

# A SPIRITUAL EYE EXAM

LUKE 18:31-43

## Main Idea

*Physical blindness can handicap us but spiritual blindness can kill us.*

### 1. SPIRITUALLY BLIND (VS 31-34)

*Pride and fear are often fundamental causes of spiritual blindness.*

- A. JESUS AND HIS PERSON (31)
- B. JESUS AND HIS MISSION (32-33)
- C. JESUS AND HIS DISCIPLES (34)

### 2. PHYSICALLY BLIND (VS 35-39)

*Recognizing our need and reaching out for Jesus brings spiritual sight.*

- A. RECOGNIZING OUR NEED (35-37)
- B. RECOGNIZING JESUS (38)
- C. RECOGNIZING AN OPPORTUNITY (39)

### 3. RECEIVING PHYSICAL AND SPIRITUAL SIGHT (VS 40-43)

*Spiritual sight leads to a Christ centered, God honoring, spirit filled life.*

- A. ASKING JESUS (40-41)
- B. RECEIVING JESUS (42)
- C. WORSHIPING JESUS (43)

# A Spiritual Eye Exam

Luke 18:31-43

We are quickly approaching the end of the section known in the Gospel of Luke as the travel section. This morning we will find Jesus approaching the city of Jericho which is about 17 miles from Jerusalem which will be His final destination. This week, Jesus will heal a physically blind man. Next week a spiritually blind man will receive salvation from Jesus. What Luke seems to be emphasizing all throughout this journey is that all people are welcome in God's Kingdom. As the Promised Messiah, Jesus can make a legitimate offer to people to enter this Kingdom. Even though Jesus is the Jewish Messiah, we have consistently seen that the religious leaders of the Jews are either blind to His true identity or they recognize exactly who He is, but refuse to change their lives and submit to His authority.

The very people who should have recognized Jesus and encouraged all of Israel to follow Him, were actually the ones planning His death. On the other hand, people who had previously been locked out of temple worship and polite society were finding healing, wholeness, and salvation in Jesus. Non-Jews, hated Samaritans, and all sorts of diseased people were being touched by Jesus. Jesus seems to be totally unpredictable to His disciples and the crowds.

The people they thought should have been tops in God's Kingdom were actually being rejected by Jesus or actually disqualifying themselves; and people they thought would be rejected by God are actually lifted up by Jesus. I think that we could summarize Luke's portrayal of entry requirements to God's Kingdom like this. People who know they are in desperate need of a touch from Jesus are humble enough to recognize their need and their inability to solve their sin problem on their own; come to Jesus in faith and in hope. People who think they are good and deserve to be in God's Kingdom are too proud to receive anything from Jesus. If we want to enter God's Kingdom and stay in good standing; we must realize that without Jesus we are helplessly and hopelessly lost. Without Jesus in our lives, we are nothing; we are dust of the earth.

We cannot be good enough, religious enough, nor do enough good works to earn a right relationship with God. Anyone who thinks we are good cannot ever be in a right relationship with God. I am going to rephrase Jerry Bridges here. Although there is never a time in our lives that we are so bad that we are beyond the power of God's grace; there is never a time in our lives when we are so good that we are not in need of God's grace. The key to remaining right with God is to remember that no matter how good we think we are or doing; we are always in need of God's grace. I think Luke makes sure to let us know that this is a theme that Jesus hammered home.

It seems that those who recognize their need for Jesus are the ones who end up receiving Him without much difficulty. It is those of us who have enjoyed some measure of success that have the most difficulty in receiving Jesus in humility. The main idea of this morning's text is this. **PHYSICAL BLINDNESS CAN HANDICAP US BUT SPIRITUAL BLINDNESS CAN KILL US.** In other words, people can overcome the problems in life that come with physical blindness. However, those who die spiritually blind will spend eternity in hell; forever separated from God.

We are going to come across an interesting question asked by Jesus in this morning's text. Jesus asked a man, "What is it that you wish Me to do for you?" I think that is a powerful question that we should think about. If Jesus asked us that question, what would we say?

There were three survivors of a shipwreck who were adrift on the ocean in a lifeboat for many days. One day, a bottle floated by. When they grabbed it and uncorked it, a genie appeared. "You have liberated me," said the genie. "For that, I will give each of you one wish." Without hesitation the first man said, "I wish I was back home with my sweetheart in New York City." Bam! He was gone. The second guy said, "I wish I could return to my family in Los Angeles." Whoosh! He was gone. The third man wasn't too smart. He thought, and thought, and thought. Finally the genie was starting to get impatient and said, "Well, what is your wish?" The third guy responded, "Oh, I'm so lonely. I wish my two friends were back again."

