

**Mark 8: 22-26; “Men Like Trees Walking”, Sermon # 50 in the series -
“Astonished at His Teaching”, Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall
on January 31st, 2016, in the Morning Worship Service.**

This passage is a picture of how our gracious Lord does His blessed work of helping people to see clearly after they come to know Him personally and are saved. When a person is converted to Christ, when they come to know the Lord, some things happen instantaneously, and there are other things which develop over time. The regeneration of a person’s heart is a sovereign act of God, and it is instantaneous. It takes place at a certain point in time; the time of God’s choosing. But the ability and extent to which each individual Christian is able to truly understand what has happened to them, and their ability to see spiritual things clearly, may be vastly different in different people. Usually, when a person is first converted to Christ, they are able to see some things clearly. They know that they have believed the gospel. They know that they have placed their faith in what Christ has done for them. But following the miracle of the New Birth and their being saved by believing in Christ, there may be some definite distortions in their perception of how they see men. And this is what I want to speak to you about today. It is only the Lord Jesus who can clear up these difficulties in the way that a Christian perceives other people around them.

We do not find another incident like this in the whole of the gospels or the book of Acts. Only Jesus could do what was done here. And so I want to give you the 3 acts of the Lord Jesus, from this text, which will show us the stages of His work, in giving clear spiritual sight to a believer. These will relate to your Confession of Christ, (verses 27-30) which we will be studying in coming weeks. And they will also relate to the verses on self-denial (verses 31-38) which we will be studying after that. But this morning let us think together of how the Lord Jesus corrects the distorted vision of believers. The 1st act which our Lord Jesus Christ did in relation to this blind man’s being given sight, was that He took him by the hand and he led him out of the town. The 2nd act which Christ did was to spit on the man’s eyes and to put His hands upon him. And the 3rd act which He did was that He put His hands upon his eyes again and made him look up. And then he was restored, it says, and “he saw everyone clearly”. So let us see if we can better understand what conversion to Christ is, by looking more closely at this incident.

The 1st act which our Lord Jesus Christ did in relation to this blind man’s being given sight was that He took him by the hand and he led him out of the town.
(Verses 22 and 23a)

“Then Jesus came to Bethsaida; and they brought a blind man to Him, and begged Him to touch him.” “So He took the blind man by the hand and led him out of the town.” It is never a vain thing to believe that you can bring people to Christ. You can speak to them about Him, and you can speak to Christ about them. This man didn’t come to Christ on his own; he came to Christ, having been brought to Him. Sometimes people are hesitant to come to Christ on their own; you might be the one to lead them to Him. You and I certainly cannot bring people physically to Jesus Christ, for He is in heaven and we are upon the earth. But we most certainly can bring them, and their case, to Jesus in prayer. Whether they are unsaved relatives or whether the person we are considering has a physical problem, we should not hesitate to come to the Lord in prayer, begging Him that He would have mercy upon them. Prayer is a begging of blessings from Christ, the One who most certainly is able to bestow them. What we can do, in our day, is to bring people with us to church, if they will agree to come. Sometimes a person doesn’t see their own unsaved condition as clearly as you do, and so if you truly care for their soul, it will be the greatest help that you can give them, for you to ask them to come with you to church where Christ is being preached and where His power is greatly at work. It is their eternal

welfare which is at stake. You may say only a few words to them about their great need of Him, and point them to Him, or you might ask if you could pray with them, and in this way lead them to Him. Of this, if they will permit it; you ought never to be ashamed. The Lord may save them; your having brought them, and your having asked Him if He would give them sight. Don't dictate the terms of another person's conversion to Christ. Christ does not always use the same and identical means to open the eyes of the understanding of a person to Himself. Rather bring them to Him in prayer and speak to them yourself, pointing them to Him as your great Savior. Remember; it is not so much your method of doing spiritual work that saves people or converts them to Christ; it is Christ's immediate wisdom and power that do that. But it is vitally important that you find ways to bring them to Jesus. When they brought this man to Jesus, Jesus saw that He could indeed do something for him, and it says that, "He took him by the hand and led him out of the town".

