



Introduction

The biological physical eyes are the source of light, enlightenment and information to the body. Physical blindness exists and many people are inflicted with it; but they still conduct their lives without any external source of light either by day or by night.

The spiritual eyes are as true as the physical ones; and lucky is the one who possesses spiritual perception. St. Anthony, contemporary to St. Didymos the blind, wrote to comfort and ask him not to be sad for having lost his physical sight with whom even the insects and animals share, but to rejoice for the spiritual eyes he possessed with which he was able to discern spiritual matters.

Our Lord Jesus Christ used the analogy of the importance of the biological eyes to the body to bring home the importance of discernment to the spirit. *"The lamp of the body is the eye. Therefore, when your eye is good, your whole body also is full of light. But when your eye is bad, your body also is full of darkness. Therefore take heed that the light which is in you is not darkness. If then your whole body is full of light, having no part dark, the whole*

body will be full of light, as when the bright shining of a lamp gives you light." (Luke 11:34-36).

The Source of Spiritual Vision

Our Lord Himself asserts that the heart is the residence of spiritual vision. With a pure, simple, undefiled heart we can see God and the opposite is true. "Blessed are the pure in heart, .for they shall see God" (Matthew 5:8). Trying to see spiritual matters with our biological eyes is futile. St. Thomas depended on his physical eyes to believe that Jesus had appeared to the rest of the disciples. "...'*Unless I see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe.*'" (John 20:25). The Lord granted him his desire but taught him a lesson in spiritual vision "...'*Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.*'" (John 20:29). Lucky is the person whose spiritual eyes are open unto God "*to behold the beauty of the Lord*" (Psalm 27:4).

Diseases of the Spiritual Eyes

1. Total Absence of Vision

Absence of physical vision may be caused by two factors:

- Absence of light wherein the sight is intact but ineffective and inapplicable because of the absence of light.
- Presence of light but no vision because of the absence of sight.

The same applies to the absence of spiritual vision because of:

- Absence of knowledge in yet a simple pure heart. An example is St. Paul, the well intentioned, zealous philosopher and teacher of the law but who was ignorantly going in the wrong direction persecuting the Christians. "although I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man; but I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief" (1Timothy 1:13).
- Absence of purity of heart in the presence of knowledge. An example is Judas Iscariot who though chosen by Christ, empowered to perform miracles, taught by Christ first hand; yet because of his spiritual blindness, he betrayed his Master. Another example is Samson who was a Nazarene, with the spirit of God on him, powerful yet weakened by his lust.

2. Partial Absence of Vision

Partial absence of vision occurs when the sight gets blurred. Three reasons, together known as choking thorns, lead to semi-blindness. The concept of "choking thorns" is taken from the parable of the sewer whereby our Lord demonstrates the types of hearts on which the word of God falls. Choking thorns are represented in:

- The worries of life. The only way to get rid of worry is to trust the Lord with all our heart "*Cast your burden on the LORD, And He shall sustain you;*" (Psalm 55:22) and "*casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you*" (1 Peter 5:7).
- The desires of the world. St Augustine describes desire as a means planted in us for an end but is not an end in itself. An example, the desire to eat (hunger) is a means to living but life is not a means to eating. We do not live just to eat but we eat in order to live. Here food is a means and not a goal. The same conceptual truth applies to all other desires.
- *Materialism*. Too much concern for this world's richness and belongings blur spiritual vision. In

Psalm 119:18, David asks a wise thing of God
*"Open my eyes, that I may see wondrous things
from Your law."* Elisha's servant, Jehazee, was
not able to see the angels surrounding them
because he was a money-lover. Elisha had to ask
God on his behalf that God may open his eyes to
see the myriads of angels surrounding them.

3. Perverted Vision

When Satan controls the mind, he deludes us and
perverts our thinking making us see things
differently and erroneously. *"But even if our gospel
is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing,
whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who
do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory
of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on
them"* (2 Corinthians 4:3-4). Satan's job is to create
hatred and dissension among people. He managed to
plant distrust, doubt and skepticism in Eve's heart
and will continue to do so with humanity in order to
block the love channels and open the grooves of
misunderstanding and miscommunication turning
every benevolent act into its opposite, every virtue
into vice, and mistaking humility for weakness.
Satan strives to pull our eyes and attention away
from Christ and fix them on despair and
despondence in order to cut us off from all sources of
life such as prayer and Holy Communion.

