

Progressive Light and Darkness

By David Harrell

Bible Text: John 9:35-41
Preached on: Sunday, October 12, 2014

We return this morning to John's Gospel, chapter 9. If you will take your Bibles and turn there. We will be examining verses 35 through 41 as we conclude our examination of the glorious transformation of this blind beggar which is an inspired illustration of the love of God and the power of God to transform sinners like you and like me. I've entitled my discourse to you this morning "Progressive Light and Darkness" for reasons that will become obvious. So let me read the text to you beginning in verse 35. John chapter 9, beginning in verse 35,

35 Jesus heard that they had put him out, and finding him, He said, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" 36 He answered, "Who is He, Lord, that I may believe in Him?" 37 Jesus said to him, "You have both seen Him, and He is the one who is talking with you." 38 And he said, "Lord, I believe." And he worshiped Him. 39 And Jesus said, "For judgment I came into this world, so that those who do not see may see, and that those who see may become blind." 40 Those of the Pharisees who were with Him heard these things and said to Him, "We are not blind too, are we?" 41 Jesus said to them, "If you were blind, you would have no sin; but since you say, 'We see,' your sin remains.

It is always an amazing thing to watch the sovereign grace of God do its work upon a person's soul. Perhaps you remember your own situation when you came to an understanding of your sin in the Savior and when you came to Christ. For some people, conversion happens very quickly, very immediately, like the Apostle Paul on the road to Damascus, an overwhelming, decisive moment when God strikes a person with the blinding light of the Gospel and immediately they believe. But for others, it is more of a journey. For some, it might be a short journey, for others it might be a longer journey. Many people can't even really specifically give a time or a date but if you hear their stories, you will see that by God's gracious initiative as in the life of this blind beggar, the Spirit of God began to move upon their heart causing them for the first time to do that which before they were both unable and unwilling to do and that is to recognize their sin, to see their separation from God and have a desire to be reconciled to him through faith in Christ. Folks, this is the miracle of what Scripture calls regeneration. Regeneration is that supernatural instantaneous impartation of spiritual life to the spiritually dead. In Scripture it is described as the new birth, as a new creation, as a new life, we are given a new nature. As we look at this blind beggar who now can see, prior to regeneration, he was unable to see the hideous nature of his sin, the consequences of his sin, his need to be saved. He was not only unable to see it but he was unwilling to do anything about it until God moved upon his heart in the miracle of regeneration.

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Now, before we examine this a little more closely, there is some rich theology that you need to hear once again. You need to have this rehearsed in your mind because it animates our hearts to such praise and it has much to do with our text here this morning. Some people will ask, "How were people saved before Christ's death and resurrection like this blind beggar?" And of course, some will say, "Well, it was by keeping the law." Well, that's not true. Scripture completely annihilates that false assumption. In fact, Paul says in Romans 3:20 that "by the works of the law no flesh will be justified in his sight." Well, how were they saved? The answer is: the same way we are saved today: by grace through faith in God's mercy that would ultimately be made possible through his promised Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ, that they didn't understand. You might say they were saved on credit. They had faith that God would be merciful, that God would forgive sins and he would do that for all who cried out for mercy. For example, if we go back to the book of Genesis in Genesis chapter 3 and verse 15, we see how that God promised that the seed of the woman would one day defeat Satan. Well, that's not a lot of theology to go on but Adam believed that, knew that God was the one in charge of all of these things and he believed what God had revealed to him. In fact, just a few verses later we read how that he demonstrates his belief in God in verse 20 by naming his wife Eve and the very next verse we see how that God himself killed the first innocent animal and took those skins and made a covering for Adam and Eve, a picture of God's provision to cover sin and to restore fellowship.

