



Ministry of Grace, not Judgment

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—Introduction—

A Change in the Concept of Sin and Grace

This morning we are going to concentrate on John chapter 9. This chapter like many things Jesus had done while He was here on the earth changes the course of human history, changes the course of human civilization and all we know of it. This chapter is not only about Jesus doing a miracle, the healing of a blind man. It is much more than that. It is understanding the differences between what sin and mercy are. In all the other gospels this incident is not mentioned, but the apostle John wants to go into the depths of this particular miracle to show us something about sin and judgment that's been misunderstood and has been totally wrong from the beginning of time. Most of society has been built on these false premises.

We start here where Jesus has just been tempted in the wilderness and then goes to back to Nazareth and starts to read in the synagogue, a usual practice where people have known Him. He quotes from Isaiah.

*Luke 4: 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;
¹⁹ *To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.*”

The time had come at last for the Lord’s anointing to firstly *preach to the poor*. Aren’t you glad the “good news” isn’t just to the rich, or to the middle class? It’s for everybody. Secondly to *heal the brokenhearted*. Drink that one in. If you haven’t been brokenhearted in your life you are one of the very few. Third, *to proclaim liberty to the captives*, those who are captive in thought, captive in many different ways, but rather to proclaim liberty and freedom for them! Fourth, *recovery of sight to the blind*. In this chapter we will be talking about being blind in sight versus being blind in our heart. Fifthly *to set at liberty those who are oppressed*. Jesus gave liberty to the captives but liberty is not just for those in prison. His liberty is for *all* those who are oppressed. An oppression can take many forms. It can take form from the person you are with, your friends, those you know, your boss, the society that you live in. The oppression can come from anywhere. It can even come from bringing it upon yourself. He gave liberty to those who are *oppressed*. I’m glad He didn’t leave that out.

And lastly number six, *to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord*. That is misunderstood by not knowing what He was talking about. However, that is a direct reference to the song we were singing before, “This is the year of Jubilee.” The time of Jubilee in the Jewish text and understanding, the acceptable year was a time when all debts were forgiven. All. Not just a few. All debts were forgiven. You didn’t owe any money. Wouldn’t that be good. That would be the answer to problems we have with money. Interestingly, I’m sure the Jewish debt collectors in those days made sure most of the debts were paid up by then. And so, that is a very important thing the Lord wants us to understand. This is a time of GREAT rejoicing. This was a time of great liberty and freedom. Everybody could start all over again. For instance, when I went to college, after the last semester in the Fall, I felt I really hadn’t done as well as I wanted to. But then January came and a new semester; it starts all over again, a new chance. I have a clean slate with every course I’ve signed up for; I start with an “A.” That is kind of like what the year of Jubilee was. Wow. I’m free. I don’t have to make excuses. I am who I am. I will just do the best I can.

Jesus the chosen One does such wonderful things. But the thing apostle John wants us to zero in on and understand in this chapter is what it means to be receiving sight as a blind person. Jesus starts in a natural realm and then goes right into the spiritual realm. John also wants us to see the difference between what the world says about sin and what

Jesus says, between what the world says about judgment and what He says about judgment, specifically concerning sickness and being born blind. The response of the world here is the same today, in our time. It is one of condemnation. They excommunicated this blind guy. Then Jesus brings us to the understanding of what it really means to have your sight, to really see.

It is Not About Blame

Right off, it is not about blame. I keep saying at home, “*It’s all about blame,*” because when you read or listen to the news it is indeed all about blame. “*It’s his fault, or her’s. It’s that country. It’s that way or system; it’s how you did this.*” It’s all about blame.

Well Jesus says, “*No. No and No. It is not about blame.*” You who are in this room this morning have come to the Lord Jesus and you’ve been born-again. Isn’t that good! You are FREE from blame. Even when you do something wrong, you ask for forgiveness and He forgives you. You don’t have to hide.

I’m going through something with my grandson. I didn’t want to, but I had to discipline him. Then he goes and hides! “*Sorry, Nope. Wrong. You don’t have to hide from me.*” Just like we don’t have to hide from God. If we do something wrong, we confess our sin and we are FREE! God is not the oppressor. The enemy is the oppressor. Don’t accept the accusation and oppress yourself. Come out from the oppression. Be free. Break these chains that bind us. Someone said to me, “*Well, we don’t have these chains any more.*” That’s true but then we go and put them back on.

