

CHAPTER 8

SPIRITUAL BLINDNESS REGARDING THE CROSS

SATAN HAS BLINDED US FROM SEEING PARADIGMATIC ASPECTS OF THE CROSS

Regarding seeing the Cross as our paradigm, how blind are we?! Probably a lot more than we realize! The Lord in love wants to open our eyes to see MUCH more than we do now, for I believe we have only seen as yet a very small portion of the Lord's love demonstrated through the Cross and of the glory of the Cross that He wants to express through us.

Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; . . . (1 Cor. 13:12)

And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. (2 Cor. 4:4-5)

I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened . . . (Eph. 1:18)

And I pray that you, . . . grasp ["perceive"] how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know ["perceive"] this love that surpasses knowledge--that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. (Eph. 3:17b-19)

This is how we know ["perceive"] what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers. (1 John 3:16)

. . . But you do not realize that you are . . . blind I counsel you to buy from me . . . salve to put on your eyes, so you can see. (Rev. 3:17, 18)

Each Christian group has its peculiar kinds of vision problems, but members are often not aware of these, being often more occupied with the blindness of other groups than their own.

How can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and **then you will see clearly** to remove the speck from your brother's eye. (Matt. 7:4-5) [emphasis mine]

The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are good, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eyes are bad [i.e., proudly seeing only the faults of others], your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness! (Matt. 6:22, 23)

At the time when my marriage was falling apart, I feared mental breakdown and contemplated suicide. I cried to the Lord to lead me to a group where God's Spirit was really "moving". Soon after, I found a group whose joy and love touched me so deeply that I was convinced that God had led me there. I soon became concerned about some teachings there and the leaders' control, but I chose to remain quiet, realizing that the love of the group was conditional on my submission.

After a couple of years in this group, I was visiting a friend, Howard Ellis,¹ who offered me a number of books by Jessie Penn-Lewis.² I became very interested in her emphasis of the "Centrality of the Cross" and about problems that developed when churches no longer kept this focus. I found these books very helpful; however, the group dismissed all such teaching as "religious" and not of the Spirit, saying we had gone past the Cross and should not go back there. Confused and upset, I prayed much that God would help me sort this out. One night in bed, as I was

¹Founder and the director at that time of "Jacob's Well" in Kitchener, Ontario.

²Jessie Penn-Lewis wrote during the Welsh Revival—See Bibliography for titles of books.

praying and meditating on some scriptures and comments that Jessie Penn-Lewis had written about them, these words suddenly thundered within my head:

I HATE THE CROSS!!!

Adding to my astonishment, I found myself on the floor beside my bed. It seemed as if I had been physically thrown off the bed. In a few minutes, after the shock had worn off, I sat on the floor full of peace, enjoying a wonderful sense of God's presence. It was clear then to me that my spiritual eyes had just been opened to see why our group avoided the Cross: Satan hates the Cross where he was defeated and he had so blinded our group with pride that we had failed to see especially that we needed to find victory at the Cross over pride and to be conformed to the humility of the Cross. Our main focus had become our teaching of our special role in bringing the Kingdom of God on earth as elite sons of God. We seemed to be celebrating our (claimed) superior identity more than the victory and supremacy and real nature of Jesus.

I soon knew that I had to leave the group and suffer severe criticism and complete rejection by those that had come to mean a great deal to me. A few months after I left, gross immorality was exposed and the group soon disintegrated.

In the last three years or so, the Lord has caused me to see more and more clearly significant Biblical teachings of the Cross. You will recall the wonderful revelations of Isaiah 53 being a paradigm of the nature and standard of Jesus' love (Ch. 2) and of the Cross being in Father's heart (Ch. 4, 5).

I am convinced that we all have blind spots especially regarding the Cross of Jesus. We cannot see what scriptures are really saying until God's Spirit delivers us through the Cross and opens our eyes. This is more likely to happen if we humble ourselves at the Cross and ask the Lord to do so. The blindness found in each Christian group has a lot to do with the image of Christ that is portrayed and emphasized by them. Especially crucial is the expectation of how His nature is to be expressed by us. Very few groups seem to emphasize the Cross as the focus to know Jesus and to become conformed to His nature. If we are willing to accept that the group we are in has been blinded to a certain degree by Satan, then we will be able to accept victory over that blindness and allow the Holy Spirit to show us more fully the importance of being conformed to the paradigm of the Cross.

Please consider carefully the following scriptures and then pray slowly and worshipfully through Isaiah 53 (often!), seeking the Lord to further open your eyes.

Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, (Heb. 12:2)

And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory. (2 Cor. 3:18)

I want to know Christ . . . becoming like him in his death . . . (Phil. 3:10)

Turn your eyes upon Jesus, Look full in His wonderful face,

And the things of earth will grow strangely dim

In the light of His glory and grace. Helen H. Lemmel

Those "things of earth" might include concepts of Jesus, His nature, and the Cross that are less than the heavenly revelation in Scripture.

You could use the words of my song to pray often for clearer vision of Jesus (Ch. 5, page 12):

Lord, come and touch afresh my eyes to see at Calvary,
The Father's glorious love shine forth as Jesus, You die for me.
Lord Jesus, as I behold your love, let Your glory transform me.
May I into Your image come—O what a glorious destiny!