

## **The Eyes Of The Blind Shall Be Opened**

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How many times have you acted on something without really knowing enough to act wisely? Most of us do not have to think very hard about that. We have all done it. Experience has taught us, sometimes the hard way, that acting without clarity usually means or leads to trouble.

Now let me illustrate what I mean. A pastor was walking down the street one day when he noticed a very small boy trying with all his might to press a doorbell on the house across the street. The problem was simple. The boy was too far too short, and the doorbell was far too high. After watching the boy jump unsuccessfully for a while, the pastor decided to help. He crossed the street, walked up behind the child, placed a gentle hand on his shoulder, leaned over, and rang the doorbell firmly. Then smiling warmly, the pastor crouched down to the boy's level and said, "Well now my little man, what do we do next?" And the boy looked up and replied, "Now we run!"

I told that about 20 years ago and I could not resist using it again, but it does illustrate the point very well. That small moment of humor makes a serious point. The pastor had clarity about how to ring the bell, but not about what the plan was after the bell rang. Action without full understanding can lead to unexpected—and sometimes uncomfortable—results.

In a much more serious way, the same principle applies to life, faith, and spiritual understanding. When people act without clarity about what they believe, why they believe it, and where it leads, it produces confusion, anxiety, and poor decisions.

Today, we are going to look at an extraordinary incident from the life of Jesus Christ in Mark chapter 8 that teaches us a powerful lesson about spiritual clarity and what it means to see clearly.

Please turn to Mark 8. Now it is in some ways one of the most significant miracles ever performed by Jesus Christ. You are familiar with what Jesus did to this blind man. He took him by the hand and He led him out of town, He spat upon his eyes and put His hands on him. We will start in verse 22 and read down through verse 26.

**Mark 8:22-26** Then He [Jesus] came to Bethsaida; and they brought a blind man to Him and begged Him to touch him. So He took the blind man by the hand and led him out of town. And when He had spit on his eyes and put His hands on him, He asked him if he saw anything. And he looked up and said, "I see men like trees, walking." And then He put His hands on his eyes again and made him look up. And he was restored and saw everyone clearly. Then He sent him away to his house, saying, "Neither go into the town, nor tell anyone in the town."

This is obviously something of very great significance. What happened in this case was not accidental. We have other examples of Jesus healing blind people, and it is very clear that He could have healed this man instantly by just saying to him, "Receive your sight." Christ had that power. Nothing was impossible for Him. He had done that in another case, and He could have done the same here.

So what He did here, He obviously did with great forethought. He knew what He was doing, He did it for a specific purpose in mind. Christ did nothing haphazardly or accidentally. All His actions were deliberate, and when He varied his technique, He always had a very good lesson and very good reason for it.

Now there was nothing difficult about the case, and the variation in the treatment was not due to chance. It was due to Christ's determined plan to do the work of God in this way so that He could teach a lesson and give a special message. In other words, all Christ's miracles are more than events. They are, in a sense, parables as well. That does not mean we do not believe the incident actually happened. I am simply emphasizing that a miracle is also a parable.

And if that is true of all miracles, it is especially true of this one because Christ obviously varied the procedure here in order to emphasize an important and essential lesson. The lesson was primarily meant for His disciples, which includes you and me.

Now you remember what had gone before and by the time the disciples went into the boat, they had forgotten to take a supply of bread. And the result was that all they had on the boat was one loaf. They began to worry about this and as a result became somewhat unhappy and stressed.

Jesus discerned that it was necessary to teach them something in the boat. And so He said, "Take heed, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the leaven of Herod." And they reasoned among themselves, saying, "It is because we have no bread." So they immediately went to the physical reason why they thought He was bringing it up. Because He mentioned the word leaven, they thought He must be talking about bread. They were literalists at that time, they were lacking in spiritual understanding and so the word leaven made them think only of bread, of their failure to take a supply with them.

So they were uneasy and Jesus asked them a series of searching questions, ending with this one. "Why do not you understand?" He knew the answer to that. But it was a rhetorical question to them. He says, in effect, "I'm here with you. I have been preaching and teaching to you, but you still don't seem to understand. You're worried because you have only one loaf, but you have witnessed two miracles that prove that with just a few loaves and fishes, I could feed 5,000 people. Why don't you understand?"

It seems that He dealt with the blind man as He did to give them a picture of themselves. He adopted this technique here in order to enable the disciples to see themselves as they were spiritually. They had a lack of clarity and they were still somewhat spiritually blind. Nonetheless, the lesson goes beyond that. It is a permanent lesson for God's people. It is a disturbing message.

Sadly, there are many people like this man. Many seem to be in the first stage the blind man passed through in the process of spiritual healing. Christ

put spit on his eyes and asked, Do you see anything? And in verse 24 again says, "And he looked up and said, 'I see men like trees, walking.'" He lacked clarity. Things were foggy.

