

The 3 C's!

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Father, this evening, we just thank You for the gift of life. We thank You for the gift of eternal life. Thank You for the Blood of Your Son that made it possible that we could all become Your children—blood washed and Spirit-born children of the Living God. We thank You. We thank You, Father. We have once again come together in Your name believing and knowing You will speak to us as a father speaks to his children. Touch our ears. Help us to hear. Help us to believe. Strengthen us to obey. Let us not be strong men and women with weak wills. Help us to be weak men and women before You with strong wills to obey You, Lord. Speak to us, Lord. In Jesus' name, Amen.

If you were there last week, last Wednesday, it's dangerous to look directly into my eyes, because I will ask you last Wednesday what did we hear? We heard about the Canaanite woman. Remember? We see her both in the Gospel according to *Matthew* and in *Mark*. And the question we ask is, yes, crumbs: can we persist in faith? Will we persist in faith? God will allow many kinds of tests in our lives, because it is like they say in English, it is the test that separates the boys from the men. One of the ways which God tests is – will we let offense stop us from pursuing God and stop us from fulfilling our destiny? The first step God takes. *Unless the Father draws no man can come to Him*, but after that, Scripture is very clear to all of us—*draw near to God and He will draw near to us*. Then, when James explains the way He draws near, it can get quite a bit offensive. Will we be satisfied or accept even if it is crumbs that is being offered? We want full loaves. What about crumbs? So, what separates great faith from ordinary faith? One of the things we learnt last Wednesday is, great faith does not get offended. It looks past the offense and keeps its eyes on the price.

Tonight, we will look at another of Jesus' encounters. This time, with a blind man. A couple of encounters, if we have time. In the Gospels, if I'm right, Jesus encounters seven blind men. That is perfect blindness. Seven men. But if you study carefully, each one of them is healed differently. The pattern is not the same. What God is telling is, "I am also a God of variety." You like to put Him in a box, but He doesn't stay there. He rarely saves two people the same way. If you actually were to share your testimonies, you will see that God touches you all in different ways. I mean, if everyone were to read the *Book of Acts* and see how Saul of Tarsus was saved and say, "I only believe in that one way," then you can't even go to Damascus now. Practically, half the city has been bombed out. So, don't put God in a box. How He works in individual lives, leave it to Him.

Tonight, we will turn to *Mark 8:22-26*. Five verses.

Mark 8:22-26

22 Then He came to Bethsaida; and they brought a blind man to Him, and begged Him to touch him. 23 So He took the blind man by the hand and led him out of the town. And when He had spit on his eyes and put His hands on him, He asked him if he saw anything. 24 And he looked up and said, "I see men like trees, walking." 25 Then He put His hands on his eyes again and made him look up. And he was restored and saw everyone clearly. 26 Then He sent him away to his house, saying, "Neither go into the town, nor tell anyone in the town."

So, we will see in verse 22 that this happened in a place called Bethsaida, and we see the names are not given but a set of people— 'they' – whoever it is, brought a blind man to Jesus. And they begged Him to touch him. Understand that. That's all we can do and that is what we must do. We can only bring people to Jesus. We cannot heal them. We cannot deliver them. We cannot save them. We cannot do anything. Only He can. We bring people to Jesus and we beg. We intercede and say, "Lord, touch them." But look beyond the healing. Here, we'll see a healing takes place. And often, we are very physical beings. God did not make us just as physical beings. But because we are very physical, we get obsessed with the physical healing that takes place. But the *Gospel according to John* tells us that every miracle he counts in the *Gospel according to John* only eight miracles, but calls them signs. So, every miracle is a sign and we have to go beyond the healing to see – what is God trying to tell us here? What is He trying to teach us here? Because every physical healing is a sign of spiritual reality. You see, when I just came to Christ, we were studying literature. They used to teach us about Aristotle and Plato and they used to talk about this is not real. They say this table is only an image of the reality that exists outside our understanding. Everything that we see here is only a shadow. The reality exists somewhere else, which is true. God tells

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Moses to make Him a tabernacle. He tells him, "Be very careful that you obey the specifics I'm giving you, because it was only a shadow image of what actually exists in heaven." Okay. So, we live in the physical reality but that physical reality will not be physical reality if you don't have a corresponding spiritual reality in the spiritual realm. So, don't get obsessed with the spiritual reality. Try to learn what God is trying to tell here about us. Because Lazarus came out of the grave, but he died. You can get healed, still fall sick and die. But the spiritual lesson you learn, you can carry through life into eternity. Therefore, all physical healing are signs of a spiritual reality or the lessons behind it. People are spiritually blind, deaf, mute and lame. And the proclamation, the first proclamation of Jesus in the synagogue in *Luke 4:18* is,

Luke 4:18

¹⁸ "The Spirit of the LORD is upon Me, Because He has anointed Me To preach the Gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to the captives And recovery of sight to the blind, To set at liberty those who are oppressed

When He makes this proclamation, He was not just talking about the physical part. Though this will happen. Many blind, seven blind men will recover their sight. Many mute will speak. Many deaf will hear. But that was only a physical manifestation of the reality of a spiritual truth that will take place that people are actually blind. People are actually deaf. People actually cannot talk. People actually cannot walk. It's a proclamation of a spiritual reality. Even the smartest man on earth, the most educated, one of the smartest; they talked about the one who passed away last week or a week before that, can only speak from his soul. Spiritual things are hidden from him. Stephen Hawkins said, "God is dead." And God said, "He is dead."

