**By Faith Alone**

Based on [Luke 18:31-43](https://biblia.com/books/esv/Lk18.31-43)

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Quinquagesima

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Original sin means that, by nature, we are conceived in sin, and born into the world blind, dead, and enemies of God. We are dead because we cannot move ourselves towards God. We are enemies of God because we are inclined to resist everything that is good, or else twist it to our own purposes. And we are blind, meaning that we cannot see the things of God in this world. This means that we cannot save ourselves, nor do we want to save ourselves. God must save us. He must give us His Holy Spirit who elivens us to come to him, who changes us to love him, and who illumines us to see the things of God.

In the bible, blindness is not simply a physical condition; blindness is a spiritual condition. It is a metaphor for spiritual darkness or unbelief. There are countless people in the world with working eyes who are blind in this way, because they cannot perceive the things of God.

Jesus said to the twelve disciples, “**See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and everything that is written about the Son of Man by the prophets will be accomplished. 32 For he will be delivered over to the Gentiles and will be mocked and shamefully treated and spit upon. 33 And after flogging him, they will kill him, and on the third day he will rise.” 34 But they understood none of these things. This saying was hidden from them, and *they did not grasp what was said*.**

The disciples did not grasp what was said. This means they were blind to the truth. Jesus speaks plainly, but because the passion he describes is the most holy event in all of history, the disciples can’t grasp it. They are in the dark.

Among educators, the light bulb has is a symbol of understanding. You teach, hoping to see “the light bulb come on” in a student. You teach and teach and teach a math problem, and the student doesn’t get it. But then, eventually he gets it. You don’t know why he didn’t get it the first 12 times you explained it, but then, *“click”* he “gets it.” And it’s almost like a miracle.

Understanding the things of God is a miracle. The word of God is taught until the light bulb comes on. But it doesn’t always happen immediately, and it didn’t happen for the disciples when Jesus taught them of his passion before it happened.

After Jesus tells his disciples that he must die and rise again, and the light bulb fails to turn on for them, the gospel lesson then changes scenes. It changes to Jericho, where a blind man is sitting on the roadside begging. Jesus is passing by and the blind man hears of him. And he cries out for Jesus to have mercy on him. The crowds tell him to stop, but he shouts out all the more. Jesus approaches him, and the man asks for a return of his sight. And Jesus heals him, through his faith and the man is made well.

The blind man is a symbol of all who are waiting for their salvation. That waiting happens in the darkness of sin, and of a world that cannot see God. But here is the magnificent irony about what happens. Jesus own disciples, they have working eyes. They can see, and yet they are blind to the salvation of Jesus. The blind man in Jericho has dead eyes. He cannot see, but as Jesus approaches he sees his salvation.

Of all the crowd passing by, only the blind man was able to see the real importance of Jesus. Only the blind man could see Jesus for who he truly was. Only the blind man realized what the saviour could do, and wanted to do for him. Only the blind man was focused enough to ignore the disapproving rebuking crowds and their pressure to silence him. Only the blind man could disregard the world of sight and appreciate the gift of grace that was passing his way.

They say that when you go blind, you end up using your other senses more. And so they become heightened and strengthened, to the point where a blind person will smell things you don’t notice; hear things that you don’t because your attention can only attend to so many things at once. It is the same with faith.

There are few concepts more clear in the bible than that faith is to replace sight in our perception of God. “**We walk by faith, and not by sight.” “You believe because you have seen me. Blessed are those who have not seen, and yet have believed.” “If you were blind you would have no guilt; but because you say “we see” your guilt remains.**” So Jesus says, “**If your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life with only one eye, than with both eyes be cast into hell.**

We take our eyesight for granted. Some people say they would rather be dead than blind. But the spiritually blind are dead, even with eyes. But the blind who know in whom to seek their salvation see the way to eternal life.

As we approach lent, the lesson of the blind man is especially relevant. Our salvation is not found in perfect health, wealth and happiness, but in one who forsook all earthly treasures, so that in weakness he could win heaven for us by dying on a cross. This mystery cannot be understood with eyesight, but with the sight of faith. So do not lean too much on the earthly provisions of this life. If you are struck blind tomorrow, you will still inherit heaven. Do not prize anything in this life too much. but seek the mercy of Christ which the Holy Spirit will give you.

You are saved and prepared for eternal life, not by the keeness of your senses or abilities, but by faith alone.