Obviously the man was no longer totally blind, but we hesitate to say he can see since he sees men as trees walking. So is he blind or not? He is not one thing or the other completely, is he? That is exactly the condition we want to examine here. This concerns those who are anxious, unhappy, and miserable because of this lack of clarity. Their minds are in a fog and so their faith wanes.

It is almost impossible to classify Christians whose minds lack clarity. Sometimes you talk to this kind of person and think, "Well, this person is a Christian," and then you meet him again and doubt creeps in making you ask, "Can he truly be a Christian and say something like that or do such a thing?" Whenever you meet this person, your impression of him changes as to whether he is genuinely a Christian or not. You hesitate to think whether he sees or does not see. They have doubts about their spiritual status because they lack clarity about who they are and the confusion carries over in an outward sense in their way of speaking and so on.

They believe they are Christian, but then something happens and they ask, "Am I really a Christian or not?" They wonder, "How can I be a Christian and have such doubtful thoughts?" Some seem to know just enough about Christianity to spoil their enjoyment of life, yet they do not know enough to feel confident about what they believe. They are neither hot nor cold. Their condition is that they see and yet do not see.

Sadly, this is the state of mind that many people face. It is a troubling condition and no one should be in it. No one should stay in it, and no one needs to stay in that condition of a lack of clarity.

We have outlined this condition broadly. Now let us clarify it in more specific terms to help us better understand ourselves and give everyone a clearer view of the condition.

What can these people see? They see something. This formerly blind man in Mark 8 said he saw men but he saw them with clouded vision, as trees

walking. What do these people see? Often they realize that something is wrong with them as they are and they feel unhappy with themselves. Something has happened that has caused a sense of dissatisfaction of who they are.

There was a time when they were completely content with themselves. Now they try to visualize calm, . . .then add stress for realism. They kept living their way of life convinced there was nothing wrong with it, but they are no longer the same. Something happened to them that completely changed their view of life that they had been living, and it unsettled them.

These people once found life in the world to be wonderful and exciting, but now they realize its emptiness, the hollowness of it all, and feel deeply dissatisfied. Sometimes they think too deeply about what happened before their conversion and cannot find their way back to a life of redemption. They see that is not a wise way to live. That it is just such an empty kind of life. And they are unhappy with themselves and complain that they cannot go on as they are. They are so conflicted and in such a fog.

Many people go through this stage where they see everything as wrong but are not fully convinced that God's way of life is right. Many people grow weary of the relentless rat race. They become frustrated and exhausted despite hard work and sincere ambitions. Disappointment opens their eyes to the emptiness of life, a life apart from a deeper purpose.

Now in that moment, some recognize the beauty and wisdom of God's way of life, as taught in the Sermon on the Mount and reflected in the lives of the patriarchs and Christ and the apostles. They see that biblical principles, especially the love described in I Corinthians 13, represent the kind of life that could truly transform the world. For some, this awareness goes further. They begin to realize that Jesus Christ is the only real hope. And though once indifferent or dismissive, they now see the world's emptiness and recognize that Christ has made a genuine difference and that He is, in some profound way, the Savior who can help them.

So they are interested in Him and concerned about Him, and they see it somewhat unclearly. And when they understand the true nature of God's way in a real Christian, they realize that man cannot elevate himself to that level,

and they see that they cannot save themselves. This is the process that people who are called by God go through quite often in various ways.

Now these people cannot see clearly as the man in the hands of Jesus Christ did when asked, "Do you see?" And he replied, "Yes." He definitely could see, but he could see men like trees, walking. These people have come to see something. Nevertheless, they still remain confused. They still cannot see clearly. They have merely seen men like trees walking, and they reason that they are not confused, just relatively uncertain.

Let us examine three key areas where they fall short.

The first mind is their mind is not focused on seeking the truth. They recognize the way of life as being something nice, or nicer, and the people who keep it are nice. But then they do not necessarily seek the truth. They lack a clear understanding of certain biblical principles and have seen that Christ is only *somehow* the Savior, and they do not see *how* He is the Savior.

For example, they are not clear about the death of Christ and its absolute necessity because they do not believe that they are as bad and sinful as they really are. So if you discuss these topics with them, you notice that they are confused. This confusion leads to anxiety and they feel extremely uncomfortable, and they ask "what if" questions all the time, what if this and what if that?—and accidentally summon anxiety by doing that. So they do not see because they do not understand why Christ had to die necessarily.

You have met these people before. They are dissatisfied with their own lives, yet they praise God's way of life. They are willing to talk about Jesus Christ as Savior, but still they cannot see certain truths, and the result is that they are troubled and unhappy. It is not surprising that they are usually self-righteous people, or at least they think highly of themselves. They do not think of themselves as bad sinners.