In *1 Corinthians 2*, this is how Paul, who was intellectual, who saw when his eyes are open, this is how he says.

1 Corinthians 2:10-15

¹⁰ But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God. ¹¹ For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God. ¹² Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God. ¹³ These things we also speak...

What is he saying? He is saying, "We saw through the spirit and what we speak are spiritual reality not just physical realities."

¹³ These things we also speak not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. ¹⁴ but the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. ¹⁵ But he who is spiritual judges all things, yet he himself is rightly judged by no one.

You need to sit and meditate upon these verses. You know, three people can read the same portion of Scripture. One can go completely in one tangent in the flesh, another can go in another tangent in the soul and the third can go in the spirit, the same Scripture. But every Scripture can be read in different levels. But Scripture says, "Unless the Spirit which we have received and the Spirit open our eyes; we will not understand the spiritual reality of what God is trying to speak to us, because God is Spirit." Remember Jesus told the Samaritan woman – God seeks those who will worship Him in Spirit and in truth.

We will see in this miracle which we see in *Mark 8* – Jesus touches man three times. The fact is that we all need these three touches from Christ. There are three anointing available – one is available in the outer courts; one is available in the Holy place; and one is available in the Most Holy Place.

First touch – the first awareness of salvation. Okay, the first awareness of salvation is the awareness of our blindness. I cannot receive sight unless, first, I acknowledge that I am blind. Okay. I can never receive sight unless, first, I am aware of my blindness. You can never receive knowledge unless you first acknowledge your ignorance. And that was the issue with the Pharisees. Nicodemus was troubled after his encounter with Jesus. He was an incredibly educated man in the Scriptures, but once he encountered Jesus, he encountered his own blindness. He realized, "I thought so far, I thought I saw

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but once I see this man and I hear Him speak, I hear His teachings and watch Him and watch His life, I think I am blind.” This man was blind and was brought to Jesus. Like I said, every man every woman every child has to be brought to Jesus. That’s the purpose of ministry – to bring people to Jesus, to point people to Jesus but remember; only He can lead and He will only lead those who acknowledge their blindness and who are aware of their blindness. There is a crowd over there and one set in that crowd brought a blind man to Jesus and the fact is that He takes the blind man alone by hand and leads him. You want to lead by Jesus? You need to acknowledge your blindness. If you don’t acknowledge your blindness with Jesus, He cannot lead us.

In *verse 23*, the first thing Jesus does, it’s interesting. The first thing Jesus does is He takes him by hand, the blind man and leads him away from the people who thought they could see. He leads him out of the town. He touches him. If you look at it, He touches him three times – first touch –he takes him by hand; second touch – He will spit and touches his eyes; Third – He will again touch his eyes. The first touch of God is the touch of the Holy Spirit, is the touch of conviction. In *John 16:8*

John 16:8

⁸ And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, (that’s the first touch)

When the Holy Spirit comes, when Jesus touches us, we are aware of one fact – I am blind. When the Holy Spirit touches us, we have three choices – We can be bad, we can be mad or we can be glad. Okay. you will see, these are the three ways people respond to the Jesus. There is a separation between the light and darkness, belief and unbelief. The first touch, He takes him by hand and separates from the unbelief, from darkness. We look at the physical reality and say, “This guy is blind, this people can see.” Jesus said, “No, they can’t see; he is going to see. Let Me separate the light from the darkness.” The first act of creation in *Genesis 1*, the first act of creation is

Genesis 1:3

³ then God said, “Let there be light”; and there was light. ⁴ And God saw the light, that it was good; and God divided the light from the darkness.

God will always divide the light from the darkness, separate light from darkness.

In *John 9*, in an instance with another blind man:

John 9:39

³⁹ And Jesus said, “For judgment I have come into this world, that those who do not see may see, and that those who see may be made blind.”

That’s exactly what happened that day in Bethsaida, who did not see; he said, “I am blind.” Jesus said, “You will see.” The others said, “We can see.” Jesus said, “You will be blind.”

John 9:39-41

³⁹ And Jesus said, “For judgment I have come into this world, that those who do not see may see, and that those who see may be made blind.” ⁴⁰ Then some of the Pharisees who were with Him heard these words, and said to Him, “Are we blind also?” ⁴¹ Jesus said to them, “If you were blind, you would have no sin; but now you say, ‘We see.’ Therefore your sin remains.

You are classroom teacher, whom do you help? The child who says, “I don’t know,” or the fellow who says, “I know”? Those who brought thought he was blind as they could see but spiritually speaking, Jesus separates them. Peter would say it this way in,

1 Peter 2:9

⁹ But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people...

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We love all that. We love adjectives! We love it! "Oh my gosh, I am peculiar." People say, "They are only peculiar in Church but they go to office, they don't want to be peculiar." When they go to Universities and colleges, they don't want to be peculiar; they want to be part of the crowd. Peculiar, special, holy nation, Priesthood

...that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;

Only those who have come out of darkness into His light will realize – I am a peculiar person. Why? I have come out of darkness into light. Paul, in his defense, before king Agrippa, will say, "This is what Jesus told me,"

Acts 26:17-18

¹⁷I will deliver you from the Jewish people, as well as from the Gentiles, to whom I now send you, ¹⁸to open their eyes, in order to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God,

Now, you see, he enhances it even more. The physical healing here denotes something much bigger. We move,

...from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God...

We are translated from one kingdom to another Kingdom,

...that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me.'

