

Blindness That Helps Us To See

Michael Allen

In **Acts 13**, Paul and Barnabas set sail on what would be their first missionary journey. Their first stop took them to the Island of Cyprus. After making their way through the entire island, they wound up in the city of Paphos. Here they encounter two men: Sergius Paulus, who wanted to hear the gospel from Paul, and Elymas who wanted to keep Paul from telling this man about the Gospel. The writer Luke describes Elymas in unflattering terms: that he was a Jewish sorcerer and a false prophet (**verse 6**); that he was deceitful, fraudulent, an enemy of righteousness, a son of the Devil; and that he worked in opposition to God (**verse 10**). That is not the kind of spiritual resume any of us would like to have. But whatever opposition is presented by this man is quickly dismissed as Paul tells him that he will be blind for a period of time. Elymas is then led away, Sergius Paulus believes, and Paul and Barnabas continue their ministry.

Giving this man blindness immediately removed all opposition to their message, and through this miracle it contributed to the belief of someone seeking God. But could there be more to this story? Elymas appears to be a man that didn't want things to change. He was willing to go to great lengths to keep the status quo. He opposed God and the preaching of the Gospel and tried to turn people away from God as an enemy of righteousness. And, in the end, he was given a temporary case of blindness.

Elymas sounds kind of similar to the type of person Paul was before his conversion. Clearly, they are not exactly identical, but their stories do seem to have similarities. Is it possible that Paul saw a little bit of himself in this man, and through similar circumstances had hoped he might see the light as well? Paul knew the effectiveness of blindness for a period of time and maybe this miracle was done to allow them to speak the word AND help someone who opposed the spread of the Gospel. If so, this was similar to what had been done to Paul. The three days that Paul spent in blindness was a blessing that removed all distractions, allowed him to gain a better perspective on his life. Ultimately, his blindness allowed him to see things a lot clearer. For a short period of time something that was very important to him was taken away, so that in the end he could walk away with something better.

In **Philippians 4**, Paul talks about dealing with the extremes of life and working toward an attitude that in all things we do our best to be content with our surroundings. There will be times when things are going great, and times when they are not. But these types of things need to be placed in perspective when compared to our spiritual lives. Bad times are by definition, bad; but maybe they are also times that we can use to try and refocus our efforts and to push aside the day to day distractions that so easily seem to consume us. Maybe this is a time to meditate on where we are today and the direction of our lives, and see if any changes need to be made. Maybe times like these are OUR three days of blindness, so that we can emerge on the other side with a better spiritual perspective.