



## Christian Cataracts May 19, 2019

Over time, people grow cataracts that cloud and impair their vision. The same thing can happen spiritually. God's people in Isaiah's day did not see well spiritually and their continual rejection of God's word would make them completely blind (Isaiah 6:8-13). They were meant to be a light to others, but they themselves were blind (42:18-20). In the New Testament, many more Jews were blind, and Jesus emphasized the blindness of the Pharisees (Matthew 15:14; 23:16, 17, 19, 24, 26). These passages give several examples of what spiritually blind religious people do, and they are worth sober contemplation. Jesus' own twelve disciples were spiritually blind (especially Mark 8-10), but every Christian is vulnerable to this flaw. Two sure signs of Christian Cataracts are hating one's fellow Christians and not growing in Christian character (1 John 2:11; 2 Peter 1:9). Warning: both physical and spiritual cataracts develop gradually, making it difficult to realize that we are seeing poorly.

As to why spiritual blindness develops, Satan can cause it, at least in some degree (2 Corinthians 4:4). But God himself will blind our eyes if we repeatedly see signs of his truth and still refuse to believe (John 12:37-40). At some point, he will withdraw his truth from those who show they are not worthy of it (cf. Isaiah 8:16-22; 30:18-21; Luke 19:41-44; Matthew 22:8-9).

How can we ward off spiritual blindness? Jesus' restoring sight to the blind was a sign that he is the Messiah (Luke 4:18-19; 7:20-23). His ability to do this literally (John 9:1-38) indicated he could also do it spiritually (vv. 39-41). We noted him opening the eyes of the twelve (Mark 8-10). What are some ways we can

cooperate with Him to preserve or restore our sight?

1. Humbling ourselves. The assumption that one sees clearly can be deadly (John 9:39-41; cf. Revelation 3:14-18).
2. Remembering that we have been forgiven for our sins (2 Peter 1:9). Spiritual barrenness ensues when we forget this (vv. 5-9).
3. Responding in an appropriate and timely way to spiritual truths we do see (John 12:37-40; Luke 19:41-44).
4. Seeking eye salve from Jesus (Revelation 3:18), which seems to mean taking to heart his rebukes and discipline and earnestly repenting (v. 19). This is in contrast to the lukewarm self-sufficiency that develops like cataracts (vv. 14-18; cf. #1 above).
5. Praying that God would enlighten the eyes of our hearts (Ephesians 1:18; cf. 2 Corinthians 4:1-6).

Faithful seeing means not looking with lust (Job 31:1; 2 Peter 2:14; 1 John 2:16), nor *focusing* on other's faults (Matthew 7:3) or *looking* to our own interests (Philippians 2:4, 21). We are not to *look* for praise from people (1 Thessalonians 2:6). In fact, we don't fix our *eyes* on anything that is seen (2 Corinthians 4:18), and specifically (here) not our troubles.

Instead, we faithfully fix our *eyes* on unseen spiritual realities. We walk by faith, not by *sight* (2 Corinthians 5:7). We fix our *eyes* on Jesus (Hebrews 12:1-3), again with specific reference to the troubles he endured. We also *look* to people who ably exemplify the way of Christ (Philippians 3:17). We *look* intently and continually into the perfect law that gives freedom, the teachings of Christ (James 1:25). We open our *eyes* to the harvest around us (John 4:35; cf. Acts 26:17-18). And we *look* forward to the day of God and the city to come (Hebrews 13:14; 2 Peter 3:12-13), but do so in such a way that leads us to live faithfully here and now (2 Peter 3:14; Hebrews 11:10, 14, 26).