Sometimes I think if we were to carefully analyze our prayers, we may find them as foolish as this third guy's wish. I think the more successful in life we are, the more misguided our requests to God are. On the other hand, the more aware we are of what we lack in our relationship with God; the more likely we are to exhibit the humility it takes to move God's heart.

## **1. SPIRITUALLY BLIND (VS 31-34)**

In verses 31-34 we come across some of Jesus' friends who are still spiritually blind. **PRIDE AND FEAR ARE OFTEN FUNDAMENTAL CAUSES OF SPIRITUAL BLINDNESS.** As I look at the Apostles and at my own life, I can see that the times I fail spiritually, it is usually because I have acted out of pride or fear instead of love and humility.

In verse 31 Luke describes Jesus and His Person. Last time we were together, we examined Jesus' encounter with the rich young ruler. The young man could not give up his money, power, and prestige to follow Jesus. It was clear that this young man excluded himself from the Kingdom of God. This prompted the disciples to ask Jesus for some confirmation as to their status in God's Kingdom. Jesus assured them that they were fine.

It is right after this affirmation that Jesus took the Twelve aside in order to prepare them for this final push towards Jerusalem. This is actually the 6th time in the Gospel of Luke that Jesus announced His planned death. Jesus is focused on His destiny but at the same time He doesn't want His disciples to be caught off guard. Soon they will be in Jerusalem.

In order to fulfill their destinies as the Apostles and the leaders of the Christian church, it is important that they understand Who the Messiah is. Jesus liked to refer to Himself as the Son of Man. It is a Messianic title that describes what He hopes to accomplish and for whom He hopes to accomplish it for. The Jewish expectation of Messiah was that He would come and rule the world. The Jews would be leaders of the entire known world. In the Jewish mind, they would overthrow the Roman Empire and become the new world leaders. The difference being that this rule would never end. There are over 300 direct prophecies concerning the life and death of the Promised Messiah. Jesus wants them to know that He will fulfill all that has been prophesied about Him. We see that the disciples were not

immune from the popular beliefs of what the Messiah ought to be. They must have felt they were headed for Jerusalem to launch the new world order. Jesus would be the King and they would be His primary cabinet. They really had no idea what lay ahead even though Jesus had been preparing them all along.

So once again, Luke portrays Jesus' teaching on Jesus and His mission in verses 32-33. Even though there are several prophecies describing the suffering of Messiah in the Old Testament and even in the inter-testamental literature, no one seemed to get it. Let me just read one of these prophecies from the prophet Isaiah:

*"1 Who has believed our message?  
To whom has the LORD revealed his powerful arm?  
2 My servant grew up in the LORD's presence like a tender green shoot, like a root in dry ground. There was nothing beautiful or majestic about his appearance, nothing to attract us to him.  
3 He was despised and rejected—a man of sorrows, acquainted with deepest grief. We turned our backs on him and looked the other way. He was despised, and we did not care.  
4 Yet it was our weaknesses he carried; it was our sorrows that weighed him down. And we thought his troubles were a punishment from God, a punishment for his own sins!  
5 But he was pierced for our rebellion, crushed for our sins. He was beaten so we could be whole. He was whipped so we could be healed.  
6 All of us, like sheep, have strayed away. We have left God's paths to follow our own. Yet the LORD laid on him the sins of us all.  
7 He was oppressed and treated harshly, yet he never said a word. He was led like a lamb to the slaughter. And as a sheep is silent before the shearers, he did not open his mouth.  
8 Unjustly condemned, he was led away. No one cared that he died without descendants, that his life was cut short in midstream. But he was struck down for the rebellion of my people.  
9 He had done no wrong and had never deceived anyone. But he was buried like a criminal; he was put in a rich man's grave.  
10 But it was the LORD's good plan to crush him and cause him grief. Yet when his life is made an offering for sin, he will have many descendants. He will enjoy a long life, and the LORD's good plan will prosper in his hands.  
11 When he sees all that is accomplished by his anguish, he will be satisfied. And because of his experience, my righteous servant will make it possible for many to be counted righteous, for he will bear all their sins.  
12 I will give him the honors of a victorious soldier, because he exposed himself to death. He was counted among the rebels. He bore the sins of many and interceded for rebels"*

*(Isaiah 53:1-12 / NLT).*

It seems to me that if the disciples had taken time to study this prophecy, they could have sensed that something bad was about to happen. They believed that Jesus was the Promised Messiah but they focused only on the prophecies that portrayed Messiah as the World Conqueror.

