

Spiritual blindness its remedy

Part 1

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Note: This text is a computer generated transcript of the sermon. In some cases it may contain errors.

[00:00:00] Regrettably, the first five minutes and the last 15 minutes of this address were not recorded. Playback will start in a few moments. And she said, The Philistines be upon thee, Samson.

And he awoke out of his sleep and said, I will go out as at other times before and shake myself. Now notice this, and he wished not that the Lord was departed from him.

Spiritually, he was blind.

He was not aware of his condition.

And as a result of that, in verse 21, but the Philistines took him and put out his eyes.

What happened to him physically was but the outward expression of what had happened to him inwardly.

[00:01:07] He'd given up his Nazirite ship.

To put that in New Testament times, he'd lost sight of the Lord.

He gave away his secret.

He gave up his fidelity.

And he became weak.

That's not the saddest thing. He didn't know it.

He wished not that the Spirit of the Lord departed from him. Do you know, beloved brethren, as I tonight stand upon a platform ministering the Word of God, that is a tremendously challenging scripture.

[00:02:04] Memory, intelligence, ability is no substitute for the Spirit of God.

And it is a tremendous challenge in regard to all of us as to whether what we say and what we do is

in the Spirit of Christ and energized by the Holy Spirit.

Samson was unaware that he had lost his strength, and he became blind.

Turn over to 1 Samuel.

It's in chapter 4.

[00:03:03] Verse 15, 1 Samuel 4, 15.

Now, Eli was 98 years old, and his eyes were dim.

He could not see.

Verse 21, and she named the child Ichabod, saying, The glory is departed from Israel.

Now, we might attribute Eli's blindness to his longevity. That's just maybe.

The end of the book of Judges, you may recall, as to the state of the children of Israel, was that there was no king in Israel. Every man did that which was right in his own eyes. Thank God for the book of Ruth.

[00:04:04] Thank God for the book of Ruth.

You know the last word of the book of Ruth? David.

David.

Thank God for the book of Ruth.

A man prepared of God to remedy the situation that developed at the end of the Judges.

But at the beginning of Samuel, that person had not yet come into public. You. We're told at the beginning of this book that the lamp of God was nearly going out. That was the true condition of Israel. They were in servitude to the Philistines, the last enemy of Israel, Philistines.

[00:05:04] And the result of their bondage was, the lamp of God was going out. That was the true condition of Israel. And its figurehead was the last of the family of Levi. He was old, he was blind, and he didn't correct his children.

And the ark of God was lost.

They lost the ark of God.

You see, they were not in a fit condition for the ark of God to remain amongst them. So they lost it.

And Eli was blind.

Ichabod, glorious departure.

[00:06:02] I'm painting a very bad picture, aren't I? Very dark, very somber, but it's the Scriptures. And you'll never see the jewel until you get a sight, first of all, of the background, which is very black. And then lastly, Zedekiah, 2 Kings.

I think it's chapter 25. 2 Kings 25.

Verse 4 says, and the city was broken up.

Verse 13 says, and the pillars of brass and the house of the Lord were pulled down.

And verse 6 says, so they took the king and brought him up to the king of Babylon, to Riblah, and they gave judgment upon him. And they slew the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes, and they put out the eyes of Zedekiah. [00:07:08] Dreadful, isn't it?

The last thing that that man ever saw was his sons being killed. And then they put out his eyes.

The city was razed.

The house was destroyed.

Those pillars of testimony and witness were broken down.

And the king was blind.

When we came to the book of Malachi, as I've already said, we have followed from that point in time through a remarkable revival. Because thank God for men like Daniel, men like Nehemiah, men like Ezra, who despite all that that we've just read of, remained faithful and true.

[00:08:09] Despite the fact that all that they loved was broken and was gone to pieces. The glory had departed. Ezekiel saw it, did he not, and it went out by the east gate and disappeared. And the glory of Israel was left, cherished and maintained in the heart of a few faithful men. Daniel and Nehemiah.

When we come to the book of Malachi, and you actually see a state of affairs that was worse morally than at the end of Zedekiah. There's a reason, you know, why the last word in the Old Testament is a curse. A dreadful word.

