

Sight To The Blind

Gifts of God's Spirit

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It comes as no surprise to you, I am sure, that this world is far from perfect. What God did during creation week, He described there in Genesis 1:31 as very good. But almost immediately thereafter, with sin running its destructive course, the world began to display wounds and scars, these horrid results of transgression.

Of course, it manifested itself in different ways: in division and deterioration, in domination and death. But it soon manifested itself in people in deformity and disease. And with all the sinful people in this world perpetuating transgression time and time again, these things are still very much with us. There are literally thousands of diseases and who knows how many genetic defects. Not all of them are the result of sin. Jesus told us very clearly there in John 9:3, that the man who was born blind was that way, not because of any sin, but to manifest the glory of God. But many, if not most of the diseases and congenital defects that we see in the world, are the result of sin at some time in the past.

Mankind tends to abuse the body, whether it is overexposing it to things that it does not need like chemicals, and alcohol, and drugs, and perverse sex, and unclean foods, and radiation, and stress, and you name it. There are all kinds of things that we overexpose ourselves to that cause us problems. It makes the body weak or on the other end of the spectrum, we underexpose it to things that it needs, like good nutrition, and clean water, and clean air, and exercise, and sleep, and such things as that. So the effects of such abuses on the body emerge in disease to the abuser and in congenital defects in later generations. Somehow these things get into our genetics, changes the way we are, and we pass that down to our children and grandchildren.

Now, one such inherited defect is congenital blindness, which comes in a variety of forms, and one of which is cataracts. The baby is born with cataracts. In most developed Western nations, the cataract is seen

immediately, right at birth, and these cataracts are removed shortly thereafter through a surgery. The same would happen with scarred corneas. There are surgeries that can be done to correct that.

But in less developed areas of the world like India, treatable forms of blindness go untreated. They just do not have the resources and perhaps the knowledge or the training to do those surgeries. Now in India, for example, cataracts account for about 60% of cases of blindness, which affects about 1% of the population. And that is a lot of people. We are talking India here, with over a billion people. One percent of the population has some sort of blindness there because of cataracts. And that is three times the rate of what it is in the United States. And less than 20% of India's cataract patients are treated. So there is a lot of blind people in India.

Ted Olson, who is an editor of a Christian magazine, a new one called *The Behemoth*, tells the story of a man named Pawan Sinha. He is a native of India, was born in New Delhi, but he came over to the United States to study and he ended up at UC Berkeley, and he was such a whiz at what he did that he ended up after that at MIT. He decided to go back to visit India at age 35 after beginning a career here in the United States, and he was struck by how many Indians were unnecessarily blind.

While there, he went to a medical clinic. I do not know if he was ill and had to go in or that he was there just visiting for some reason. But he saw a blind boy with cataracts sitting in the waiting room with his impoverished parents. And his heart really went out to this little kid, thinking, that if you were only in the United States, we could do something. So he asked the doctor if the cataracts could be removed and the doctor just kind of brushed him off and he says, "We don't do free surgeries here."

With a background in miniaturization, Sinha decided to do something about the problem on as big a scale as he could. So what Sinha did was to design an inexpensive lens (he got it down to a \$1.50 a piece) that could be inserted into a 2-3 millimeter surgical incision on the cornea—and that is all they needed. Voila! The eye was fixed and a baby, which is what they tried to put them in, or as young a child as they could, could see. He and his team have so far performed almost 2,000 of these cataract surgeries to blind Indian children. And they could say that their work has restored sight to the blind.

However, that is wonderful; but they were very disappointed when these ones that were old enough to respond to them, told them about what they felt after putting these very inexpensive lenses in their corneas. They said, "meh." Here they thought these people would be jumping up and down and just be so happy that they had these new lenses, but they were not. What they found out was that all that work that Sinha and his team had done was the easy part. Once these kids had the lenses in their eyes, they found that it was far harder to teach their brains how to distinguish between objects, and to gauge distance, and to make sense out of what they saw, than it was to actually put in a little lens into their cornea.

The hard part was *after* the surgery, trying to teach the brain how to process the images that they were seeing. And they found that the older the patient, the more difficult it was for them to learn how to do this. Learning to process visual data in the brain, they found, is exhausting and frustrating work. Some who recover their sight by this method end up with severe mental problems because they just cannot take it. They cannot understand. Some threatened to tear their eyes out because it was putting them under so much stress. They cannot tell what is going on. Others find it easier to just give up and simply continue to act blind. And believe it or not, some are so depressed that they commit suicide.