4. Inhibited Vision

Inhibited vision is the worst type of impaired spiritual vision. The Pharisees were plagued with such inhibitors. Our Lord was aware of this plague and addressed it openly and boldly. The "pole" that our Lord referred to in his teachings is the existence of an inhibitor in our heart that clogs and impedes the spiritual ducts hampering our evaluation of ourselves and interfering with our appraisal and assessment of others. Examples of such inhibitors are egoism, judgmental attitude, self-adoration, arrogance, selfishness, and pride. Three among other incidents demonstrate this type of inhibited vision:

- After our Lord had given sight to the man born blind, the Jews' reaction was certainly not of marveling at God's power nor joy for the man's restoration of sight. Their totally egoistic, pompous and distorted, self gratified evaluation of the miracles was as such *"Therefore some of the Pharisees said, 'This Man is not from God, because He does not keep the Sabbath.' Others said, 'How can a man who is a sinner do such signs?' And there was a division among them. They said to the blind man again, What do you say about Him because He opened your eyes?"* (John 9:16-17). After cross examining the man, they still would not admit the most obvious and

"Then they reviled him and said, 'You are His disciple, but we are Moses' disciples. We know that God spoke to Moses; as for this fellow, we do not know where He is from.'" (John 9:28-29). "And Jesus said, 'For judgment I have come into this world, that those who do not see may see, and that those who see may be made blind.' Then some of the Pharisees who were with Him heard these words, and said to Him, 'Are we blind also?'" (John 9:39-40). The Lord answered accurately, distinctively, and succinctly, "...If you were blind, you would have no sin; but now you say, 'We see.' Therefore your sin remains." (John 9:41).

- Simon, the Pharisee, judged both Christ and the woman in his heart *"This Man, if He were a prophet, would know who and what manner of woman this is who is touching Him, for she is a sinner"* (Luke 7:39). In reality it was him to be judged for his lack of love and oblivion of real Jewish hospitality.
- At the Pharisee's house which in essence should have been one of kindness and not judgment our Lord met with an opportunity to reveal the

leaders' blindness to the true laws leading to the Kingdom of God. "And as He spoke, a certain Pharisee asked Him to dine with him. So He went in and sat down to eat. When the Pharisee saw it, he marveled that He had not first washed before dinner. Then the Lord said to him, 'Now you Pharisees make the outside of the cup and dish clean, but your inward part is full of greed and wickedness. Foolish ones! Did not He who made the outside make the inside also? But rather give alms of such things as you have; then indeed all things are clean to you. 'But woe to you Pharisees! For you tithe mint and rue and all manner of herbs, and pass by justice and the love of God. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone. Woe to you Pharisees! For you love the best seats in the synagogues and greetings in the marketplaces. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like graves which are not seen, and the men who walk over them are not aware of them.' Then one of the lawyers answered and said to Him, 'Teacher, by saying these things You reproach us also.' And He said, 'Woe to you also, lawyers! For you load men with burdens hard to bear, and you yourselves do not touch the burdens with one of your fingers. Woe to you! For you build the

tombs of the prophets, and your fathers killed them. In fact, you bear witness that you approve the deeds of your fathers; for they indeed killed them, and you build their tombs. Therefore the wisdom of God also said, 'I will send them prophets and apostles, and some of them they will kill and persecute,' that the blood of all the prophets which was shed from the foundation of the world may be required of this generation, from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah who perished between the altar and the temple. Yes, I say to you, it shall be required of this generation. 'Woe to you lawyers! For you have taken away the key of knowledge. You did not enter in yourselves, and those who were entering in you hindered.' And as He said these things to them, the scribes and the Pharisees began to assail Him vehemently, and to cross-examine Him about many things, lying in wait for Him, and seeking to catch Him in something He might say, that they might accuse Him.'" (Luke 11:37-54).

- In the book of Revelation God reminds us of the difference between an evaluation generated from an impaired vision and a genuine one coming from Him. While one thinks "*I am rich, have*

become wealthy, and have need of nothing' — and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked—I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent. Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me. To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne. 'He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.'" (Revelation 3:17-22).

5. Short Vision

Technically and biblically referred to as "short sightedness", short vision is a shortage in the knowledge and wisdom of God thereby resulting in lack of virtues. Confining our faith to the here and now without looking beyond to the thereafter is classified as short sightedness. St. Peter provides a treatment and correction for this vision ailment "*as His divine power has given to us all things that*

pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love. For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For he who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins" (2 Peter 1:3-9).