But again, Jesus warned them that He would be handed over to the Gentiles. In other words, the Jewish religious leaders would give Jesus to the Romans to be crucified.

The Jewish leaders and the Roman soldiers would mock Jesus and spit in His face. We will study these in depth later in our studies through Luke.

The Roman soldiers would torture Jesus and crucify Him. I would just like to comment on this because it continues to confuse me. I am continually confused by the anti-Jewish sentiment that seems to grow century by century, year by year, and day by day. Who are the Jews and what have they done to be so hated throughout the centuries? In Italy, Jews are often referred to as “Matza Christa”, which means Christ killers. What is so strange about that whole thing is that the Romans, their own ancestors, are the ones who killed Jesus. In fact we Italians should refer to ourselves as Christ killers. The record is clear. There is no confusion in the prophecies nor is there any confusion in the New Testament or the history books. The Romans crucified Christ.

I’m pretty sure the disciples had quit listening by now but Jesus also promised to rise again to life on the third day.

Verse 34 goes on to describe this message of Jesus and His disciples. We will see later that they did not have a clue. They are totally taken by surprise at the events that would unfold shortly in Jerusalem. None of them were ready for what was about to happen. Certainly once Jesus was dead, they never expected Him to rise from the dead. They thought it was all over. Verse 34 is clear that they didn’t know what Jesus was talking about. Here is what’s interesting about the placement of this event by Luke. Right after this, they will encounter a man who is blind. This man is physically blind but the disciples demonstrate here that they are spiritually blind. Jesus has now told them at least 6 times that we know of that He is going to suffer a humiliating death in Jerusalem; yet the disciples refuse to accept it. What caused them to remain spiritually blind to this? I think there are two answers.

The first is fear. They had continually witnessed the hostility the Jewish leaders showed towards Jesus. They had witnessed an assassination attempt on Jesus, perhaps several. They saw how Jesus antagonized them. When Jesus performed miracles like walking on water, casting out demons, and sending them out into storms; they were probably scared out of their minds for the entire three years. Who could even want to process more of these frightful events? Sometimes we act and think in ways to cover up our fears.

But pride also causes us to be spiritually blind. In the Gospels of Matthew (chapter 20) and Mark (chapter 10) right after this discussion and right before they encounter the blind man, the disciples have a very public fight on the road. It seems as if James and John approach Jesus to ask Him if they can have the two top positions when Jesus enters His Kingdom in Jerusalem. When the other 10 got wind of this, they confronted James and John, and a brouhaha broke out right there, in the middle of the road, with the intent of deciding who would be the first in Jesus’ new Kingdom. If they really knew what was ahead, none of them would have wanted to be next in line for that job. We see that the disciples often fought with their own pride and egos. Do you think that may have been more than a little embarrassing to Jesus? Here He is teaching about humility, submission,

sacrifice, and love while His disciples are right there in public arguing as to who is the greatest. Please, let us learn to replace our fear with love and our pride with humility. Those are the qualities that accurately reflect who our Lord and Savior Jesus is. Don't think it can't happen to us. It happened to the Twelve Apostles; it can happen to you and it can happen to me. **PRIDE AND FEAR ARE OFTEN FUNDAMENTAL CAUSES OF SPIRITUAL BLINDNESS.**

## **2. PHYSICALLY BLIND (VS 35-39)**

In verses 35-39, we are introduced to a man who is physically blind. What we need to learn from this man is this. **RECOGNIZING OUR NEED AND REACHING OUT FOR JESUS BRINGS SPIRITUAL SIGHT.** In order for Jesus to fix our problem, we first have to recognize that we have a problem, then ask for help. In order to ask Jesus to save us, we first have to recognize that we are lost, then ask for salvation.

Verses 35-37 illustrate how recognizing our need leads to a touch from Jesus. As we said, Jesus is now about 17 miles away from His date with destiny in Jerusalem. As He approached Jericho, Luke informs us that there was a blind man sitting along the roadside begging for alms. He noticed that something was happening and that there seemed to be a crowd gathering and approaching his location. He asked those standing around him what was going on and they told him that Jesus was approaching and passing by.

Verse 38 demonstrates clearly what recognizing Jesus causes people to do. It seems as if this blind man had heard about Jesus. He must have put one and one together because he addressed Jesus as the Son of David which was definitely a Messianic title. He knew that Messiah was supposed to give sight to the blind. He had heard about the works of Jesus.

