



ISAIAH 42:16 | The Lord Leads the Blind from Darkness to Light

Sunday, March 15, 2015 – The Fourth Sunday in Lent

¹⁶ I will lead the blind by ways they have not known, along unfamiliar paths I will guide them; I will turn the darkness into light before them and make the rough places smooth. These are the things I will do; I will not forsake them.

Can you imagine what it's like to be blind? Not the *I can't see without my glasses or contacts* blind. No, the *cannot see anything—living in darkness* blind. The saying goes, "You don't know what you have until you don't have it anymore." And how much more true that would be with our senses. But today we're not talking about physical ailments. In fact, we're not talking about anything earthly at all. Isaiah is speaking about spiritual blindness.

And in that he was an expert. Isaiah was standing face to face with a people who were so lost, so blind to their own condition that they didn't know what had been happening to them. Judah had been slowly becoming more and more blind to the sinful spiritual life of their people. The temple was almost a ghost town. Scrolls of the prophets had been lost or destroyed. Some people of Judah would go to the temple to worship and then come home and dust off their household idols. They disrespected God's spokesmen, and they gave no regard to his warnings and commands.

And God had kept silent. He had sent his prophets. He had given his people his Word. And he waited. He waited patiently for the Word to work in the hearts of his people. He waited patiently for his prophets to speak patiently and lovingly to his nation. But now he had grown impatient. He had had enough. "For a long time I have kept silent, I have been quiet and held myself back. But now, like a woman in childbirth, I cry out, I gasp and pant." (Isaiah 42:14) The Lord couldn't help it anymore. They had forced his hand. And now he had a message for his people. "I will lay waste the mountains and hills and dry up all their vegetation; I will turn rivers into islands and dry up the pools... Those who trust in idols, who say to images, 'You are our gods,' will be turned back in utter shame." (Isaiah 42:15,17)

Hearing what he had to say, we could assume that people would listen. This was the same God who had plagued Egypt with some of the worse scenarios imaginable. This was the God who opened up the Red Sea and swallowed the largest army on earth. This was the same God who obliterated Sodom and Gomorrah because of their vileness and infidelity. This is the same God who had allowed the vicious Assyrians wipe an entire people and culture off the face of the earth. Who wouldn't listen to him?

Judah. They didn't listen. They were utterly and completely spiritually blind. "Who is blind but my servant, and deaf like the messenger I send? Who is blind like the one committed to me, blind like the servant of the Lord? You have seen many things, but have paid no attention; your ears are open, but you hear nothing." (Isaiah 42:19,20) And isn't that even worse than physical blindness? Someone who is physically blind can compensate by using other senses: touch, smell, hearing, etc. They can have a guide dog or use a cane. But spiritual blindness is much more severe. There are no other senses to use. There are no helps or guides. Someone who is spiritually blind is lost. They are literally lost in the dark. And they have no clue.

And that is what you were. You were blind. You were lost. You were without hope. And even worse, you had no clue. That's another danger of spiritual blindness. Satan is so good at convincing people that there's nothing wrong. He's good at making people believe that light is something dangerous, something un-wanted, something that is not to be desired. He makes people comfortable in their blindness.

Think of some of your "pet" sins. How often do we continue to do these sins and not bat an eye? How often have we sinned and kept sinning and didn't realize how much trouble we were really in until it was far too late? This is the depravity of sin. This is what King David recognized as he cried out to the Lord, "Surely I was sinful from birth; sinful from the time my mother conceived me!" (Psalm 51:5). This is why we hear the penitent tax collector cry out to the Lord, "Lord, have mercy on me, a sinner!" This is why confession is so important. We are wrought with sin. We cannot escape it. Every breath we take, every word we speak, every action we make is tainted with our sin. Lord, have mercy on us, sinners!

And he does! In fact, he did! Because our God is a faithful God. From the first breath of sin from Adam and Eve's mouth, the Lord had promised deliverance. And he has done so for generations. To the people of Israel in Egypt he sent Moses. For the people of Israel who were hungry as they wandered he sent manna and quail. For the people of Israel who had been straying he sent his judges. To his people who were faced with a Philistine giant he sent David. To his people who were being oppressed in captivity he sent Esther. And to his people enslaved in sin he sent his Son.

But he was far different than the rest of the "helpers" God had sent. Christ didn't just manage sins and the effects of it; he faced sin, death, and Satan head-on. He walked the road of life and faced the bumps and crevices without wavering from the truth. He willingly and joyfully "endured the cross, scorning its shame." He became "obedient to death—even death on a cross!" And he looked Satan square in the eyes and resisted every temptation and every snare and every trap the evil foe had set for him. Christ was—and is—the light of the world. "The people walking in darkness have seen a great light!"

You see, dear Christians, because of our blindness to sin our paths can seem hopeless. Our sinful lives seem like an endless maze of traps and snares. And we can become discouraged. Perhaps you attempted to make a resolution at the New Year. Or maybe you vowed to give something up for Lent. In your weakness, you may have already broken that resolution or given into temptation during Lent.

But take courage! Christ is enduring the cross—for you! He is marching toward victory—for you! He is breaking the chains of sin—for you! And he is making smooth the road ahead. All you need to do is trust him. Take his hand and follow him. When you stumble, look to him for help to get up. When you trip, reach out for his merciful hand. When you wander, find forgiveness in his Word. And trust that the Lord leads the blind from darkness to light through Christ. Amen.



Soli Deo Gloria!

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