Yet others, like I said, they are usually younger people, more persistent, they make it work, they figure it out, they understand, or they come to realize that the brain is more plastic, more malleable than they think. And when they diligently work on this problem, when they diligently try to rewire their brains, they get a payoff that is just wonderful: real, true, usable sight. But I cannot overestimate the fact that it takes a great deal of work for them to rewire their brains so that they can understand what they are seeing.

Now, in the biblical account of the man born blind, the difficulty and even the impossibility, we could say, of restoring sight to the blind is stressed. I want to start there in John the ninth chapter, verses 32 and 33. Martin went over this chapter a little while back and I do not want to tread the same ground that he did. But I do want to bring this out here.

John 9:32-33 [This is the man who was healed answering the Pharisees. He says] "Since the world began it has been unheard of that anyone opened the eyes of one who was born blind. If this Man were not from God, He could do nothing."

So while the people of the time, and certainly this man, did not understand the anatomy, he did not understand how all that worked, the eye-brain connection through the optic nerve, nor the brain's plasticity and how the brain has to be able to change to make all this work properly, they did know that restoring the sight to one born blind was pretty much beyond their abilities. As a matter of fact, it *was* beyond their abilities. And the one who could do such a thing must be of God. Only the Creator could do something so wonderful.

It was a miracle. That is what the man concluded. This was a miracle, and the person who did it must be from God; and he was right. Obviously, He was Jesus Christ, his very Creator. He could do such a thing.

So when Jesus anointed this man's eyes with clay, what we come to understand through the story of Pawan Sinha is that He did not *just* fix the man's eyes. When Jesus did this miracle, He gave him the ability to see the world clearly and to know what was going on. This, what was happening here in the account here in John 9, happened immediately after his eyes were restored. So more than just correcting his eyes, Jesus radically healed the man's mind. It was like He reached right through his eyes and right into his brain, and changed something there in his mind so that he could see the world and everything in it immediately and clearly think of what He revealed to him in this miracle.

He obviously revealed to him light, and color, and shape, and depth, and perspective. He was able to distinguish things in shadow. Just think how difficult it would be to just walk around after not having sight. I mean, just putting on some kind of glasses, you try to go up a step and you end up tripping because your perspective is slightly off because the lens is a little different. What if you had never had a lens to look through? Can you imagine trying to figure all that out? But Jesus, in this miracle, did not just

change the man's eyes, but He changed his *brain* so he was able to use his eyes and distinguish all the features and make sense out of them.

So He did far more than simply open the man's eyes. He rewired his mind, his brain. He put all the synapses together so that the man could understand what he was seeing. And just on a physical scale, this miracle is a fantastic one. It may be among His greatest. Obviously, we know He healed other people's blindness. But this one is special. And if we go to the first few verses of the chapter, we find that this miracle was intended from the beginning to bring glory to God.

I think maybe now, because we know so much about the science of the eye, the anatomy, the science of the brain and such, we are seeing how much this actually glorified God more than they did back then. They knew the man could see and that was a wonderful thing. But we know what it took—and it was done just like that. (snap!)

But you know, every time God calls a person into His church and converts him or her, He does an even greater miracle than this. Again, He rewires the mind, as it were. He makes it possible for us to see Him and His Word with understanding. He lets us see ourselves. He lets us see the world. He lets us see His plan as we have never been able to see them before.

Now, it is this rewiring of the mind that He does at conversion that I want to speak about today. So please turn to Luke the fourth chapter, verses 16 through 21. If you know your chapters, you know that this is the opening of the ministry of Jesus Christ, starting with the temptation of Jesus and then going on to beginning His ministry in Galilee. And that is where we find ourselves in verse 16. He is in Nazareth. This is roughly parallel to Matthew 4, Mark 1, and John 1. So right at the very beginning of His ministry and this is what happens.

Luke 4:16-21 So He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up. And as His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up to read. And He was handed the book of the prophet Isaiah. And when He had opened the book, He found the place where it was written: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He

has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed; to preach the acceptable year of the Lord."

Then He closed the book, and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all who were in the synagogue were fixed on Him. And He began to say to them, "Today, this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing."

