

## Sermon by Philip C. Herrmann, June 10, 1973

### Willo Bible Chapel, Willoughby, OH (45:58)

Thank you all for your good wishes. It sounds very nice, to be going on vacation. I think I have vacation all the time, so it's just a matter of change of scenery. I hope to be busy where I am; it'll be either Brooklyn, New York, or Boston, one of the suburbs of Boston.

My subject today is something along the lines of what we were just singing. John Newton wrote that beautiful hymn that for some reason or other has become very popular. I wonder if those who sing it so glibly appreciate the person who wrote it, and what a life he lived. He was a slave trader, but was converted, showing that God saves unusual persons. But my subject today is more, I was alluding to the phrase, "was blind, but now I see" and you'll see from the Scripture that I read how that fits in. Maybe John Newton had that passage in mind, this passage that I'm going to read to you in the second book of Corinthians, the fourth chapter. But those who sing that hymn, I wonder if they really believe the words that they are singing. I trust they do.

In II Corinthians, fourth chapter we read a few verses that allude to something that he referred to in the previous chapter. Now we'll try to make it clear as we go along. In the third verse of the fourth chapter of II Corinthians we read "But if our gospel be hid," that is if our gospel of the good news of the grace of God, the same thing that was the subject of the hymn of John Newton that we just sang, "if our gospel be hid," that is, it's hidden, it's not seen, it's not visible, because the apostle is using the same words unfortunately they didn't translate them the same, that he used in the previous chapter when he spoke of Moses coming down from the mount with the ten commandments, or the two tablets of stone, and his face shining so that the people of Israel couldn't endure it. It was like looking at the sun, which would make you blind if you persisted in looking at it.

So he says that "if our gospel be veiled, it is veiled to them that are lost." Make a note of that please, of that word "lost," because we'll be referring to that. Now he goes on to speak of the second god of this world. We believe as Christians that there is only one God, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. But here the apostle speaks of another god, a god with a small letter g, not a god at all. He takes the place of God, he sought to take the place of God and to many in the world today he is their God, because they are following him and not the God that we honor and seek to worship and live for.

It says, "In whom the god of this world has blinded the minds." You see how that ties in with the phrase in that hymn, "was blind but now I see." And he says, "has blinded," this supposed god of this world, who is Satan, and elsewhere called the prince of the power of the air, that is his operations take place in the heavenlies, in the air above us. We're very much interested, aren't we, in the air today. Think what they're doing, trying to maintain a place in the sky, in the upper atmosphere from which the world can be looked down upon, pictures taken, and the news disseminated immediately.

But he's not interested in that. He's not interested in scientific improvement, except as it concerns his way of getting men away from God, turning them away from God and getting them to follow him. He says, "them that believe not," that's the great subject of the apostle Paul. He separates the world into two classes, those who believe, those who have put their trust in Christ as savior, who are looking for him to return, to come back to this earth, and to bring infinite blessing to it. But he says now the

reason that God has blinded the minds, and I hope to show how the god of this world, Satan, the Devil, one who is said in Revelation 12 verse 9 to deceive the whole world, just in the same way that he deceived Eve and Adam, although it says Adam was not deceived. Adam followed Eve's disobedience and partook of the forbidden fruit, disobeyed God, and brought upon the world this trail of sin and sorrow, of trouble that plagues us even to this very moment.

Now what is the purpose of this blinding of the mind, which is far worse than physical blindness, "lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ should shine unto them." And then he repeats this in a different way, very interesting. He goes on to say, "we preach not ourselves." In the previous letter to the Corinthians, he has said that the preaching of the cross, which is what he came to bring them was foolishness, foolishness to Greeks [I Corinthians 1:23].

Why the idea of looking to a person who hung upon Calvary's cross as a punishment for his sin, though he was no sinner, Pilate said that many times that "I find no fault in him," he wanted to release him, but he was crucified nevertheless. "we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus as lord." Not the Lord, but as lord, for that's what the person the world knows today as Jesus Christ, or Jesus, it's sad how the earthly name of the Lord Jesus has been taken away from his full name, for all the rest of the New Testament, from the book of Acts on to the end, speaks of the Lord Jesus Christ; that's his full title. And God has made that person who hung upon the cross, Peter says in his first opening address, the first of the seven addresses in the book of Acts, he says that "God has made that same Jesus whom you crucified both Lord and Christ" [Acts 2:36].

