rats to see if there would be reaction to antibodies specific to hemoglobin, has only confirmed that they are indeed red blood cells and soft tissue from the marrow. In fact, I have included some pictures of that for you. Since that time, other bones of dinosaurs have been uncovered that are even fresher. You would think that this would convince the evolutionists that these bones were young. No way! They don't know how the bones got so well preserved for 68 millions years – they just did. Let me quote one of the lead team members. She said,

“I mean, can you imagine pulling a bone out of the ground after 68 million years and then getting intact protein sequences? That's just mind boggling how much preservation there is in these bones.”¹

Mary Schweitzer, who made the discovery said something similar. She said,

“Finding these tissues in dinosaurs changes the way we think about fossilization, because our theories of how fossils are preserved don't allow for this.”²

“We may not really know as much about how fossils are preserved as we think...”³

And creationists are thinking, “Now wait a shake! This points to the youngness of the bones, not to an amazing preservation over 68 million years!” But evolutionists are not about to give up their pet theories. This team member went on to say that this actually *proves* evolution. Let me quote her:

“A comparison by Asara's team of the amino-acid sequence from the T. rex collagen to a database of existing sequences from modern species showed it shared a remarkable similarity to that of chickens...[The] precise order [of the amino-acids] is determined by instructions found in DNA... This finding supports the idea that chickens and T. rex share an evolutionary link. And bolsters previous research showing that birds evolved from dinosaurs and that birds are living dinosaurs.”

Can you see the problem? It's easier for these people to believe that blood, and flexible soft tissue, that still has moisture in it, can survive intact for 68 million years than it is for them to acknowledge that the earth is

¹ Jeanna Bryner, *T. Rex Related to Chickens*, *LiveScience* ([Link](#)) Last Accessed: April 20, 2007; See also: Sharon Begley, *T. Rex and His Family*, *Newsweek*, April 23, 2007

² http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2005/03/0324_050324_trexsofttissue.html

³ Mary H. Schweitzer, Jennifer L. Wittmeyer, John R. Horner, Jan B. Toporski, Soft-Tissue Vessels and Cellular Preservation in *Tyrannosaurus rex*, *Science*, March 25, 2005

young. It changed her views of how long bones can survive, but it did *not* change her views in the least about evolution.

Here are pictures of some living trilobites, or at least creatures that look awfully similar to trilobites.



Modern example?

Trilobite fossil

What do evolutionists say? They claim that they couldn't be trilobites since trilobites went extinct 350 million years ago. Besides we date things with trilobites, so that would be rather inconvenient. So these just get renamed as something else. Could it be a slightly different species? Of course it could. But the hysteria that the evolutionists showed indicates that there is more than evidence that they are concerned about. Again, the hapless fellow who found these things and called them trilobites was himself an evolutionist. He at first couldn't understand why everyone was so upset. The problem was that his evidence was overturning necessary elements of an evolutionary dating system.



1.5 million years ago?



Footprint in Permian strata
(over 250 million years ago!?)

Here are two human footprints – one in rock that evolutionists date as 1.5 million years ago, and the other in rock that evolutionists have (until this came along) dated at 250 million years ago. In fact, they had long established the dating of this rock based on other artifacts in the stone. But when this came up, all hell broke loose. It's an inconvenient fact, so let's crucify it. Scripture won't convince them, and evidence won't convince them.



June, 1851 Scientific American – this metallic vase was encased in solid pudding rock, estimated to be 100,000 years old.

Here is a beautiful vase that was encased in solid pudding rock. It was examined on site and reported on in the Scientific American in 1851. People have puzzled over that ever since. But have they ditched their theories of the age of the rock? No way. I could show you other examples of artifacts from hundreds of feet under the earth, or encased in solid granite, or taken out of coal mines, and they have either been ignored or explained in bizarre ways – some of them extremely bizarre. One explanation that I laughed at was that the objects were possibly transported from a parallel earth. Some try to say that they are frauds, despite the fact that they have been carefully examined. I don't think you can explain these as frauds. One of the most bizarre explanations that I have read was by Ted Twietmeyer, who claimed that through scientific processes of which we are not yet aware, there may be conditions (perhaps through lightning storms) where objects can pass through hundreds of feet of rock. And he was serious. It's amazing the lengths to which some people will go to avoid the obvious – that planet earth is not as old as evolutionists say it is.