So, everything is put over there. So, let me tell you – if you do not acknowledge you are a sinner, do you receive forgiveness? If you don't acknowledge you are bad, can He make you good? If I don't acknowledge I am blind, can He give me sight? If I don't acknowledge the influence of the power of darkness over my life, can He translate me into the power of God's Kingdom? That is the first step – will we let Jesus lead us from unbelief to belief, from darkness to light?

The Pharisees were mad and Stephen. Remember when Peter preached on the Day of Pentecost, the people were cut to the heart. Why? The Word, like a sword, went in and showed the darkness in them and they were cut to the heart and cried, "What should we do?" When Stephen preached to the Sanhedrin, they were also cut to the heart and they gnashed their teeth and they were so mad. One was broken; they become glad. One was mad. You know what Jesus had told to Nicodemus? Jesus told Nicodemus in *John 3*.

John 3:19-20

¹⁹And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness...

They like being bad. Some are mad, some are glad; some like being bad.

...rather than light, because their deeds were evil. ²⁰For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. ²¹But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God."

So, God says, "When people are bad and they like being bad, they hate the light. They don't like the light." That's why cockroaches thrive in the dark.

So, after He leads him away from the crowd, He deals with him personally. Jesus deals. See, if you go through the Gospels; that's what we love about Jesus. Jesus ministered to a crowd but deals with individuals. He always deals with individuals everywhere. That's why you will see names popping up – "Zacchaeus, come down." To Bartimaeus, He will stop and say, "What do you want?" Everywhere. Samaritan woman. All through the Bible – individuals. You never see Jesus doing mass healing. Individuals. There, He deals with him personally. What is He trying to say? He is trying to tell us – God will deal with all of us personally. Yes, we come as a group. We worship as a group. We pray as a group. We study the Word as a group but Jesus deals with each one of you personally. Do not be satisfied with the crowd. Yes, I went to Church. Yes, I worshipped on Sunday. Yes, I took the notes. Yes, I was there on Wednesday. Yes, I was there on fasting and prayer. That's all fine but that's not salvation. Salvation is when God deals with us personally, one-on-one. God always deals with people

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one-on-one. The reason is – Christianity is an individual choice. So many think they are Christians because they were born in Christian families. Like Jews thought they were Jews because they were born into Jewish families. Paul will say in *Romans 2*, “It doesn't work that way.”

Romans 2:28-29

²⁸ For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh; ²⁹ but he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter; whose praise is not from men but from God.

Outwardly, every Jew will look the same but he says, “That doesn't make you a Jew.” What makes you a Jew is if you have been touched individually by the Spirit. The same way; it doesn't matter whether we are born in a Christian family. It makes no difference. You have to be born again individually by the Spirit. Hepzibah, if you are born in an airport, does it make you an aeroplane? No. Peter, if you are born in a railway station, do you become a train? No. God says, “If you are born in a Christian family, it doesn't make you a Christian.” God has only children and no grandchildren. When you reach heaven, all are brothers; no great-grandfather or grandfather; nothing. Everyone must be born again to be a child of God. That is the second touch. In *verse 23-24*,

Mark 8:23-24

²³ So, He took the blind man by the hand and led him out of the town. And when He had spit on his eyes and put His hands on him, He asked him if he saw anything.

First, the Holy Spirit comes, and He convicts us of sin. Then, He points us to the righteousness that is available in Christ Jesus and we need to make a choice. Spiritual rebirth is not forced on anybody. We are shown our real state – this is what you are, this is what Christ is. This is who you are, this is whom you can be. You can choose to be like Him. It's free but you have to choose.

...And when He had spit on his eyes and put His hands on him, He asked him if he saw anything. ²⁴ And he looked up and said, “I see men like trees, walking.”

One moment he was in darkness, the next moment he was in light. It happens instantaneously. I cannot remember but I can tell you 1984, last week of October. Exact day, I am not sure, but I know. Let me ask you, how many of you fell asleep last night or this morning? Whenever, do you remember? Unless your alarm rang or you looked at the clock, do you remember the exact moment when you woke up? Most of us don't, right? But you know you woke up. In an instant, you moved from darkness to light, right? And you know. Does anybody have to tell you, Hepzibah, that you are awake? You will know when you are born again. You know. You can't explain it. You know when you have crossed from death to life. You know. It's not connected with your baptism; it's not connected with anything you have gone through. You know – I have crossed from death to life. You know because you see. You perceived something which you never saw before because you know spiritually, your eyes start seeing the light of God which you never saw before. This is not knowledge, this is not wisdom; this is none of those things. You know you have broken through. You know the Kingdom of God is real. That's what God told Nicodemus, “When you are born again, you will see the Kingdom of God, you will enter the Kingdom of God.” He says, “How is that possible?” He couldn't understand. With all his Biblical knowledge, he couldn't understand at all. Jesus says, “It's like the wind, Does anybody know where the wind comes from?” But do you know there is wind? How do you know there is wind? You can see the curtain moving and you know, “Yes, there is wind.” You can't see the wind. You can only know the wind by the effect it causes. Nobody sees the wind. You see the wind by what it causes. He says, “That's the same way when you are born from Heaven, You don't see but you know, it has done something to you. You know you have passed from darkness to light, from death to life. You know.” That's the touch nobody has to convince you again. Salvation is like that. You believed and you passed from death and you cannot explain it. You can only explain it in terms of light – I was blind; now, I see. I was blind. This is, again, an issue with every... It's a progression in light. At every stage, there is. Okay, I got saved. Then, I argued for many years – what's the point of getting baptised? I was baptised when I was small. Then, one day, I got convicted and God said, “Go, get baptised.” Then, when I got baptised and came out, it was different. So many times, I have gone in all kinds of water – rivers, seas, swimming pool, everything; but this was different. But how do I explain it? It was something that is spiritual.

