

RESOLVED: Sight

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Resolved: Sight

Several years ago, right before my auto accident that I got my brain injury from, I was diagnosed with having double vision. It was manageable until the accident; then my chronic headaches and the way my brain processed stuff meant that I would have to wear glasses from there on in that have a prism in them, in order to correct it.

The reason I bring all this up is because there was a test that the eye doctor did to examine the severity of my double vision. I had to look through this monstrous piece of headgear machinery and I saw two red dots. He was testing to see when the dots were together and when the dots were apart. There was only one dot in the machine but I saw two, and the dots were consistently side by side. He did this test with the lights on in the room. Then he shut off the lights, and suddenly the two dots disappeared and I only saw one. So I asked him, why does my double vision disappear when the lights are out? He said essentially this: With the lights on, your eyes are trying to take in all the images and all the data from the center of your eyes to the peripherals and it's overwhelming them. With the lights out, you can focus solely on the dot; no distraction.

And I thought, that's a lot like our spiritual lives, isn't it? There are so many distractions, there is so much that is crowding out our singleness of vision on Christ and the purpose he has for our lives, that it's easy for us to get overwhelmed and begin to get double vision. The Bible tells us:

“Where there is no vision, the people perish, but he who keeps the law, he is blessed.” (Proverbs 29:18, nkjv)

This means there is a singularity of vision that keeps us blessed and moving forward. We want to have singular vision for our lives, so we can make the most out of what we have, and make the most difference in the world around us.

But this world can be so distracting. Spiritually speaking, double vision comes very easily for us. It reminds me of what James says in the Bible:

“But anyone who needs wisdom should ask God, whose very nature is to give to everyone without a second thought, without keeping score. Wisdom will certainly be given to those who ask. Whoever asks shouldn't hesitate. They should ask in faith, without doubting. Whoever doubts is like the surf of the sea, tossed and turned by the wind. People like that should never imagine that they will receive anything from the Lord. They are double-minded, unstable in all their ways.” (James 1:5-8, ceb)

In fact, King David said it clearly in the Psalms:

“My heart is set on keeping your decrees to the very end. I hate double-minded people, but I love your law.” (Psalm 119:112-113, niv)

So as we move into this new year, with everything going on in the news, in the culture, in the world around us, it is going to be vital that we look resolutely, exclusively, and singularly to Jesus for our purpose and direction and decisions in life.

We are beginning this series called “Resolved.” which has a couple of different meanings. First of all, with the new year we always think of “resolutions,” right? Those are decisions we make that we want to be resolved about. The problem is, despite the best of intentions, we don’t often follow through with them. Recent research says that 80% of us fail to keep our resolutions,¹ and there are all kinds of reasons for that. But for this series we’re not talking about decisions we *hope* to keep; we are talking about decisions that have already been made. The word “resolved” means two things: one meaning is to make up one’s mind; to have a firm determination about. The other is a question or dilemma whose solution has been arrived at or determined; that a question has been resolved. This series is not to encourage you to make decisions that you have a 20% chance of keeping; this is about *living in what has already been resolved* in your life. If Christ is in your life, you have everything you need to succeed in your Christian life – *if you will be singular in your focus and faith.*

You are going to need this in the coming year. There will be struggles you will face, there will be temptations you’ll need to overcome, there will be doubts and attitudes that you will want to avoid, especially with everything that is going on in the world today. Your family, your neighbors, your co-workers and classmates all need to see Jesus in you; *God has resolved that you are to be Christ in this world.* He’s given you his Holy Spirit so that you can do it. More than that, God has a vision for our church and this community we are in; it’s exciting, it’s bold, and it’s clear. And we see it and are moving toward it. And you have a part to play in this church because he’s brought you here! I want to make sure you are aware that in a month we will embark on something together unlike anything we’ve ever done before, and it will take all of us, resolved together, to see it through as God will work miraculously through all of us together. These are exciting days; this year we launch a major initiative that will put significant legs to the mission statement that we have faithfully followed all these ten years that I’ve been here: *to introduce people to Jesus Christ, to equip people with a faith that works, and to live as people with purpose.* At the same time, there is also an exciting, bold, compelling vision that God has for *your* life, personally. I want you to be able to see it more clearly.

Today, I want to tell you how it works. I want you to understand what it takes to have resolved sight – singular focus on Christ in your life.

Let’s start with the obvious – if you are going to see, you’ve got to have...