And what I have read to you before I read those verses in chapter 3, [00:09:02] is to show to you that spiritual blindness had come upon Israel. Wherein hast thou loved us? O beloved brethren, how dreadful it is when the saints of God lose a sense of the love of God in their hearts. But Israel said, wherein hast thou loved us? They got so far away that they had lost completely a sense of the love of God.

Wherein have we despised thy name?

Wherein have we polluted thee?

So it goes on.

Wherein shall we return?

Wherein have we robbed thee?

What have we spoken so much against thee?

[00:10:01] I'm not going into all those details, beloved brethren. I've only read them to bring before you the dreadful condition that can be found amongst God's people when they are unaware of their true spiritual condition.

They can't see what's wrong.

As a consequence, they cannot understand the way back.

They're unaware of how to remedy the situation. In fact, they're unaware that anything is wrong at all. Our dear brother this afternoon warned us of the pollution that can rub off on the saint of God if he hobnobs with the world.

[00:11:01] Be also very careful, dear brethren, young and old, of what rubs off from Christendom.

It's worse than worldliness because it professes the name of Christ and is blind as to its true condition in the sight of the Lord.

I'm not necessarily, brethren, going beyond our own gatherings when I say that. I've already confessed to you all how easy it is to get in the state of things when one is not aware of one's true spiritual condition before the Lord. Just like Samson.

[00:12:02] Not knowing that the Lord is not with you in what you're doing.

Brethren, these are the days that we are in.

We are at the end.

Many of the meetings that some of us have been brought up in, thank God, are the result of a revival that took place in the last century as to the truth of God. When the truth of repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ was heralded forth as the only way of salvation. When the coming of the Lord was revived amongst the affections of the saints of God. When men in truth, with that hope in the Lord, purified themselves.

[00:13:09] When the Spirit of God brought again to us that which the Colossian assembly speaks of as in which are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. The truth of the mystery and the assembly. The headship of Christ. The lordship of Christ.

The body of Christ. The indwelling power and energy of the Spirit of God. Motivating, energising, forming the assembly according to Christ. And as a result of that, brethren were gathered out to the name of Christ alone.

That's what took place very briefly about 150 years ago.

[00:14:07] And our bookshelves, some of us, are full of the ministry that came out of that which was undoubtedly a movement of the Spirit of God. But we can't write like that today.

Do you ever read the hymn book?

Of course you do.

Do you ever feel ashamed, brethren, at some of the hymns we sing? Do you honestly sing some of these hymns?

And some of the depth of meaning, the ministry and the truth that is contained in the words that we sing? Are they a true expression of the soul in worship to the Father? [00:15:04] In adoration to the Son? In regard to the collective enjoyment of the blessing of God amongst his saints? And the overflowing of blessing to those which are without? Our hymn book is full of those things.

And we sing it.

They were the hymns of men of God.

And we're the aftermath.

I believe in regard to the true state of things in this country, and I'm only speaking about ourselves here at the moment, I believe that this is a true appraisal of the state of the testimony that the Lord committed to you and I that was the result of the labors and devotions of men of God.

[00:16:03] And we're nearly dead.

We're nearly dead.

I trust, beloved brethren, that you will forgive Frank speaking, but it is only with a view to a rekindling and a stimulating of that which remains. Hold fast, the Lord said.

The Lord to Philadelphia never for one moment envisaged the re-establishing of that which was true of Ephesus at the beginning in all its power, despite its lack there.

But he did say, hold fast.

And so it was at the end of Malachi that despite that dreadful scenario that one has just painted before you, [00:17:01] we come across a little verse which says, then, don't forget that verse, then, in those conditions, at that time when things were so black and dark in what was left of that remnant that returned, then, they that feared the Lord. I want to speak about three things. The fear of the Lord, speaking often one to another, and thinking upon his name.

Now, reverence.

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.

Beloved brethren, let it never be said of us that a sense of the majesty and the glory of Christ and that which is due to his name [00:18:04] is absent in our speaking, in our singing, in our worship, and in our gathering.

There is that which is comely and befitting those that profess godliness. I know that is said in regard to sisters, but let us brothers, old and young, take it to heart.

There is that which is comely, according to God, that should be the hallmark of those that profess piety and godliness.