So opening up to the book of Isaiah, what we now call chapter 61, He used this to inaugurate His ministry. What we see here by His quoting of Isaiah 61, He gives a kind of specific purpose statement, or we could say a mission statement, for what He would accomplish through His ministry. What God had sent Him here to do, what God had given Him: Spirit without measure to perform during these three and a half years of His ministry. And in fact, He says that not only would He do this, but He says in verse 21 that He has actually performed it in that very minute with the opening of the ministry. It was as good as done that He would do all of these things throughout His ministry. This is what God had sent Him to do and He would do it, and He was in fact doing it already.

Of course, the focus (and please forgive the pun) is on recovery of sight to the blind in verse 18 for this message. Now, if you would flip back to Isaiah 61:1 and look at what is written there, you will find that it does not say recovery of sight to the blind. In fact, the Hebrew reads something along the lines of, and as the New King James translates it, "the opening of the prison to those who are bound." The Septuagint, which Luke is quoting here, has, in more literal Greek, "to the blind recovery of sight." So the Hebrew and the Greek of this passage in Isaiah 61 do not necessarily agree.

Now, why is there a discrepancy here? Well, there is not a discrepancy. The Hebrew is actually translated wrong. You know how Hebrew is written, it is written in all consonants. The vowel points were put in much later, and there are no spaces between words, no spaces between sentences. And so all of these consonants are just piled on top one after another, so where you divide things and how you put the vowels in to make them sound, makes a difference. It can change the meaning.

Well, this phrase in Isaiah 61:1 could mean one of two things with the consonants that are there. The first is that it could mean the opening of the prison to those who are bound. But the alternate translation, which the Septuagint used when it was written, is "to those bound, opening of eyes." So when Jesus quoted this in the synagogue, starting His ministry, He told us which translation should be preferred. And that is, He is opening the eyes of the blind. He is recovering the sight of the blind. Because He had just said in the sentence before that He was going to deliver the captives, so He did not need, necessarily, to say it again. Now He wanted to give you the idea that He was helping the blind recover their sight.

So no discrepancy there. The Hebrew is actually the one in the wrong, not the Greek, which is unusual. Usually we think the older one, the Hebrew, would be the one to be the more correct one, but in this case, it was not. However, we should not let this idea that blindness is a kind of imprisonment or captivity escape us, because blindness *is* a form of captivity. And when we are given the ability to see, it is freedom, it is liberty. So in performing the miracle of correcting our spiritual sight, God frees us from the hold that Satan has had on us for our whole lives up to that point.

In John 8:32 (another memory scripture), Jesus tells the Jews there that the truth shall make us free. But we can understand that truth only when He removes the blinders from our mind's eye. So He has to do something to our minds. He has to remove the blinders that we have had on all our lives before that truth becomes understandable and that we become then liberated by what we learn and what we practice of that truth.

We have to understand that when we are reading this passage here in Luke 4, that while He miraculously gave sight to several people actually who were physically blind, His ultimate intention in this statement of His mission is the recovery of spiritual understanding. That is what His main intent is. He says that He is going to give this comprehension, this discernment to those that He frees from the bands or bonds of Satan. He is far more interested in freeing minds than eyes. He wants to liberate our minds to the truth from all the lies that we have been forced to suffer in this deceived world.

Let us go to John 3. Jesus actually uses metaphors of sight quite a bit throughout His ministry. And then Paul and the other apostles pick it up in the rest of the New Testament, so I could have gone pretty much to just about any page here and found one. But I wanted to go to John 3 because this is where He is explaining to Nicodemus what goes on here, what has to happen.

John 3:1-3 There was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. This man came to Jesus by night and said to Him, "Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with Him." [You think Jesus would say, "Yeah, thanks. You got that right." But He says] Jesus answered and said to him, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again [or born from above], he cannot see the kingdom of God."

It is that last bit that I wanted us to see here, that God has to do something. He has to begin something. He is the one that initiates it from above, from heaven, from His throne, from His place on high, where He is looking down and choosing those He wants. But what He has to do, He says, must be done; otherwise that person cannot even *see* the Kingdom of God.

Now, there are several ways we can look at the word "see" here. We could look at it in terms of physical sight, obviously. We could look at it in terms of mental sight. We can look at it in terms of understanding and comprehension, or we can even go to the point and take it all the way into the future where seeing is a metaphor for entering the Kingdom of God.