John 9¹ Now as Jesus passed by, He saw a man who was blind from birth.

I’m sure Jesus understood everything that was going on here since this guy was sitting there every day and Jesus had been that way before.

² And His disciples (note, not the Pharisees) asked Him, saying, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?”

Up until this point when Jesus healed someone He’d say, “*Go and sin no more.*” There was a Jewish doctrinal understanding that every time you were sick and needed healing, whether mentally, physically or any other way, it was because of something you had done. But this time it was a little bit different. His *disciples* asked this question.

Why would they even ask it? Because it was a part of their culture, part of who the Jewish people were. If there was a problem it was because you had done something wrong. If they went back and looked at the book of Job they would realize that is not necessarily true. Job was the first book written in the bible.

³ *Jesus answered, “Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but that the works of God should be revealed in him. ⁴ I must work the works of Him who sent Me while it is day; the night is coming when no one can work. ⁵ As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.”*

So, Jesus is here, in you, to bring healing upon the earth. When people come up for prayer, sometimes they’ve done something wrong and there are reasons why there is sickness or whatever. But many times that is **not** true. Many times it is just because God wants to heal them and wants to encourage them that He is “for them not against.” His plan for you is for good not evil! He does not have an intent of evil towards you. Amen.

Right off, it is not about blame. It is interesting here that it is almost a continuation of the idea when Jesus asked the Pharisees, “*What man among you would leave the ninety-nine and look for the lost sheep?*” In the culture of that society, everybody would stay with the ninety-nine and forget the one. How could He even ask that question? But it wasn’t just asking a question, He was prophesying to them, “***That is not the norm any more.***” There was going to be a shift and change in the culture. Here again He says, “*When you are faced with sickness and disease, and whatever calamity, it is no longer always true that it is because somebody did something wrong.*” When Jesus comes it is going to be different how He brings healing, how He brings restoration, how He proclaims the favorable year of the Lord. It is going to be different now! Next He says, “*It is not about techniques.*” You know how He says it? If someone had done these things in this church and many others, it would not be accepted. “*Behold I do all things new.*”

It’s Not About Technique

⁶ *When He had said these things, He spat on the ground and made clay with the saliva; and He anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay.*

Spit and dirt from the ground! To the nurses among you, “*Is that cool?!*” No. Does that appeal to you in any way shape or form? It is almost the stupidest thing you could ever possibly imagine Jesus doing.

Previously He would lay hands on someone to receive their healing. You could understand that. But why would He do this? Because it is NOT about technique. It is not about methods. It is about WHO you go to. God. Isn't that right? He spits on the ground, making this spit-mud thing and put it on the guys eyes.

⁷ And He said to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" (which is translated, Sent). So he went and washed, and came back seeing.

So this guy was obedient to what Jesus wanted him to do. Now if you were there and you'd been blind from birth and some faith healer did this to you, I'm honestly not sure you'd have followed through on this. You'd rather take a bath or shower. However the blind man was obedient. Now John wants us to understand something about this particular man. He wasn't just any man. He was a man that typifies many of the things we go through. God brings us to a place and a point in our life where there is no other solution to our problem. This blind guy didn't even ask for a solution. Jesus was passing by and Jesus wanted to heal him. It doesn't say the blind man even asked.

When you are blind from birth you learn some things about people. We ourselves learn about people by how they stand, how they walk, what their countenance is visually. But this man had none of that going for him. All he could do was to listen and try to understand what people were saying through the inflection in their voices. We shall see he understood what people were really saying very well..

⁸ Therefore the neighbors and those who previously had seen that he was blind said, "Is not this he who sat and begged?"

⁹ Some said, "This is he." Others said, "He is like him."

Once somebody can actually see their whole countenance changes. Somebody who is blind looks at you with a blank facial expression. But someone who sees can zero in on you.

He said, "I am he."

¹⁰ Therefore they said to him, "How were your eyes opened?"

¹¹ He answered and said, "A Man called Jesus made clay and anointed my eyes and said to me, 'Go to the pool of Siloam and wash.' So I went and washed, and I received sight."

¹² Then they said to him, "Where is He?"