Now Adam and Eve did not understand that this was a marvelous picture of the coming Lamb of God, a picture of substitutionary atonement and all of those wonderful things that we now look back upon and understand, but they did understand that God had a remedy for sin and they had faith that he would do just that. Prior to the death of Christ, the object of faith for salvation was God. Old Testament believers knew only of a coming Messiah. They certainly did not know of Jesus but they saw him in types and symbols and prophecy and in various shadows in Scripture. In fact, the Psalmist tells us in Psalm 2:12, "Blessed are all who take refuge in Him!" And that "Him" referred to God. They didn't understand the fullness of the atoning work of Christ. In Genesis 15:6, we read that, "Then Abraham believed in the LORD; and He reckoned it to him as righteousness." Paul picks up on that in Romans 4:3 and says the same thing, "Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness." And in verse 5 he went on to say, "But to the one who believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is reckoned as righteousness, just as David also speaks of the blessing upon the man to whom God reckons righteousness apart from works."

So dear friends, since the fall of man, the basis of salvation has been the sacrificial death of Christ for those who were chosen for salvation before the foundation of the world. In fact, his death paid for the penalty of sins of all the Old Testament saints, all of the New Testament saints, and the sacrificial system in the Old Testament never took away any

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sin. Hebrews 10 makes that very clear along with other passages. But it pointed to Christ's atoning work whereby he would one day be the propitiation or the satisfaction for the sins of all who would believe in him. So the only thing that changed after the cross was the content of faith. Prior to Christ, God only held man responsible for the amount of revelation that he had given to him. For example, in Hebrews 11, you will recall how the writer gives an amazing account of faithful saints down through redemptive history and they knew nothing of Christ Jesus. In verse 39 we read, "And all these, having gained approval through their faith, did not receive what was promised, because God had provided something better for us," referring to those of us under the New Covenant, "so that apart from us they should not be made perfect." They had faith in the ultimate fulfillment of the eternal promises in the covenants that God gave to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, though they did not know the details of how he would fulfill all of those things with respect to the atoning work of Christ.

So even prior to any knowledge of Christ Jesus, the Lamb of God, men were saved by grace alone, through faith alone, in God alone and ultimately in the fullness of time in Christ alone when they understood the fullness of all of that. But ultimately you must know that it was because of Christ that even the Old Testament saints were saved. Moreover, Old Testament saints like us were born in sin, therefore, they needed to be born again. Regeneration needed to take place with them as well like this blind beggar. It is obvious from his testimony prior to even learning the actual identity of Jesus, that regeneration had occurred making him both able and willing to do what he was previously unable and unwilling to do prior to his physical healing and what was that? To have faith in God's grace for salvation. To be obedient to what God asked him to do. He was given spiritual life and the gift of faith, albeit very weak. This is proven in how he obeyed Jesus. At first he only saw him as a prophet, a messenger sent by God, but he recognized the hand of God in his miraculous healing and though his faith was embryonic, it was alive. You see, cadavers do not respond. They do not obey. They do not listen. They do not seek. They have no desire to know the way of salvation. They have no desire to obey God. But this man had been given life which resulted in an active commitment to obey God, even the Son of man, without seeing him. Which by the way, is a demonstration of faith that Jesus praised in John 20:29 when he said, "Blessed are they who did not see and yet believed."

So like millions of people before him, this blind beggar was divinely enabled to act upon the light that he had, the light of divine revelation that God had given him. That was all that was required at that point but then as the story unfolds, because of this new life that God had given him, we see him doing what the other Jews were unable and unwilling to do, violently unwilling to do: we see him defending Jesus before he even knows who he is. They see him as one of his disciples which he does not deny and they cast him out of the synagogue. His faith was new, it was small but it was tested, validated, strengthened,

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ultimately blessed as we see God giving him more light, even the light of a personal encounter with the Light of the world, the Messiah himself as he revealed his identity.