Please turn over to Deuteronomy 28. Now their inability to see the truth is often a form of blindness driven by guilt. And this blindness and mental confusion affect those who refuse to accept the truth, thereby losing this

ability to see it. Here in Deuteronomy 28, you are very familiar with this chapter. It has the blessings and cursings. We are entering the cursing period here.

**Deuteronomy 28:15** "But it shall come to pass, if you do not obey the voice of the Lord your God, to observe carefully all His commandments and His statutes, which I command you today, that all these curses will come upon you and overtake you."

Let us jump down to verse 28 and see what some of them are.

**Deuteronomy 28:28** "The Lord will strike you with madness and with blindness and confusion of heart.

This is exactly what we are talking about here that people get themselves into. And this is Israel, and he is warning Israel, do not get allow yourselves to get this way.

**Deuteronomy 28:29** "And you shall grope at noonday, as a blind man gropes in darkness; you shall not prosper in your ways; you shall be only oppressed and plundered continually, and no one shall save you."

This was a message directly to the nation of Israel before they had almost even gotten started. But there were millions of them and so this was the message God sent and it is a direct message to God's church as well because we are required to live at a higher standard than the rest of the world, a far higher standard, but we are living in the world, we are influenced by the world, and we fall back into those things.

So this blindness and confusion of the heart are caused by disobedience. In both physical and spiritual context in Scripture, blindness signifies fear, weakness, helplessness, anxiety, and despair, unless it is cured by God's miraculous intervention.

When God calls a person, you know, "many are called but few are chosen," quite often they go through this series of attitudes that I have been describing here.

The apostle Paul explains why people gradually become spiritually blind when he writes in Romans chapter 1, verse 21 about those whose foolish hearts are in a puzzle. Spiritual things are an enigma to them.

**Romans 1:21** Because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened.

Now turn over to Isaiah 29, verse 9. They were either blinded, or at the very least, unclear about their beliefs and their commitment. Refusing to accept God's sovereignty is an intentional act of self-blinding. Here in Isaiah 29, we are going to read verses 9 through 13. This is about the blindness of disobedience.

**Isaiah 29:9-12** Pause and wonder! Blind yourselves and be blind! They are drunk, but not with wine; they stagger, but not with intoxicating drink. For the Lord has poured out on them [that is, the disobedient] the spirit of deep sleep, and has closed your eyes, namely, the prophets; and He has covered your heads, namely, the seers. The whole vision has become to you like the words of a book that is sealed, which men deliver to one who is literate, saying, "Read this, please." And he says, "I cannot, for it is sealed" [meaning it is closed up, unless a person has God's Holy Spirit, and they did not because of their disobedience.] Then the book is delivered to one who is illiterate, saying, "Read this, please." And he says, "I am not literate." [He cannot read it either.]

So it did not matter what level of life or intellectual capacity they had, they were still not able to read it because they were not obedient to God, therefore they could not have the understanding needed.

**Isaiah 29:13** Therefore, the Lord said: "Inasmuch as these people draw near [to Me] with their mouths and honor Me with their lips, but have removed their hearts far from Me, and their fear toward Me is taught by the commandment of men, . . .

They listen to the society, to the influence of the experts in their society. They listen to others, but they would not listen to God and read His Word.

The root of sin is failing to prioritize God above everything else. Therefore, He is not honored and praised as He deserves. The people are not necessarily foolish in the sense that they lack intelligence, but in their rejection of God's sovereignty over their lives, they knew God, not in a faithful and submissive way, but simply as His existence and attributes can clearly be seen in creation.

Jesus described the religious leaders and teachers of His time as being blind, specifically *spiritually* blind. And the irony of their situation is that in their spiritual ignorance, they believe they understood everything perfectly.

Please turn over to Isaiah 6. Now the old adage "ignorance is bliss" eventually proves false. It is flawed because sooner or later causes will have effects. And problems from ignorance will lead to negative consequences.

So the first area where they fall short is that *their mind is not focused on seeking the truth*.

The second area that they fall short and do not see clearly is that *their heart is not fully committed*. They are not convicted. Their heart is not fully committed. And here is what God says about the uncommitted Israelites in Isaiah 6. We will read verses 9 and 10.

**Isaiah 6:9-10** And He said, "Go, and tell this people: 'Keep on hearing, but do not understand; keep on seeing, but do not perceive.' Make the heart of this people dull, and their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and return and be healed."

So God had a lot to say about their disobedience but not very much praise about what they did; and always told them how to repent and how to return to being healed. So this was true for the Israelites, both leaders and followers. Only God in His mercy can change this condition if they submit to Him.

And now flip over to Isaiah 35. This pictures the Millennium when life will be peaceful at last. Verses 1 and 2 give hope and inspires strength and courage in God's weak, unsteady people.