So that the person that is used almost on every tongue, nobody is unaware of the name of Jesus, that's now the person in the highest place in Heaven. And he's coming back, first for his own, to take them out of this scene, those who have believed on him through these centuries. Those who have faith in the Old Testament, he's coming to take them back, with him, the dead and the living, in one second, the twinkling of an eye, it says, take them back to the place that he is now occupying himself at the right hand of God.

And a little later, after the judgments of God have been taking their course, as indicated in the book of Revelation, then the Lord himself will appear, not as the person Jesus Christ, when he was here upon earth, but he will appear in all his glory, the glory that is spoken of here, that Satan is seeking to disturb and detract from, that he's trying to keep men away from, to see the glory of that person, who to believe on, means the greatest blessing, not only now, but for all the ages, and the ages to come.

The repetition of this thought is now given us in another way, very similar, but the Spirit of God, writing through the apostle Paul, goes back to the very time of creation, when there was nothing, when there was just darkness, and it says that God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, (that was his first command, let there be light, let light be, and there was light, [Genesis 1:3]) God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, has shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ.

You see, Satan is trying to distract and detract, keep men away from seeing anything of the glory of Christ, but here it's also to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ. You remember the

19th Psalm begins, "The heavens declare the glory of God." That's visible to everyone in nature, anyone who looks at the stars in the middle of the night. when there's less light to distract, must be

impressed by the multiplicity of the stars. and of that time when God said to Abraham, “Look at the stars; can you count them?” If you’ve ever been to the Haydn Planetarium in New York you will see hundreds of pictures seeing the multiplicity of stars, the tremendous number of them, and the variety of them, the intensity of some, and the faintness of others. But all of these are of tremendous size, and they are a tribute to the glory of God.

But now the glory of God is seen not only in that, in his finite creation, but in the souls that have been saved, and that are now an exhibition of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. And I submit to you that I think it is a greater glory, and one that will last far longer, for God to have shined in the hearts of you and me and everyone that believes, than his glory in the heavens, because they’re going to pass away, God will dispose of them, will change them, there’ll be no need for them. God himself, the Father, and God the Son will be the glory in the day of eternity. There’ll be no need of the sun, or the moon, or the stars there, for God will be all in all.

Well the subject of this morning is, “Why are men not saved?” We read that the god of this world has blinded the minds of those who believe not, those who in the previous verse are said to be lost. Just think of that. God, through the person of his son, when he was here, he used simple words, words that are understood by the smallest child, and the oldest person, and everyone in between. He used such words as light and darkness, and the wind, water, bread, the door, sheep, wolf, shepherd, and many others. That’s just to take them from the one gospel of John. Throughout the other gospels there are many more words used, that everyone knows. The Lord used them to illustrate spiritual truths, things that have to do with eternity, things that affect our spiritual bodies, for we have a spiritual need as well as a physical need.

And I believe that the thought of darkness, and blindness, is one of the most prominent in the gospel of John, and also the fact of being lost. You remember the prodigal son. He wasn’t really lost in one sense, because he came back. The Lord even goes farther with him; he has the father say, “this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found” [Luke 15:24]. And so those that are said to be blind here, and I believe this applies to the greatest percentage of living beings, and has throughout the centuries, the god of this world, Satan, who blinded the minds of Eve, and all that followed her, is still at work today. He “has blinded the minds of those that believe not, lest the light of the glory of the gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine to them” [II Corinthians 4:4].

We come across the expression, “the image of God” quite often in the scriptures but I’d like you to note that after man fell, as he fell into sin and was banished from the Garden of Eden, it says that Adam begat a son in his own image. See, he had lost the image of God. And man, in the Garden of Eden as an innocent being, equipped with wonderful powers, never regained that place, but the one who believes on Jesus Christ today will regain that. He has the divine nature now; the life of God is supplied to him. And that was the everlasting life that the Lord promised to everyone that believes on him.

I remember hearing a story of a preacher who was asked to address some blind children. And he was to do this at night, just before they went to bed. He went to the institution, and heard voices of children, having wonderful times, they were playing. The lady that took him to the room in which he was to speak opened the door and it was dark. but these children were all in there, enjoying themselves, not a bit fazed by the fact that it was perfectly dark in there. But she clapped her hands, and immediately the preacher saw one of the boys creep along the baseboard or along the wall, feeling for the electric switch.

The light appeared immediately, and then he went on with his preaching.

But he asked the lady, “is this customary, do they always play in the dark?” And she assured him it was. And I thought what a picture it is of men today. They’re going on as if nothing was going to happen, everything is fine, they’re enjoying themselves, yet they are in spiritual darkness. And it doesn’t matter to them whether the room is dark or the room is light; they are still in darkness, they don’t see.