Now, this is called progressive revelation. It's fascinating. Think about it: while Jesus' disciples knew that Jesus was the Son of God, they did not have an understanding of their Messiah with respect to the cross and what he was going to do. Nevertheless, their faith was genuine. It was genuine saving faith because they acted upon the revelation that God had given to them. In fact, it was rather late in Jesus' ministry that according to Matthew chapter 16, beginning in verse 21, "Jesus began to show His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised up on the third day." Then we read, "Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, 'God forbid it, Lord! This shall never happen to You.' But He turned and said to Peter, 'Get behind Me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to Me; for you are not setting your mind on God's interests, but man's.'" Though their faith was in God's mercy to remedy sin, a product of regeneration as time progressed in the lives of these disciples as well as in the life of this blind beggar, we see revelation progressing as well. They are understanding more and more of what God is doing. And what a glorious day it must have been for them as well as others like, for example, Nicodemus, when they could finally see the whole picture after the Lord had died and been buried and then rose again. A picture that we can see clearly today as we look backwards in history. The Apostle Paul summarizes the full picture of God's redemptive plan in a variety of passages. The full content of our faith is summarized well in 1 Corinthians 15, beginning in verse 3, Paul says this, "For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised up on the third day according to the Scriptures."

So with these foundational truths, we can focus on the progressive light and darkness revealed in this account which completes the story of this dear brother in Christ who was born blind. I want to focus our attention into separate categories. First, we're going to look at the divine light that results in spiritual sight and worship. Secondly, the divine light that results in spiritual blindness and judgment. So let's first look at the light and how it results in spiritual sight and worship. Think again of this blind man that now has physical sight. His budding faith, I think, is fascinating to watch. His whole disposition is antithetical to the Jewish authorities and this is a contrast that John makes throughout his Gospel. God has given him some measure of spiritual sight which increases but at the same time, we see how that the others are becoming increasingly blind, progressively blind, and though they taunted him, he refuses to succumb to their pressure.

By way of review, in verse 28, the humiliated Pharisees once again appeal to their self-satisfied ignorance and John says, "They reviled him and said, 'You are His disciple, but we are disciples of Moses. We know that God has spoken to Moses, but as for this man,

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we do not know where He is from." In other words, "We don't know where this guy gets his authority." To which the beggar replies in verse 30, "Well, here is an amazing thing, that you do not know where He is from, and yet He opened my eyes." It's interesting, he taunts them in return. He's saying, "This is astonishing. You who pretend to have eyes, you who pretend to know everything, do not know where he is from and yet he has opened my eyes." Then he pins them to the mat in verses 31 and following. He says this, "We know that God does not hear sinners; but if anyone is God-fearing and does His will, He hears him." Now, by the way, this was a statement they could not deny. They knew that this was something that was recorded throughout the Old Testament. And then the man goes on and says, "Since the beginning of time it has never been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a person born blind. If this man were not from God, He could do nothing."

Now, his reasoning has a major and a minor premise. First of all, the major premise to his reasoning is that only God-fearing people who do his will are heard by God so that they can give sight to a man born blind. That's the major premise. The minor premise is this: this man Jesus is obviously such a man. He defends Jesus. He was heard by God, performed a miracle that has never been even heard of in the history of the world. I find it ironic, in fact, John uses irony throughout his Gospel, here we have a mere beggar that has defied the authority of the Sanhedrin; he has publicly bested them with his argument. God has opened his eyes to see and given him power to give voice to his testimony. And here this man that was despised and rejected of society has now exposed their pride and prejudice. He has made sport of their perceived dignity and their high position. Little did they know how far they would fall because of their stubborn unbelief.

Verse 34, "They answered him, 'You were born entirely in sins, and are you teaching us?' So they put him out." Again, we see the irony of this. Because of his testimony, they banned him from the social and religious life of Israel but oh, what a happy day it was for this man. What a happy day because on that day, God graciously set him apart to be among those with that honored position of being identified with the Messiah, the one who was despised and rejected by men. What happens next is a marvelous picture of how sovereign grace pursues those that he has chosen in eternity past.

So we come to our text, verse 35, "Jesus heard that they had put him out, and finding him, He said, 'Do you believe in the Son of Man?'" Folks, here we see the inevitable result of being born of God. He leads people to believe in the truth regarding Christ. Just as "all those who were given by the Father to the Son come to the Son," as Jesus said in John 6:37, "so to all who are spiritually reborn through the work of God have as the object of their faith the Lord Jesus Christ." I want you to think what has happened here. God has first given this man spiritual life, regeneration has occurred. Before this, he was spiritually dead. He was alienated from God. He couldn't respond to anything spiritually.