**Isaiah 35:3-5** Strengthen the weak hands, and make firm the feeble knees. Say to those who are fearful-hearted, "Be strong, do not fear! Behold, your God will come with vengeance, with the recompense of God; He will come and save you." Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped.

So the eyes of the spiritually blind shall be opened. Not just the physically blind, but the spiritually blind, and that is what will happen in the Millennium. People will have God's Holy Spirit to be able to live His way of life and understand the full meaning of it.

Now verse 5, then the following verses, describe joyful times when God would come to rescue His people from their enemies. This passage is so precise in its description of what the Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ did, that it clearly refers to the miracles that He performed in His life. On several occasions He restored sight to the blind, providing clear evidence that He was the Messiah sent by God. And you will find additional proof of that in Matthew 9:27; Matthew 20:30; Mark, Mark 8:23 (which we are reading); Mark 10:46; and Luke 7:21 all mention that.

Now please turn over to Matthew 11. It is a full confirmation that this passage in Isaiah there refers to Christ. The Savior Himself points out that He restored the blind to sight as evidence that He was the Messiah, suggesting that this was foretold as part of His purposeful work. We will read verses 2 through 5.

**Matthew 11:2-5** And when John [that is the Baptizer] had heard in prison about the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples and said to Him, "Are You the Coming One, or do we look for another?" And Jesus answered and said to them, "Go and tell John the things which you hear and see: The blind see and the lame walk; the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear; the dead are raised up and the poor have the gospel preached to them."

So the revealing of the gospel to the poor was a type of the spiritually blind beginning to see clearly.

Please turn back over to Isaiah, this time in chapter 42. In chapter 42 of Isaiah, blindness is a major fault. How could Israel and Judah be God's servants and yet be so blind? How could they be so close to God and see so little?

**Isaiah 42:16** "I [that is, the Lord] will bring the blind by a way they did not know; I will lead them in paths they have not known. I will make darkness light before them, and crooked places straight. These things I will do for them, and not forsake them."

And then, speaking directly to the Israelites,

**Isaiah 42:18-20** "Hear, you deaf; and look, you blind, that you may see. Who is blind but My servant [that is, of the people of God], or deaf as My messenger whom I send? Who is blind as he who is perfect, and blind as the Lord's servant? Seeing many things, but you do not observe; opening the ears, but he does not hear."

The phrases "servants of God" and "My servant" and "the Lord's servant" refers to God's people, the ancient Israelites, and of course it applies to us today who struggle with belief and who end up in a partially unclear circumstance.

The word "servant" here in verse 19 refers to those who claim to be the true worshippers of the Lord. In the previous verses, the prophet Isaiah described the blindness and foolishness of the Gentile world. And here he turns to his

own countrymen and calls them even more blind and deaf and foolish than the Gentiles are! And he asked, Who is as blind as they are, that is, the Israelites? Where are any of the pagan nations so unresponsive to God's calls and so hard-hearted?

So Isaiah's point is that the Israelites had many greater advantages than the Gentiles did in understanding, yet they were so deeply in sin that it could be said that comparatively to the Gentiles, none were blind but the Israelites. So what he is basically saying there is that the Israelites out-pagan the pagans. Sadly, I think it is true today as well. The descendants of the Israelites have more wealth than any other nations on earth, and what do they do? They out-wicked or out-evil the other nations in many ways because there is more money to do it with, in one sense. They have more opportunity.

Even the degradation of the pagan nations under the circumstances of the case against them could not be compared to the extent of the blindness of the Israelites. Jesus condemned the religious leaders of His day for the same disregard of God, yet do we not fail in the same way today, meaning we in general as a nation and also claiming Christianity. Sometimes partial blindness, seeing but not understanding or knowing what is right but not doing it, can be worse than not seeing at all.

In today's context, although some people who do not see clearly can perceive many things, they do not truly find their happiness in God's church or in living God's way of life. And somehow or another, they are not moved by it, they are not totally committed. Now they always have to remind themselves of it and keep trying to use it to lift themselves out of discouragement. The problem is that they do not find lasting relief from stress or genuine joy because they associate it with the material world rather than the spiritual aspects of God's church. They simply are not fulfilled people; they keep searching for happiness in all the wrong places and their heart is not fully engaged.

And this is only a broad overview of their overall condition. So the second area where they fall short is that *their hearts are not fully committed*. They are not convicted.

Now the third area where they fall short and do not clearly see is that *their will is divided*. They are rebellious. They do not understand why a man, because he calls himself a Christian, has to do certain things and stop doing others. We are talking in generalities about professing Christians. But this happens to people in the church as well, because we are all human. They think that it is narrow-minded.

