

**Mark 8: 22-26; "Men Like Trees Walking", Sermon # 50 in the series -
"Astonished at His Teaching", Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall
on September 27th, 2009, in the Morning Worship Service.**

I wanted to wait a few Sundays with regard to preaching this particular sermon because of its subject matter in relation to the sermons which I have previously given to you. This sermon is out of its consecutive order, but I have a purpose in doing it this way. I have been declaring to you the truth about Confessing Christ; what an important subject it is. I said to you that in order to make a good Confession of Christ, a Confession that indicates that you have been saved from your sins; you must recognize the uniqueness of Christ among men, and you must have the Father reveal Him to you so that you truly see your need of Him and receive Him to yourself for the forgiveness of your particular sins. You cannot be saved on someone else's Confession of Christ; you must make Him your own. It is not enough that one of your relatives was a pastor and that you grew up religious. That will never bring you to heaven and glory. You must personally believe in Him and experience the glory of His saving grace for yourself. We also saw, that after our conversion to Christ, how we must expect resistance to that Confession from Satan and unbelieving people around us. Christ said, "I came not to bring peace, but a sword, and a man's enemies may indeed be those of your own household." We saw that Satan uses unbelieving people to oppose the advance of Christ's kingdom, and that in the history of the Church that there have been a number of great systems of false religion or counterfeit Christianity that he has raised up; but that "the gates of hell" shall not ultimately prevail against Christ's Church. And we also saw how we have the responsibility to continue steadfastly in the Apostle's doctrine; to faithfully come to church and to learn the spiritual truths that God would have us to live by; in order that we might grow and become strong in our Confession of Him. Peter and the other Apostles were given the Keys to Christ's kingdom, the Church, and it was their infallible word written down in the Bible that we submit to. This is an integral part of the true Confession of Christ.

And this is where the sermon that I am about to preach to you fits in. Sometimes we do not understand the importance of being able to see things clearly in a spiritual way. This passage is a picture of how our gracious Lord does His blessed work of conversion. When we are converted to Christ, some things happen instantaneously, and there are other things which develop over time. The changing of the bent and direction of our mind is related to regeneration which is instantaneous, and it takes place at a certain point in time. But the ability and extent to which each individual Christian is able to see spiritual things clearly can be vastly different in different people. Usually when a person is first converted, they do see the major things related to their faith in Christ clearly. But sometimes they do not. Sometimes there are things that are distorted in their perception of how they see men. And I want to assert to you this morning that it is only the Lord Jesus who can clear up these difficulties in the way that we perceive things. 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 of giving

clear spiritual sight to a believer. These will relate to your Confession of Christ, which we have already begun to look at; and they will also relate to the verses on self-denial which we will be studying in the near future. 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.

1st of all - 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 men 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 here for us. This city was Bethsaida, and although Christ did do many mighty miracles in this town; the vast majority of the people there did not believe in Him and they had not repented of their unbelief and their other sins. Turn with me to Matthew 11: 20. It says, "Then He began to rebuke the cities in which most of His mighty works had been done, because they did not repent." "Woe to you, Chorazin!" "Woe to you, Bethsaida!" "For if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes." "But I say to you, it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for you." Jesus' miracles were done, and they are done even today, in order that men and women and young people might repent of their sinful way; their godless way; sometimes their self-righteous way that they have been living thus far; and change the direction that they are going. They will most certainly perish and end up in hell if they do not heed the words of Christ and turn away from their sins. In God's mind, our not repenting of our sins deserves an eternal and everlasting punishment. He will not have rebels come into His eternal City. Those cities of unbelieving people which have had the most exposure to the light of the gospel and the message of Christ, and have done nothing to change their way of life; they shall be more heavily punished in the Day of Judgment than those wicked sinners of Sodom and Gomorrah. It is entirely possible that this is one of the reasons that Jesus led this blind man out of town. The people of Bethsaida were unworthy to behold this miracle because they had seen so many miracles before, and had not repented of their sins. This is what I call being gospel hardened. Let me ask you this morning; Has Christ led you out of town? A person who hears the gospel of Jesus Christ many, many times; and realizes that Christ can do great things to save the soul and heal the body, and can give the inestimable gift of eternal life; and yet they do not enter in; and they do not repent of their sins; they are in a very dangerous position. And sometimes the problem is that they are too enamored with this world. "Do not love the World or the things in the world." "If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him." "For all that is in the world--the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life--is not of the Father, but is of the World." "The World is passing away and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God shall abide forever."(1 John 2: 5-17) All of your sinful lusts; those of your flesh desiring the things of this World which are selfish or sinful; those desires then being reinforced by unbelieving people around you through your job, your family members, and even sadly through others who are professed Christians; O heed the warning today and repent! All of your pride, foolishly thinking that you do not need to recognize that you are totally dependent upon God for every good thing, and instead thinking that whatever you become or do; that you owe it all to yourself; this God does not approve of. The Lord in the Day of Judgment will not ask you how popular you were; or how faithful to your friends you have been; He will be declaring to you the extent to which you have been faithful to Him. Jesus Christ is infinitely great and infinitely good to the one who trusts in Him. But the one who is trusting in Him will publicly declare it. Here Jesus is saying you must all repent or you will all likewise perish, and perish eternally.

