

## Blind Spots

All of us who drive have learned that checking the mirrors before turning into the left lane of traffic is not enough. After only looking in the mirrors, we have been surprised or dismayed by a car seemingly coming out of nowhere. That blind spot in our vision demands that we turn our head to check for cars in the other lane.

Again, watching the quarterback who was so intently looking to the right, we have wanted to warn him as we could see the linebacker about to blind-side him from the left.

Always with surprise, and sometimes with dismay, I have learned that I have had many blind spots in viewing the Scriptures. Discovering them causes me to wonder how many remain of which I am unaware. My dogmatism is diminished by the admission that I may have tons of them yet. I will enumerate some that I have discovered in later years.

1. 1. The Bible begins with the majestic statement: "*In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.*" How could I misunderstand that? It was when I interpreted it to mean "In the beginning of time, or existence." Unless God emerged spontaneously from nothingness, the passage does not refer to the beginning of time or existence. He is the great "I Am," the ever existent One. So the passage necessarily must have some such meaning as is listed in the footnote of the TEV: "*When God began to create the universe.*" Or, "In the beginning of creation, God created the heavens and the earth." Right?
2. 2. I could hold in disdain those supposed intellectuals and modernists who declared that the six days of creation were not literal days. Every Bible believer and lover of truth knew that when it referred to "evening and morning" measuring a day, it had to be a literal day. That was conclusive for me, that is, until I discovered a blind spot in my understanding.

Looking at my globe which depicts the earth suspended in space, I began to try to visualize that literal "evening and morning." That is an impossibility! There can not be one and only one evening succeeded by morning on the whole earth in one rotation of the earth. When it is evening in one area, it is morning somewhere else at the same time, and when it is morning at that point of the earth, it is evening on the opposite side. So, looking more intently into my blind spot, I had to face the undeniable fact that those could not have been literal days!

3. 3. When you are "proving" a point which is evidently true, what difference does it make if you prove it illogically? We must not add to God's message revealed in the Bible. That is an obvious truth. As though it needed more proof, all the teachers of my upbringing used Revelation 22:18f to "prove" that. So did I, until I looked more closely and saw that John did not say that or have it in mind, for they had no "book" called the Bible. He wrote, "*I warn every one who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if any one adds to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book, and if any one takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book.*" John was

writing about the book of prophecy which he was concluding, not the Bible. Which is less offensive to God: to add to his word, or to try to force it to mean what it does not mean? Sincere teachers are still being broad-sided because they refuse to look into this blind spot.

4. 4. *“I desire then that in every place the men should pray, lifting holy hands without anger and quarreling...”* (1 Tim. 2:8). In reading this passage through the years, I focused on the contention that the men should do the praying in the assembly (never mind all the assumptions!). When our attention is focused intently on one thing, it is easy to overlook most everything else involved. So, lifting up hands in prayer was no problem for me. I just ignored it! In fact, when questioned about it, even though I cannot now remember the great logic I used, I could speak disdainfully about people who did such things. Of course, no one would do that these days! L
5. 5. By looking on down the road and not thinking of blind spots, I could look to 1 Corinthians 14 to the corrective teachings of Paul and then read Ch. 11: 5 to mean “Any woman who prays or prophesies before men dishonors her head.” Well, isn’t that what Paul meant? Paul was capable of writing what he meant. He wrote, *“Any woman who prays or prophesies with her head unveiled dishonors her head.”* After checking my blind spot, I can see that he offered no objection to women praying and prophesying, but his objection was in their doing so without the customary veil among the Greeks. In Chapter 14, he was not rescinding his approval but was correcting their rudeness and disorderliness in the Corinthian assemblies while they participated.
6. 6. For a number of years I had a radio program which I called Searching The Scriptures. Now, that is a good, scriptural enterprise and designation, isn’t it? Luke tells of the nobility of Jews in Berea because they examined / searched the scriptures daily to see if the things being taught were so.

Due to my blind spot, however, I could not see that I was doing less what the Bereans did and more what Jesus rebuked his critics for doing: “You search the scriptures, because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness of me; yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life.” (John 5:39f).