But I think right here, in terms of what He is trying to explain to Nicodemus (this is their first encounter), He is not necessarily talking about the end of the process. He is talking about the beginning of the process here. And so He says, unless God does something to your mind to make you, as Paul says, a new creation or being a new man or being given newness of life, unless that happens, you cannot even understand what is going on here. You cannot see the goal, as far away from it as you may be. You cannot see it. You cannot even comprehend what it is all about or what it is about at all really.

You may know the words "Kingdom of God," but you really do not understand what it all entails. God has to turn the mind onto this somehow, to give us an understanding, a comprehension, a little glimpse, you might say, into the Kingdom of God. And let us not think of this purely in terms of a *kingdom*. Think of it as the rule of God as well. How God is involved in what is going on, how He is sovereign over everything, how God is in control and working things out. Unless God does something to the mind, unless He rewires us somehow, we have not a clue, and we will never get a clue until He intervenes, until He rewires us somehow.

So without what God does, one cannot see, understand, comprehend, grasp, God and what He is doing. We cannot perceive it, we cannot discern it, we cannot grasp it, we cannot fathom it, we cannot join it. It all begins when God does that miracle. So until that miracle is performed, we are blind to it. It is absolutely beyond comprehension. It is not just paradise lost, it is paradise unknown and unseen.

Have you ever read *Paradise Lost*? Do you know anything about *Paradise Lost*? It is clear, that even though the man was "Christian," he really did not understand. He did not have the mind opened up to it. Until God does something, as Jesus explains here in John 3, the Kingdom of God should be just some kind of pie-in-the sky utopia. That is all it is thought of as, something along that line.

Now, we can see a dramatic opening of the mind in Acts 9. We will read verses 17 through 20. This is the apostle Paul in his encounter on the Damascus road. You know what happens, Paul is on the road. There is a light. Paul gets driven to his knees. Jesus says, "What are you doing? Why are you kicking against the pricks?" And then He says, "Arise, and go into the city," and when Paul comes out of this vision, he is blind. And so they have to lead him by the hand to the city of Damascus. In the meantime, God sends Ananias to him.

Acts 9:17-18 And Ananias went his way and entered the house; and laying his hands on him he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you came, has sent me that you

may receive your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit." [now notice this next term] Immediately there fell from his eyes something like scales, and he recovered his sight at once.

Now, we could say, "Oh he's just talking about the physical side." Well, yeah, but it was something that God did to him to give him a picture, an illustration, an image that he could carry with him the rest of his life about what had just occurred once Ananias laid his hands upon him.

Acts 9:19-20 So when he had received food, he was strengthened. Then Saul spent some days with the disciples at Damascus. Immediately he preached the Christ in the synagogues, that He is the Son of God.

He went from breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord in verse 1 to preaching that Jesus Christ was the Son of God in verse 20. Snap! He was rewired like that. Only three days happened between those two points, and he still did not know what happened on the third day. He was still running this through his mind, "What in the world is going on here? Why am I blind?" And Ananias comes and lays hands on him and immediately he is a changed man. Everything that he had known and believed before this time was rubbish, he says in another part of the Bible. He threw it all away because now God had rewired everything and he saw everything from a totally different perspective. And the One that He was persecuting was now his Lord and Savior.

Has anybody changed so quickly? But that is what has happened in each one of us, whether we had it so dramatic or not. And we probably did not. But God did this especially for the apostle Paul because he wanted him to be able to relate this to other people and let them know what exactly happened. And that is what he does through his epistles. He gives people an idea of what happened when God intervened in their lives. So when God does what He does, whatever mechanism it is that He uses, whether we say that He lifts the veil or He wipes the scales away, or He removes the blinders or blows the fog away, whatever. Once that happens, God, His Kingdom, His Word, His purpose, all of that begins to make sense where it did not make sense before.

Now, the how of it, the mechanism, I called it, is somewhat irrelevant. It is kind of a historic reality for us right now. It is something that happened in the past and we are glad it happened. But the engineering of the process is not all that important to us right now. Maybe we would like to know, but it is really not all that important. The result, though, is what is important, as the blind man said in John 9:25, "One thing I know: that though I was blind, now I see." That is what is important.

Let us go to I Corinthians 2. Paul attempts to explain this to us in his own inimitable way, this famous passage on what the Holy Spirit does in our minds.

I Corinthians 2:6-7 However, we speak wisdom among those who are mature, yet not the wisdom of this age, nor of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing. But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery. . .