Well how has Satan managed to blind men? I believe it is through excuses, misconceptions, misunderstandings; and all of them are lies, because the Lord characterized Satan, the Devil, as the father of lies. He could do nothing else. I’ve listed a few of the excuses, some of the statements that men make when they’re asked about their soul’s welfare, whether they believe in Christ to the saving of their souls, whether they’ve put their trust in him as savior. And I imagine this is one of the foremost excuses or statements to offset all this that men have given: “God is too good and kind to send men to Hell.”

Isn’t it interesting that men will take the one side of God, the side of love, for he is said to be love, “God is love,” but they pass by, absolutely, the fact that “God is light.” God is holy. He cannot look upon sin. “No man can see me and live” [Exodus 33:20]. His standard is absolute perfection. You, if you would reach God, if you would speak to God, if you would want to appear in his presence, you have to have perfection. That was what the law was given for: give man a perfect rule to live by, and if he didn’t do it, he was lost, he was under the curse.

It’s a terrible thing to read, both in the Old Testament and the New, that “cursed is every one who continueth not in all things which are written in the law to do them” [Deuteronomy 27:26], [Galatians 3:10]. And yet how many people, not only unbelievers but believers, put themselves under that law, hoping to gain favor and righteousness with God. David said, “There’s not a man upon earth that doeth good and sinneth not” [Ecclesiastes 7:20]. And he said, “By the works of the law shall no man be justified” [Psalm 143:2]. No man is justified by the law in the sight of God.

There are one or two other facts that the Lord himself said. He said, “he that believeth on the Son,” it was either the Lord or John the Baptist, I’m not sure, but it’s the absolute truth, “he that believeth on the Son (the Son of God), has everlasting life. But he that believeth not (the Son of God), shall not see life. The wrath of God abideth on him” [John 3:36]. [It’s not that PCH can’t remember to whom the Bible quote is attributed: it’s that it is unclear from the text. See the Sermon of Feb. 4, 1973 for details. TW] And hundreds of times the thought that God must judge sin is in the Scriptures. The very first statement about death, what comes after death, is the judgment, the judgment of God upon sin.

And another one is that God will balance the good against the evil. This was one of my Uncle’s pleas. He did not believe. He was a churchgoer, he did not believe in Jesus Christ as savior. God will balance my good deeds, and he was a good man, I’ll have to admit that, as men speak. In the sight of God he was an unbeliever. He was under God’s wrath for not believing on Christ his son, but he didn’t know that, and he wouldn’t accept it. “it’s not by works of righteousness which we have done but according to God’s mercy he saved us” [Titus 3:5], and he saved us in view of the sacrifice of his son, when in those three hours of darkness that enveloped the earth, God judged his son for your sin and mine, and for all sin. So that there’s not a person that can claim that God is against them. Christ has borne the sin for everyone, but God demands that we apply to his son for our salvation. We come to him as guilty sinners, unbelievers, for that’s what God is going to judge all men for: they have not believed the record that God has given of his son, or they have not believed the words in the Old Testament that

“trust in the Lord, and everything will be well” [Psalm 37:3?]. Put your trust in him; that was God’s word in the dispensation past. But today we’re living in the day of grace, where God has made it easier for everyone, no excuse for anyone to disbelieve, and yet how full the world is of unbelievers. No, it’s he that worketh not, but to him that believeth, Christ’s work is counted to him for righteousness. The righteousness that you and I need, to appear in the presence of God, either now or at any other time, all through eternity.

And then you have the people that preach that God will give men another chance, after death. I’ve already quoted the verse that says no to that, “after death the judgment,” Hebrews 9:27, after death the judgment. It is only ?? in this life; the chance to be saved is now. God doesn’t even say tomorrow, or when you like it, or on your deathbed. So many say “I’ll accept him then.” No, God is not to be played with. He’s a God of reality; he means business. When he tells us that “now is the day of acceptance of salvation” [II Corinthians 6:2], not so much that we are to accept him as he is to accept us.

And then you hear the talk of people, another evidence of the blindness that Satan has put over men’s eyes, pulled the wool over their eyes with this: God will ultimately save all men. And they take as the proof of that the word in Colossians [Colossians 1:20] that says that God will reconcile all things, but they forget that that means things. God has reconciled by the death of his son, has brought back, his creation that man lost for him. But man is not reconciled unless he comes to God, requiring salvation. And one of the steps to that is repentance, repentance towards God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. I think I quoted this morning the 53rd of Isaiah, the sixth verse, “All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.” That is the verdict of God, though the prophet Isaiah; and that verdict stands.