He said, "I do not know."

We need to go to the Lord every time, every day, not lose track of where He is, so busy in our own life and our own trials that we lose track of what God is doing in them.

There is No Special Day

Aren't you glad that we don't have to wait for a day like Sunday in order to worship the Lord? There are times I just cannot wait for Sunday. I gotta worship the Lord here and now! Sometimes the circumstances of life and the tragedies around me are just too much. I need to go the Lord.

¹³ *They brought him who formerly was blind to the Pharisees.*

So now the guy sees perfectly well and people have identified that this is the guy and they bring him to the Pharisees. Why would they do that? That would be the last people I'd want to go to. But they were the ones in authority and people thought they should be informed.

¹³ *They brought him who formerly was blind to the Pharisees.* ¹⁴ *Now it was a Sabbath when Jesus made the clay and opened his eyes.* ¹⁵ *Then the Pharisees also asked him again how he had received his sight. He said to them, "He put clay on my eyes, and I washed, and I see."*

¹⁶ *Therefore some of the Pharisees said, "This Man is not from God, because He does not keep the Sabbath."*

That would disqualify all of us. You see, religion wants a special, certain technique. In some churches you cannot be baptized unless you go through the ritual of their particular liturgy in which you have to repeat things so many times and go through the entire prayer of supplication they might use. Then you can be baptized and some feel it can only be when you are an infant. It is a ritual that has lost all of its meaning. They say, "Yes, I believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. He was raised from the dead. He sent the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary," so forth and so on. Do they even know what they are saying? In the Greek Orthodox church they even ask, "Do you renounce the schemes of the enemy?" "Yes, I renounce the schemes of Satan and the enemy." They go through that repetition five or six times or more. I think to myself, "Do they even realize who Satan is and what he does? Do they even know what his schemes are?" Tragically most do not. Because once you make something a religion it becomes fake. It becomes artificial. It is not real. However you somehow feel justified, *improperly* justified. There is no justification in religion. That is why Jesus *hates* religion. You cannot somehow wash yourself clean from any sin by going to a priest and have him absolve you of your sin. There is only One who can do that and it is the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. For this we are thankful.

The Pharisees said, *“This man is not from God.”* They didn’t have to investigate any further. He didn’t keep the Sabbath, therefore He is automatically disqualified without any other examination. *“He healed you on the Sabbath, you crazy man, you shouldn’t even be healed.”*

*Others said, “How can a man who is a sinner do such signs?”
And there was a division among them.*

Sounds like politics as usual, always a division of ideas, good and bad.

*¹⁷ They said to the blind man again, “What do you say about Him because He opened your eyes?”
He said, “He is a prophet.”*

He didn’t know what else to say. Here’s a blind man who didn’t see, only hearing all the conversation going around him about Jesus and yet he still didn’t know that Jesus was the Savior. I find that very interesting. Somehow the Lord had closed this man’s spiritual eyes even though He had already opened his natural eyes. John is really making a point about this. There are two different eyes that you can see with, your natural ones and your spiritual!

¹⁸ But the Jews did not believe concerning him, that he had been blind and received his sight, until they called the parents of him who had received his sight. ¹⁹ And they asked them, saying, “Is this your son, who you say was born blind? How then does he now see?”

Now the parents understood something of the Jewish society they were in. Like the culture we ourselves live in, our families and those that we love around us, become more important than what we believe. We don’t want to be separated from our family. Who does? We don’t want to be separated from our friends. Well his parents didn’t want to be either.

²⁰ His parents answered them and said, “We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind; ²¹ but by what means he now sees we do not know, or who opened his eyes we do not know. He is of age; ask him. He will speak for himself.”

They knew that if they answered truthfully they would be thrown out of the Synagogue.

²² His parents said these things because they feared the Jews, for the Jews had agreed already that if anyone confessed that He

was Christ, he would be put out of the synagogue. ²³ Therefore his parents said, "He is of age; ask him."

Preconceived Agenda

The outcome was already decided before the incident even happened. Isn't that sad? Preconceived agenda. It is like man, politics involved, having a preconceived agenda. We shouldn't even think they don't. I'm not a conspiracy person. Men and women make agendas all the time.

²⁴ So they again called the man who was blind, and said to him, "Give God the glory! We know that this Man is a sinner."

