

If We Could See This

Written by Bill Perkins

While reflecting on the subject of a blinding bias, the Holy Spirit drew me to the story of two sisters, Martha and Mary, who sent a message to Jesus informing him their brother, Lazarus, was sick (John 11:3). Like the twelve disciples, and us, the sisters viewed physical death as irreversible.

This because they knew of only three Old Testament exceptions—two involving Elijah and Elisha, separately raising a dead boy in the power of God. The third involved a dead man who sprang to life when some men unintentionally threw his body onto the bones of Elisha (1 Kings 17:21-2; 2 Kings 4:35; 2 Kings 13:21).

The Story of Two Sisters

The sisters believed and looked forward to a future bodily resurrection, as did many ancient Jews. But in their mind, a dead person stayed dead until that future event. I'm sure they didn't expect Jesus to travel to Bethany and heal Lazarus since on his last visit the Jewish religious leaders sought to kill him (John 7:1). It wouldn't have mattered anyway, when Jesus received the message, Lazarus was dead and buried. Jesus said as much when he told his disciples:

“Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep; but I am going there to wake him up.’ His disciples replied, ‘Lord, if he sleeps, he will get better.’ Jesus had been speaking of his death, but his disciples thought he meant natural sleep. So then he told them plainly, ‘Lazarus is dead, and for your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe.

But let us go to him’” (John 11:11-15 NIV).

It would be easy to miss a crucial part of the Lord's statement. I read it many times before I noticed. Jesus said, “I am glad I was not there, *so you may believe*” (Italics mine).

Believe what? The Twelve were present when Jesus raised the widow of Nain's son from the dead (Luke 7:11-17). They were also present when he raised Jairus's daughter (Mark 5:22-24; 35-43). They certainly believed in the Lord's resurrection power because they had seen it twice. Or, did they? Had they learned anything about the power of Jesus from those two miracles?

As they considered trekking to Bethany, fear wrapped around their hearts and squeezed. That's why they resisted, “But Rabbi,” they said, “a short while ago the Jews there tried to stone you, and yet you are going back?” (John 11:8). A moment later Thomas said to the rest of the disciples, “Let us also go, that we may die with him” (John 11:16).

If the disciples had viewed danger in the light of the Lord's previous teaching, they would have known Jesus had to die to be resurrected. The Lord repeatedly said He must travel to Jerusalem to die AND be raised from the dead. In Luke 9:31-32 Jesus told them, “The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men. They will kill him,

and after three days he will rise.’ But they did not understand what he meant and were afraid to ask him about it.”

How could they not understand? How? Their bias against the death of the Messiah created a dark eye which shielded their minds from the light of truth. They had a blind spot that prevented them from hearing the Lord’s repeated promise of dying AND being raised.

The Bias of Unbelief

Even though they had seen the Lord raise two people from the dead, and perform countless miracles, the disciples feared the Jews in Bethany would kill them all.

Are we different?

With each new loss, or potential loss, don’t we revert to a paradigm of unbelief? Don’t we replace the good eye of faith with the dark eye of doubt? Don’t we focus on the fear in front of us rather than the Lord within, around and above us?

And then the Lord, despite our doubt, provides. God parts the Red Sea. He slays the giant. He shuts the Lion’s mouth. He multiplies loaves. In that wonderful moment, isn’t our faith strengthened? Don’t we experience a growth spurt that makes our previous faith seem immature? I could tell a lifetime of stories about God’s amazing protection and provision. So could you.

Yet no sooner is the celebration behind us, then the next challenge looms, like an attacking bear, resurrecting old fears. In a moment, the dark eye blocks light from our mind, and fear captures our soul. The darkness prevents us from seeing the bright truth before us—we are seated with Christ in the heavenlies, at God’s right hand. Why can’t we see that:

Death has no stinger.

Loss, no leverage.

Fear, no foothold.?

Why do we resist viewing danger, death and fear through the eyes of the Lord’s resurrection life and power?

An Unhealthy Bias Blinds us to Truth

The answer is simple: Our old biases, and the lies that support them, are pushing against what God has revealed. This brings us to an important bridge we must cross. This is the bridge which will take us to the place of understanding unhealthy biases, how they damage our spiritual eyes and create darkness in our soul. This we must grasp. Then God will give us clear eyes to see the truth, as Jesus said, “I have come into the world as a light, so that no one who believes in me should stay in darkness” (John 12:46 NIV).