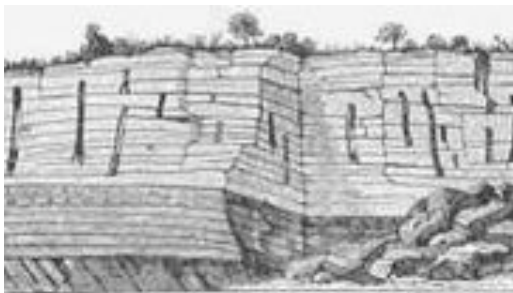
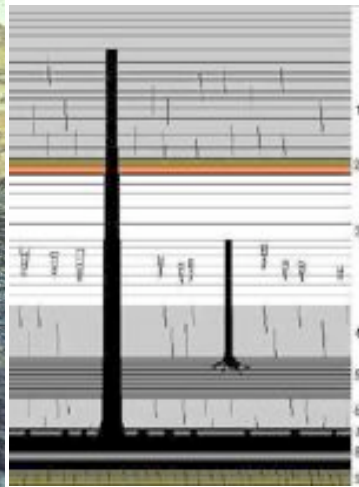
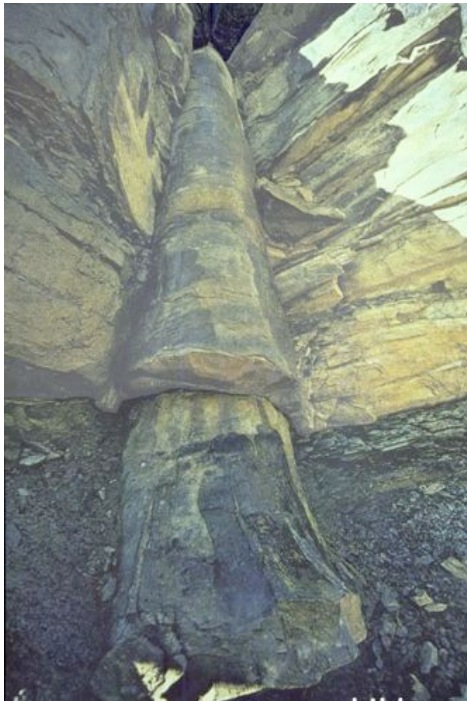


Here is a bell with a still intact clapper on the inside that was encased in a huge chunk of coal. In fact, the coal piece that was broken apart had the shape of this bell in the coal. The coal seam that it came from was supposedly over a hundred million years old. A creation organization sent this bell to the University of Oklahoma for research of the metallurgy used, and they found it to include a mixture of metals not found in any ancient metallurgy that we have yet discovered, including copper, zinc, tin, arsenic, iodine, and selenium. It had an image of some kind of god that they had never seen before.

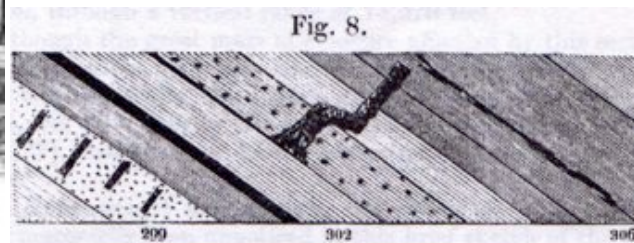


Here is a hammerhead with part of the wooden handle still intact that was buried deep within Cretaceous rock. They chiseled away a good deal of the rock so that you could see the hammer. Evolutionists admit that the rock it was buried in was Lower Cretaceous rock, dated by evolutionary geologists to 110-115 million years of age. What's the explanation? Not that the rock is young, but that the hammer must have fallen into a deep crack of old rock, with young rock later forming around it. The only problem with that theory is that the rock around it looks just like the Cretaceous rock, and secondly, parts of the handle have begun to turn to coal.

And speaking of coal, which supposedly was layered over millions of years, why so many coal trees standing and piercing through what is supposedly several million years worth of layers of coal? And even more embarrassing, are trees that not only go through coal seams, but through coal seams, millions of years worth of rock, and then another coal seam.



Textbook of Geology By: Charles Schuchert,
John Wiley & Sons, Inc. London, pp. 784



I have spent more time on this to show that without grace, people don't change their presuppositions that easily. Luke 16:31 says, **“If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rise from the dead.”** Evidence will never change a human heart. It might embarrass it, and make them flip flop, might make them change their humanistic theory, but only God's grace can actually bring sight to spiritually blind eyes.