Notice that term there. It is not necessarily a mystery to us, but certainly those people who are outside and who have not had this change occur to them, think of it as a deep mystery. They do not really understand it. They can try to comprehend it but it just never penetrates.

I Corinthians 2:7-8 . . . we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory, which none of the rulers of this age knew; for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.

They would have had an entirely different perspective on this Man. They would not have dared touch Him, but they did not have that wisdom because it was hidden from them. They were blind to it.

I Corinthians 2:9 But as it is written, "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him."

It has been obscured from them, whether it comes from sight or from hearing or from whatever way, they are unable to learn it. They do not know what God is trying to do, even though God has put eternity in their hearts. They have this strange yearning for this understanding and this knowledge, but they cannot understand it because they are blind, and purposely blind to it. God gave them over to a reprobate mind, he says, and they will have to learn it at another time. Only those whom God has chosen can understand it. We can know, we can have enter into our hearts the things which God prepared for those who love Him, because that thing, that whatever, has been done to us.

I Corinthians 2:10-11 But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. [There is the thing we have been given, the Spirit of God, and that has opened our minds to this hidden wisdom, this mystery.] For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God. For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God.

He is saying they work kind of in parallel. We are human beings and we know physical things because God has given us the spirit of man, Mr. Armstrong called it. And the Spirit of God works a similar way, but from a spiritual perspective, from a spiritual side. And so when you can know things physically through your own human spirit, now with God's Spirit, you could know spiritual things.

I Corinthians 9:12 Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God.

That is another thing we can understand now. We can perceive His gifts, those things that we thought were just inherited skills or something we worked on, or just something that we are kind of good at for some reason, well, now we know that those things are gifts of God, and everywhere we look we can see gifts of God, parts of His providence given to us because He loves us and He gives these things, as it says, freely.

I Corinthians 2:13-16 These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches, but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them [that is, he cannot know them], because they are spiritually discerned [and he does not have the tools to do it]. But He who is spiritual judges all things, yet he himself is rightly judged by no one [that is Christ's job]. For who has known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct Him? But we have the mind of Christ.

That is what it comes down to. We have been given the Spirit of God, which is a spiritual form of Christ's own mind: how He looks at things, how He understands things, how He thinks about things, judges things. That is ours to use through His Holy Spirit.

So if I can summarize all this up: it is the receipt of God, which He calls the mind of Christ, that gives us the ability to know the things of God and compare spiritual things with other spiritual things. So it gives us spiritual discernment. And you understand what discernment is all about. It is not just understanding. When you discern something, you are actually making a judgment. So what is being given here is that we can now understand things and make judgments and decisions based on spiritual principles and truth that were beyond us before.

Now we have an ability to make qualitative judgments about things and say that this is better than that. This way leads to life, where this other way leads to death. This way leads to good, this way leads to bad. We can now judge things rightly because we have the mind of Christ. Not in its full form, oh, that would be wonderful! We are all learning and growing in this. But now we have access to it, and abilities from it, and gifts with it, so that we can make use of it and have a better life, and eventually, as we go forward, move toward the Kingdom of God.

So we have a perspective on truth and upon spiritual matters that we have never possessed before and could never possess until God does that thing that He does in our minds, until He rewires us. And as the apostle says here, we can know, not just the rudiments of spiritual things, but the deep things of

God. So we are not limited to just the surface of what God knows. We can go deep, way beyond the wisdom of this world, to understand things that God has withheld from everyone else but us. And yeah, we will look like kooks to those people out there because they think it is foolishness. But it is God's truth and we have the proper perspective on it because of that thing that God does to open our minds, rewire us to think like Him.

Besides the fact of our having the Holy Spirit, what kind of enhancements does God's miraculous recovery of sight to the blind give us? What is it all made of? What are the enhancements that we are given? What makes up this wisdom that Paul is talking about here, the wisdom of God?

I have come up with five of them, five of these enhancements to our vision. I have called them the *five visions that we are now able to see*. I have tried to order them in terms of chronology, meaning when we first become aware of these abilities and also I have tried to organize them in terms of difficulty and being able to make use of them. So they go from what we encounter first to what we get to later. And then it also goes in easier to more difficult in trying to make use of them. But really, the order is not all that exact, nor is it particularly important. It is just the way that I thought of them and I thought to order them.

I will give all five of them to you right away and then we will just go through each one and you will see how simple this is once I give you the five. The five enhancements to our vision that we are given when God gives us His Spirit are:

1. Hindsight
2. Introspection
3. Foresight
4. Circumspection
5. Insight.

Those are the five enhancements to our spiritual vision that we are given.