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Then, I fought and fought about the baptism of the Holy Spirit with those who are baptised and said, "No, it is this; it is that." Then, this call for ministry came. Then, I said, "Lord, I look into the Bible in the New Covenant and I see everyone who was called into ministry was baptised in the Holy Spirit. If this is real, then baptise me before I step into ministry." On the day I stepped into ministry, He filled me with Holy Spirit right at the podium. Now, how do I explain now it is different? All my arguments before that, I was standing in darkness and contending with light. And I was saying, "There is nothing like light." When you step into light, you have no arguments.

Through life, you will see – there is a progression onward, onward. God is light. He dwells in unapproachable light. The journey of salvation is the journey towards light. So, there is so much to cover. We haven't reached anywhere yet. All of eternity, we will be journeying. That is what, this is here in salvation, that is what is happening. He uses a simply metaphor and He says, "Can you see?" He says, "I see."

One man of God said it this way, "If three different blind men among the seven were to sit together and discuss how they got their sight, one would say "Jesus touched me once. That is how you get your sight." The second would say, "No, no. You are wrong. Jesus touched me twice. That is how you get your sight." The third will say "No, no, no. That's not how. Jesus spat into the mud, made a paste and put it into my eyes and said, 'go wash in the pool of Siloam', and that's how I got." And the three would start fighting. If they continue fighting like we do today in the 21st Christianity, we would have three denominations – one called the 'one-touch Church', the second called 'the second-touch Church' and the third called 'the spit-in-the-eye Church'." We fight about spiritual realities using physical experiences. In *verse 24*, he says,

Mark 8:24

²⁴ And he looked up and said, "I see men like trees, walking."

Okay, what do you see? So, stage one; first touch is conviction. Second touch is what we call –conversion, you have moved from light to darkness. You see. When He took him by hand, he did not see but there is a conviction between light and darkness, between unbelief and belief. There is a conviction because you are being separated and you are being shown these two realities.

Second, when conversion takes place, you see. Then, what does Scripture say?

Mark 8:24

²⁴ And he looked up and said, "I see men like trees, walking."

When we come into salvation in the initial years, we only see the big picture. What if we had gone with it? His sight was there; yet, it was not complete. Do men look like trees? Yes, from blindness to sight, darkness to light is good but men look like trees. What does that mean? It means our judgments would be faulty. They are not accurate. If that man were to fight with somebody who has got perfect sight; the man says, "How tall is your brother?" "My brother is only 5 feet." "No, it can't be. All men are like trees." Our sight, though we have received sight, we don't grow our salvation, then our sight is faulty. That is why instruction is given in ministry in *1 Timothy 3*,

1 Timothy 3:6

⁶ not a novice (meaning a new believer), lest being puffed up with pride he fall into the same condemnation as the devil

Can I have NIV over there? It is easier to understand. He says, "When you pick somebody for ministry, somebody who is expounding the Word, somebody who is teaching from Scripture."

1 Timothy 3:6

⁶ He must not be a recent convert (somebody whose eyes are opened recently, who is still seeing men as trees), or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil.

This is not talking about youth. In the same letter Paul will tell Timothy, "This has got nothing got to do with age; it's got to do with spiritual maturity; how you actually see. Spiritual reality." He says, "Anybody who is in ministry who especially preaches the Word of God has to be somebody whose eyes have been opened, who understands the spiritual reality that is

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there in Scripture.” Otherwise, what will happen? He will get conceited because he sees everything like trees and he misses the details of what God is trying to say. That is why preaching ministry is a very dangerous ministry.

1 Corinthian 2:15

¹⁵ ***But he who is spiritual judges all things. Yet he himself is judged by no man.***

He is able to see which others are not able to see because he is not seeing people as trees or events as trees; he is able to see the fine details. That's the whole thing. If we don't grow in our salvation, we grow in the light, we will only see big, big pictures and sometimes, we reveal ourselves. That's one of the problem with social media when you have a group. As long as it is social things and all, it is fine but when somebody tries to put across a spiritual thing, you immediately see where they are. I mean, it's fine as long as they are growing. But immediately, you see, even the people you read, the people you recommend shows. This is not to discourage; what I am saying is keep growing, read those people and all keep on growing, but don't stay with them. Keep on growing.

Then, *verse 25* will show us the third touch.

Mark 8:25

²⁵ ***Then He put His hands on his eyes again and made him look up. And he was restored and saw everyone clearly.***

That's the third touch, when the third touch comes, He will cause you to look up. God will cause you to look up. Jesus made him to look up. The third touch is not the touch of conviction, this is not the touch of conversion, this is a touch that should continue in the life of a believer – it is the touch of correction. There is so much to the walk of faith other than conversion. It is the touch of correction. That is why we gather as often as possible to the study of the Word of God. Not to gather knowledge but to be constantly correction by the Spirit of God. In *Psalms 119:130*, the man of God says,

Psalms 119:130

¹³⁰ ***The entrance of Your words gives light; It gives understanding to the simple***

The entrance of Your words – that is the difference. You need to realize, the Word of God has to bring light. It has to bring correction. Our vision has to be corrected. Every year, I and my wife go to the ophthalmologist and he will check, and he will see if our power has to change or not, right? You don't go with the same pair of glasses which you had 5 years ago because every time you go, he will check and says, “No, your vision has to be corrected,” and each time you get the new pair of glasses, you see, “Last week, I thought I could see but now, I can see even more clearly.” We need correction constantly. Constant correction because the entrance of His Word brings light. The devil brings blindness, Christ brings sight.