C. They were on the offensive, not Paul (v. 19b)

But let's go on in chapter 28. It's really a situation that is far worse than simple unbelief. The Jews want blood. That's implied in the statement that "**there was no cause for putting me to death,**" which implies that this is what the Jews wanted. They wanted blood. But verse 19 goes on: "**But when the Jews spoke against it, I was compelled to appeal to Caesar, not that I had anything of which to accuse my nation.**" So Paul is not accusing his nation to the Romans. It was the Jews who were trying to get Rome to either kill Paul or hand Paul over to them to be killed. They were after blood. They were on the offensive. Over the past 100 years the liberals, homosexuals, and other enemies of America's God and constitution were at first simply appealing to sympathy, ideals of liberty, and letting all views have equal time. "You need to be tolerant." They knew as minorities that they wouldn't dare do what these Jews are doing. But as soon as they got into power, they are trying to shut down all views that differ from theirs. Pastors could easily get thrown into jail for preaching against homosexuality, based on the new hate crimes bill. This is not a simple competition of ideas. It is a willful hatred of God and His claims.

And of course, the last century has seen the most aggressive persecution of Christians ever. Now I should point out that not all unbelievers are equally aggressive. On all of these points there is a tendency to slip into worse and worse depravity as God's restraining grace is removed. Some people are kinder because they are only at the beginning stages of this downward move. But eventually people will get more aggressive in saying about Jesus, "**We will not have this man to reign over us**" (Luke 19:14). That's what depravity and spiritual blindness is about – "I will reign over myself; I don't want Jesus telling me what to do." And wherever our hearts have even the beginnings of such an attitude, we need to crucify it by God's grace before it gets out of hand.

D. They were opposing the heart of Israel's hope (v. 20)

Let's move on to point D - what is even more unusual is that they were vigorously opposed to the very Messiah that they and their ancestors had looked forward to seeing for over 1000 years. Verse 20 says, "**For this reason therefore I have called for you, to see you and speak with you, because for the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain.**" "...for the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain." What the Jews were persecuting Paul for was preaching what had always been the hope of Israel – the Messiah, the resurrection, and the kingdom. This is blindness indeed.

E. They know they don't have a case (v. 21)

And the last evidence of the blindness of the Jerusalem Jews is that they must have *known* that they didn't have a case, because they don't utter a peep about their actions. Verse 21: “**Then they said to him, ‘We neither received letters from Judea concerning you, nor have any of the brethren who came reported or spoken any evil of you.’**” That's an amazing thing! If the Jews in Jerusalem thought they had a case against Paul, surely they would have brought it to Nero's court; surely they would involve the Roman Jews. But obviously they are a bit nervous about arguing the case here; they don't have a case. *And there is no case against Christ or against Christianity.*

Yet if they don't have a case, why don't they repent and believe what Paul is saying? We call it depravity. It is the nature of the human heart to not believe. John 12:39 says, “**they could not believe.**” There was a bondage of their mind, affections, and will to their human nature. Blind people simply can't see. They need God to give them new life, a new heart, and new eyes.

II. Blindness illustrated in the Roman Jews

A. Prejudice without investigation (v. 22)

Well, let's move on to the Jews in Rome and see if they are any different. Perhaps they will be more neutral. Initially it looks that way, since they say in verse 22, “**But we desire to hear from you what you think...**” That sounds pretty open minded, doesn't it? But they unwittingly show their prejudice right along with the pretense of openness when they say, “**...for concerning this sect, we know that it is spoken against everywhere.**” They knew about Christianity, but they were content to ignore it since it was spoken against. This level of blindness was willing to believe the lies of others without investigating the evidence.

Paul is grateful for the opportunity to preach the Word to these guys, but he is under no illusion that they can believe apart from sovereign grace invading their hearts. You see, all unbelievers start with a basic prejudice against God because the human heart loves to suppress the truth about God. They may think they are open and objective, but look at Paul's opinion of man in Romans 1:18-20

Romans 1:18 ¶ For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness,

Romans 1:19 because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown *it* to them.

Romans 1:20 For since the creation of the world His invisible *attributes* are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, *even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse,*

It's not as if unbelievers don't know about the existence of God, or the fact that they daily break God's law. God has written that law right onto their hearts. Their problem is that they suppress that truth in unrighteousness. They suppress the truth of God's existence, His creation, His nature, and His will. Do not be surprised by blindness.