Preconceived agenda. Preconceived narrative. They already know and have decided what they will do but they are leading this guy down a path, saying, "In order for you to stay in the Synagogue and be in communication with this fellowship and stay outside and beg or do anything here, you'd better do what we tell you to do and how we tell you to do it. This man is a sinner."

Now John is going to give you a glimpse of this man's personality. He wasn't just a blind man but every day he had been there listening to what was going on. He was not an ignorant person. He knew what was going on and he also had a little "attitude."

²⁵ He answered and said, "Whether He is a sinner or not I do not know. One thing I know: that though I was blind, now I see."

²⁶ Then they said to him again, "What did He do to you? How did He open your eyes?"

²⁷ He answered them, "I told you already, and you did not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you also want to become His disciples?"

Look at this attitude. "Do you want to go back to the transcript, go for it! You didn't listen." Whoa. Would you tell somebody in authority these things. This guy had an attitude! And he was willing to express it. His parents weren't. He had a problem with authority. Why? Because those who were in authority hadn't really helped him at all when he was blind. They left him to be a beggar. He had a problem. "Do you also want to become His disciples?" Sarcastic! Asking for trouble.

Disciple of Jesus is the Beginning of a Life of Grace

I feel like I'm reliving some of the trials in Washington D.C. while I'm reading this.

²⁸ Then they reviled him and said, "You are His disciple, but we are Moses' disciples." ²⁹ We know that God spoke to Moses; as for this fellow, we do not know where He is from."

You are Left. I am of the Right. I am of the Right and you are of the Left! When they said they did not know where Jesus was from it was not really true. They did know who He was and where He was from.

Discipleship is the beginning of the understanding of His grace. The blind man didn't really know Jesus but he wanted to be his disciple. Being a disciple to someone was to be under their teaching, under their grace, and under their understanding of what is going on in this world. The beginning of the grace that we have in our life is when we accept Jesus Christ into our life, we accept that He has died for our sin and we become His disciple. He even says to us, "Go and make disciples in all the earth." That is because the grace of God is there for His disciples.

This guy's sarcasm and personality comes out even more.

³⁰ The man answered and said to them, "Why, this is a marvelous thing, that you do not know where He is from; yet He has opened my eyes!" ³¹ Now we know that God does not hear sinners; but if anyone is a worshiper of God and does His will, He hears him.

Whoa. Where did he get this. It wasn't from them. It wasn't from the Jewish community. He started to understand something of God. Already the Holy Spirit is working within him about grace and mercy. He thinks, "We know that from you guys that sinners are sinners. There is no hope for them. God does not hear sinners. You tell us we need to have a blood sacrifice to be absolved."

³² Since the world began it has been unheard of that anyone opened the eyes of one who was born blind. ³³ If this Man were not from God, He could do nothing."

This man is not expressing the Jewish faith or Torah. Rather, he has "street doctrine." Not bad but different from what he'd been taught. If he was part of a kibbutz or whatever in the temple, they would have taught him much differently.

³⁴ They answered and said to him, "You were completely born in sins, and are you teaching us?" And they cast him out.

So by saying this, "That's it; we know you are a sinner now. You were a sinner right from birth. It doesn't matter; born in sin." I don't think they even realized what they were saying at this point. Because of his confronting them for not knowing Jesus and not even trying to know, they threw him out. That would be the worst possible thing you

could do to a Jewish man. One of the most extreme forms of torture is to put someone into solitary confinement.

I know when my mom sent me to my room without dinner and closed the door, it was the worst torture she could've done to me. And that was only for a few minutes!

Grace as Unmerited Favor

Our grace is given to us and is unmerited. It is not because we did anything right or wrong. This is one of the most interesting verses in the bible to me because this is where Jesus starts looking for the "lost sheep." This is where He doesn't wait for you to answer His "knock at the door" This is where He goes out and *captures* you because of your misunderstanding, your street doctrine. He needs to correct it. Do you want to be His disciple? Well He is going to start instructing you. He's going to come to you Himself.

³⁵ *Jesus heard that they had cast him out; . . .*

What a tragedy when Jesus heard this! That is not acceptable to Him. He could have walked on ignoring the whole thing saying, "I'll just do more miracles. I'm going to the cross anyway." But Jesus, with compassion, reached out to this man! This is not acceptable. "Disciples stop whatever we are doing. We are going to go find this man."