- Faith "in the unseen and the hoped for" has to be manifest through and in good works. Without faith in the heavenly reward we will not seem to carry out the rest of the virtues. Gradually they will fade and disappear from the field of our spiritual vision.

- Good works should not be performed haphazardly but need to be well thought out in wisdom and discernment.
- While demonstrating knowledge and wisdom in our good works we should do so with self-control and circumspection lest we be deceived by Satan into delusion and arrogance.
- This self-control in all areas of our life has to continue incessantly, diligently and perseveringly.
- Perseverance must be godly, accompanied with the fear of God and His commandments otherwise we will be trapped in self-reliance.
- Our godliness will lead us to brotherly kindness. In Psalm 15, David, the Psalmist, considers brotherly kindness as the gate to the kingdom and the source of stability and anchorage. "*Lord, who may abide in Your tabernacle? Who may dwell in Your holy hill? He who walks*

uprightly, and works righteousness, and speaks the truth in his heart; he who does not backbite with his tongue, nor does evil to his neighbor, nor does he take up a reproach against his friend; in whose eyes a vile person is despised, but he honors those who fear the Lord; he who swears to his own hurt and does not change; he who does not put out his money at usury, nor does he take a bribe against the innocent. he who does these things shall never be moved" (Psalm 15:1-5).

This brotherly kindness if not done in aghappy love will be subjected to hypocrisy and endangered by slackness. Love is the byproduct, yet initiator, summit and sealant of all virtues.

Remedies and Treatment

1. See Through Christ

Our Lord Jesus Christ is the source of light and accurate, proper vision. Look up to Him for perfect perception, sizing and judging. "*Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God*" (Hebrews 12:2). When St. Peter started to remove his eyes from Christ, his

faith weakened and was about to drown. Four examples of perfect vision deserve recognition:

- St. Stephen fixed his eyes on Christ even while being stoned. So, he saw heaven open and Christ surrounded with angels and crowns. He immediately sized his plight in a surprisingly unique but exactly proper and spiritually focused way. The stoning became an occasion for forgiveness and a means to reach the goal. Hence it was easy for him to forgive his opponents.
- The woman with the bleeding issue pushed her way through the multitude ignoring her bleeding and the moans and groans of the multitude. Thus she deserved to divert the Master's attention and received that recognizable healing power from the Lord.
- Zakias, ignored his social status and only remembered his goal to see Christ. That clear goal provided the unthought-of means and paved the way. He trod over his pride, the multitudes' ridicule, rode over the unconventional, and climbed a tree to see Jesus.

Thus he deserved to have the Master in his house, the guest of the night and all the nights thereafter.

- The friends of the paralytic did the impossible and the farfetched. Forgetting themselves and their personal needs, they were determined to reach Christ. So, they removed the roof of the house disregarding any damage and the subsequent ramifications and expenses.

2. Wear the Correct Glasses

Spiritual vision gets corrected through:

- Prayer
- Repetitive and perpetual reading of the word of God.

The heart gets purified by what is pure and defiled by what is defile. "*Blessed are the pure of heart for they will see God*" (Matthew 5:8). Correct spiritual vision strengthens one's faith and the rest of the virtues. It also leads to repentance. Even in the midst of sin, looking up to Christ and at Him, will annihilate the force of sin and destroy the forces of evil and bring about repentance. How did St. Peter's eyes meet with Christ's unless he himself was looking at Him even in the midst of his renouncing

of the Master before the maid. That glance accelerated and facilitated St. Peter's repentance.

St. Paul in his letter to the Ephesians says that he does *"not cease to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers: that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come"* (Ephesians 1:17-21).

Conclusion

In the prayers of the Eleventh hour we recite Psalm 123 *"Unto You I lift up my eyes, O You who dwell in the heavens. Behold, as the eyes of servants look to the hand of their masters, as the eyes of a maid to the hand of her mistress, so our eyes look to the Lord our God, until He has mercy on us"* (Psalm 123:1-2).

St. Paul advises us not to waste time and energy over seeing what is only physically visible, and on transient matters; but to aspire to look onto eternity. To see heavenly things we need to fix our eyes on Christ. *"Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God"* (Hebrews 12:2). We need to dwell on the Word of God and His commandments praying incessantly. *"Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path"* (Psalm 119:105). Let us have the attitude of the multitude who went about pressing and persistently wanting "to see Jesus". When we do so, our hearts will acquire a new measure of purity and simplicity, our standards will be more virtuous and our spiritual sight will become sharper and stronger.

I pray that *"the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power"* (Ephesians 1:18-19).

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