Now why did He do this? Why did He take this man out of the city? Couldn't He have simply spoken the word and have healed him right then and there? Yes, He no doubt could have. But there are some lessons for us here. I think that the reason that Jesus led this blind man out of town was that He was teaching him that obtaining salvation and spiritual sight is not a matter of popularity; it is a matter of being crucified with Christ to the World and all of its influence upon your mind and heart. In your conversion you are leaving town with Jesus, (so to speak) in order for Him to do a work of grace upon your soul. Do you remember Bunyan's Pilgrim in Pilgrim's Progress? Bunyan dreamed and he "saw a man clothed with rags, standing in a certain place, with his face from his own house, a book in his hand, (that is the Bible), and a great burden on his back." (that was the burden of his sin.) Bunyan looked, and saw him open the book and read therein; and as he read, he wept and trembled; and not being able longer to contain, he broke out with a lamentable cry, saying, "What shall I do"?

"In this plight, therefore, he went home, and refrained himself as long as he could, that his wife and children should not perceive his distress; but he could not be silent long, because that his trouble increased." "So he opened his mind to his wife and children and said, 'O my dear wife, and the children whom I love; I your dear friend am myself undone by reason of a burden that lies hard upon me.'" "I am for certain informed that this our city will be burned with fire from heaven; in which fearful overthrow, both myself, with thee, my wife and you my sweet babes, shall miserably come to ruin, except (the which yet I see not) some way of escape can be found, whereby we may be delivered." Well, you know the story if you have read it. He hesitated to leave the city because others did not see their danger as he did. You see, the Lord was opening his eyes. But when he was walking in the fields one day, he ran into Evangelist who gave him a parchment roll with the words on it, "Flee from the wrath to come"; that is, the wrath that is coming upon all men in the Day of Judgment if they do not repent.

Bunyan says, "The man therefore read it and looking upon Evangelist very carefully said, 'Whither must I fly?'" "Then said Evangelist, pointing with his finger over a very wide field, 'Do you see yonder wicket gate?'" "The man said, 'No'." "Then said the other, 'Do you see yonder shining light?'" "He said, 'I think that I do.'" "Then said Evangelist, 'Keep that light in your eye, and go up directly to that place, so shall you see the gate; at which when you knock, it shall be told thee what thou shalt do.'" "So the man began to run." Then it says, "Now he had not run far from his own door, but his wife and children perceiving it, began to cry after him to return, but the man put his fingers in his ears, and ran on, crying Life!" "Life!" "Eternal life!"

You see, this is what must take place in the life of a person who would have eternal life and salvation in Christ. He must leave town with Jesus. When you hear someone like a pastor or an evangelist preaching the gospel to you and directing you to flee from the wrath which is coming, if you will heed that message, it is like Jesus Himself taking you by the hand, and leading you out of the City of Destruction. Don't look back. Flee from the wrath to come. Don't think of

whether your friends or your brothers and sisters are doing it also, or whether they will come with you. You flee from the wrath to come, and into the loving arms of Jesus. When Jesus takes you by the hand, spiritually speaking, he will lead you out of town. “But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.” (Galatians 6: 14)

But 2ndly- The next action which our Lord took was to spit on the man’s eyes and to put His hands upon him. (Verse 23b)

“And when Jesus had spit on his eyes and put His hands on him, He asked him if he saw anything.” These were the outward means of grace that Jesus used to heal this man. There was Divine power behind them, in the exercise of them, by our Christ. He spit on his eyes. This would have been a rude and disgusting thing to have happened to this man if it was anyone else but Jesus doing it. Jesus’ spitting on this man’s eyes was the placing of the liquid of His Holy mouth upon this man’s eyes so he could see. In conversion, what Jesus uses to give people spiritual sight and discernment is the regeneration of their heart and mind. They are blind, but you and I must understand that they are sinfully blind. If they are to be saved, they must be given eyes to see. The eyes of their heart must be opened. And the outward means that our Lord uses in a person’s conversion, is the word of God. And the word of God must be accompanied by the power of the Holy Spirit in a washing action for the person to be born again. The liquid of Christ’s holy mouth, was spit into this man eyes physically. And this was done intentionally to give us a picture of what every Christian who has distorted views of the Christian life must have done for them spiritually speaking. This is what must be done spiritually speaking, to the one whom Christ intends to heal, and correct their spiritual vision.

