

Say That Again!

A Christian panellist on ABC's Q&A shares the truth of the Word of God on an issue and this is followed by some ragged applause from the studio audience. But the eyes of some fellow panellists seem to glaze over. Still other panellists have heard wrongly and retort with flippancy or scorn. The next question from the celebrated host doesn't seem to flow on from the previous. Sometimes it almost seems people aren't speaking the same language!

Ever Seeing and Ever Hearing But ...

Jesus experienced this phenomenon many times from His hearers even when He spoke the very words of eternal life and performed many miracles. On one occasion He quoted Isaiah to describe the paradox of those who were not ready to receive the spiritual truth that He came to share. Jesus said, **"Though seeing, they do not see; though hearing, they do not hear or understand"** (Matthew 13:13).

In doing so He gives us an insight into the condition of spiritual deadness. People in Jesus' time, like those in our time, choose not to believe despite the evidence. Because of their constant refusal and rejection of Jesus people eventually experience the hardening of their hearts. And it is God who does this simply to confirm their own choices. Isaiah **"because he saw Jesus' glory and spoke about Him"** wrote **"He [God] has blinded their eyes and deadened their hearts"** (John 12:40a,41).

Everybody's Spiritual Condition

Man was created in the image of God as an eternal being. But eternal life was conditional that man would not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. God said **"when you eat of it you will surely die"** (Gen 2:17).

Sadly Adam and Eve chose to sin by eating the forbidden fruit. Paul writes of the tragic result for mankind saying that, **"just as sin entered the world**

through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned" (Romans 5:12).

Sin is a deep discrepancy between who we were created to be as image-bearers of God. It leads to both physical and spiritual death. The Rev Dr John Stott writes, *"the death that Paul refers to is a factual statement of everybody's spiritual condition outside Christ ... which included ourselves until God had mercy on us."*

But for many this statement about the 'deadness' of non-Christian people does not seem to square with the everyday experience. All of us see lots of people who make no Christian profession whatsoever but who appear very much alive and do wonderful things. Are we to say that such people are dead?

Stott answers *"Yes, indeed, we must and do say this very thing. For in the sphere that matters supremely (which is neither the body, nor the mind, nor the personality, but the soul) they have no life. ... They are as unresponsive to him [God] as a corpse."* Spiritual death is the condition of being separated and alienated from the living God because of sin.

Their Hearts are Hardened Against God

Those who are spiritually dead CANNOT please God. Paul writes, **"The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace; the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God"** (Romans 8:6-8).

Without the indwelling of God's Holy Spirit our hearts are hardened and we live in the futility of our thinking. Everything we do is rebellion against God and is displeasing to God.

They are Blind to the Glory of Jesus

Those who are spiritually dead CANNOT see the light of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Again Paul writes that,

"the god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel that displays the glory of Christ, who is the image of God" (2 Corinthians 4:4).

The Gospel is declared to everyone. But Satan as **"the god of this age."** has blinded the spiritually dead who don't believe in Christ **"who is the image of God"**. Jesus said, **"For judgment I have come into this world, so that the blind will see and those who see will become blind"** (John 9:39).

Shocked that Jesus thought they were spiritually blind, Jesus said that it was only spiritual blindness that could explain their stubbornness and stupidity. Adamant in their claim that they could see Jesus told the Pharisees that they were **"guilty of sin"** (John 9:41). To those who remain open and recognize how sin has truly blinded them from knowing the truth, Jesus gives spiritual understanding and insight.



They are Deaf to the Voice of the Holy Spirit

Those who are spiritually dead CANNOT understand the things of God. Paul writes, **"the person without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God but considers them foolishness, and cannot understand them because they are discerned only through the Spirit"** (1 Cor 2:14).

We should not be surprised when people are not able to grasp spiritual truth no matter how clearly it may have been presented.

From Death to Life

But what the spiritually dead CANNOT do for themselves God is more than able. Jesus points to how the spiritually dead can escape death and receive eternal life. He said, *“whoever hears my word and believes in Him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life. ... a time is coming and has now come when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear will live”* (John 5:24-25).

In saying that the dead will hear His voice, Jesus was talking about the spiritually dead who will hear, understand and see Him as the Son of God. Our part is to keep sharing the words of life of Jesus and praying that God by His Spirit will soften the hardened hearts. In this way the spiritually dead can receive the mercy of God and be saved.

*Merciful Heavenly Father, We come to you on behalf of those who are separated and alienated from You because of sin. We ask that in Your mercy You would rescue them knowing that Your desire is that none should perish. Thank You Jesus that You came into the world so that the blind would see. We stand against the work of Satan who has blinded the eyes and blocked the ears and hardened the hearts of all the sons of Adam. In the Name of Jesus we ask that You by Your Holy Spirit will enable the spiritually dead to see, hear and believe in Jesus for Your Son said **“no one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him”** (John 6:44). In the Name of Jesus we pray. Amen.*

About ‘Image of God’ Leaflets

In the Bible we read that God *“created man in His own image”* (Genesis 1:27). Many maintain that all human history revolves around this truth. The Judeo-Christian belief in the unique dignity of human beings is at the very foundation of Western civilisation.

The 2010 Canberra Declaration therefore states:
“We believe that all human life, being made in the image of God, has intrinsic and equal value from conception to life’s natural end.”

‘Image of God’ leaflets relate the doctrine of man as created in the image of God to various issues we face in Australia today.

The 21 leaflets in SERIES ONE are dedicated to Sophie Scholl who was martyred at the age of 21 in World War II for writing and distributing leaflets.

You can download other ‘Image of God’ leaflets at the Canberra Declaration website.

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to Protect

- *Religious Freedom*
- *Marriage and Family and*
- *Human Life*
in Australia

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Leaflet 16

Spiritual Deadness



and the Image of God