Hindsight may be the first, and certainly the easiest of the newly-called person's ability to see. And the reason why it is so easy and so early is because it is based on our own experiences. We are always within ourselves and we are always cognizant of our past, what has gone before in our lives. And in fact, because those experiences that have happened before we were called are usually so shameful, they are among the first that attract our attention. Once God starts giving us a little bit of His truth and starts working with us by His Spirit, we say, "Oh man, I did those things. I can't believe I was so far away from what is good."

When God gives us His Spirit, our past sins are exposed for what they are and we see them for what they are—that they are sins against Him. What does David say? "Against You only have I sinned." But we find, we realize that those things that we did before were defiling, they were perverse, they were reprehensible, they were humiliating, and they were entirely wrong. And, of course, evil. When God begins to rewire our minds, we begin to perceive in a way that we had never perceived before just what kind of a life we have lived and we are not proud of it. So now with the enhancement of the Holy Spirit, we can begin to see that our past was horrible.

I Corinthians 6:9-11 Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the Kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the Kingdom of God. And such were some of you.

That is what we realize. We were pretty bad people. And what makes it worse is we thought we were pretty good people and now we realize just how evil all of that stuff was. But Paul goes on,

I Corinthians 6:11 But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the spirit of our God.

He put an end to that. He opened our minds so that we could behold what we were. And then He washed us and sanctified us and justified us and gave us

His Spirit. He turned it all around for us. But we had to come to understand what we were like, what our lives were like in the past. So Paul lays it out here quite clearly. The Spirit of God makes us realize that we are absolutely unrighteous sinners and absolutely disqualified for the Kingdom of God. That our lives were just horrible, evil, wicked, totally against Him, totally rebellious against Him.

Our past and our present sins have not only defiled us, but they have ruined our lives and they have done a great deal of harm to the lives of others. And we can see that clearly now because we see sin for what it is. We see our flesh for how carnal it is. We see that we can do no good thing. We see that we need to be washed, to be cleaned up, and forgiven, and justified, and sanctified by the blood of Jesus. Christ. So we see clearly now just how evil our past was.

I Peter 4:1-3 [Peter writes] Therefore, since Christ suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same mind, for he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh for the lusts of men, but for the will of God. For we have spent enough of our past lifetime in doing the will of the Gentiles—when we walked in licentiousness, lust, drunkenness, revelries, drinking parties, and abominable idolatries.

We have spent enough time doing evil, and we can look back and see we do not want to go that way again. And even though we, as it says in verse 4, lose our friends, the ones we used to run with in doing all those things, it is a far better thing that Christ has done for us and we now want to live for God and not for ourselves. So even if we have not run wild, as verse 3 describes—licentiousness, lust, drunkenness, rebels—even though we have not done those sorts of things, we have to admit that we have lived selfishly and that we have lived idolatrously in our own way. But the Holy Spirit, once it has given to us, helps us, it enhances our ability to see the depth of our past sin and it also then gives us resolve, as Peter says here, that we should no longer live like that, but live for God.

The second one is *introspection*. The next kind of vision, that is, introspection, follows right on the heels of our hindsight, as we have already

seen. It makes us look inward, it makes us look at the way we are. The exposure of our past iniquity causes us to turn our gaze inward so that we examine ourselves to see what we really are. The Holy Spirit, in this way, acts like a dazzling beacon of bright white light and nothing escapes that spotlight. Now, thankfully, God does not expose all of that wickedness at once, but that is the effect of the Holy Spirit over a lifetime. It is there to expose all that evil that is still in us and give us the encouragement, some sort of inducement to change it, to get it out of us, to mortify our flesh, to do this or that, to get rid of it so that we can be like Jesus Christ.

We are not too far from Hebrews, so turn back to Hebrews the fourth chapter. The author here speaks of this in terms of the Word of God and even gets into the idea of Christ Himself doing this. But the revelation of ourselves is accomplished through God's Spirit.

Hebrews 4:11-13 Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall after the same example of disobedience. For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.

There are two metaphors here that we need to understand in verses 12 and 13. The first, in verse 12, is the opening and also the cutting and piercing action of a deadly proficient warrior with a sword. It is like God, or Christ, as the Word of God, is there with a great sword, one that He is very dexterous in using. And He jams it into us and He splits us open, and He pierces every little part in us and lays all of our organs out, like a good butcher, exposing everything, all the little pieces and parts so that nothing remains hidden anymore.