2 Corinthian 4:4

⁴ ***whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe...***

So, believing is a constant process. If you don't believe at all, your eyes are blinded and after seeing, if you don't progress in your belief and we don't receive correction, then we will always see things as trees. We will not see the spiritual realities behind the symbols in the Bible what Jesus was actually doing and what God is trying to do. That is why Scripture, “The Word of God is living.” What is the Word of God? How can a set of Scriptures, which were written, the youngest of the letters is, at least 2000 years old, be living? How can it be living? Unless it is spiritual. Otherwise then, this is just a mantra. This is not a mantra. Here, God really speaks. It's living; it is real.

The more we come for the third touch, we see life clearly, we see men clearly, we see people clearly because we are taking correction. We receive correction and we look up.

You see, Peter had flashes of revelation when Jesus was walking with Him. “Who am I?” “You are the Son of God.” “Peter, that's the revelation straight from Heaven. You had a flash. This is not revealed to you by flesh and blood.” Second minute, he reverted back to flesh – “You shouldn't.” He took Jesus aside and rebuked him. You see, how quickly he went from spirit; not to the soul but to the flesh. No. He said, “Get behind Me, satan. You don't understand the things of God. You are absolutely blind.” One minute, you are seeing; the next minute, you are totally blind. Then, something happened in the day

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of Pentecost – his eyes opened. He was filled with the Spirit. His eyes opened. And a simple man could look at the *Book of Joel* and look at two *Psalms* and see an incredible message of salvation that you and I, if our eyes were not open, wouldn't see text and we would say, "My God, this is first time the Gospel is going to be preached. What text should I use? Maybe, I should use *Isaiah 18 and 17 and 18 and 19* – 'I will contend with you. Come let us reason together'." Nothing. This is a soulish man. The man in the soul will look through it and see which would appease to the mind of man. The spiritual man is not looking at the soul of man, he is looking at God, "What do You want me to speak? Because Your words are life. You pick the verse for me," for which Spirit said, "The *Book of Joel*, this *Psalms*." That's it. Finished. 3000 people are cut to the heart. They are on their knees, crying and they get baptized. The Church is born. But he still had problems. He needed constant correction in his vision. You have to understand but he is a man who receives correction. We will see, later, God gives him a vision and it was at noon time. So, it is a vision. He was in a trans. NIV will say, "He was in a trans." And what did he see?

Acts 10:11-16

¹¹ and saw heaven opened and an object like a great sheet bound at the four corners, descending to him and let down to the earth. ¹² In it were all kinds of four-footed animals of the earth, wild beasts, creeping things, and birds of the air. ¹³ And a voice came to him, "Rise, Peter; kill and eat." ¹⁴ But Peter said, "Not so, Lord! For I have never eaten anything common or unclean." ¹⁵ And a voice spoke to him again the second time, "What God has cleansed you must not call common." ¹⁶ This was done three times. And the object was taken up into heaven again.

You see, God had to speak to him three times before his eyes opened. Now, today, people will read this and go back to the beginning, people will go to *verse 12*, "Hallelujah! The *Book of Leviticus* is removed for me. I can eat shrimps, I can eat crocodile, I can get alligator, I can eat snake, I can eat everything." You see, the same man reads the same verse and interprets it completely differently. He sees not with his eyes; he sees with his belly. Three times, before he could see. Three times, God had to repeat to Peter and then, Peter caught on. Immediately, vision is over. Three men come from Caesarea and Peter was astonished when he heard the report and he received the correction. Listen to what he says,

Acts 10:34-35

³⁴ Then Peter opened his mouth and said: "In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality. ³⁵ But in every nation, whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him.

Then, he says, "Oh my gosh, that vision had nothing to do with animals; it had to do with people. God is not a respecter of person. Anybody who calls upon the Name of God and longs for redemption, God will receive him." He is ready for correction, he receives correction and we need to constantly, like your IOS on your Apple phone or whatever, have to keep on updating your software according to the Word of God. Be up to date with the Word of God. Don't work on an old software then, suddenly, one day, you will get a message saying, "Your system will no longer work. You are outdated." Why? Because we got saved and we saw men as trees and we decided this is the whole of salvation. Scripture says, "No," anyone who comes to Him, He can save them to the uttermost. He saves us to the uttermost. Therefore, there is a constant course correction as we go on so that we can see more and more and more clearly.

A little later, again, he needed correction. This time, God will correct him not directly through a vision, He will correct him through another younger man, a younger minister. He will correct the older apostle, you will see in,

Galatians 2:11-14

¹¹ Now when Peter had come to Antioch, I withstood him to his face (who? Apostle Paul who came to the Lord much later), because he was to be blamed; ¹² for before certain men came from James (that is from Jerusalem), he would eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he withdrew and separated himself...

Did you see now what he is doing is a total contradiction of what he saw? There, he confessed, "A! God is not partial. He is not a respecter of persons. He accepts people from every," but suddenly, he is separating from those whom God has accepted.

