

2 Peter 1:9

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins.

Analysis

But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. Peter now describes the tragic opposite—someone lacking the virtues (vv. 5-7). Such a person is "blind" (*typhlos*, τυφλός), completely sightless spiritually, and "cannot see afar off" (*myōpazōn*, μυωπάζων), a rare word meaning "nearsighted" or "squinting." The combination seems paradoxical but emphasizes different aspects of spiritual vision loss: total blindness to spiritual reality and myopic focus on immediate, earthly concerns rather than eternal realities.

This person "hath forgotten" (*lēthēn labōn*, λήθην λαβόν, literally "having obtained forgetfulness") "that he was purged from his old sins" (*tou katharismou tōn palai autou hamartiōn*). The verb "purged" (*katharismos*, καθαρισμός) refers to cleansing from sin's guilt and defilement—likely alluding to baptism or conversion. "Old sins" (*palai hamartiōn*) denotes the pre-conversion sinful life.

Peter's logic is devastating: profession of conversion without fruit-bearing virtue reveals either spurious faith (never truly cleansed) or tragic forgetfulness of salvation's reality. Someone who genuinely experienced cleansing from sin's defilement and guilt would pursue holiness eagerly; failure to do so exposes either self-deception or culpable negligence. This passage challenges easy-beliefism that divorces justification from sanctification, treating conversion as mere intellectual assent without life transformation. True faith remembers salvation and responds with gratitude-driven pursuit of holiness.

Historical Context

Spiritual blindness was a common biblical metaphor (Isa 6:10; Matt 15:14; 23:16-26; John 9:39-41; Rom 2:19), particularly applied to religious leaders who claimed special insight but demonstrated spiritual ignorance. Peter applies this devastating diagnosis to those claiming Christian identity but lacking Christian character. In the ancient world, memory was highly valued as essential for wisdom and virtue; forgetfulness indicated moral failure, not merely cognitive lapse.

The reference to purging from sins likely evokes both Old Testament ceremonial cleansing (Lev 16; Num 19) fulfilled in Christ and Christian baptism as the initiatory rite symbolizing cleansing. Early Christians understood baptism as marking radical break with former life, identifying with Christ's death and resurrection (Rom 6:1-11). Someone living unchanged contradicted their baptismal profession. False teachers exploiting grace to justify sin (2:19; Jude 4) demonstrated precisely this blind forgetfulness—claiming Christian status while pursuing corruption.

Related Passages

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. How regularly do you rehearse the gospel personally, reminding yourself of what Christ has saved you from and for?
2. What practices help you maintain spiritual vision for eternal realities rather than myopic focus on temporary concerns?
3. How should churches address professing Christians whose lives show no fruit, balancing grace with truth?

Interlinear Text

ῳ	γὰρ	μὴ	πάρεστιν	ταῦτα	τυφλός	ἐστιν
he that	But	lacketh		these things	blind	is
G3739	G1063	G3361	G3918	G5023	G5185	G2076
μυωπάζων	λήθην	λαβὼν	τοῦ	καθαρισμοῦ		
and cannot see afar off	and hath forgotten			that he was purged from		
G3467	G3024	G2983	G3588	G2512		
τῶν	πάλαι	αὐτοῦ	ἀμαρτιῶν			
G3588	old	G846	sins			
G3819			G266			

Additional Cross-References

1 John 1:7 (Sin): But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.

Hebrews 9:14 (Parallel theme): How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

Ephesians 5:26 (Parallel theme): That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word,

Romans 6:11 (Sin): Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Titus 2:14 (Sin): Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.