Now this is what I want to point out. The people around him told him that Jesus was passing by. Let's think about the people in Luke's Gospel that Jesus passed by. Jesus passed by lepers, paralytics, a widow whose son had just died, a woman who bled for 12 years, parents of a dead girl, a crippled woman, and other hurting people. They did not let Jesus pass by without letting Him touch their lives. They were broken and had no way to fix themselves or their situations. But they did not let Jesus pass by without a touch. On the other hand, Jesus passed by religious leaders, rich people, proud people, self-sufficient people, the social and religious elite.

Jesus passed by them as well only they did not stop Jesus to receive a touch from Him. They let Jesus pass by without a healing touch. The problem was they did not know they were sick and in need of Jesus' touch.

At any rate, this guy is not going to let Jesus pass him by without a touch. This guy started to call out to Jesus, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" We have seen this cry time and time again. He is inviting Jesus to do some act of kindness for him. He does not care who is around him or who knows him. He only wants to get a touch from Jesus. He throws aside fear and pride. He just wants to get Jesus' attention.

And in verse 39 this guy is portrayed as truly recognizing an opportunity not to be missed. Everyone around him was telling him to be quiet. Do you remember in the last passage we studied that the disciples were trying to keep the children from bothering Jesus? Here the people try to shut this blind guy up. It takes passion, humility, and courage to follow Jesus. The more they tell him to shut up the louder he cries out. By the time we get to him in verse 39 the word used to describe him shouting out is *kradzo*. It doesn't get any more loud or passionate than this. It is used to describe the cry of a raven. It is used to describe people crying out in pain or in need. It is used to describe Christ crying out on the cross. Now he is becoming a public spectacle but that's exactly what he wants.

There is no one in the crowd who could save him. Why should he care what they think? The question is for him and for us, "Who do we trust in and depend on?" That answer must be Jesus and Jesus alone. We must stop depending on our own talents, resources, abilities, successes, contacts, and anything else. We cannot save ourselves nor can anyone else we know save us. It doesn't matter what society thinks of us, our family thinks about us, or even what we think about ourselves. The naked truth is that we are nothing without Christ and there is no goodness in us apart from Christ.

We need Jesus' grace and mercy every minute of every day. Jesus is the only One Who can save us and lead us safely home to heaven. Please let's not allow our successes in life confuse us as to our total dependence on God. **RECOGNIZING OUR NEED AND REACHING OUT FOR JESUS BRINGS SPIRITUAL SIGHT.** Too many people in our culture are walking around thinking they are good people and good enough to make it to heaven on their own. That is a spiritual blindness that will bring them to hell for an eternity.

### **3. RECEIVING PHYSICAL AND SPIRITUAL SIGHT (VS 40-43)**

Receiving physical and spiritual sight is described in verses 40-43. The point Luke is making here is this. **SPIRITUAL SIGHT LEADS TO A CHRIST CENTERED, GOD HONORING, SPIRIT FILLED LIFE.**

I am often critical of the way I approach God. I often find myself asking Him for stuff unashamedly and for very selfish reasons. As I look at my prayer life as a whole, I find that I am often asking for things; from a parking space to open up to the salvation of my friends and family. Some prayer requests are noble but many are very self-focused. As I get to know Jesus better, I think that we ought to ask for everything; not in an entitled demanding way; but in a way that we would ask a loving parent, accepting whatever the answer may be. Jesus' brother James said that we don't have things because we don't ask for them. I never want to miss something because I have failed to ask for it. However, James also went on to say we don't have things even though we asked for them because we asked for things to satisfy our own lusts.

I think we should humbly ask for everything and humbly accept the answer God gives us. We should be thankful for the things God gives us, enjoy them, and use them for God's glory. We should thank God for the things He withholds from us because we know He has withheld them for our benefit.

Look at verse 41. Jesus asked what the man wished for Him to do. There is no hesitation on the man's response, "Lord I want to see." There is another subtle shift we should see here. The blind man was shouting out for the official Messiah by His official title, "Son of David." Now that he has Jesus' attention, he makes it personal. He addresses Jesus as Lord. This could be the man addressing Jesus politely, but I think we will see later that Jesus has become this guy's personal Lord.

We often talk in the church about Jesus being our Lord and Savior. Do we say that because that is Jesus' official title, "Lord and Savior?" Again, if we were to take time and allow the Holy Spirit to search our hearts, we may come to see that we welcome Jesus as our Savior but not our Lord. We do realize that without Jesus we would be lost and going to hell. We rejoice that Jesus died on the cross for us and saved our souls. But is Jesus our Lord? Do we really want Him to take control of our lives and everything in our lives? Do we want to submit to Jesus as Lord as we read and study His commands in the Sermon on the Mount? Do we want to serve Jesus as Lord when it comes time to forgive those who have wronged us, when it comes time to pray for our enemies, and when it comes time to humble ourselves and ask for forgiveness? Do we want Jesus to be our Lord over our thought lives, sex lives, and ways in which we spend our money? The point is this. If Jesus is not our Lord, then He is not our Savior.