Nonetheless, they denounce their old life and embrace the Christian life as a good idea and like the people in the church. They acknowledge Christ as Savior, but when it comes to applying His teaching, they are confused because it is against their human reasoning and their will. They always debate this, constantly unsure if it is right for them to do this or that. There is a lack of ease with their natural tendencies, and many of us have been through this stage and know it firsthand. Before we are complete, before we are baptized and receive God's Holy Spirit, there is a battle going on within us. There is a lack of ease with their natural tendencies, and many of us certainly can relate to that from our past lives.

Christ used this method with the blind man in Mark 8. Sometimes He appears to do something similar during our conversion. Some people see certain things right away and others go through stages. And those who go through this vague stage of claiming to be Christian but not truly living as one do not just end up here; there are reasons for it.

Although metaphorically blindness may describe simple ignorance, it often suggests an unwillingness to confront the truth, meaning to apply the truth in your life. And in the case of those who do not believe in Christ, Satan has blinded them. Paul wrote to the Corinthians, "whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe." And believers who revert to their pre-Christian ways are described as blind.

To give you some examples, II Peter 1:8 says, "For he who lacks these things [that is, virtues that produce faith] is short-sighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins." First John 2:11, "But he who hates his brother is in darkness and walks in darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes." So they fail to recognize the contradiction in their behavior. Blindness here means

their lack of awareness of how serious their condition is. The understanding of the Laodicean church in Revelation 3 is described as blind.

So the third area where they fall short is that *their will is divided* between their human nature and what they think that they know that they should be doing but will not.

Please turn back again to Mark 8, verse 13. Now just before Jesus performed the miracle of healing the blind man, He asked His disciples a series of questions. The following verses come before what we read earlier about the blind man's recovery and regaining his sight.

This is the incident that I just mentioned briefly earlier in the sermon but this will give us the details.

**Mark 8:13-21** And He left them, and getting into the boat again, departed to the other side. Now the disciples had forgotten to take bread, and they did not have more than one loaf with them in the boat. Then He charged them, saying, "Take heed, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod." [And I briefly explained that earlier in the sermon.] And they reasoned among themselves, saying, "It is because we have no bread." But Jesus, being aware of it, said to them, "Why do you reason because you have no bread? Do you not yet perceive nor understand? Is your heart still hardened? Having eyes, you do not see? And having ears, you do not hear? And you do not remember? When I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many baskets full of fragments did you take up?" They said to Him, "Twelve." "Also, when I broke the seven for the four thousand, how many large baskets full of fragments did you take up?" And they said, "Seven." So He said to them, "How is it that you do not understand?"

These were the disciples of Jesus Christ earlier on in their teaching, but they just did not get it. They saw things unclearly. They saw God's truth like men as trees walking.

So how could the disciples experience so many of Jesus' miracles and yet be so slow to comprehend who He really was? Sometimes we are slow to

understand, and although Christ has led us through trials and temptations before, we are slow to believe. He will do so again and hopefully our hearts are not so closed off that we cannot see clearly all that God can do for us.

You look at the tremendous miracles that the Israelites witnessed with the crossing of the Red Sea and all the miracles through the 40 years of wandering and still they doubted all the way through all those years.

Jesus asked His disciples the rhetorical question, "Is your heart still hardened? Are you still resisting the truth of who I am? Are you not clear on My purpose and message?"

He told them they were letting their human reasoning cloud their minds, and they were unclear about the spiritual principles that Christ taught them through parables and miracles. What spiritual truth was Christ teaching His disciples by asking a series of these questions, then presenting it all dramatically in the miracle of the healing of the blind man? Let us continue on here in Mark 8, we are going to read again verses 22 to 25.

**Mark 8:22-25** Then He came to Bethsaida; and they brought a blind man to Him, and begged Him to touch him. So He took the blind man by the hand and led him out of the town. And when He had spit on his eyes and put His hands on him, He asked him if he saw anything. And he looked up and he said, "I see men like trees, walking." Then He put His hands on his eyes again and made him look up. And he was restored and saw everyone clearly.

This is the same miracle that we receive in a sense. The same great miracle, probably the greatest miracle in our life that we have happened at baptism, the receiving of the Holy Spirit and continuing our conversion and our sanctification.

This miracle highlights essential spiritual truths. Although the man may still perceive light, he remained practically blind. His blindness symbolized spiritual or moral blindness, signifying someone who cannot see the spiritual truths that are obvious to those God has called. This healing by stages pictures the maturation of a believer's spiritual understanding and the conversion process each Christian experiences.

The disciples sometimes experienced anxiety and depression because of their lack of clarity and fear of the unknown. Here are three reasons for spiritual anxiety due to a lack of clarity.

The first reason is that *people oppose clear-cut definitions*. They dislike clarity and absolutes. They do not like ministers who say this is sin and this is not. They have chosen to remain in a state of darkness. They might avoid clear spiritual standards because of the challenges they pose. For some people, the most comfortable type of religion is vague, nebulous, and uncertain. The less clear and less defined the religion is, the more comfortable they feel in their minds. Nothing is more uncomfortable than clear-cut biblical truths that demand decisions and actions.