1. **Open Eyes**

Jesus’ favorite miracle was to open the eyes of blind people. Jesus said:

¹ <https://www.inc.com/marla-tabaka/why-set-yourself-up-for-failure-ditch-new-years-resolution-do-this-instead.html>

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has chosen me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free the oppressed and announce that the time has come when the Lord will save his people." (Luke 4:18-19, gnb)

One of the significant proofs of the Messiah, according to the prophets of the Old Testament, was restoring sight to the blind. Healing the blind was a validation that Jesus was God's Son. Restoring sight did more than provide physical healing; it was representative of the fact that he would open our eyes spiritually. Without Jesus, we are spiritually blind; we cannot see anything of the spiritual reality of our lives, and that spiritual reality is more permanent, more directional, than anything in this world. That's why the Bible says:

"We look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal." (2 Corinthians 4:18, esv)

Having correct spiritual sight is our "northstar" for all of our lives. So we need to turn to Jesus for healing of our sight. When Jesus died on the cross for your sin and mine and rose from the dead, he made it possible for you to suddenly have spiritual eyesight! Without him we are blind; not only blind, but spiritually *dead*. We need to be born, spiritually speaking.

Jesus talked about this when he had a conversation with a religious leader named Nicodemus and he said:

"I am telling you the truth: no one can see the Kingdom of God without being born again.' 'How can a grown man be born again?' Nicodemus asked. 'He certainly cannot enter his mother's womb and be born a second time!' 'I am telling you the truth,' replied Jesus, 'that no one can enter the Kingdom of God without being born of water and the Spirit. A person is born physically of human parents, but is born spiritually of the Spirit. Do not be surprised because I tell you that you must all be born again.'" (John 3:3-7, gnb)

Let me try to explain it this way. Without Christ, we are "alive" if you will, in body and soul. We are alive physically, and we are alive mentally and emotionally. Wouldn't you agree? But also without Christ we are dead in spirit. Paul said to the church in Colosse:

"You were at one time spiritually dead because of your sins and because you were Gentiles without the Law. But God has now brought you to life with Christ. God forgave us all our sins..." (Colossians 2:13, gnb)

So when you accept Christ's *complete* death in place of your death, then according to the Bible we then become alive in our spirit, *in Christ*. The Bible says:

"People whose lives are based on selfishness think about selfish things, but people whose lives are based on the Spirit think about things that are related to the Spirit. The attitude that comes from selfishness leads to death, but the attitude that comes from the Spirit leads to life and peace. So the attitude that comes from selfishness is hostile to God. It doesn't submit to God's Law, because it can't. People who are self-centered aren't able to please God. But you aren't self-

centered. Instead you are in the Spirit, if in fact God's Spirit lives in you. If anyone doesn't have the Spirit of Christ, they don't belong to him. If Christ is in you, the Spirit is your life because of God's righteousness, but the body is dead because of sin. If the Spirit of the one who raised Jesus from the dead lives in you, the one who raised Christ from the dead will give life to your human bodies also, through his Spirit that lives in you. So then, brothers and sisters, we have an obligation, but it isn't an obligation to ourselves to live our lives on the basis of selfishness. If you live on the basis of selfishness, you are going to die. But if by the Spirit you put to death the actions of the body, you will live. All who are led by God's Spirit are God's sons and daughters." (Romans 8:5-14, ceb)

That means that by being alive in your spirit, now you can see spiritually. You now have opened eyes to see things the way God intends, and you can begin to see his direction for your life. Does that make sense so far?

Great. Then once we have opened eyes, we need...

2. ***Corrected Sight***

When we've put our entire faith in Christ, our spiritual eyes have been opened, healed from blindness, literally opened from being closed in death. Now we need to make sure we are seeing clearly without the distractions around us that can cause double vision. There's an African proverb that says, "The man who tries to walk two roads will split his pants."² We must be single-minded; we need to walk one road. Our sight needs correcting.