That is what God's Spirit does. It goes in and it goes all the way to the bone, as it were, all the way to the joints. It separates every joint from every other joint. It goes all the way to inside the brain, inside our minds, and discerns, as it says here, even the intents, not just the thoughts but the intense of our heart. So when we go under God's knife, as it were, everything gets revealed.

Nothing could be hidden in this little pocket of ourselves or that little pocket. Everything gets laid out on the table, as it were.

Verse 13 is a little less gruesome, but it has the same intent. Verse 13 has the image of a very talented wrestler who is so strong, and he is so skilled with all the moves, that he can lay anyone, any person, flat on the mat, on his back, and tilt the man's head back and look him in the eye as he pins him down with ease. Now, the idea here is that of course, the opponent, which is us, is trying hard not to look Him in the face because we are ashamed.

And so Christ, in this picture here, as it says, they wrestled naked. So everything is exposed and He even tilts our head back and looks us directly in the eye and says, "What are you hiding?" And it has got to be done because of verse 11, "Be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall after the same example of disobedience." So the Holy Spirit works in us to begin to expose ourselves to ourselves, so that we can work on the problem with God. Nothing remains hidden, nothing cannot stay hidden if we want to enter God's rest. And so the Holy Spirit gives us the ability to really look inside and see what we really are like.

Back in Romans 7, Paul gives us an example of this.

Romans 7:14-25 For we know the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin. For what I am doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do. If, then, I do what I will not to do, I agree with the law that it is good. But now it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find. For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice. Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. I find then a law, that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good. For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man. But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? I thank God—through Jesus Christ our Lord. So

then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin.

So this is what we go through, just like Paul. When our minds are open to the truth, we see how evil and carnal we really are. We see that we are evil to the bone, and though we may want to do good, we never seem to be able to do it. It is like it is impossible. We have this desire in our minds to do good, but our flesh just keeps dragging us down. We are constantly losing that inner war, the flesh against the Spirit, and we need help. Our only salvation is in Christ, he says. Christ will save us from this and give us the help and the strength that we need. Only He can save the wretched creatures that we are. And the Spirit gives us the ability to understand that, and work with it, to work with Him.

The next one is *foresight*. It is not enough just to see our past and our present condition and to know that we have to change. We also need something to live for and to work toward. We need a goal, something out in the future to draw us and our actions so that we can make it beyond this point. And the Holy Spirit enhances our vision in this too. It allows us to see the future.

Now, granted it is a very limited foresight. We can only see so far and only see so hazy. We see in a mirror dimly, as it says there in I Corinthians 13, but it opens up the pages of God's Word to give us a glimpse of another world. We see a future world of peace and goodness that makes life worth living. It is out ahead of us. It is the carrot that we constantly trot after because it is worth living for. It is worth changing for. And we know that God has promised us a life beyond this life of pain and woe and trial and disease and death. There is something better out there.

Let us go back to Hebrews. This is the thing that sustained the patriarchs.

Hebrews 11:13-16 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. For those who say such things declare plainly that they seek a homeland. And truly if they had called to mind that country from which they had come out, they would have had an opportunity to return. But now they desire a better, that is, a

heavenly country. Therefore, God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them.

So they had this vision of a better, far off country, a heavenly, godly one, one that God is Himself building for them. And it gave them hope even though things were crumbling around them. It braced and built their faith that God would give them the promises. And it guarded them, it says here, from returning to their former lives of sin and melting back into the culture that they lived in. People like Seth and Enoch and Noah and Abraham. They did not know the details of the Kingdom of God. I think we know far more than they do, from what is revealed later in the Scripture. All they knew was that God was going to give them a better country, and they worked for it. It sustained them. They focused on it because they were promised a better, fuller, eternal life with God. And they believed Him and it sustained them, as I said, through all that they had to endure.

And Jesus, in John 14, left us with the same sort of thing. Let us go back to John 14. He left His disciples with this. It was one of the last things He taught them and it was to give them the same hope and faith that He had given the patriarchs.

John 14:1-4 [He says] "Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you [that city that Abraham was looking for]. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also. And where I go you know, and the way you know."

John 14:15-18 "If you love Me, keep My commandments. And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever—even the spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him or knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you. I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you."