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He was triple blind: he was blinded by his nature; blinded by Satan; blinded by the world. But look what God has done. God has now moved upon him in such a way as to make him able and willing to deal with spiritual things.

Now, I want you to understand when Scripture speaks of an unregenerate sinner being spiritually dead, it does not mean that he is somehow passive in his rebellion. No, in fact, he is very active in his rebellion. Jesus tells us that sin just flows out of the unregenerate heart. In fact, in Matthew 15:19, he says, "For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies," and so forth. So we must understand that the idea of being spiritually dead means that man is incapable of doing what is pleasing in God's sight. As you've heard me say before, I think a good definition of sin is man's innate inability to do that which is pleasing to God, his innate inability to conform to the moral character and desires of God. So man apart from regeneration is unable and unwilling to properly respond to God but he is not passively unwilling, he is hostilely unwilling to do so. This is why, frankly, the phrase "free will" is such a fantasy. Who cares if the will is free when the desires that come from man's nature cause him to act in such a way as to be corrupt and evil. He has no desire for God until God does something. This is why the doctrine of irresistible grace is so important to understand. Irresistible grace is simply the assertion that God's grace expressed in his sovereign and gracious work of regeneration is irresistible.

Now, this does not mean that God forces sinners to somehow believe in Jesus against their will. Rather, what it means is that the Holy Spirit overcomes the sinful nature, overcomes all human resistance to a point where a man will not only willingly believe, he will joyfully believe and certainly he will believe. Jesus says, "All that the Father gives me will come to me." Those that were given in eternity past will come. God needs no permission from a spiritual cadaver to raise one of his elect to life. When we look at a corpse, we can see very clearly that it cannot hear, it cannot respond, so too, the unregenerate sinner. The spiritual capacity of the unregenerate can be likened to Lazarus when he was in the grave: he was dead; he was bound; he was incapable of self-resurrection. Corpses do not obey commands. They must be given life and that's what God does and when he does, the dead sinner cannot resist the resurrection to new life nor will he want to resist. That's part of the radical change. He will willingly repent. Which by the way, is also a gift from God. Do you realize that? Repentance is a gift from God. Peter saw this in the response of the Gentiles in Acts 11:18 where we read, "When they heard these things," referring to the Gospel, "they fell silent and they glorified God, saying, 'Then to the Gentiles God has also granted repentance that leads to life.'"

As a footnote, our Arminian brothers contend that faith results in regeneration, whereas Calvinists contend that regeneration results in faith. We would argue that one must first be born again. He must first be given new life in order to function in a spiritual capacity

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and to do that which is pleasing to God, namely have saving faith which also is a gift from God. Folks, it was not free will that blinded Paul and knocked him to the ground on the road to Damascus. It was the regenerating power of the living God which resulted in faith and this is true of every believer. Again, sometimes a man responds immediately, for others it may take time but one thing is certain, God's grace is irresistible. It cannot be thwarted because the newborn sinner will want it more than anything else on earth which we see happening here with this blind beggar like others God saved in the Old Testament. Before he even knew who Jesus was, God makes him able and willing to do that which prior to regeneration he was unable and unwilling to do and that is to respond to God in faith and obedience, even persevere under trial. He showed uncompromising boldness towards men and yet humility before God because, again, spiritual birth precedes all actions of spiritual life. "No one can come to me," Jesus said, "unless the Father who sent me draws him," John 6:44.