The Apostle Paul realized in a literal way how blind he was; that the direction he was heading with his life was wrong and that he needed Christ. The book of Acts describes Paul's journey from being misdirected, dead and blind in his spirit, to having his eyes opened and seeing God's direction for his life. The amazing thing was that Paul is described as being one of the most religious people on earth. Still, he was spiritually blind:

"Meanwhile, Saul was still breathing out murderous threats against the Lord's disciples...he might take them as prisoners to Jerusalem. As he neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, 'Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?' 'Who are you, Lord?' Saul asked. 'I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting,' he replied. 'Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do.' The men traveling with Saul stood there speechless; they heard the sound but did not see anyone. Saul got up from the ground, but when he opened his eyes he could see nothing. So they led him by the hand into Damascus. For three days he was blind... In Damascus there was a disciple named Ananias. The Lord called to him in a vision, 'Ananias!' 'Yes, Lord,' he answered. The Lord told him, 'Go to the house of Judas on Straight Street and ask for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for he is praying. In a vision he has seen a man named Ananias come and place his hands on him to restore his sight.' 'Lord,' Ananias answered, 'I have heard many reports about this man and all the harm he

² A West African proverb, heard in conversation by my father, a missionary to the Maninka tribe; submitted by Janet Weiss, Leesburg, Florida

has done to your holy people in Jerusalem. And he has come here with authority from the chief priests to arrest all who call on your name.’ But the Lord said to Ananias, ‘Go! This man is my chosen instrument to proclaim my name to the Gentiles and their kings and to the people of Israel. I will show him how much he must suffer for my name.’ Then Ananias went to the house and entered it. Placing his hands on Saul, he said, ‘Brother Saul, the Lord--Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you were coming here--has sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit.’ Immediately, something like scales fell from Saul’s eyes, and he could see again. He got up and was baptized...” (Acts 9:1-18, niv)

Interesting, isn’t it? Heading the wrong direction with his life, apart from Christ, highly and zealously religious, still Paul was blind and dead in his spirit. Then, when Ananias is sent by Christ to lay hands on him and pray for him in Jesus’ name, Paul’s eyes are opened and he is baptized.

Now here’s where it gets really interesting and really cool. In the book of Acts, especially in the early chapters, laying hands on someone and praying for them meant they would be filled with the Holy Spirit. In this case, Ananias is filled with the Holy Spirit. Paul repents and accepts Jesus as Lord. Ananias lays hands on Paul who is *not* filled with the Holy Spirit. And then Paul is filled with the Holy Spirit. Paul’s eyes are opened (he becomes spiritually alive) and then his vision is corrected (he is filled with the Holy Spirit). Do you understand that? Paul writes from his own experience:

“May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.” (1 Thessalonians 5:23, niv)

Being sanctified means to be set apart completely, wholeheartedly, resolutely for God in Christ. To be resolved in our whole spirit, soul, and body allows us to be filled with the Holy Spirit! Is this starting to come together for you?

Paul uses the word “spirit,” using the Greek word “pneuma.” It’s where we get the word “pneumatics” from. A pneumatic machine is run by what? By air. The Spirit that we receive is in the air, or the breath, of God. In the Garden of Eden, when God made man in his image, it says:

“The LORD God formed a man from the dust of the ground and *breathed* into his nostrils *the breath of life*, and the man became a living being.” (Genesis 2:7, niv)

So that part of God that makes us godly – in His image – from the very beginning was his Spirit. Now here’s something else that’s interesting: after Jesus rose from the dead, and before he ascended into heaven, he imparted the Holy Spirit to his disciples *by breathing on them*:

“Jesus said, ‘Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.’ And with that he breathed on them and said, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit.’” (John 20:21-22, niv)

The word “Spirit” there is pneuma; same one.

Here's where all this should start to come together for you: when you become a Christian, you are made alive in your spirit. Your spirit is now able to house the Holy Spirit, the breath of God, which sanctifies you and makes you holy – sets you apart for a life of purpose – not just in your spirit but in your whole being – body, soul, and spirit. The only way you and I are going to have single-minded, resolved sight, is if we are looking to God wholeheartedly, allowing His Spirit to fill us, then setting our sights solely on Him. *Spiritual sight is a metaphor for being single minded in our commitment to and focus on Jesus.* That's why the Bible says:

“Let us look only to Jesus, the One who began our faith and who makes it perfect.”
(Hebrews 12:2, ncv)

Is all this starting to come into view? So now you can have...