Here's what one author said about the atheist, Sir Thomas Huxley:

The famous agnostic Thomas Huxley was once lovingly confronted by a very sincere Christian. This believer stressed to Huxley that he was not in any way impugning Huxley's sincerity. Nevertheless, might it not be possible that mentally the great scientist was color blind? That is, some people cannot see traces of green where other people cannot help but see it. Could it be that this was Huxley's problem--that he was simply blind to truth that was quite evident to others? Huxley, being a man of integrity, admitted that this was possible, and added that if it were, he himself, of course, could not know or recognize it. (*Interpreters Bible, vol. 8, p. 708*)

But that's actually not true. There are many people who have been shown that they are literally color blind, and they can understand that and believe it. I know I am partly color blind because I can't distinguish between dark blue and black. And in the same way, when pushed into a corner by apologetics, there have been people who have been willing to admit that they don't have a case, that the evidence is against them, but they don't want to submit to God anyway. According to Romans, unbelief is not because of lack of evidence; it is a willful unbelief.

B. Unbelief despite clear Biblical backing (v. 23)

A further evidence of their blindness was that they had unbelief despite clear biblical teaching. People might think that it is their fault that others aren't convinced. "Perhaps I am a bad witness," or "Maybe if the pastor had preached well, the person would have believed." But Jesus was a pretty good witness, and not everyone was convinced by Him. Paul was a pretty good witness. Verse 23 says, "**So when they had appointed him a day, many came to him at his lodging, to whom he explained and solemnly testified of the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus from both the Law of Moses and the Prophets, from morning till evening.**" Paul was using their own presuppositions (their own Scriptures)

to prove that Jesus was the Messiah. He spent a whole day pulling out the verses that they were familiar with, and yet for most, it didn't make a dent.

I have to admit that I stand amazed at the blindness of some Jews that I have talked to about the Messiah. You show them passage after passage in the Old Testament that is a perfect description of Jesus, and they can't see it. You read them their own prayers, which sound like they are expecting Jesus to come in the future, and you point out that these prayers were already answered, and they refuse to see it.

I remember a court case in Israel back in 1972 that was interesting. A resident of Tel Aviv went to court against a stone mason because he refused to chisel the letters "A.D." on his father's tombstone. He just wanted the man to put the letters on it that he died in 1972 A.D. You may not be familiar with the controversy of why Jews refuse to speak of B.C. or A.D. B.C. is short for "before Christ" and A.D. is short for "anno domini" or the "year of our Lord." They don't like the fact that Jesus divides history into two eras. So Orthodox rabbis date things from creation. Anyway, the court referred the case to the Rabbinate for an opinion. The Rabbinate rejected the citizen's appeal, saying that the Christian calendar was unacceptable in Israel since it was based on the birth of Jesus. However, in a very controversial ruling, the court overturned the rabbinate's opinion, stating that the rabbinate had dated their own letter 1972, implying the legitimacy of the calendar. What most Jews do today is to refer to BCE (before common era) and CE (common era). They don't want the name of Jesus on their lips. The Talmud, when it references Jesus, does not name his name, but uses other cryptic descriptions. Why the incredible attempts to avoid any mention of Jesus? It is blindness. We ought to feel sorry for them and pray for them as Paul did.

C. But it was only blindness to Israel as a whole, and not to the remnant (v. 24; see Romans 9-11). God's grace can heal the blindness.

But the encouraging thing for me is that God's grace can slice through that hardness of heart, that deafness, and that blindness, just as easily as a knife can slice through soft butter. As easily as he spoke the world into existence, He can speak a regenerate soul into existence. As easily as He commanded there to be light, Paul says that God can take away the blindness. 2Corinthians 4:6 says, "**For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.**"

And we see that happening in this passage as God regenerates and turns on the lights for some of these Jews. Praise God for His power! Verse 24 says, “**And some were persuaded by the things which were spoken, and some disbelieved.**” The amazing thing is not that some disbelieved. We would expect that. Romans 3:11 says, “**There is none who understands; there is none who seeks after God.**” In fact, genuine saving belief is an absolute impossibility apart from grace.

