INTRODUCTION
“Relevant” is a word that is often tossed around in Christendom today. It is a word that is used to emphasize the need for the Church to adjust its message to reach today’s society. This premise has resulted in the contorting of many Biblical doctrines and Church polity to adjust to whims of an ever changing society. The twisting of Scripture for the purpose of adjusting to the world is so numerous time would not suffice to cover such illustrations. It is the purpose of this paper, however, to emphasize the real culprit of the so called lack of relevancy of the Church in the world today – spiritual blindness.

The problem with spiritual blindness is that you can’t see that you are until the blind has been lifted. A great many men have charted courses to do that which they considered to be well pleasing to God, only to find they were way off course from what God desired. The apostle Paul persecuted Christians from town to town convinced he was doing God a favor. He later found that he was completely blinded to the true will of God.

Spiritual blindness blinds men to seeing truth of God’s plan and purposes.

Some in the church at Corinth were convinced that their present tense salvation was to be achieved on their own merit. There were teachers who had convinced them that Paul was the false apostle. Paul pointed out the source of their problem – they had been blinded by Satan.

William Barclay in his New Testament Words describe the two primary words translated for blindness as “the man who stubbornly takes his own way, who is deaf to the appeal of God, because he has been busy making God in his own image. They describe the man who thinks he knows better than God.”

Spiritual blindness is a key culprit in understanding the inability of the church to reach the world today. Spiritual blindness has always been a problem from the beginning of the church. We endeavor in this paper to explore the four causes of spiritual blindness and their effect upon those gripped by it. We also look to prove that God has the ability to reach through the darkness of spiritual blindness. Consequently, the Church need not move from its moorings to be “relevant” in today’s culture.

I.THERE ARE TERMS USED IN SCRIPTURE TO DESCRIBE THE PROBLEM OF SPIRITUAL BLINDNESS.
A. Old Testament terms used for blindness.
   1. Sanver – is used three times in the Old Testament of physical blindness that occurs suddenly.\(^1\) Cf. Gn. 19:11
   2. Ivver – is used metaphorically of men who walk in the darkness of ignorance or of misery.\(^2\) Cf. Is. 56:10

B. The place of spiritual blindness is the eyes of the mind.
   1. Physical sight involves two general elements:
      a. Light reflects off an object an enters into the physical eyes of those who are looking at the object.
      b. The mind interprets the object in the line of sight based upon information stored.
   2. The eyes for understanding spiritual things is the heart.
      a. The heart needs light to understand spiritual matters. Eph. 1:18 cf. Heb. 6:4
      b. The absence of illumination is a state of spiritual blindness. Heb. 10:32

C. There are two primary words used in the New Testament for spiritual blindness.
   1. “Tuphlos” is the Greek word used which means *to blunt the mental discernment, darken the mind.*\(^3\) cf. Matt. 23:16,19,24,26; John 12:40; 2 Pet. 1:9; 2 Co. 4:4
      a. Tuphlos pertains to the blinding of the “eyes” – one’s mental capacity to see –gaze with the ability to perceive what one is seeing. Cf. Matt. 5:16
      b. The “eyes” pertaining to one’s mental faculties is associated with the heart. Eph. 1:18; 4:18
         i. The mind of the person blinded doesn’t have ability to process thoughts on a spiritual plain.
         ii. The emotions of the person are corrupted to feeling things inconsistent with what is true.
         iii. The will of the person is corrupted from seeing things
   2. “Poros, is a type of blindness in which is *the act of the covering of a callus; obtrusiveness of mental discernment; dulled perception; the mind of one who has been blunted.* Cf. Eph. 4:18
      a. The Hebrew word is kabad which emphasizes the insensibility and want of conviction. Cf. Ex. 7:14
      b. The Greek word is porosis which means a *stony concretion; to petrify; the to become callous, unimpressible.*\(^4\) Cf. Eph. 4:18; 2 Co. 3:14; Heb. 3:8
      c. Scripture draws a distinction between blindness and hardness. Cf. John 12:40 consistent with God’s will.

D. There are other New Testament terms used to emphasize the blunting of spiritual insight.

---

\(^1\) Wilson’s Old Testament Word Studies
\(^2\) Wilson’s Old Testament Word Studies
\(^3\) Joseph Thayer Lexicon
\(^4\) Thomas Sheldon Green Lexicon
1. “Slumber” – the Greek word is katanuxis which means *pricking or piercing; insensibility or torpor of mind such as extreme grief easily produces.* cf. Rom. 11:8

2. “Darkened” – *to shrouded in moral or spiritual darkness.* cf. Eph. 4:18; Rom. 1:21

3. “Hid” – is the Greek word krupto which means *to conceal that it might not become known.* cf. Lk. 18:34

4. “Closed” – describes eyes that are not opened to the truth from God. cf. Matt. 13:15

5. “Hardness” is a word that is emphasized both in the Hebrew and Greeks.
   a. The Hebrew word is chazaq which means *to leave one to his own obstinacy and rebellion, and withdraw that favour or benevolence by which alone he might be brought to relent.*
   b. “Skoliosis” is the Greek term used for hardened meaning – *to leave to stubbornness and contumacy.* cf. Rom. 9:18; Acts 19:9; Heb. 3:13

E. Some words are used in Scripture to emphasize the blunting of information arriving through the ear gate.
   1. Dull is the Greek word nothroi which means to be sluggish. Cf. Heb. 5:11, 6:12
   2. Heavy is the Greek word bareos which means to be too heavy. Cf. Acts 28:27

F. Scripture lists four major causes of spiritual blindness.

II. NATURAL BLINDNESS IS A MAJOR FACTOR IN SPIRITUAL BLINDNESS.

A. The apostle Paul uses the term “natural man” to describe the fallen state of unregenerate men. 1st Co. 2:14
   1. The word used in Scripture to describe natural blindness is the word psuchikos which notes that which emanates from the soul.
   2. There are other words used in the New Testament to describe the fallen state of unregenerate man.
      a. Paul uses the term “Gentiles” as reflective of unbelievers. cf. 1st Thess. 4:5; Eph. 4:17
      b. Paul uses the term “unbeliever” to denote the unregenerate man.