John 16:13 "However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak of His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come."

Because that is so important that we have something drawing us from the future so that we can work toward it. And this uplifts us and makes us expectant for that wonderful World Tomorrow.

The next one is *circumspection*. God's Spirit does not just draw us inward. It also gives us new perspective on what is going on around us. What is happening in the world takes on a whole new meaning. We understand that what is happening around us is not just history repeating itself, but it is God's purpose leading toward His ends. He is fulfilling His purpose and His plan. Other people, too, those people who are around us—our families, our friends, our co-workers—begin to have increased importance in our lives.

What I mean in this case is that how we treat those people makes a real difference to us and to God. We cannot just live for ourselves anymore. We have to live for others as well because of that second great commandment, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." Because we are lights to the world, how we act in the presence of others now makes a very big impact. We are God's witnesses, we are God's representatives, and we have to think outside ourselves.

Go back to Philippians 2, please.

Philippians 2:12-15 [Paul tells the Philippians] Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure. Do all things without murmuring and disputing [why?], that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world.

We have a responsibility now. While we work out our own salvation and fear and trembling with God to be very careful, to be circumspect about how we act in the world. We have got to stop murmuring and complaining. We have got to quit arguing. Because God wants us to be bright lights, beacons of His way of life in the world. He wants people to be able to see us as He is. And so we have to be circumspect about our behavior. He says we have to be blameless and harmless. Despite the world being very wicked and cruel, we have to be different. We have to always be aware of the impression that we are making on others.

Notice Titus 3, verses 1 through 8 where he writes to the younger evangelist. He says,

Titus 3:1-8 Remind them [the people, the brethren] to be subject to rulers and authorities, to obey, to be ready for every good work, to speak evil of no one, to be peaceful, gentle, showing all humility to all men. For we ourselves were also once foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving various lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another. [meaning, we have an understanding of what they are going through because we did as well live like that]

But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward men appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy, He saved us through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior, that having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life. This is a faithful saying, and these things I want you to affirm constantly, that those who have believed in God should be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable to men.

That is how we should be living in the world. We should be, before all that see us, an example of His way of life. Paul says we now have new eyes regarding who and what we are, and what is around us and how we affect them. And we have to make use of it to grow and to be the kind of people God wants us to be.

The final vision that God gives us through His Spirit is *insight*. And what I mean by that here is the true understanding of God's Word. Insight is not immediate, insight is not necessarily right away deep, and may never actually be especially deep. But now ideas make sense that never really clicked before. We now recognize truths that may have confused us in the past, but now no longer do because we see connections through the insight that God gives us by His Spirit. And most of all, maybe we now realize that the Word of God is real, it is true, it is valid, and in force for us.

Notice Luke 24, the last chapter of the book of Luke. Jesus has been resurrected and it says,

Luke 24:44-45 Then He said to them, "These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me." And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures.

So Jesus personally, here, gave them an ability to understand the Bible so that they could have true comprehension. And He does the same thing to us through His Spirit. Ideas that other "Christians" reject, like the Sabbath and the holy days, clean and unclean meats, the resurrections instead of heaven and hell, the law, all kinds of stuff like that, we embrace because God's Spirit has revealed to us their necessity and their reality. Those without God's Spirit just cannot get it, will not get it, do not get it. Quit arguing with them. They are not going to get it, but we get it. We have insight that is special from God. So you go back to circumspection. Live it, do not argue it.

First Peter 1. This is amazing to think about.

I Peter 1:10-12 [he had just been talking about the salvation that God has given us] Of this salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesized of the grace that would come to you, searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ [which] was in them was indicating when [t] testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow. To them it was revealed that, not to themselves, but to us they were

ministering the things which now have been reported to you through those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven—things which angels desire to look into.

Do you understand the gift, the enhancement that you have been given by the Holy Spirit into the Word of God? He is saying here, even the prophets did not understand the things that you understand, and even angels do not have access to what you have access to! We are so privileged to have both the revelation of God and the insight to understand and accept and follow the truth. And most of the time, we do not even think about it, but we have been given an awesome gift through God's Spirit that has opened our eyes.

Let us conclude, then, in Matthew 13. We are just going to read two verses here verse 11 and verse 16. After asking the question, "Why do you speak in parables?"

Matthew 13:11 He answered and said to them, "Because it has been given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them, it has not been given."

Matthew 13:16 "But blessed are your eyes for they see."