You don't have to wear an expensive suit, but there's nothing wrong with wearing a decent one.

Let us be marked, brethren, if necessarily, by sobriety, [00:19:01] rather than that which characterizes Christendom.

I just recently was made aware of a trend that is developing in the Church of England at the present moment.

And when I saw it, without making any reference to the truth as to the reality of the salvation of souls, without questioning for one moment the genuineness of salvation and conversion, yet, beloved brethren, so much is not according to the truth in dress, in word, in singing, and in deportment. One of the things that marked that true godly remnant at the end of Malachi was that they feared the Lord. When they gathered together, the Spirit of God maintained in their hearts [00:20:03] a true sense of what was due to Jehovah.

I do trust that we might be concerned to maintain in our gatherings, and in our homes, and in our individual lives, what is true and honorable to the person and the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. But it says they spake often one to another. You know, they knew the reality of fellowship. They spake often one to another.

Oh, beloved brethren, let us seek to bind up.

Let us seek to draw together around the person of Christ. Let us know what it is to embrace one another. We heard this afternoon about the need of being kindly, [00:21:02] affectionate, one to another.

Do you think that would have appeared in the scriptures if the Spirit of God didn't see that there was evidently something that was the complete opposite of that, that so easily could have sprung up?

When did you last put your arms around a brother and kiss him?

I don't speak of oneself, but I'm deeply thankful that in some places where I go, there are godly sisters who give me a kiss.

There's nothing wrong with it, beloved brethren. Let us maintain the reality of kindness and love, because if you don't, fellowship is a facade.

Breaking bread together can be a facade [00:22:06] if there is the absence of love and confidence and

feeling one for another.

Beloved brethren, the greatest tragedy today is our inability to forgive, to bind up, and to encourage one another in love and kindness.

But there were those at the end of Malachi who did, I believe, those very things. They took off from one another, and the Lord hearkened.

He didn't take account of their outward testimony. I'm not decrying that for one moment. But the Lord took account of that which was inward and being expressed one to another amongst his saints of God.

[00:23:04] And the other thing is that they thought upon his name. They thought upon his name.

He was absent, you see, from his temple.

But there were those who maintained what should have been true of the nation publicly. There were those which maintained that inwardly in their affection. And that's just where we are today, beloved brethren. Just because things are broken outwardly, just because things have got so very small, that doesn't mean to say that you cannot maintain inwardly and spiritually the truth of God that was once committed to his saints. You still can. You can't maintain the outward corporative idea. But you can maintain inwardly in your affections the truth of the whole body of Christ.

[00:24:03] And to do that, you need to maintain the reality of our relations one toward the other and our relationships personally toward the Lord. They thought upon his name.

I think that's pretty well the nearest expression that you can get in the Old Testament that may cover in idea the truth of the breaking of bread. I'm suggesting to you that that which characterized this godly remnant at the end of Malachi, and if you go into the Gospel of Luke at the beginning, you'll find it. You'll find that there at the beginning of Luke when the Lord was born.

You'll find a remnant. You'll find a Simeon, an old man who cherished in his heart the consolation of Israel. A man whom the Spirit of God came upon [00:25:02] and energized at a certain moment. And when they brought in the child Jesus to do according to him, according to the law, he came at that very moment.

And he took into his arms the Lord's Christ.

A picture no artist can paint of an old man whose heart was filled with the glory of Jehovah but held in his arms the Son of God.

We need a bit of that, you know, in our hearts today. And then there was that Anna. You know, one of the things it said of her that she spoke of him to all that looked for redemption of Israel. She knew every one of them. And you know, Luke was 400 years after Malachi. And these things that we have thought about [00:26:03] spake often one to another. They went on for 400 dark, dark years to the beginning of Luke. And there was an old, aged Saint of God that was still speaking of him to all that looked for redemption in Israel. You see, beloved brethren, that just proves that when you get down to the reality of things, the Spirit of God maintains it despite the weakness and the darkness of the

day. God will never let go the realities and that which is vital to the truth of Christianity. He'll maintain it to the end in the hearts of some. Let us make sure that you and I are numbered amongst those that the Spirit of God will maintain these things to until the coming of the Lord. It won't be easy.