Over 40 years ago, I worked with a woman who was not religious at all, but then decided to convert to Catholicism to marry a Catholic man. And I asked her why was she willing to become a Catholic, having not been in any religion at all, maybe even an atheist. And she had a very simple answer. It is a very sad answer, but it is a very simple answer. She said, "I love all the pomp and circumstance, the glitter of the cathedral, and the beauty of the robes of the priests. It all seems so religious."

You know, there was no understanding at all. She will have her opportunity someday. She had no interest in making any changes in herself. There was no awareness of the beliefs.

Please turn over to Romans 11, verse 7. Now if a person begins with the idea that Christianity is not straightforward, he should not be surprised if he ends up like the partially healed blind man seeing men as trees walking. If he claims that he does not want a clear focus or an exact definition of God's truth, he will not take it to heart. Here in Romans 11, we are going to read verses 7 through 10.

**Romans 11:7-10** What then? Israel has not obtained what it seeks; but the elect have obtained it, and the rest were blinded. Just as it is written: "God has given them a spirit of stupor, eyes that they should not see and ears that they should not hear, to this very day." And David says: "Let their table become a snare and a trap, a

stumbling block and a recompense to them. Let their eyes be darkened so that they do not see, and bow down their back always."

So these individuals face a serious problem because they typically oppose clear-cut doctrines and dislike clarity and absolutes, unlike the elect of God, the truly converted.

The second reason for spiritual anxiety due to a lack of clarity is that *they do not fully accept the teaching and authority of the Scriptures*. Of course, this overlaps the second one there. They do not see the Bible as the inspired written Word of God. They do not fully submit to its authority. They syncretize their own ideas with biblical truth, creating a God to worship formed in their own image. Paul says,

**Romans 1:22-23** Professing to be wise, they became his fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man. . .

The world has its gods whether they are atheists or not. If they are atheists, they are their own god and whatever they place as more important than the eternal God.

They say their beliefs are based on the Scriptures—and this is the key point—but they quickly go on to change them to fit their own mindset. That is why mainstream Christianity, cultural Christianity is based on human tradition, not on the Bible. And that is why you can talk till you are blue in the face to somebody in cultural or mainstream Christianity about heaven and hell and where we are actually, what our reward is and all that type of thing, and they will agree with you and then two sentences later, they are saying the exact opposite. So it is very interesting to see the power of the Holy Spirit that we have in us at work in those moments, and always, if we are obedient to God.

They select specific biblical ideas a la carte but also want to retain their previous beliefs. They combine natural ideas with spiritual ones, and they claim to like the Sermon on the Mount from the Gospels and the love chapter of I Corinthians. They distort biblical principles here and there to fit their own ideas rather than faithfully following scriptural teachings from beginning to end. So their human tradition always replaces biblical doctrines.

We must uphold God's Word, submit to it, and trust Him to use His own methods according to His will.

The third reason for spiritual anxiety due to a lack of clarity is that *it often occurs because people lack interest in doctrine.*

Now all these three are related, but they have specific points.

Some people say they are not interested in doctrine. They prefer scholarly interpretations of the Bible. What is doctrine? Maybe we should start there. Let us generally define it first. The secular definition is: doctrine is a set of beliefs or teachings that are formally taught and upheld by a group, especially in religion, philosophy, or law. It refers to authoritative principles considered true and foundational.

Doctrines are meant to guide belief, thinking, and behavior. They are usually systematic and intentional, not casual opinions. For example, legal doctrine refers to established principles used by courts to decide cases. Philosophical doctrine expresses a school of thought like empiricism. Cultural Christian doctrine includes teachings such as the Trinity. Generally, doctrine refers to the accepted truth that influences belief and practice.

Synonyms for doctrine include dogma, teaching, and instruction. It is a principle, position, or the body of principles within a system of belief.

True biblical Christian doctrine includes all the teachings such as obeying God's law, statutes, and ordinances as made clear in the Old and New Testaments of the Holy Bible. There is no room for change, and there is a curse on anyone that does change what is in this Book. Some people think that at the end of Revelation where it says there is a curse on people who changed these words, mean only the book of Revelation, but it is referring to the whole Bible, the whole inspired written Word of God.

Please turn with me to II Peter 1. II Peter 1, verses 16 through 21 strongly affirms the inspiration of Scripture. Peter states that the Old Testament prophets conveyed God's messages, and he places himself and the other apostles in the same category since they also proclaim God's truth.

The Bible is not just a collection of fables or human ideas about God. It is God's Word given through people to people. Peter emphasizes his authority as an eyewitness along with the God-inspired authority of Scripture to prepare for his critique of the false teachers. If these evil men contradict the apostles of the Bible, their messages cannot originate from God is the point Peter is making.