And then, despite the fact that one person, a member of the Godhead has paid for his iniquity, so that he never has to pay for it with the eternal judgment that’s promised, “after this the judgment,” he will receive God’s highest gift.

And then another statement that you often hear is that every religion is good; we’ll all reach the same ultimate goal. Well, the very first gospel sermon that was preached in this dispensation of grace, in this day of grace, would disprove that. Because the Apostle Peter said on the day of Pentecost, to the very men who were the ones who had brought about the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, he says “there is no other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved” [Acts 4:12]. You see it isn’t a question we can be saved, we must be saved, because we’re lost. The person who takes that place, takes the place of being lost, deserving nothing from the hand of God, they receive everything. That’s the wonderful thing about grace. Grace gives everything; the grace of God gives everything to those who deserve nothing but judgment

Then as the last excuse that I would give, that even those who profess to be interested in religion, or in the gospel, because the gospel is not religion, they give this: there’s still plenty of time, plenty of time. And that I believe is perhaps the greatest excuse, the greatest lie, that Satan can give men: there’s still plenty of time. There isn’t plenty of time. The same apostle that wrote our text this morning said that the time is short, no time left, [I Corinthians 7:29]. and as we see the evil in the world increasing, I remember fifty years ago listening to a preacher who said that if God be God, he must judge. And he was referring to punishment right then. I think it was in connection with the Teapot Dome, some scandal like that, where someone had walked off with 250 million dollars, or was in the process of doing so.

Well my time is almost out, and I had thought to give three examples of persons that the Apostle Paul, the same person who the Spirit of God used to write these wonderful words, words of explanation for you and me, which tell us why things are the way they are. The Apostle spoke to three prominent men, and I don't think we have time to look at them, but I'll just refer to them briefly. In the eighteenth of Acts, the Apostle is in the city of Corinth, Greece. And he's preaching there, but runs up against the people of Israel who believe he's a traitor to their race, because he seems to be preaching against Moses. Because the law of Moses was to lead men to Christ; it tells us that in the book of Galatians. When they got through with the Law, when they finally couldn't do anything about the Law, they couldn't keep it, and therefore were under the curse, they were to apply to Jesus Christ, the Messiah, the one who could rid them of that curse. Which he did when he ascended the cross and bore the judgment of God. The Lord lived the life of an Israelite those 33 years, and then took upon himself the curse of all those who had broken the law.

Well this man Gallio was appealed to, he was the deputy there and he was the man to judge the case, but he immediately dismissed it [Acts 18:16], and the Apostle of course went free. That was God's way of relieving him of a possible imprisonment and punishment, because in those days, those who differed about religion made a great thing about it, it's not like today. But it says that Gallio, for he was the Roman governor in that case, he dismissed the case, and let the disputants fight each other, beat each other, and his comment on it, Dr. Luke's comment on it, for he was the one who wrote the book of Acts, said that 'Gallio cared for none of those things.' He was a careless man. Things that concerned somebody else's law didn't bother him. He couldn't care less.

And that's one of the things that trouble men today. Try to interest them in their soul's salvation, and you get the brushoff. We're not interested. Just like the purchasing agent that you go to to try and sell some materials: brushes you off, "I'm not interested," "I don't care," "we have our source of supply," all kinds of excuses. You can beat your heart out in front of a person like that. Not interested. Gallio cared for none of those things.

And so, millions today don't give a hoot for religion. They'd never be seen in a place like this. They don't care about God, although God gives them their breath, life, and all things, as the Apostle said to the men of Athens [Acts 17:25]. They're not interested, but they're not consistent about that, because the moment they're in trouble, the moment they reach a time of crisis, the moment they face death, oh how different it is. Then they care, oh, and they'll cry to God to save them. How many atheists, Voltaire is a wonderful example of that, praying to God at the very end of his life, to spare him, oh, give me a few more hours of life, promising everything to the doctors if they'll only advance his life a few hours.

Well, that's what Gallio stands for: "he cared for none of those things." And then you remember, in a few years after that the Apostle Paul is a prisoner taken from Jerusalem to Caesarea to save his life. The Jews had vowed with an oath to kill him, but he was spirited away, practically with a small army, to keep his life, to keep him safe. He's in Caesarea and he meets Felix. Felix was another governor; Felix, wonderful name, the name from which we get the word felicity, felicitation, felicitous, who was certainly a fortunate man. And he knew of the gospel, and here was this famous prisoner, brought before him, and with his wife. He wants to hear more about this.