...fearing those who were of the circumcision. ¹³ And the rest of the Jews also played the hypocrite with him, so that even Barnabas was carried away with their hypocrisy. ¹⁴ But when I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of

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the gospel, I said to Peter before them all, "If you, being a Jew, live in the manner of Gentiles and not as the Jews, why do you compel Gentiles to live as Jews?"

Wait a second. Here, your sight is falling. You are losing your sight. It's still there. Till down today, anywhere in India, you go you will still see, you go to Kerala, you go to Hyderabad. Anywhere in Kerala, when I grew up there is one street, N.G. Road – two Churches; both are the same denomination. Here, they will say, "We are of Syrian heritage. These are converts." Same Church. They won't even marry among themselves. When I go to North India, I have gone to these special Kerala Churches, Syrian Churches, the first question I have asked them is: do you have a single convert here? They will say, "No." I will say, "What are you doing here? You won't accept converts because you want to look at your Brahmanical roots. So, you won't accept a convert. You are blind. You don't see."

We have here also – Reddy Christians, Rao Christians, Naidu Christians, Chowdary Christians. How can you be a Chowdary and a Christian? It's a contradiction. You can't be. In Christ, there is nothing. It's all gone. It's nothing. That is why I say, when the marriage proposal comes, you will know your faith. You understood what I said, right? At every point, Peter had two choices – get offended or accept correction. "That is not the way I was brought up. Who do you think you are to correct me?" There are so many touches in that third stage but this is actually where we struggle, where we fail.

David was a man who accepted correction all this life. Be like David. In *Psalm 119*, he says,

Psalm 119:67

⁶⁷ Before I was afflicted I went astray, But now I keep Your word.

You afflicted me but now, I realize – I need to make correction in my life.

Philippians 1:6

⁶ being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ;

If we are the generation who will see the second coming of Jesus Christ until the day He comes, there is a work going on. But it is not done overruling anybody's will. It has to be a life to which we surrender individually to be corrected by God directly or whomever God choose to correct us through. It's a life of correction and obedience.

Isaiah 1:19-20

¹⁹ If you are willing and obedient, You shall eat the (Old Testament) good of the land; (New Testament – the very life Jesus came to give us) ²⁰ But if you refuse and rebel, You shall be devoured by the sword"; For the mouth of the LORD has spoken.

We all have these two choices. Accept correction. Keep on changing. We will see more and more and more clearly. Absolutely clearly, the spiritual reality. That is why we study the Word of God and look at the reactions of these people like Paul and I know, it's so often repeated; it has become; it shouldn't become anything other than what it is – Scripture. Paul and Silas does an incredible ministry, delivers a girl and is stripped naked beaten and thrown into the prison; how do they react? They are singing, they are praising, they are worshiping in the midnight hour sitting in a stinking, dirty roman prison. Why? How many servants of God who, if you go through a fraction of that today, react like that? Why? Spiritual reality – how they saw and how we see. Today, persecution itself is being used to raise money. I have seen many who have raised money through persecution. These are the lessons we learn as we go through the Gospels. We are all deaf, blind, mute, lame without Christ. The people who brought him thought, "Oh, he is blind. He needs help. We can see. Jesus, please help him." That is how so many people will call us and say, "Pastor, please pray for him. He is struggling." "What about you? At least, he comes regularly to Church. I haven't seen you for two weeks. You are calling for prayer for him. At least he knows he is blind. You think you see." Do we hear? Do we see increasingly? In *Revelation 2:7*, seven times,

Revelation 2:7

⁷ "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the Churches.

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Do we hear? Now, God is talking about hearing, seven times over and over to all the Churches, God will say, "Do we have ears? Yes, but do we hear? Do we speak? Do we know how to speak?"

Isaiah 50:4

⁴ "The Lord God has given Me The tongue of the learned, That I should know how to speak A word in season to him who is weary. He awakens Me morning by morning, He awakens My ear To hear as the learned.

You see what is Bible talking about – it's talking about Jesus. Jesus didn't talk; He spoke and when He spoke, it was life. How did He learn to speak life? Because He learned to hear. He learnt to hear from Father, The Holy Spirit. Therefore, He learned to speak. It's a spiritual reality. Unless we learn to listen to God, we only talk; we don't speak. Jesus spoke. Either people got mad or they become glad. Either people left, or people said, "Where can we go? You alone have the words of life." So, we see this played out over and over in the Gospels. We see this played out in the Gospels.

In another instance, we are just looking at Mark; *Mark 7:32-35*, again, another man;

Mark 7:32-35

³² Then they brought to Him one who was deaf and had an impediment in his speech, and they begged Him to put His hand on him. ³³ And He took him aside from the multitude...

Same scenario – a set of people who can hear, who can talk, thinks this man cannot hear and this man cannot talk. So, they said, "You need help. Let's take you to Jesus." And Jesus separated him from them. He took him aside away from the crowd; Jesus sees our hearts. Jesus sees through people. Jesus sees. He separated him from the crowd

...and put His fingers in his ears, and He spat and touched his tongue. ³⁴ Then, looking up to heaven, He sighed, and said to him, "Ephphatha," that is, "Be opened." ³⁵ Immediately his ears were opened, and the impediment of his tongue was loosed, and he spoke plainly.

