

Paul's Blindness

“Ordinary Object, Extraordinary Meanings”



“When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, ‘I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life’” John 8:12

Saul was a Pharisee from Tarsus. We are led to believe that he was very well educated and respected among the people. His word was taken with great respect and he had ordered the killing of many people who were responding to the teachings of John and Baptist and Christ. He wanted to ruin the Christian church as it was emerging. He ordered the stoning of Stephen who was willing to die for Christ rather than deny the teachings of Christ. Paul stood by and watched. But God had a plan for him. Paul was a strong person, but God's power was much stronger.

One day after the death and resurrection of Christ, Saul was going about persecuting the followers of Christ and ordering them to be killed. He had been given power by the high priest to order the arrest and death of followers of Christ in Damascus.

As he was going down the road, there was a bright, blinding light that shown in his eyes and he heard a voice say "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" Saul questioned who was talking to him. The response must have startled him. The voice said "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do." (Acts 9:4-6, NIV)

Saul was helpless. He couldn't go anywhere. He was blind and had to have the men who had been with him lead him into Damascus. He was blind for three days. Christ did not forsake him. He sent a man named Ananias to him. Ananias blessed him. He was filled with the Holy Spirit and his sight was restored.

We don't know why God had to blind Paul, but we do know that because he was blinded, he was able to accept God's love and become a wonderful minister to many people.

Sometimes we are blinded. It may not be in the physical way that Paul was blinded, but we are blinded to what we should do. We tend to see things as we want to see them. We also hear what we want to hear. But Paul didn't have the choice we have. He was physically blinded and when he asked who had done it, he was startled because Christ spoke to him. God speaks to us each day and shows us His love, but many times we do not choose to listen.

Physical blindness can be looked at many ways. We are told that when one does not have one of the senses, the other senses are stronger. Probably the best known example of this was Helen Keller, but I know several blind people who are leading a full life.

They have decided that blindness can be a curse or a blessing. They have chosen to lead as full a life as those of us with all five senses. In fact, it may be fuller.

I never cease to wonder at how the blind person carrying the cane is able to judge as he walks. And, then there are the pets that are trained to help people with many disabilities including blindness. I recently talked with a woman who often had low sugar attacks, but her dog was able to know this ahead of time and warn her. As my grandson was playing soccer there was a father who had lost his sight in a tragic accident in his late 20's. But he was at each game and he heard everything. He was able to know the sounds of hitting and follow the game.

I know a woman who lost her sight as a teenager. Her son played baseball. Her husband told us on one occasion how she would tell him that their son was warming up to pitch. She could tell the way the ball hit the glove. That is amazing to me. There are blind people who work for the police because they can hear things on the tape that those with sight do not hear.

We all know of similar stories if we take time to look around us and see the handicaps of others where we can help as we count the blessings we have taken for granted.

Not too many years ago, the blind person was considered dumb and had no possibility of getting a job. Today, the blind are involved in almost every profession. Schooling is available to them in many fields, and many of them are teachers. That is a wonderful blessing not only for them but for us.

How does this relate to Paul's blindness? Paul's sight was restored, and he went on to be one of the most prolific teachers of his time. His writings are quoted constantly, and we all benefit by his teachings.

Paul needed to be blinded to the way of life he was leading so he could change. Sometimes, we need to be shaken up so we can see things as they should be seen. I am not saying that we need to be blinded, but we need to see a different perspective. We need to see through the eyes of those that are blind and have other disabilities. We need to see the beauty around us and accept it as a wonderful gift from God that we can share with others. We may not be blinded in order to believe, but when we see God's love, we will heed a call to obedience to His love and have the gift of fellowship with Him.

Prayer: God, please forgive us for the times we have turned away from You and not shown the love You have given us to others. We have neglected those in need, the sick, the homeless, and the ones who don't know You as their personal Saviour. Strengthen us to feel your power and guide us to serve You by showing Your love to those we meet every day. Through Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.

1. Why do you think that God needed to physically blind Paul?
2. Are we sometimes blind? In what ways?
3. Do we sometimes need to be blinded to the things of this world so we can see things of eternal life better?

4. Do you think this experience had much to do with Paul's being such an ardent teacher and preacher?
5. How can we become better followers of Christ's teachings?

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