And the number at the beginning of Luke doesn't appear to be very many. [00:27:02] They thought upon his name. Well, the time runs on.

We must run over to Revelation chapter 3 where you will see actually a similar picture that now has a relevance right to us.

I didn't read Philadelphia. I'll do some underlining for you. Perhaps just to establish from the Word of God the truth of what I have suggested. We have been told, and I'm sure it's true, that the secret to the overcomer in the addresses to the seven churches is found in the way that the Lord presents himself to each of those seven assemblies. I believe an overcomer is one who responds to Christ, [00:28:01] who looks directly to himself and draws from him all that he needs to lift him above the prevailing condition of things. And there's still an overcomer in Philadelphia. Have you seen the way the Lord presented himself to Philadelphia? I'm sure you have.

He that is true.

He that is holy.

He that has the key of David, he that openeth and no man shutteth and shutteth and no man openeth. It seems almost as though in the spirit-given description of the Lord there is a commendation, a commendation of the condition of Philadelphia.

He that is holy.

He that is true.

[00:29:05] Essential things, holiness and truth seem perfectly in Christ with a view to them, me taking it in objectively in him in order that the Spirit of God might subjectively work it out in me. He that hath the key of David, the one who yet will secure and bring in Israel to God's glory in a wonderful way. The key of David.

And you notice what he says? He commends that assembly with these things. Two of them in verse 8. Thou hast kept my word, number one.

Thou hast not denied my name, number two. And verse 10.

Thou hast kept the word of my patience.

[00:30:03] Three very brief statements. You can't miss that in each one of them it's my word, my name, the word of my patience.

You can deduce very simply from that that Philadelphia valued things that Christ valued.

What were they?

My word.

I believe that's the ministry of John that we heard about this afternoon. The Lord Jesus uses that very expression in John chapter 17.

My word.

Thy word.

The revelation of God.

The knowledge of God as Father and Son.

[00:31:02] And all that flows out from the bringing into revelation the true knowledge of God.

And the life imparted to those that believe on account of new birth. Giving them the power to enter into all that has been brought out in the revelation of God as Father. All that circle of intimacy and love and relationship and eternity that is involved in my word.

They have not denied my name.

I believe that's the ministry of the Apostle Paul who brings out pre-eminently the truth of what is due to the name of Christ relative to the individual, lordship, relative to the assembly, headship.

[00:32:03] I'm being very brief but I think you'll find that these things are true as our brother brought out before us this afternoon. The interlocking, the overlapping, the coalescing of the writers of the New Testament. They supplement one another. They build upon one another with a view to bringing out the fullness of the truth of God that was given to Paul to complete. Thou hast kept the word of my patience.

That's the truth of the kingdom which we don't hear much about today. Largely the ministry of the Apostle Peter. That which is relevant today to the rights of Christ. That which has to do with my individual movements in this world in relation to a Christ-rejecting world where the rights of Christ have to be maintained that will be universally acknowledged and owned [00:33:02] in the world to come.

Seen universally, publicly displayed when he sets up the kingdom.

Displayed in the hearts and lives of the saints of God today while they wait in patience his face to behold.

And the Lord Jesus says to Philadelphia you have maintained my word. You have maintained what is due to my name. You have maintained the truth of the time of my patience.

Have I?

Have I?

I come quickly, he says. Hold fast. Don't let go. Don't give up. Let no man take thy crown. [00:34:01] The crown, you know, is the distinguishing feature of that which lifts a man above all his companions. The king.

Where is the crown? It distinguishes him.

There is something tremendously distinguishing in the world today that marks them out.

Saints of God who maintain Christ's word.

Who maintain what is due to his name. And who maintain the truth of the time of his patience. There is something about those truths. The truth of God.

The present truth of the New Testament that will distinguish and mark out the saint of God in the world today.

I'm not suggesting that we exalt ourselves.

[00:35:01] But do I provoke a thirst amongst the hearts of men and women for the truth of God and the Saviour who died for me.

I once heard an old brother, George Davison was his name, who said that a mixer is a misser.

And it's true. Lot had no testimony in Sodom.

However, when you come to Philadelphia, when you come to Laodicea, in the presentation of himself, the Lord says, these things saith he, Amen.