B. The fallen nature of unregenerate man blunts them from insight into spiritual truth. 1st Co. 2:14
   1. The natural man doesn’t welcome the things from the Spirit of God.
      a. “Things” in the context are the things God has revealed to those who (are loving) Him. cf. 1 Co. 2:9, 12
      b. “Receiveth not” is the Greek word dechomai which is used in Scripture of *embracing, follow.* cf. 1st Thess. 2:13

---

5 Bible Works (copyright 2006)
6 Thomas Sheldon Green’s Lexicon
7 Bible Works (copyright 2006)
8 William Wilson’s Old Testament Word Studies; emphasized so in piel.
9 Thomas Sheldon Green Lexicon
10 Thomas Sheldon Green Lexicon
c. The things from (source) the Spirit of God are “foolish” (moria – without sense) to him.

2. The natural man doesn’t have an ability to “know” the things from the Spirit of God.
   a. “Know’ is the Greek word aorist infinitive use of ginowsko which is to have an experiential knowledge of a matter. Cf. Phil. 3:10; Eph. 3:19
   b. The word for “able” means to have an ability – the unsaved man is limited in matters related to spiritual things. cf. John 3:3,27; 14:17

C. The “understanding” of the natural man is absent of light. Eph. 4:18
   1. The word “understanding” is the term dianoia – thoughts that flow through the mind. cf. Col. 1:21; 1st Pet. 1:13;
   2. The word “darkness” means to be deaeth of spiritual insight. Cf. Rom. 1:21

D. The problem on blindness is removed at salvation.

III. CARNAL BLINDNESS IS THE BLUNTING OF SPIRITUAL INSIGHT IN A SINNING BELIEVER.
   A. The term “carnal” is used once in Paul’s letter to the Corinthian Church. 1st Cor. 3:1
      1. “Carnal” is defined by C. I. Scofield as the renewed man who, walking after the flesh, remains a babe in Christ; is able to comprehend only its (Scripture’s) simplest truths, “milk”.11
      2. The apostle Paul uses the word to describe his state when he attempted to overcome the sin nature apart from law. Rom. 7:14
   
   B. A teacher of God’s word doesn’t have the ability to communicate deeper truths of the Word to a carnal believer. 1st Cor. 3:1

   C. The carnal believer doesn’t have an ability to take in deeper truths of the Word of God. 1st Co. 3:2

   D. The sin nature works in the carnal man to give a false impression of what he sees. Heb. 3:13

IV. JUDICIAL BLINDNESS IS A BLUNTING OF THE MINDS OF THOSE IN THE NATION ISRAEL SO THAT THEY CANNOT PERCEIVE GOD’S DECREE.
   A. The nation Israel is blinded until the contingent from among the Gentiles has been brought into God’s program. Rev. 11:25; Rom. 11:7, 10, 17, 25; Acts

11 Scofield Reference Bible note (pg. 1214)
28:27
1. Israel is blinded through “hardness”.
2. Only a part of Israel is blinded. Cf. Rom. 11:7
3. Israel’s blindness will remain until the “fullness of the Gentiles” has come in. Ro. 11:25
4. A factor is Israel’s blindness is that their eyes are “darkened”. Rom 11:8, 10; Acts 28:27

B. Israel already possessed a natural blind. Is. 42:19

C. Satan also blinds Israel. 2 Co. 3:14

V. SATAN BLINDS MEN IN AN ATTEMPT TO THWART GOD’S PLANS.
A. Satan has been allowed to blind unsaved men from believing the gospel. 2 Co. 4:4
   1. Satan is seen in Scripture as the god of this “world” (age).
      a. There a distinction in Scripture between the word world and age. cf. 1st Co. 1:20
      b. The word “mind” here is the Greek word noema which is the result of the act of the mind as it reaches a conclusion. Cf. Phil. 4:7
   2. Satan blunts the conclusions of the mind of the unbeliever in order that it doesn’t arrive at the proper conclusion. 2 Co. 4:4
      a. The god referenced in this context is Satan. cf. John 16:11
      b. An age is a period in God’s program in which He is teaching something to rational creatures by comparison or contrast. Cf. Gal. 1:4; 1st Co. 2:6-8; 1:20
      b. The language used for “blind” denotes a continuous cloaking over the conclusions of the mind in order to prevent the unsaved from believing.

B. Satan can blind believers to the truth of present tense salvation. 2 Co. 11:3; 1st John 2:11 cf. 2 Tim. 3:13

CONCLUSION
Scripture is relevant for any generation. There will never be a time when the accurate teaching, interpretation and preaching of the Word of God is not relevant to any generation, culture or social classification. The x factor in the relevancy of the Word of God lie not the Word of God, but in the individual to whom the Word reaches. It is said of the Thessalonians that they received the Word of God as it were, not the Word of men, but the Word of God. We learn from Scripture that they Holy Spirit play a crucial role in the reception of the Word. Because of natural, judicial, carnal and satanic blindness, divine intervention is necessary to reception of the Word of God. This truth is essential to a consistent handling of the Word in this Dispensation of Grace.