Let me prove it. John 6:35 offers life to all who will come, but it goes on to say, “**No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him.**” (v. 44). John 3:16 offers life to all who will believe, but John said in the same Gospel, “**they could not believe because Isaiah said again: ‘He has blinded their eyes and hardened their heart, that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and turn again, and I should heal them.’**” (John 12:39-40) Paul quotes the same verse and with the same conclusion. Men are blind, and until God heals their sight, they cannot see, and they cannot believe.

Life is offered to all who will seek God in Isaiah 55:6, yet Romans 3:11 says that there is none who seeks after God. Life is offered to those who will look (Is. 45:22), yet 2Corinthians 4:4 says, “**whose minds the god of this world has blinded.**” They cannot look. Life is offered to those who will hear (Is. 55:3), but Jesus said in John 8, “**Why do you not understand My speech? Because you are not able to hear my word. He who is of God hears God’s words; therefore you do not hear, because you are not of God.**” Until God regenerates us, there can be no faith. Salvation is 100% of God. Faith is a gift of God. And it is easy for God to give hearing ears, but if you are not of God, there is nothing you can do to spiritually hear.

Life is offered to those who will open their hearts, yet the Scripture indicates that this is impossible since unbelievers have hearts as hard as stone. The solution was already given in Acts. Luke said of Lydia, “**The Lord opened her heart so that she heeded the things which were spoken by Paul.**” (Acts 16:14). This is what we must pray for – a moving of God’s grace in the hearts of our children, of our covenant community and beyond. And God guarantees that His elect will hear His voice and come; they will see the truth and respond. We can rejoice that all whom He has given to the Son, will come to the Son for life. And I praise God that He has promised to give in covenant succession to our children, and to our children’s children, to a thousand generations. That is not a difficult thing for God to do. But neither is it a thing that we take for granted. We pray for it and plead for it.

We believe God's promises for it. We raise our children diligently in the fear and nurture of the Lord.

D. Yet it was a thorough going and complete blindness that was prophesied by God (vv. 26-27)

1. Willfully not hearing

We will look briefly at these verses again next time, but let me just quickly outline that this blindness of Israel was a prophesied blindness that will one day be removed. Paul quotes the Old Testament saying, **“Go to the people and say, ‘Hearing you will hear, and shall not understand; and seeing you will see and not perceive; for the hearts of this people have grown dull. Their ears are hard of hearing and their eyes they have closed, lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, lest they should understand with their hearts and turn, so that I should heal them.’”** That is the goal of the Gospel – to heal them of this blindness. But this text says, they willfully close their ears, and **“their eyes they have closed.”**

Paul Johnson in his book, *Modern Times: The World from the Twenties to the Eighties* points out that at the very time that Stalin was liquidating millions of people, the Rev. Hewlett Johnson of Canterbury spoke of him as bringing in the kingdom of Christ. Blasphemy! Communist sympathizers in America also turned a blind eye to the atrocities that were going on. They *knew* about them; you couldn't *help* but know about them. But they thought that this loss of life was worth it since the communists were bringing peace and love and prosperity to the world. Blindness; utter blindness. It's all around us brothers and sisters. We live in a world of spiritual blindness.

2. Willfully not perceiving

3. Dull hearts – lest they understand and turn for healing

4. Hard hearing – lest they hear and turn

5. Closed eyes – lest they see and turn

Conclusion

- The scary nature of disbelief of God's Word

And if that does not scare you about the potential of your own human heart to ignore the truth, it should. In Romans 11 Paul warns the Gentile

church that they too can fall away. We always need the cross of Christ. We must always walk in the light of the Gospel.

- **The progressive nature of disbelief of God's Word**

All it takes is a little ignoring of the Holy Spirit, and it becomes easier to ignore Him later. There is a progressive downhill slide until finally we cannot hear either the Spirit or our own conscience accusing us.

- **Cry out to God, "Lord I believe, help Thou mine unbelief!"**

In fact, I put in your outline that our cry to God should be the cry that one man made to Jesus, "**Lord, I believe, help Thou mine unbelief.**" We don't want unbelief to grow in our heart, but we know it is always lurking around the corner ready to trip us up. And the only remedy for progressive blindness is the mercy and grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. And we can be encouraged that God always hears the prayer of saints who cry out like this. Lord I believe, please overcome any unbelief that I have.