The faithful and true witness. The beginning of the creation of God.

The assembly at Laodicea had had the epistle of Colossians read to them. I believe that would be true. [00:36:02] Paul gave commandment to that effect at the end of that epistle. It is perfectly evident that they did not respond to the exhortations of that epistle. They had been led astray. I'm not going into the controversy as to whether there was any true Christians in Laodicea. I'm not entering into that at all.

But they had lost the sense that Christ was everything in regard to the thoughts of God. They had lost the sense in their souls that he is the Amen for everything for God. That doesn't just mean to say that he said Amen to everything that God said. It means that he himself is the person who brings into establishment eternally everything that God said. Christ himself is the Amen.

[00:37:05] You might recall that Paul said to the Colossians in that epistle, Ye are complete, filled full in him.

Paul wrote to the Corinthians, In him all the promises of God are yea, and Amen to the glory of God by us.

Do you honestly think that all that God has ever said relative to the assembly can be to his glory by

you and me apart from Christ?

Of course not.

All the promises of God in him are yea and Amen to God's glory in us.

He is the one that will maintain [00:38:02] the assembly to God's glory in a way that will make God himself glorious. But the Laodiceans have got their eye off the fullness of Christ. We sing of it sometimes, Oh fullness resides in Christ Jesus, our head. It's in our hymn book. Do we really believe it?

And do we govern and motivate ourselves on account of that truth in him? And in him alone is the power and the strength to do anything for God in the world.

He is the faithful and true witness. What were they? Were they faithful? Were they true?

No, they were blind.

They were lukewarm. They were neither one thing nor the other. [00:39:02] You know, Mr. Darby has said that he does not think that Philadelphia and Laodicea are a condition that are true of any particular sect or gathering. Philadelphia and Laodicea are a condition that is found amongst the saints of God universally.

It's not a matter of pointing in that direction or that direction or even this direction and saying this is Philadelphia or this is Laodicea. When you read the truth of God like we have read tonight, there's only one place to look and that's in here. In here.

Is it true of me?

Have I got my eye off Christ as the source of all fullness and energy and zeal for him in this world? He is the Amen.

[00:40:01] He is the faithful witness. Truly the Lord Jesus said yes to everything in his life in this world. He did always those things that pleased the Father. But that doesn't mean the word Amen doesn't mean that here. It means that he in himself is the one who will bring into establishment for eternity all the promises of God. Everything that God has said in his word, he will establish it. But by infinite grace, he'll do it in me. He'll do it in you. Despite what we may think of ourselves now, he will do it in you and I to God's glory in a coming day. Let us never lose heart and lose a sense of the greatness and the ability of Christ to bring such as you and I despite all that we are to that point when we will be there with him with him as his complement in the glory with a view to displaying the glory of God to the universe in the world to come. [00:41:03] And not only so, but to be eternally for the heart of Christ.

You know if we get a sense of that in the soul, there'll be no lukewarmness. There'll be no coldness either. There'll be the outflow spontaneously of worship. I think that was the burden of our dear brothers this afternoon. The spontaneity of heart going out to divine persons. Not just on account of what they have done. Great and glorious that is. But on account of who they are.

God is love.

God is my father.

God is my father.

I worship God because of who he is. Not just because of what he has done. [00:42:04] The Lord has to counsel these. He says of this assembly amongst all those other things. He takes account of what they said about themselves and he dismisses it.

Like that man you know who went up into the temple to pray and despised that poor publican. All he could speak about to God was what he was himself. And the Lord says to this assembly or to these type of persons, you're blunt.

You're naked.

You're wretched.

You're unclothed.

You haven't got anything worth having. They said we're in Christ. We've got need of nothing. They've given up the prayer meeting. You don't need a prayer meeting if you think you've got everything. I don't think they had a prayer meeting in Laodicea. [00:43:02] They were unaware of their sense of need and of their own true condition on the one hand. And they were unaware of the glory and greatness of Christ on the other. And those things too go together. If you lose a sight of the glory of Him, you will lose also a sight of your own true condition. Two things go together. The greater the apprehension of the glory and person of Christ in the heart, I believe that you will become more and more aware of your own true moral condition. Think of a man like Daniel.