Did you see, unless Jesus touches us, we, too, will not hear? Unless He touches our tongue, we, too, will not know how to speak. Here, again, Jesus takes him from the crowd and ministers to him, one-on-one. Simple lesson – if you want to see, if you want to hear, if you want to speak, you have to allow God minister to you one-on-one. You have to spent time with God. We learn as a corporate as a body, but you have to encounter God, because He is God who comes to meet individuals. He ministers to people one-on-one. And don't be offended by how He ministers to you. That's why the first blessing in the Bible in the New Covenant; not the Old Covenant, the first blessing in the New Covenant – "Blessed are the poor." If we are poor; remember the old example I gave you? Nowadays, you can't see them also. The Government, KCR, very nicely, has rehabilitated all the beggars; it's very good. He has done a good job. He has taken all the beggars; but before that, remembers the beggars? If you ever met the beggars, desperate beggars, they wouldn't care what you give them. Will they ask you, "Is it today's cooking?" Did they ask you? Did they ask you where that plate is? Did they ask you? If you give them clothes, do they turn and look at the brand? You know what a beggar means? A beggar is a man who will receive anything. That's why he is a beggar, right? He is not offended by what you give him, because he is desperate. *Blessed are those who are poor in the Spirit.* They are not offended how the God deals with them.

...He spat and put it on his tongue...

He was not offended. He spat and put it on the other guy's eyes, he is not offended; Namaan was offended; he came with his entourage and stood there and said, "Tell the prophet." And the prophet did not come out. He sends his servant to tell him, "Go and wash in River Jordan seven times." He was offended. He said, "I thought this man would come and take a rod and wave it like that and my leprosy would go." Offended. Are you offended the way God deals with you? Are you offended? Are we offended? This man was not offended; the other man was not offended; they were not offended. One, He touched; He touched the man's tongue with spittle and in the other case, 8:23, He had spit on the man's eyes. Imagine you go, let's say, there is a lady in your 20,000 rupees pattu sari, for a healing service and the Pastor spits, what would you do? See, we don't realise that we actually are not seeing. We are not desperate yet. We are not desperate for sight yet. We are satisfied at our Bible studies; we are not desperate for sight. We are satisfied that we hear through the man of God and

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through WhatsApp and YouTube and all; we are not desperate enough that our ears opened that we hear from God what is happening now. That's why people are so casual; they have no clue what is happening. They are so casual.

That's what Jesus talks about. When He talks about the last days. He said, "It would be like Lot's days or like Noah's days." What is that? "They ate, they drank, they planted, they harvested, they built; they gave in marriage, they got married." What's wrong with that? They are absolutely blind about the reality of the judgement that was knocking at the door. They didn't hear, they didn't see, they didn't walk, they didn't speak, they didn't warn. Lot did not warn anybody, and in the last hour, when he warns, Scripture says, "His sons-in-laws laughed at him. What, dude? What are you talking about? If there is judgment, then why are you living among us?" You see what the Jesus is trying to say? He moves the desperate from that group who think they see but actually, don't see, who think they see but actually, don't hear; who think they speak but actually they cannot speak. God moves us. God understands our pain in *Mark 7:24* – he looked up to heaven with a deep sigh. And He sighs. Deep sigh. Jesus was a Man acquainted with grief. He groans. The same word in the Bible is translated as, "He groaned." At Lazarus' grave, He groaned. Why is He groaning? You are going to do Your greatest miracle – the man who has been dead for four days and he is going to come out; You were dead for three days; You will come out. This man has been dead for four days; You will bring him out; This is Your great miracle; why are You groaning? Because many will die and not rise up. Did we see that? He is standing before His greatest miracle He is going to do and He groans, He weeps and He cries. Because He knows – this is the spiritual reality – most will not raise. They will rise for the second death, the judgment. He groans. Here, He groans. Why is He groaning? Because He knows most will not hear. They will be caught like the Lot's generation was caught, Noah's generation was caught. Nothing opened their eyes. Before their eyes, the whole thing is being built and it is finished and Ark, in the middle of nowhere; they have never seen thunder, rain, flood, judgement, nothing. And right before their eyes, a man had persevered for 100 years, 120 years; built; not only that, from every corner of the world, incredible strange animals have come –two-by-two – not only they come two-by-two, they have all entered into the Ark. That should make you think that there is something happening here! Even you hear about people saying, "Oh! The rats are fleeing, the horses are fleeing," they will say, "An earthquake is coming because animals sense it." The animals got in. Not a single human being whom he preached. Why? They did not see, they did not hear and they were blind. Still, God was merciful and left the door open for seven more days. Nobody came in; Noah and his family only got in. Finally, Scripture says, "He shut the door." Judgment began. Then, everybody believed; God says, "Do you see?"

Christ wants to lead us from the unbelieving crowd to Himself; He wants to restore our sight. He wants to open our ears; He wants to loosen our tongues so that we may behold His glory, so that we may hear the voice of His Spirit, so that we may declare His praises. So, where do we stand today?

As I close, last five minutes, let's once again look at *Mark 8:22-23*,

Mark 8:22-23

²² Then He came to Bethsaida; and they brought a blind man to Him, and begged Him to touch him. ²³ So He took the blind man by the hand and led him out of the town.

He took him out of Bethsaida. See, if you read accounts of people who have gone to the holy land, they will talk about thriving cities in Jerusalem or bustling towns in Palestinian area, Jericho, Bethlehem, Jerusalem and all these places. But they will say – in two cities you go, they are no longer cities; they are just ruins. And they don't realize why these two cities are still ruins. Nothing has happened in those cities. One is Bethsaida; the other is Capernaum. *Luke 10*, Jesus will tell,

Luke 10:13-15

¹³ "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, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. ¹⁴ But it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the judgment than for you. ¹⁵ And you, Capernaum, who are exalted to heaven, will be brought down to Hades.