This is about how trustworthy the prophetic word is. And it kind of parallels Matthew 17:5, Mark 9:7, and Luke 9:35.

**II Peter 1:16-21** For we did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty. For He received from God the Father honor and glory when such a voice came to Him from the Excellent Glory: "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." And we heard this voice which came from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain. Also we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts; knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.

Christ is the Morning Star, and when He returns, He will shine in His full glory. Until that day we have Scripture as a lamp and the Holy Spirit to illuminate Scripture for us and guide us as we seek the truth.

The Scripture does not originate from the prophet's own creativity. God inspired them, making their message authentic and trustworthy. God used each writer's talents and education and cultural background, but he worked with them in a way that ensured the message He intended was accurately communicated in their words.

Now people who are not interested in doctrine may claim to believe the doctrines in the Bible, but they make a fatal distinction between biblical interpretation and true doctrine. But what is the value of biblical

interpretation unless it leads to revelation of the truth? It is useless otherwise. It is not hard to see why they keep doctrine apart. Doctrine focuses on issues that call for lifestyle changes from mainstream society, and it is tough to break habits or routines that have been part of someone's life for so long.

It is one thing to be interested in words and shades of meaning that does not really upset people, nor does it highlight sin or require a decision. People can relax and enjoy that, but doctrine confronts us and calls for a decision. Biblical doctrine is truth and it examines us and tests us and forces us to reflect on ourselves, which is what we are to be doing now before Passover, examining ourselves, and that is what this is helping to do. It is helping us to take maybe a slightly different look at how we should be examining ourselves. There are many ways to examine ourselves. Hopefully this will open up a door for us, another one. It has already been there, but maybe just call attention to it.

In the early centuries of the church, the gospel was passed down from generation to generation. However, there have always been individuals who spread false ideas. For instance, some claim that Christ did not truly become a human. They said it was merely a phantom appearance. False teachers cause people to feel anxious, miserable, and confused. That shows their ignorance if they do believe that Christ was just a phantom, because 500 people saw Christ after His resurrection. That is proof, proof enough, not just the apostles, but 500 people.

I Timothy 6, verse 20, if you will turn there with me, please. There have always been times of intense pressure on the church. The church has faced ongoing challenges in defending the faith for nearly 2,000 years. Truth must be defined and protected. People will fall into error if they follow false traditions and prophets.

**I Timothy 6:20-21** [Paul tells the pastor Timothy] O Timothy! Guard what is committed to your trust, avoiding the profane and idle babblings and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge—by professing it some have strayed concerning the faith.

So if someone objects to doctrine, it is not surprising if they have difficulty seeing clearly and experience a lot of anxiety. A person's spiritual vision improves by learning and understanding the doctrines of the Bible. However, those who lack clarity are often not interested in doctrine.

What temptations lead to spiritual anxiety caused by a lack of clarity?

The first principle is clear: Do not prematurely rush to the conclusion that your blindness has been healed. It must have been a strong temptation for the blind man in Mark 8 to do that. Here is a man who had been blind. Christ spit on his eyes and said to him, "Do you see?" And the man says, "I see." What a temptation it must have been to him to announce the whole world "I can see." But how did he see? He did not see it clearly. Not yet. The man in a sense could see, but his sight was still incomplete and imperfect, and it was crucial that he not testify until he did see clearly.

So the first principle is avoid making a premature claim that your blindness has been cured, or in other words, saying, "I have overcome that."

The second principle is the exact opposite of the first. The temptation of the first is to run and to proclaim that you can see before you see clearly, but the temptation of the second is to feel absolutely hopeless and to say there is no use in going on.

People like this can become confused and feel hopeless. They stop reading the Bible and praying. The Laodicean can be either of these two types.

You know it so well, I will not ask you to turn there, but Revelation 3, verses 17 and 18 of the lukewarm warm Laodicean church says,

**Revelation 3:17-18** "Because you say, 'I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing,'—and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked—I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see."

So the Laodiceans in their attitude of lukewarmness only see in a fog They do not see clearly, which is their major flaw. And that is a category of many things, like not putting God first and so on. Not seeing clearly, lacking clarity, seeing men like trees walking is similar to when Christ put His hands on the blind man's eyes again and made him look up. He was restored and saw everyone clearly. His vision was sharp and focused.

In a sense, it is like our calling and conversion. God calls us by revealing only enough of His truth, but it is still not completely clear. Then through faith and submission, we say, I want to see more clearly, I want to be baptized and receive God's Holy Spirit so that I can see clearly.

Please turn with me to I Corinthians 13, verse 12. So the question before us is not merely do we see? The real question is, do we see clearly?