3. *Focused Vision*

This gets even more interesting. I want to take you to a passage in Romans that is talking about living a life of complete surrender or submission to Jesus. When we let him have full control, he can fill us completely with his Holy Spirit. In Romans 7 Paul talks about the wrestling match that happens in the Christian between their sinful nature and the Holy Spirit, before giving him full control. Paul wants the sinful nature to be done away with so the Holy Spirit can have complete control of his whole being. So it ends with the question:

“Oh, what a miserable person I am! Who will free me from this life that is dominated by sin and death?” (Romans 7:24, niv)

And the answer to that question comes immediately following:

“Thank God! The answer is in Jesus Christ our Lord....And because you belong to Him, the power of the life-giving Spirit has freed you from the power of sin that leads to death.” (Romans 7:25 - 8:2, nlt)

There's the Spirit (pneuma) again. Later, in Romans 12, it talks about living a surrendered life to the power of the Holy Spirit – making your life a living sacrifice to and for God, so that he can direct your life in his purpose and power for your life. He talks about how to find out what God's will is for your life – his purpose, his direction for your life. It says:

“Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God--this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is--his good, pleasing and perfect will.” (Romans 12:1-2, niv)

Catch that? You will learn to know God's purpose for your life! You will prove the vision, the direction for your life.

Do not be conformed, but be transformed. Do you know what “conformed” means? It means to be shaped from the outside. To be conformed means to live from the outside in – letting circumstances, people, and even your physical body, drive your life.

Now contrast that with “transformed living,” or inside out living, which is living by the Spirit. Look again at that verse:

“Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is--his good, pleasing and perfect will.” (Romans 12:1-2, niv)

Transformed how? *By the renewing of your mind.* When we are filled with God's Spirit – sanctified – we live from the inside out. God's Spirit is the one directing our life. He changes the way we *think*; what our priorities are, what our values are, how we see circumstances, and how we see people and the world around us – with love and compassion. That's why the Bible says:

“For as he thinks in his heart, so *is* he.” (Proverbs 23:7, nkjv)

By being alive in our spirit with the Holy Spirit, we think differently, so we become different. We begin to become less distracted, and we can focus in without distraction on the *one* thing in our life that is important – Jesus. Just like that red-dot test the doctor gave me.

So what do you do? Well, if you haven't accepted what Jesus did for you, and asked him to clean your life out, then you are spiritually dead. But I believe God is awakening something within you so that you understand what I am saying, and you need to respond and accept him. That will open your eyes.

If you are a Christian and you recognize yourself as someone with double vision – you are probably still wrestling with the Holy Spirit. It's time for you to quit fighting him and let him have control so he can fill you.

That's how you can have clear vision for God's purpose for your life.

My prayer is that you will begin to see things for your life from God's perspective. There's a great story that illustrates this, from the Old Testament about the Prophet Elisha. There was an evil king that was determined to destroy Israel, and he knew that Elisha was the one who God was using to guide the king of Israel. So the evil king surrounded Elisha and one of his servants. When Elisha and his servant saw the armies surrounding them, the servant got real nervous. Then it says this:

“Elisha's servant got up early and went out. He saw an army with horses and chariots surrounding the city. His servant said to Elisha, “Oh, no! Master, what will we do?”

“Don't be afraid,” Elisha said, “because there are more of us than there are of them.” Then Elisha prayed, “Lord, please open his eyes that he may see.” Then the Lord opened the servant's eyes, and he saw that the mountain was full of horses and fiery chariots surrounding Elisha. The Arameans came toward him, so Elisha prayed to the Lord, “Strike this nation with blindness.” And the Lord struck them blind, just as Elisha asked.” (2 Kings 6:15-18, ceb).

We see here that God's people see something entirely different that others can't see, and those who do not follow God are the ones who are really the blind ones. There are all kinds of spiritual activity going on in the world around you, if you have eyes to see it.

No matter what goes on in your life and in this world, you don't have to get distracted. No matter how bad things get, no matter what the headlines say, no matter how overwhelming your circumstances are, God is greater than anything you are facing. Keep your eyes on him.

Pray

Let me tell you why this is especially important: God is leading our church into some very, very important days. In one month we will begin a new sermon series, which will really be an initiative and effort that will require all of us to work together. I strongly encourage you to plan to be with us *every Sunday* from February 9-March 8. We will be going through devotional material together that we've written specifically for us, we will be praying together, and we are asking everyone to be in a small group or Bible study during those six weeks together. There will be special small groups set up just for that six weeks, so if you are not in one, or maybe you aren't able to be in one for a long time, you can at least be in a group for just six weeks. Because during that time we are going to be asked to see what God wants to do in our lives and our church, and we'll be challenged to follow him with radical obedience. To be willing to do so will require that we are filled with the Spirit and that our sight is focused in on Jesus.