Capernaum represents unbelief in spite of all the works that God has done. God talks him and brings him out of Bethsaida. They say that if you go to Bethsaida today, it is ruins. Capernaum, ruins. Because He said, "Woe to you." The very Son of God came here, preached to you, did all these things but you still won't believe. These were cities of unbelief though many of His miracles and His preachings were done there. These cities rejected His message. Therefore, they lie in ruins. It is dangerous for a city or for a person to reject the Word of Jesus. It is dangerous to reject. That's why we look into Scripture. I

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have googled all these things. I've never gone there. I've googled to see if this is real and I saw that it is real, the ruins. You type out Capernaum and the images and all that come is ruins. 250-300 million trees, after the Jews returned to the Promised Land, in the last 70, 80, 100 years, they have made a desert bloom. It is green. They have planted and planted and kind of drip irrigation, everything but one place you go, it is still like a patch desert. Nothing grows there. What is it? Gilboh. Why? David, in his grief, when he heard Saul and Jonathan were dead, he cried and said, "Oh, Gilboh, no dew on you. No rain on you. You will never bring anything out green. You will be dry." Till today, it is dry. When you see these things and you say, "Oh my gosh, the Word of God is real." This is real. There are no jokes here. This is a real Book. This is a living Book and it has not lost its power. Maybe David spoke this 3000 years ago or Jesus spoke this 2000 years ago, it is still valid because the Word of God is living. That's why the prophecy about Jesus in Isaiah; the final word for today,

Isaiah 35:5-6

⁵ Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, And the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. ⁶ Then the lame shall leap like a deer, And the tongue of the dumb sing. For waters shall burst forth in the wilderness, And streams in the desert.

This is the reality, the spiritual reality of when your eyes have been open, your ears have been open and you are going further and further because you are fascinated by this Person of Christ, the tongue is loosened. Your tongue is loosened. You speak. What is happening? You are leaping like a deer. How does Malachi end? The Old Testament? "The Son of Righteousness shall rise with healing under His wings and you shall go out like (what?) calves fed in the stalls, leaping." He says, "Your outer body may be perishing; in your inner man, you are no longer walking; you are tripping because you know this is a Kingdom and you are part of the Kingdom and you are only growing in the Kingdom." So, you can look at all the terrible things you have gone through, unbelievable terrible things, turn around and tell us – what does Paul say? "Momentary affliction in the weight of glory that I see." How many years? "I don't know." How many beatings? "I don't know." What all have you gone through? "I have no clue." How do you look at that? "Momentary." Why? "I see another reality – the weight of glory." Why? "My eyes see, my ears hear and therefore, I cannot stop singing His praises and I cannot walk anymore. Though I am old, my knees hurt and my joints creek, that's what you see. Inside, I'm leaping." Isn't that what Habakkuk says? "Everything is gone. The fields are dry; the stalls are dry; everything is dry; yet, I will rejoice in the Lord my God and He shall make my feet like the feet of the hind, the deer and I shall continue to climb in high places. My physical reality doesn't matter because I live in another reality – the reality of the Spirit and that is true and I will keep on climbing," because if you go to the mountains and you see the mountain deer – sharp jagged edges. They will jump and they will go. Where we will fall and break our head, you will go. So, that's what he is saying. The physical reality – all jagged edges of life but you know, spiritually – I am just climbing closer and closer. I'm not offended. I'm not upset. I'm not mad. I am glad because through it all, He is drawing me closer to Him. That's a walk. That's to what God is calling us and it is a daily walk.

So, this night, as we close, don't just Lent, Good Friday, Easter and all become another routine ritual. It's got no meaning unless it's an inward reality. There's no meaning. Those are symbols. All that is over. Now, we live in a different reality, the reality of a resurrected Christ. Live in that reality each day, one-on-one with God. Corporately, yes; we do all that. But there is a one-on-one encounter with the living Jesus every day. When you have met Him, you will know you have met Him because you cannot meet Him and remain the same. The blind man saw, the deaf man heard, the mute man spoke, the lame man walked. Why? Because they met Jesus. When you meet Jesus, you will know. Others will know. Shall we pray?

Closing Prayer:

Father, this evening, we just come to You, Lord. We thank You, Father. Help us, O Lord, continuously, to see the depth, the height and the width of Your salvation. Help us not to restrain it with what we see with our physical eyes, O Lord. Open the eyes of our heart, as Paul prayed, O Lord, in his epistles to the Ephesians, O Lord. Open the eyes of our heart that we might see this incredible exceeding glory, the knowledge of God, the revelation of God. Open, Lord. When all these things come, help us not to be discouraged. Help us not to be dismayed. Help us to see beyond it to know You are only leading us further and closer to You. I pray, during this season, as the Church fasts and as the Church prays, a time of drawing close to You, Lord, let our ears be open, eyes be open, our tongues to be loosened and our inner man, we hear, we see and we cannot stop singing Your praises; for You not only brought us from darkness to light; You are forever leading us further and further into Your glorious light. Thank You, Father. You brought us here safely. Take us home all safely, Lord. For Thine is the Kingdom, the power and the glory forever and ever, O Lord. Thank You, Father. For in Jesus' Name we pray, Amen.