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 overcoming its influences upon your mind and heart. In your conversion you are leaving town with Jesus, 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 is 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."

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, and being exercised in them. He spit on his eyes. This would have been a rude and disgusting thing to have happened to him 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 they are sinfully blind. If they are to be saved, they must be given eyes to see. The eyes of their hearts must be opened. And the outward means that our Lord uses in a person's conversion, is the word of God which is accompanied by the power of the Holy Spirit in a washing action. The liquid of Christ's holy mouth is spit into the eyes, spiritually speaking, of the one whom He intends to heal. 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 slowly and lovingly. This washing, this lubrication of the eyes is very necessary if we are to be cleansed of our sinful blindness, our willful blindness which we have 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."

Our 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 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 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 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, "Prophecy!" "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. 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 this man. 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 that shows us the stages which many people pass through in conversion, is 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." (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 He put His hands on his eyes again and made him look up." "And he was restored and saw everyone clearly." Now I hope that we can see better, now, after going through the first two points; 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. They were 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 is this particular regard. They are not seeing men in the way that God designed it. 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. Their gifts and their abilities and their influence upon the spiritual sight of a Christian who has this problem are far greater than they should be. So that person ends up paying more attention to what men say and what men think than they do what God says, and what He thinks. 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 for not only 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. Other Christians have a distorted view of men. Let each person listening to me try to understand if you have this problem. Christ through this passage is asking you if you are seeing clearly.

Christ "put His hands on this man eyes again and made him look up." In closing let me give you verses which, by the good hand of Christ upon you, will take away this distortion in your spiritual sight if you have it. Psalm 39, verse 4. This is a Psalm penned by the great King David; the man after God's heart. "Lord make me to know my end, and what is the measure of my days, that I may know how frail I am." "Indeed, You have made my days as handbreadths, and my age is as nothing before You; certainly every man at his best state is but vapor." "Surely every man walks about like a shadow; surely they busy themselves in vain; he heaps up riches, and does not know who will gather them." Let me ask you today if you have seen the vanity of living this life for the pursuit of money; being busy all the time and thinking that if you just have enough money that then you can serve God. This is not a godly way to live. David calls this a shadow of the true life of living for Christ. In the margin of verse 6 it says that such a person "makes an uproar for nothing". All this show is vain. You need to see that it is God that gives the best things and makes your life to abound with blessings. When you rush around thinking that it is your clever mind, and your great and hard work, and your building your own kingdom here upon the earth that is the meaning of life; life becomes very vain. In verse 7 David says, "And now, Lord, what do I wait for?" "My hope is in You." "Deliver me from all my transgressions; do not make me the reproach of the foolish." "I was mute, I did not open my mouth, because it was You who did it." "Remove your plague from me; I am consumed by the blow of Your hand."

"When with rebukes You correct man for iniquity, You make his beauty melt away like a moth; surely every man is vapor." Let me ask you this; do you see men in this way; as a vapor? Do you see how frail you really are, or are you trusting in your own strength rather than Christ's? Do you see that your days as are handbreadths and your age as nothing before God? If you don't, you need to have Christ correct the way that you see things. The time of your life here upon the earth is moving on. A thousand generations before you have all lived their lives out, just as you, thinking that this world and their dreams for this world were the end-all of their existence, and they were wrong. They died, and those whose vision never changed are presently in torments, in a place preparing for everlasting burnings. "Knowing the terror of the Lord we persuade men," says the Apostle Paul. Oh how much time many Christians waste pursuing their own greatness, their own glory, and their own kingdom, and their own righteousness when this is not the way that a Christian is to see things. That is a man-centered view of the Christian life. But it is not 20/20 vision. The Lord will have to put His hands on your eyes again and make you look up, perhaps because of your weakness or your ignorance, like the man of our text; or perhaps because of your sins, as was the case of David.

In Psalm 44, verse 1 we see the view which is clear. 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. Christians who call themselves Arminians are those who are seeing men as having more power and wisdom and ability than they really have. But those who call themselves Calvinists have had a further touch from Christ. They no longer see men as trees walking. We will look at the implications of this truth as we will go on further to speak about the subjects of Peter's rebuking our Lord for going to the cross, and what it means to take up our own cross.