- **Share the good news of your sight.**

Another conclusion that I draw from these words is that we must share the Gospel just like Paul did. Someone might think, "Why bother if they are blind?" But God works through the nudgings, testimonies, and encouragements of people in the lives of the blind to want to go to the great doctor, Jesus Christ. In fact, God has chosen to regenerate hearts and to give them faith as Scripture is brought into their lives. Our role is not to regenerate them. Our role is simply to bring the Scripture.

But another great reason for sharing the good news is simply as an expression of love for all that God has done for you.

The missionary, Roland Allen, told the story of a medical missionary who served in a region of India where something in the soil or something about that region was making everyone go progressively more and more blind. This missionary developed a process by which that progressive blindness could be arrested. And Dr. Shepherd will have to enlighten me on what that disease might be, because Roland Allen did not elaborate. Maybe it was glaucoma, or cataracts, I don't know.

But anyway, people came to this doctor from all over that region to have this operation performed on them. They would leave realizing that they had been spared a lifetime of blindness. He said that he never heard a "thank you," because they didn't have that word in their language. Instead, they had a word that meant, "I will tell your name." Wherever they went, they would tell the name of the missionary who had cured their blindness. And that is the best kind of thanks we can give God for our salvation – to tell everyone

we know that God has cured our blindness, and that we want God to cure the blindness of others too.

May we be a church that is not discouraged when we see spiritual blindness. It is to be expected where grace does not reign. But may we also be a church that never gets over the wonder of the fact that God has done a spiritual eye operation on us, and we get it. Express your love and worship to God for being able to see. And may we be a church, who like Paul, shares the Gospel with absolutely everyone that we meet. May it bubble up out of us. May it be a holy compulsion to see Christ's kingdom grow. But may we also be a church that has Paul's confidence that the elect will come to Him. That confidence will make the mocking and persecution that we will receive well worthwhile. What a great God we serve. To Him be the honor and the glory forever. Amen.

Spiritual Blindness

Acts 28:17-27

By Phillip G. Kayser at DCC on 1-24-2010

Introduction – pervasive blindness (see Eph. 4:18; Rom. 11:25; 2Cor. 3:14-16)

I. Blindness illustrated in the Jerusalem Jews

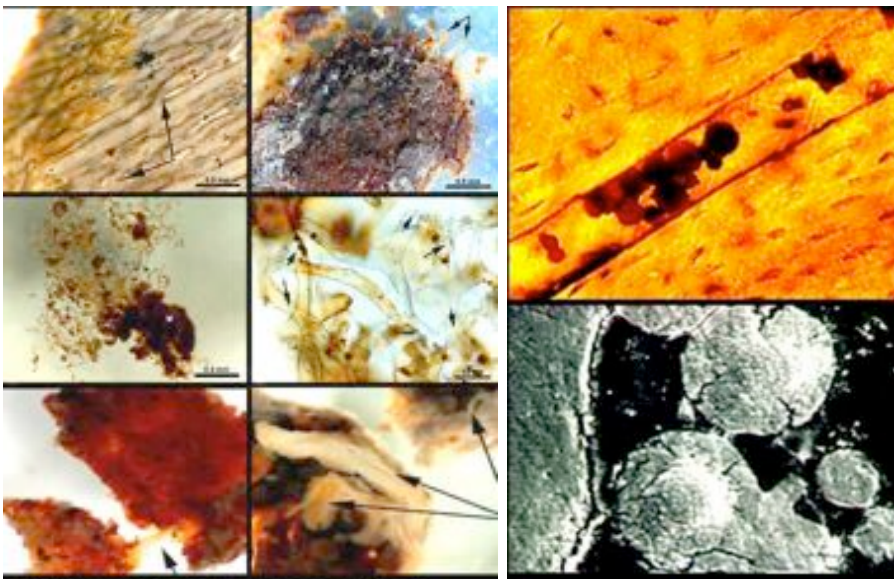
- A. They falsely accused Paul (v. 17)
- B. They refused to be convinced by the evidence (vv. 18-19a)
- C. They were on the offensive, not Paul (v. 19b)
- D. They were opposing the heart of Israel's hope (v. 20)
- E. They know they don't have a case (v. 21)

II. Blindness illustrated in the Roman Jews

- A. Prejudice without investigation (v. 22)
- B. Unbelief despite clear Biblical backing (v. 23)
- C. But it was only blindness to Israel as a whole, and not to the remnant (v. 24; see Romans 9-11). God's grace can heal the blindness.
- D. Yet it was a thorough going and complete blindness that was prophesied by God (vv. 26-27)
 1. Willfully not hearing
 2. Willfully not perceiving
 3. Dull hearts – lest they understand and turn for healing
 4. Hard hearing – lest they hear and turn
 5. Closed eyes – lest they see and turn

Conclusion

- The scary nature of disbelief of God's Word
- The progressive nature of disbelief of God's Word
- Cry out to God, "Lord I believe, help Thou mine unbelief!"
- Share the good news of your sight.