Some people become indignant when they hear the preacher telling them that they are sinners and that they must have Christ come and save them from their sins. They are offended when they are told that their own ideas of what it means to come to know God and to have eternal life are not true. They become indignant when they hear that they cannot be saved by their own works, ceremonial or moral or otherwise. They need to find real spiritual sight. They can only have it if Jesus “spits in their eyes”. I believe that Jesus did this action very carefully, and very gently; not in contempt as a man would sinfully spit into another man’s face if he detested him; but rather He did it slowly and lovingly. This washing, this lubrication of the eyes is very necessary if you are to be cleansed of your sinful blindness, your willful blindness which each of us has, in some ways, before conversion. Christ is not at all trying to be offensive to you, O sinner, when He spits in your eyes in the preaching of the word. He loves you very tenderly in this way, even as He is portrayed as doing in Ephesians 5: 25 and 26. He acts like a husband would toward his wife, in all tenderness toward your soul. “Husbands love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle.” And in Revelation 3: 18 the Lord Jesus counsels the church at Laodicea to buy from Him, “eye salve to anoint their eyes, that they might see”.

Let us understand that a sinner’s gaining true spiritual sight, came at a great cost to Christ Himself. Turn with me to Mark 10: 32. “Now they were on the road, going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus was going before them; and they were amazed.” “And as they followed they were afraid.” “Then He took the twelve aside and began to tell them the things that would happen to Him: ‘Behold we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and to the scribes; and they will condemn Him to death and deliver Him to the Gentiles; and they will mock Him, and scourge Him, and spit on Him, and kill Him.’ “And the third day He will rise again.” Evidently Christ thought of this spitting that was going to happen to Him, to be a real part of His suffering for sinners; for He specifically mentions it to be so. If you will turn over to Mark chapter 14 you will see the fulfillment of this prophecy. Jesus is on the trial before

the chief priests and the scribes and has thus far answered nothing in relation to testimony being brought against Him. In verse 60 it says, "And the high priest stood up in the midst and asked Jesus, saying, 'Do You answer nothing?' 'What is it these men testify against You?' 'But He kept silent and answered nothing.'" "Again the high priest asked Him, saying to Him, 'Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?' 'Jesus said, 'I am.'" "And you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven." "Then the high priest tore his clothes and said, 'What further need do we have of witnesses?' 'You have heard the blasphemy!' 'What do you think?' 'And they all condemned Him to be deserving of death.'" "Then some began to spit on Him, and to blindfold Him, and to beat Him, and to say to Him, 'Prophesy!'" "And the officers struck Him with the palms of their hands."

Now look over at Chapter 15 and verse 16. "Then the soldiers led Him away into the hall called Praetorium, and they called together the whole garrison." "And they clothed Him with purple; and they twisted a crown of thorns, put it on His head, and began to salute Him, 'Hail, King of the Jews!'" "Then they struck Him on the head with a reed and spat on Him; and bowing the knee, they worshiped Him." "And when they had mocked Him, they took the purple off Him and put His own clothes on Him, and led Him out to crucify Him." Now I want you to see that these things that Jesus suffered, when the religious but unbelieving Jewish leaders wanted to show their contempt of Christ, they spit upon Him. When the Gentile soldiers wanted to show their contempt of Jesus, they mocked Him and spat on Him. When Jesus wanted to show His love for this blind man; He spat upon his eyes. Oh the difference is so very great, between the love of Jesus Christ and the contempt of unbelieving men! But these sufferings of our Lord Jesus are how we come to have our spiritual sight when we believe in Him. Why will you not come to the Lord Jesus Christ? Is it because you are afraid that He will spit in your eyes? Remember that Jesus did not spit in contempt, but in compassion. He spit in order that He might heal. He did not come into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. But in order to save, He Himself had to suffer the spitting of wicked men upon Himself in order that you might be saved, and in order that you might see and see clearly. It is because He was spit upon; it was because He was held in contempt, both by sinful unbelieving men and religious unbelieving men; taking your place in these things; and going further to cross to die there for you there; that you are saved and your blindness is taken away. This is why you can know the reality of His putting His hands upon you, spiritually, and giving you sight.

Now the 3rd act which Jesus did, is that He put His hands upon his eyes again and made him look up. (verses 23b -26)

"And when He had spit on his eyes and put His hands on him, He asked him if he saw anything." "And he looked up and said, I see men like trees, walking." "Then Jesus put His hands on his eyes again and made him look up." "And he was restored and saw everyone clearly." This, I am trying to tell you, shows us the stages which many people passes through in conversion. I hope that you have come to understand that all people who become true Christians, experience in their conversion, the first two of these acts upon their mind; the Lord "taking them out of the town" and the Lord "spitting in their eyes". But I think that we can also safely say that not all people when they are converted, "see men as trees walking". Why do I say this? I say it because of the way that this man's difficulty is described for us. He said, "I see men like trees walking." He had his sight, but his sight was distorted. And his distorted sight is described for us in a particular way. It is described as "seeing men as trees walking". It was the way that he saw men that was distorted. He saw them as bigger than real life. They were bigger than they should have been in this man's sight. And I think that this is the spiritual lesson that the Lord would have us to learn. Sometimes when a person becomes a Christian and they are able to see things spiritually for the first time, their sight is not perfectly clear in some particular

ways. They are not seeing men in the way that our God would have them to see them. They have a distorted view of men. To them men are much bigger in their sight than they should be. They are like trees in their height.