So this man faithfully walked with what little light had been given to him and now God honors him more by sending him the light of the world, his Son, to seek him out, to reveal himself as the Messiah. By the way, as a footnote, if we see a person who is truly mourning over their sin and you see them seeking after God, know full well that God is at work, that that quickening work has happened here and saving faith is going to be inevitable. So it's no need to rush things by pressuring a person to make a decision for Christ. You know, to play 14 more verses of "Just As I Am" so that hopefully they will be so overwhelmed with emotion that they'll make that decision. It's almost as if we are saying, "Lord, it's not happening here. Let me help out a little bit." Folks, you don't have to do that and sometimes I see this with parents. At the first sign of what appears to be genuine spiritual interest, oh, they give me a call. "Oh, you've got to come quick. We've got to get them. We're pouring it on them." Now, I'm not saying that we be passive but, folks, know that God is perfectly capable of raising the spiritually dead and drawing them unto himself. So what do we do? We love them. We pray for them. We give them all the Gospel that they can handle, but we let God do his work in his time. Don't rush those things.

So Jesus knows how this man defended him at the tribunal and yet remained steadfast in his testimony which earned him the disgrace of excommunication. Now the uninformed faith in God that he possesses is about to be expanded further by the Light of the world himself. Verse 35 again, "Jesus heard that they had put him out, and finding him, He said, 'Do you believe in the Son of Man?'" Folks, I have to pause again. I cannot get past that phrase "finding him." I remember when the Lord found me. Do you remember when he found you? Every time I read that passage my mind goes back and it's like this movie starts playing. To think that the uncreated Creator of the universe veiled in human flesh seeks out this man that was a reject from society, it's overwhelming to me. To think that he did that for me and he has done that for you. Knowing too that he is about to bear that

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man's sins in his body on the cross, yet he seeks him out. What an amazing testimony of God's grace and his love.

"Do you believe in the Son of Man?" he says. Contextually and grammatically, the idea is, "Do you personally believe like a true disciple in distinction from your Jewish kinsman that reject me and want to kill me? Do you entrust yourself wholly to him as the only hope of salvation? Not only for your physical healing but more importantly for your spiritual needs?" That's the idea. And he answered him in verse 36 and said, "Who is He, Lord, that I may believe in Him?" Now remember, this is the first time he had seen Jesus with his physical eyes though he has already had a glimpse of him with spiritual eyes as we're going to see. What a precious scene. What an example of progressive revelation. What an example of sovereign grace in regeneration. What an example of irresistible grace. This man's heart has been supernaturally softened to hear more from God. It has been divinely prepared to believe in Jesus as the Messiah. Again, don't you remember when this happened in your life? What a precious season that was. You know, I'll never stop praising him for seeking after me, for saving me and I hope you share that same sentiment.

This is one of the most blessed truths to me, to know that it is God that initiates salvation, that salvation is always the result of his uninfluenced sovereign choice. We are merely farmers that throw the seed of the Gospel. It is up to God to cause that seed to fall on the good soil and to yield the fruit of righteousness. Therefore, we know that whenever we preach the Gospel, it will do one of two things: it will either harden hearts or soften hearts and that is God's prerogative. That's what God will do. And in this I relax and I rejoice. Not that I become passive. No, not at all, in fact, it's for this reason that we want to preach the Gospel all the more. But the point is, I know that ultimately salvation is of the Lord, not of me.

"Do you believe in the Son of Man?" This is one of Jesus' favorite ways of referring to himself. In fact, he did so 80 times in the Gospels. In John's Gospel, it speaks of Jesus being the revelation of God to man. If you read other passages, the context speaks of the Son of man with respect to him being the incarnate word that reveals God. It speaks of his provision for salvation and his authority to judge. The Son of man speaks therefore of the incarnate revelation of God to man who gives his life for those who will believe, something this man would not have understood until later. By the way, this is also a Messianic title that we read in Daniel's prophecy in Daniel 7:13 and 14. There he speaks of how in the future the Son of man will receive the kingdom from the Ancient of Days and for this reason John is going to even close this section speaking about judgment.

Now think about it: don't you know this dear brother is exhausted. I mean, we've got to put ourselves in his place. I don't know, maybe roughly the day before, he has suddenly

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been able to see. He's never seen anything before and not only does he see all that is around him and experiences things like he's never experienced before but he also sees the wickedness of the religious system. He finds himself being persecuted and all of a sudden banned from the synagogue. So he's in a worse state now than he was before he could see. I would imagine the poor guy's head was spinning and he has no idea that the Messiah of Israel is speaking to him but he is about to.