Out of all the host of Israel, was there a man who should have taken those words upon his lips, We have sinned.

Yet they were the words of Daniel.

He felt the true condition of things [00:44:03] like nobody else because he had a true sight of the glory of Jehovah. That's what we need, beloved brethren. But if you get a true sight of Christ and a true realization of the condition of things, you'll never give up. You'll never give up because Christ will maintain and sustain that which is true, that which is real, and that which is of Himself and in the power of the Holy Spirit. So he says, counsel of me. Counsel of me.

Buy of me.

And know the reality of riches that are according to God. Raiment that thou mayest be clothed that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear. And anoint thine eyes. See, the last thing that he says, [00:45:01] the last thing that he refers to was their blindness.

He says, anoint your eyes that thou mightest see. Have a true perception of things according to God. You know, this was found with the Lord in John chapter 6. Sorry, John chapter 9, after the Lord had healed that blind man. The Lord said, I am come that they who see might be made blind.

And they said, are we blind also?

How blind those Pharisees were. You see, it was there as well. Blindness.

And you know, the Lord is the only person in the Scriptures who healed blindness. No apostle, no Old Testament saint, prophet, king or priest healed the blind.

The Lord only.

The reason is, he is the only one [00:46:01] who can bring the light of God into the soul.

And that's what we need. But he ends, as many as I love. Have you ever noticed, you know, isn't it astonishing? But isn't it so like him that it's only to the assembly at Laodicea that you read of his love? He says of another one, I can't put my hand on it at the moment, that the world might know that I have loved thee. But to a person who responds and overcomes to the Lord in Laodicea, to that which he could take account of, which he knew would respond to himself, he says, as many as I love, as many as I love, I rebuke and chasten.

[00:47:01] You know, just as an aside, and I'll crave the brethren's indulgence for five minutes.

It'll be late starting anyway, but that wasn't my fault.

You know, one of the astonishing things, if you move amongst the saints of God today and keep your eye open and your ear open, you cannot miss the fact that today many of those who appear to be seeking to hold fast and to maintain and to walk close to the Lord, they are the saints of God that are going through the mill.

I can think of many, many that I know and love in the truth. I hesitate to speak of one's own experiences, but one has sought a great deal of late of how the saints of God need that brother and yet he's laid aside.

What a help that person can be [00:48:02] and yet they've got problem after problem after problem.

Why is it?

As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten.

The Lord leaves alone those who are not walking according to Him, you know. And so does Satan.

But the saint of God that has Christ before him and the saint of God that has the truth of God that we're speaking of, cherished in their hearts and a true desire to maintain it to Christ, you'll go through the mill. You'll go through the mill.

But it will be the end result that will be seen in the kingdom.

We don't need to look around about us, beloved brethren.

We don't need [00:49:02] to despair about what is happening.

Philip didn't know what the Lord was doing in John chapter 6 when the Lord said to him, Give ye them to eat. Have you noticed that little verse that the Spirit of God puts in, but Jesus knew what He was about to do? Or you could put that in modern parlance and say the Lord knew what He was doing. Beloved brethren, the Lord knows what He's doing.

You and I have to bow to it to receive strength from Him and to go on even though the circumstances that you, dear saint of God, might be going through, you may not understand, you might think hard, you might even be tempted to say, Wherein hast thou loved me?

If that ever comes into the heart, [00:50:01] listen to this verse, As many as I love.

I will just say one thing.

Perhaps to show to you that I can speak a little bit from experience. I can remember a day when an old brother came to see me and my wife just after we had learned that we had a handicapped child and he said to me, How greatly the Lord must love you.

I didn't understand what he meant.

I know now. I know now.

As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. The discipline and the chastisement of the school of God is the portion of those that are the particular object of the Lord's love is with a view to their being brought out in moral conformity to Himself [00:51:01] and the kingdom will declare it.

Behold, I have stationed myself at the door and am knocking.

I think that is the literal translation of this well-known verse. It means that despite the condition of things in Laodicea, the Lord didn't run away. No, He put Himself outside. He was just like that one, you know, in the Song of Songs when that spouse had put off her tunic and laid herself down and was taking rest.