In other words, when a person is like this, when they look at other people, especially Christian people who have great gifts and abilities, the influence then, that this gifted person has upon the one who cannot see this clearly, is far greater than it should be. The result is, that that person who has this distorted vision, ends up paying more attention to what men say, and what men think, than in reading and listening to what God says, and what He thinks, as it is related to them in His word. This is a problem which, if it is not corrected by the Lord Himself, affects the way that that person will see, and the way that they will live their whole Christian life. The way that we see men, and what we think men are able to do, is very important; not only for the young Christian, but also for any Christian. Some people when they become Christians do not have a problem with what we are talking about here. They see clearly that all men are only as truly great as God's gift and grace make them, and they do not idolize them. Other Christians have a distorted view of men. They follow them as their disciple, and they promote what they are saying and doing as though that person had all knowledge in living the Christian life. This does not mean that we cannot learn from other Christian people who have good discernment in Biblical things. But sometimes, a Christian may not realize, or perhaps they have forgotten, that Christ has many important and good lessons to teach each of His people. And this includes even those who have been raised up to be the teachers and leaders in churches, denominations, and Christianity at large.

Let each person listening to me try to understand if you have this problem. Your faith must not rest upon men, but upon Christ who is the God-Man. He is your ultimate leader. He is your ultimate teacher. Matthew 23: 8 – “But you, do not be called ‘Rabbi’; for One is your Teacher, the Christ, and you are all brethren.” “Do not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven.” “And do not be called teachers; for One is your Teacher, the Christ.” “But he who is greatest among you shall be your servant.” “And whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.” You see, my dear friends, you are a followers of Christ, and Him implicitly, not of any man implicitly. Christ through this passage is asking you if you are seeing this clearly. Christ put His hands on this man eyes again and made him look up. Dear Christian, has Christ made you to look up to Him for everything that you need; for wisdom and power to do what is right, and grace to live to His glory?

In Psalm 44, verse 1 we see 20/20 vision which a Christian needs. It is the view which sees the power of the flesh, the power of the natural man, as vain for the Christian. “We have heard with our ears, O God, our fathers have told us, the deeds You did in their days, in days of old: You drove out the nations with Your hand, But them You planted; you afflicted the peoples, and cast them out.” “For they did not gain possession of the land by their own sword, nor did their own arm save them; but it was Your right hand Your arm, and the light of Your countenance, because You favored them.” “You are my King, O God; command victories for Jacob.” “Through You we will push back our enemies; through Your name we will trample those who rise up against us.” “For I will not trust in my bow, nor shall my sword save me.” “But you have saved us from our enemies, and have put to shame those who hated us.” “In God we boast all day long and praise Your name forever.”

Let me put it to you this way my friends. If you trust in man, you will boast in man, and that boast in the end will fail you. But if you trust in Christ, He will give you good discernment, and you will boast in the Lord all the day long. Your faith and your trust will not be in men, but in God. He will take away the distortion in your sight; placing man and his wisdom, man and his power, man and his ability at the center of things. He will lay His hands on the eyes of your heart and correct that distortion. No longer will you see men as trees walking because Jesus has

laid His hands on you again. Now you can look up to Him and see every man clearly because your sight has been restored. Now you will live a God-centered life in doctrine and practice because Christ has touched your spiritual eyes. Let us remember this important truth in closing. There are some Christians who see men as having more power and wisdom and ability than they really have. But these Christians will need to have their vision corrected. You should understand that only Christ Himself can correct their vision. But you can pray for them, and bring to their attention the many verses from the Bible which teach us that good and accurate spiritual sight comes from having Christ touching the eyes of their hearts again and restoring them to a correct Biblical view. When Christ does this, they will no longer see men as trees walking. They will no longer be talking about man's ability in spiritual matters, but rather about what God through Christ can do for men, and through them.