My search was not of the Old Testament scriptures (or NT either) for proof that Jesus was the Christ like the Bereans did. More than trying to convert my hearers to Christ, my efforts were to convert believers to a different set of doctrines which would make them feel secure in the Church of Christ. My pointing people to Christ was overshadowed by emphasis on salvation through correct understanding and keeping of all scriptural teachings. Are not the scriptures the “wonderful words of life” as we have sung? Yes, but only in the sense that they point us to Jesus who gives us life. He, not the Bible, is the Word, the Good News. Eternal life is not given by a Book but by a Person. The blind spot is still a danger as we continue to hear the emphasis more on having all the “right” interpretations than on a relationship with God in Christ.

7. 7. The quarterback may be so intently focused on his primary receiver that he overlooks a secondary receiver who is in the open field. Even worse, he does not see the line backer who smashes him to the turf. It is too common for us to overlook the obvious and important while looking to prove preconceived notions. It took me many years to see

that I was using Acts 20:7 as a proof-text concerning the Lord's Supper while it actually proved nothing about it. That was my focus, for I had preconceived assumptions to prove. Such a focus allowed me to overlook Luke's evident purpose in relating the incident in Troas, that being to tell of Paul's greatest miracle in raising Eutychus from the dead.

8. 8. One of my favorite parts of the scriptures has been Hebrews 11, which I have described as "Inspiration's Hall of Fame." Here is a great cloud of witnesses to the power of faith in history. Only recently, however, as I looked again at this inspiring chapter, I was startled as I saw another of my blind spots. Through the years, I had taken the great examples of faith and made them into great examples of works! Yes, it is true that faith works, but in my focus on works of obedience, I had let emphasis on detailed "correct" works overshadow the awesome power of faith in the lives of those Biblical heroes. Maybe you have not done that.
9. 9. Countless times Peter's statement, "His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness," (2 Peter 1:3) has been used to "prove" the all-sufficiency of the scriptures. In like manner his words in Chapter 3:18, "But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ," were considered an exhortation for Bible study. Somehow, we managed to interpret those passages as "His Bible has granted to us all things..." and "Grow in the knowledge of the scriptures." While Peter was encouraging a closer relationship with Christ, we diverted it to a greater knowledge of scriptures. Blind-sided again!
10. 10. Many years ago a preacher came to me with an urgent plea for some gasoline to help him reach his preaching appointment. Though touched by his plight, I resolutely refused to help him. You see, he was not one of us, so he was clearly not abiding in the doctrine of Christ (!), and for me to have helped him would have been bidding him godspeed! If he had needed the help to go to his mother's funeral, that would have been all right. But to preach outside my narrowed concepts – no way! How righteous I was! I thought I was heeding John's warning, "Any one who goes ahead and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God: he who abides in the doctrine has both the Father and the Son. If any one comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into the house or give him greeting; for he who greets him shares his wicked work." (2 John 1:9f). Years later I looked at the context of that passage, and I was chagrined and humiliated to learn that John was warning about men who will not acknowledge the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh (1:7). You mean that John was not referring to the perceived soul-threatening issues of our party that distinguished us from others who serve him? I was elevating all sorts of scruples to equal importance with the denial that Jesus came in the flesh like John was writing about. I thought midweek communion, having unauthorized congregational organization, or using instrumental music in worship were as damning as denial of the resurrection or atonement of Christ. How blinded I was! John was warning against certain ones who were denying the very basis of hope in Christ.

In this essay I have put together bits and pieces hoping that you may be made more aware of the need to revisit familiar passages and teachings for fresh meanings. Consciousness of my own need in this area allows me to look with scorn at no one else for their misconceptions.

When we cross over into the world that awaits us, surely truth will be made clear to us. As we then discover how pathetically ignorant and limited in understanding we were in our life on earth, surely we will marvel at the loving patience God had in dealing with us. Let us exhibit that patience in dealing with others whose understanding is not the same as ours. []