Pictures of the soft tissue and blood cells inside the T-Rex thighbone.

- Why were evolutionists not convinced that the dinosaur bones were young when they found blood cells and soft tissue in them?
- What does Luke 16:27-31 say about the power of evidence compared to Scripture?
- See reverse side for just a few samples among thousands that could be given that shows that evidence alone cannot convert.

More examples of conundrums for evolutionists



Modern examples?

Trilobite fossil

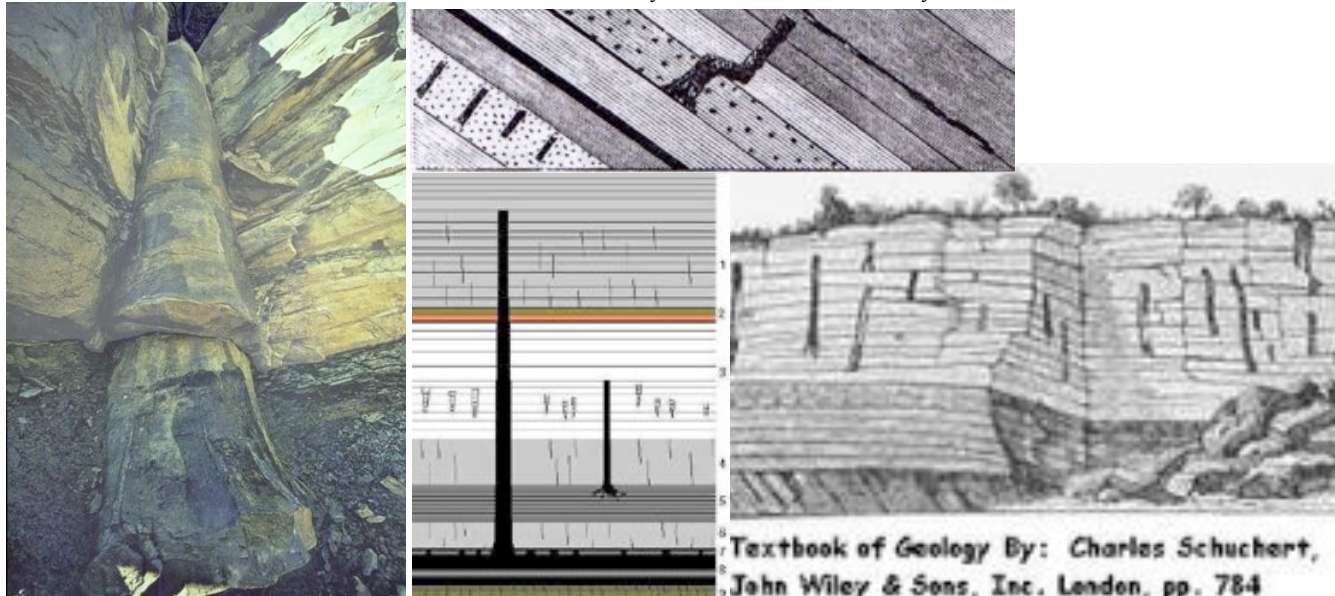


In rock previously dated 1.5 million; 250 mya (Permian strata) Vase encased in pudding rock; bell (with clapper intact) encased in coal dated 100 mya



hammer with handle in Cretaceous rock. Cretaceous rock is dated by evolutionists as 110-115mya.

- All of creation testifies to the truthfulness of Scripture, but Jesus reminds us that **“If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rise from the dead”** (Luke 16:31).
- Natural blindness can only be reversed by a spiritual operation called “regeneration.”



Petrified and/or coal trees growing through many layers of coal and stone representing millions of years on an evolutionary scale

Textbook of Geology By: Charles Schuchert, John Wiley & Sons, Inc. London, pp. 784