"Do you believe in the Son of Man?" He answered, "Who is He, Lord," it could be translated sir, "Who is he, Sir, that I may believe in Him?" I would imagine even though the text doesn't say this, I'm reading this into the text so please understand that, I would imagine that he is sitting somewhere in the shade and he is just exhausted. I mean, he has been run through the mill, as we would say. "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" I would imagine that he would look up and say, "Who is he, Sir, that I may believe in Him?" It's like, "I've just had it." He is so ready, isn't he? That's a work of grace. "Please identify him to me. I am eager to believe in him." By implication he's saying, "I have no confidence in the theology of the traditional religious authorities that have cast me out of the synagogue." Folks, here we see the inscrutable mystery of God's sovereignty in salvation and man's responsibility to believe. Isn't it fascinating? It is God who empowers, who awakens, who enables those he has sovereignly chosen to believe and yet man is responsible to do that. So God miraculously transforms the human heart so that it will freely and voluntarily and joyfully choose that which before it would never choose and that is to choose Christ. In Acts 13:48 we read, "When the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord; and as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed." What an amazing truth.

Jesus then reveals himself as the true Messiah, the Son of man. Verse 37, "Jesus said to him, 'You have both seen Him, and He is the one who is talking with you.'" Now, in what sense has he already seen him? Well, John doesn't give us the details, he's only giving us kind of a summarized version of all that happened but obviously this man has received some measure of spiritual sight with respect to Jesus' true identity, all that has gone on, the way he has defended him in the temple before the Sanhedrin and so forth, but now, God is going to give him not just physical eyes but spiritual eyes to see. Jesus is saying, "In fact, you have already seen him spiritually and he is the one who is now speaking with you. I, therefore, am the ultimate object of genuine saving faith." Which is consistent with what Jesus has said throughout his ministry. Remember in the synagogue there in Capernaum in John 6:29, Jesus says, "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent," referring to himself.

So, because God had prepared his heart in regeneration, we see in verse 38, "And he said, 'Lord, I believe.' And he worshiped Him." Oh, the glory of seeing Jesus for who he really is. Folks, when this really happens in a person's life, the immediate heartfelt response will

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be adoring worship and that's what we see with him. You see, this is the climax of God's sovereign work in salvation, the goal of choosing you and me: that we might worship him; that we might give him glory; that we might proclaimed the majesty and excellencies of Christ; and the indescribable joy of being united with him; being reconciled to God; being in relationship with him; enjoying his presence deep within our souls. Peter put it this way in 1 Peter 2:9, "But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession," and here's why, "so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light." You see, apart from sovereign grace that chose us and delivered us from darkness, we would remain blind to spiritual truth. We would remain alienated from God, separated from God, ignorant, even hostile toward the lover of our souls like so many people we know, some even within our own families.

So beloved, I want to ask you: do you worship him? I hope you do. That doesn't just mean coming to church on Sunday. Jesus makes it clear in Matthew 7 that hell will be full of people who go to church on Sunday. If you have truly been born again, God has awakened within you an insatiable appetite to know him; to know his word; to experience his beauty; to commune with him; to feel his presence deep within your soul; to delight in all that God is in Christ. He has made you so that you will literally revel in the satisfying joy and the eternal blessings of being in Christ and this animates our hearts to praise and to service. Folks, this is what worship is all about. This is what Peter is describing when he says that we've been delivered here by this marvelous light, the light that this beggar can now see so much more fully than before.