This guy has the order right. He submitted himself and his request to Jesus the Lord and in verse 42 we witness him receiving Jesus. First Jesus healed him physically. Look at verse 42. Again many translations rightly translate this, "your faith has healed you." But remember what we said before. That word used for healed is actually the common word for salvation. Jesus said, "Your faith has saved you." Let's just think about this man compared to the rich young ruler. The rich young ruler had every worldly possession and advantage possible but no eternal life. The beggar in this morning's text had no worldly possessions but after meeting Jesus left healed and saved with eternal life. Jesus has hammered this home time and time again. Money, power, and prestige all have this negative bent towards evil. They often cover up our need for Jesus. Here, another poor person received not only physical sight but eternal life.

Verse 43 reminds us that someone who has received a saving touch from Jesus ought to spend their life worshiping God. This guy not only received physical sight, he received spiritual sight. He recognized Jesus as the Promised Messiah. He received Jesus as his Lord and Savior. Jesus received him into the Kingdom of God. There was only one possible response for this on the man's behalf. He gave his life to Jesus. He followed Jesus and praised God.

This is something else Luke has caused us to focus in on. If we have genuinely been touched by God, we should not become proud or puffed up. Being touched by God should break us and make us humble. It should cause us to be loving and gracious to all the people we come into contact with.

If we have received Jesus as our Lord and Savior than our lives ought to be dedicated to praising God as we follow Jesus. In other words, when people look at us; the way we comport ourselves, do they see the Jesus of the Bible; the Jesus Who is our Lord and Savior? Too many people who claim to be Christians are angry, judgmental, proud, unforgiving, and



self-righteous. People who serve Jesus as Lord and Savior ought to be gentle, humble, gracious, loving, self-sacrificial, and merciful. Remember, if we name Jesus as Lord, then people will judge our Lord by the way we act.

In this morning's text, all the people who saw this also praised God. We must be careful to make sure we are drawing attention to God and not to ourselves. I think we can learn this from this morning's text. SPIRITUAL SIGHT LEADS TO A CHRIST CENTERED, GOD HONORING, SPIRIT FILLED LIFE.

I don't think we can tell ourselves this enough. Jesus has consistently reached out to the humble. If we continue to approach Jesus in humble submission, He will continue to bless us beyond our wildest imaginations. Those are the qualities that keep our spiritual eyesight 20/20. It is critical because PHYSICAL BLINDNESS CAN HANDICAP US, BUT SPIRITUAL BLINDNESS CAN KILL US.

I think anyone who has read about the spiritual giants of the faith is familiar with Fanny Crosby. Fanny Crosby lost her sight at six weeks old due to a doctor's error. She never became bitter. Instead she became one of the most prolific hymn writers in church history. She was born in 1820 and died in 1915. During her lifetime she composed over 9,000 hymns and poems. Many of them are Christian classics.

Speaking of her physical blindness she said, "I have always believed that the good Lord, in His infinite mercy, by this means consecrated me to the work that I am still permitted to do." When you sing any of her hymns you can recognize there is no spiritual blindness. Let me close by just reading one of her hymns to you.

**"A Wonderful Savior Is Jesus My Lord"**  
A wonderful Savior is Jesus my Lord,  
A wonderful Savior to me;  
He hideth my soul in the cleft of the rock,  
Where rivers of pleasure I see.

He hideth my soul in the cleft of the rock  
That shadows a dry, thirsty land;  
He hideth my life in the depths of His love,  
And covers me there with His hand,  
And covers me there with His hand.

A wonderful Savior is Jesus my Lord,  
He taketh my burden away;  
He holdeth me up, and I shall not be moved,  
He giveth me strength as my day.

With numberless blessings each moment He crowns,  
And, filled with His fullness divine,  
I sing in my rapture, "O glory to God  
For such a Redeemer as mine!"

When clothed in His brightness transported I rise,  
To meet Him in clouds of the sky,  
His perfect salvation, His wonderful love,  
I'll shout with the millions on high.

He hideth my soul in the cleft of the rock  
That shadows a dry, thirsty land;  
He hideth my life in the depths of His love,  
And covers me there with His hand,  
And covers me there with His hand.