The Apostle Paul, in answering the request for the first time it says that Paul reasoned with him of righteousness, of temperance or self control, and of the judgment to come. And evidently it impressed

Felix, because in another translation than our King James, which is a good one but I think faulty in this one instance, because it says that Felix was terrified. As well he might be, for he was a wicked man, yet he did not believe. He brushed Paul off, saying “go thy way. When I have a more convenient season, I’ll call for thee.” And the wonder of it was that he did. But there was a hidden motive, an ulterior motive in that. It says that Felix hoped that money would be given him by the friends of Paul, to secure his release.

So you see, how could a man like that be saved? It says that after two years of imprisonment of the Apostle Paul Felix was transferred, and another man came into his place, Festus. Festus, and Felix, desirous to curry the favor of the Jews left Paul bound, didn’t do anything about him, although he certainly knew this was no criminal. No reason why he should have been kept in ?? ??.

So Festus asks Agrippa, this was the son of the Herod that suffered a tremendous death, a horrible death. You remember he took the place of a god, when the people worshipped and said “this is not the voice of a man but the voice of a god,” he was immediately stricken, and he died eaten of worms. Just think of it: worms eat the body after it’s dead, but they didn’t wait for him to die. He died that way. Well this man was the son, Agrippa was the son of that Herod. His real name was Herod Agrippa II, and he was there to listen to the Apostle Paul give his reasons for why he should be set free.

Paul did a very remarkable thing after telling of his conversion for the third time. That’s recorded in the 26th chapter of the book of Acts, Acts 26, we should read it. The Apostle Paul labors with Herod Agrippa, to reach his soul. He did a very daring thing. He pointed him out and said, “King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets?” And not hearing an answer, he said “I know that thou believest.” Herod Agrippa had to answer. This was his answer, according to the King James Version “almost thou persuaded me to be a Christian” [Acts 26:28].

But I think other translations go a little more accurate, and the thought is this. It’s more in the form of a question, “with a little more, are you trying to persuade me to become a Christian?” Just think what that would have meant to Herod Agrippa. He would have had to join forces, he would have had to join the Christians of that day, who were treated like the Apostle Paul, as criminals. Herod Agrippa was not ready for that. So when he said that, the Apostle Paul gave what I believe is one of the most magnificent answers. He said “I would to God that not only thou, but all that hear me this day, were both almost and altogether such as I am, except these bonds.” A prisoner then, in those chains; perhaps those chains were clanking as he said it. Just think of the daring of that man, to make such a statement. He wished everyone in that room, and there were lots of them, the small and the great, he wished they were like him.

There was a man who wanted to leave. He could say at the end of his life, “I know whom I have believed” [II Timothy 1:12]. And that’s the gospel. The gospel brings us into relation with Jesus Christ. If you haven’t until now, or you’re not certain of it, you haven’t believed this person who hung upon the cross as your savior, the one who wants to be your savior, but who can only be your savior if you will apply to him, in God’s way, and that way is to repent of your sins, turn your back upon the past life, get right with God, accept Christ as your savior. Come to him, owning that you’re only a sinner, but that he died for you. That was the burden of our songs today, that Christ died for us. But it’s only when we realize that he died for me; it doesn’t do me much good to say he died for all, although that includes me, but if we say with the Apostle Paul, “Son of God who loved me, and gave himself for me”

[Galations 2:20], then we've reached the highest point, and God will honor that. We turn to him in simplicity; God is a God of reality. We have to meet him on his terms, and his terms are so easy. I see it's past my time, and I thank you for your kind attention.

I thought of a verse that would be a nice one to leave with you for the next three months of so that I shall be away. I think it's a verse that all of us would not only enjoy, but would be a wonderful thing, for the increase in this place, have all the chairs filled. The Apostle Peter, at the end of his life, the last thing he wrote was, "grow in grace, grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" [II Peter 3:18]. You see there he gives the Lord the full title that he is entitled to.

Gracious God and Father, as we come to the end of this little message, we pray thou would bless it to our souls, and give us greater consciousness of the need around us, and of the blindness, and the darkness from which we have been delivered. Help us to be a help to some soul or souls. As we take leave of one another now we thank thee for this day, this day of the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the proof that he is no more in this scene but at the right hand of God, looking down upon us, calling upon men to be saved, if they will only come. "Many are called, but few are chosen" [Matthew 22:14]. We thank thee that we are among those who have answered the call, and are among thy chosen ones. May thy blessing be upon each one here, and each family. Bless the dear little children downstairs; may the word of God have been blessed to their souls too. We ask it in Christ's precious name, amen. The meeting is over.