God is not asking us to claim spiritual maturity we do not yet possess. He is asking us to come to Him humbly and say, "Lord, I see, but not clearly yet." So what is the cure? What is necessary to gain clarity when facing life's challenge challenges. The Holy Spirit, yes. But what else?

**I Corinthians 13:12** For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. [that is, at Christ's return] Now I know in part, and then I shall know just as I also am known.

There is so much we do not know and cannot know until we are fully spirit beings. Ancient mirrors were crafted from polished metals like bronze, so the reflections were even more dim than what we see in our modern mirrors. This is the condition of the newly-called and those who can only handle the milk of the Word.

Jesus turned to the healed, formerly blind man, and He asked him if he saw anything. And the man said, "I see men like trees, walking." The man's honest answer made it known to Christ that he needed more help to see clearly. Christ knew that, but so the man needed to know as well, and the rest of us for the last 2,000 years who have been in God's church, we need to know this principle.

Please turn over to Philippians 4, verse 6. The attitude needed when asking God to help us see His truth more clearly is one of sincere, humble prayer and thanksgiving.

**Philippians 4:6-7** Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

So our duty is to fully submit ourselves to God and Christ just like the healed man did. He did not resist further treatment—he welcomed it. Christ never leaves anything incomplete. This man was healed, restored, and saw every person clearly.

Our role as members of God's church is to have a clear understanding. We are not meant to be left in a state of doubt or worry or vagueness. Do you think too much? Or just enough to worry yourself sick? That is kind of the way that these people who are only seeing partially are. It worries them sick because they do not see clearly, but they do not know what they do not see clearly.

From the Ambassador's Spokesman's Club manual, Lesson 3, Be Crystal Clear:

Misunderstanding is the most common ailment of the human mind. People misunderstand each other in conversation. Political orations are misunderstood. Nations bicker over misunderstandings. The main reason for all this is lack of clarity. Most people do not say what they mean, nor do they mean what they say.

So clarity or lack of thereof also affects the way we face life's challenges and problems and difficulties in physical, mental, and spiritual health.

Let us turn over to II Corinthians 1, verse 8. Even great spiritual leaders can experience days of doubt and uncertainty. Moses was prepared to give up at one point, as were Elijah and Jeremiah. And Paul understood what despair meant.

**II Corinthians 1:8-10** For we do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, of our trouble which came to us in Asia: that we were burdened beyond measure, above strength, so that we despaired even of life. Yes, we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves but in God who raises the dead, who delivered us from so great a death, and does deliver us [It is an ongoing thing. It is a process. It is a sanctification.]; in whom we trust that He will still deliver us.

So God constantly saves us in a sense from the past, present, and future as we confront life's challenges.

There is a difference between doubt and unbelief. *Doubt* concerns the mind. In a state of doubt, we cannot understand what God is doing or why He is doing it.

*Unbelief* is a matter of the will. It is unfaithfulness because we refuse to believe God's Word and recognize that our lives are in His hands.

Doubt is not always a sign that a person is wrong, it might indicate he is thinking. But *overthinking is the art of solving problems that do not exist*. We may experience doubt that is not caused by willful unbelief, but by stress from physical and emotional sources.

We often face anxiety, and this society and its willful sins put us under a lot of pressure. How often have we acted without clarity and paid the price for it? Life teaches us, sometimes painfully, that wisdom begins with seeing clearly. And that is why the miracle in Mark 8 is so searching.

Jesus did not heal the blind man in stages because He lacked power, but because He intended to teach a lesson, and the miracle was a mirror. "I see men like trees, walking." Not blind, but not seeing clearly; not lost, but not not secure; not outside, but not fully in. And that is where some stand today.

Christ will not leave His people in that condition. He never has, He never will. He places His hands on our eyes again and calls us higher out of vagueness, out of half truths, out of divided hearts and hesitant wills. He calls us to clarity of mind, commitment of heart, and obedience of will.

The cure is not emotion alone. It is not a vague belief or borrowed conviction. It is a humble submission to God's Word, love of truth, willingness to be taught, and openness to the power of the Holy Spirit. And when we honestly say, "Lord, I see, but not clearly yet," Christ responds. He *always* responds.

God did not call us to live anxious, confused, lukewarm lives—seeing but not perceiving. He called us to walk in light, to understand what we believe, and to act wisely because we see clearly.

Let us remain in Christ's hands so that our vision can be restored. Because as Christ accomplishes His work, confusion gives way to peace, anxiety to assurance, and partial sight to clear vision.

Here is the call to action:

Examine your mind. Are you actively seeking truth or avoiding clear answers because they demand change?

Examine your heart. Is it fully committed to God or divided between the world and His way?

Examine your will. Are you submitting to Christ's authority or still negotiating obedience?

When Christ completes us, we will no longer see men "as trees, walking." We will see the truth clearly and love God fully and walk confidently in His way.