In 1730, Jonathan Edwards exhorted the early saints here in the United States by saying this, "Make God the peculiar object of your praises. The doctrine of election shows what great reason you have to do so. If God so values you, sets so much by you, has bestowed greater mercies upon you than all of the ungodly in the world, is it too little a requital for you to make God the peculiar object of your praise and thankfulness? If God so distinguishes you with his mercies, you ought to distinguish yourself in his praises. You should make it your great care and study how to glorify that God who has been so peculiarly merciful to you and this rather because there was nothing peculiar in you differing from any other person that moved God to deal thus in such a peculiar way with you. You were as unworthy to be set by as thousands of others that are not regarded of God and are cast away by him forever as worthless and filthy." Then he went on to say this, "See to it, therefore, that there being nothing that stands in any competition with God in your esteem. Value him more than all riches. Value his honor and glory more than all the world. Be ready at all times to part with all things else and cleave to God alone. Let God be your peculiar friend. Value his friendship more than the respect and love of all the world. When you lose other enjoyments, when you lose earthly friends, let this be a supporting, satisfying comfort to you that you have God left, you haven't lost God."

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Well, we've seen how the divine light can result in spiritual light and worship and that is contrasted with how it can also result in spiritual blindness and judgment. And I close with these thoughts here in the final part of this text. How fascinating to see how that some will respond to the light of the world and be saved and others will reject it and go deeper and deeper and deeper into the dark caverns of unbelief. Verse 39, "And Jesus said, 'For judgment I came into this world, so that those who do not see may see, and that those who see may become blind.'" Now mind you, there's a crowd gathered around Jesus. They are hearing this, especially the Jewish authorities. Now, some will say, "Well, I thought Jesus came to seek and to save that which was lost?" Well, that's true but those who reject his grace will incur his justice. That's the point. You see, the life and death of Christ saves all who falter under the burden of guilt and shame and come to him for mercy and are saved but the life and death of Christ also judges all who shun the light of Christ. All of those who refuse to repent and believe, sentence themselves to continued separation from God which will ultimately commence in eternal separation and damnation. Jesus warned that basically that if you continue to shun the light of Christ, then you will be cast into the outer darkness and in that place there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. God is long-suffering, dear friends. He gives us much time to repent and believe but if we do not, then the wrath of God abides on us and we will be judged.

Verse 40, "Those of the Pharisees who were with Him heard these things and said to Him, 'We are not blind too, are we?' Jesus said to them, 'If you were blind, you would have no sin; but since you say, "We see," your sin remains.'" In other words, "If you would acknowledge your spiritual blindness, admitting your need for the light of the world that has come to give you sight, you would have no sin because it would be forgiven, because my righteousness would be imputed to you. But since you say, 'We see,' you betray your stubborn pride. You betray your stubborn self-sufficiency, therefore, your guilt, your sin remains." You persist in loving darkness rather than the light unlike this man that was born blind who turned to the light and, therefore, no longer walks in the darkness but has the light of life. What solemn words and I pray that we all hear them. For those of us who have come to the light by sovereign grace, these things again, should animate our hearts to worship, to praise, to serving Christ. But dear friend, if you think you can see and you think you don't need Christ, you think you've got everything figured out, then all of this is a fairytale, your blindness remains and so too does the condemnation of God upon you.

I close with the words of Jesus who said in John 3, beginning in verse 18, "He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil. For everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come

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Progressive Light and Darkness

By David Harrell

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to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. But he who practices the truth comes to the Light, so that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God."

Dear friend, the complexities of the human eye are absolutely unfathomable. Scientists still shake their heads trying to figure out how all of it works with the brain, with the central nervous system, with our bodies. It is absolutely staggering and yet the majority of the world will say that somehow that eye evolved out of nothing. What a picture of spiritual blindness and what a picture of the miracle that God performed physically on this man. But I would submit to you that the greater miracle is the gift of spiritual sight where he completely transforms our very nature so that we will voluntarily choose to believe in him and worship him forever. I hope that this is true for you. I pray that it is.

Let's pray together.

Father, we give you praise for the spiritual sight that you have given us by your grace. We certainly do not deserve it and had you not done this, we would have remained as blind as the people that we have read about today, as blind as the people that we see all around us. So Lord, we give you praise. And for those who think they see, Lord, convict them of such a foolish thought. Help them to acknowledge that they do not see and they cannot see unless you give them sight and may they do this to the praise of your glory. I ask all of these things in Jesus who has saved us by his grace. Amen.

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