. . . and when He had found him, He said to him, "Do you believe in the Son of God?"

Do you believe in the Son of God? Jesus almost always referred to himself as the Son of Man. But here it says, "Do you believe in the Son of **God**?" John made sure that was correctly stated.

³⁶ *He answered and said, "Who is He, Lord, that I may believe in Him?"*

It is almost like the movie, "You've Got Mail." Do you remember that man she thought was in love with her? She said, "I was hoping it was you." Well I think that was the case here. This previously blind man was hoping that it was Him. And Jesus said to him, straight out, not arguing doctrine. He doesn't go round the bush and say I am going to return in three days, blah, blah, blah. But with this man Jesus doesn't wait for the man to open the door He's knocking at. Jesus comes into the room straight way.

³⁷ *And Jesus said to him, "You have both seen Him and it is He who is talking with you."*

Has Jesus ever done that to you? Because if He hasn't He will. He will come into your room when you are in sorrow and remorse with no hope. He's going to you and say, "HELLO." There's a hope you cannot take away. You can try to smother it or bury it. But there is a HOPE that will never die! It is in you, planted in you. "It cannot die," says the Lord. "No matter what disease. No matter what affliction. No matter what oppression comes upon you. No matter what lack of grace. No matter what you bring upon yourself! Here I am. Talk to Me. Listen to Me. You are My disciple. I will instruct you this day. There is always hope. When there is no hope, there IS hope. Where there is no hope, there you will find it." That is because you cannot smother the light. the light of Christ is not like a candle that can be smothered, that you can put out and only smoke is left. That light just rekindles, flaming up again. It burns brighter than before.

Worship is the Outcome of True Belief

Now Jesus wanted this man to be His disciple, not just a believer but a disciple. This is what happens when you become His disciple, when you finally understand that Jesus Christ is Lord of Lords, King of Kings, He's never going to leave you nor forsake you, that He is living inside of you:

³⁸ *Then he said, "Lord, I believe!" And he worshiped Him.*

That word "believe" also encompasses, "I believe and understand." You cannot believe without understanding. You don't blindly believe. You believe because He told you! Because you have seen Him your self. Because of the testimony of the Lord Jesus Himself, the outcome is belief and worship. This man didn't just sing songs of religion but he worshiped Him. Something of the heart came forth. As we come to Christ there is a sense of worship that cannot die. When we sing these songs of praise, the worship that is within us awakens. The Lord inhabits that praise because that is the worship He has put into us. That hole that you had in your heart before you were saved is now full and continues to be full. As He fills you with the Spirit every day, you cannot help yourself. You are in love with the Lord Jesus Christ!

He also calls you to be in love with your brothers and sisters. He also calls you to be in love with those who need Him that are yet in the world.

***True Sight is Not Seeing with Your Natural Eyes,
but with the Eyes of the Spirit
—Judgment of Sin—***

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.”*

The disciples asked the question, “Whose sin, because he was born blind, is the condition blamed on? His parents or him?” It is not for judgment that Jesus came into this world but that those who were blind could see. Those that think they can see, cannot see at all. How many times when I have looked upon the circumstances and say to the Lord, “I know I can see with my eyes, but I need the eyes of the Spirit. I need to see what You see here in the hearts of men.” At times He will say, “Yeah. This is a time when they have a preconceived agenda and you need to confront it.” Other times He says, “It’s time to flee and walk away.” Only the Holy Spirit can show you that. Only the Holy Spirit. When you do things on your own initiative, you are just asking for trouble. The best outcome of that is to say, “Look what I did.” The enemy will encourage that. “Yeah, look what **you** did. It was awesome wasn’t it. Oh yeah, look at you.” “NO,” Jesus says, “Not you.” As soon as you start seeing with your own eyes, you’ve lost your vision. As soon as you see with your own eyes, you make a religion. You may know a song that’s been sung for centuries that was full of worship, but it doesn’t have meaning any more.

I don’t know how many times I would sing as an alter boy, “Lord, have mercy upon us. Let Christ have mercy upon us.” Over and over again until when I was a teenager I no longer even knew what I was singing. I no longer knew what any of the words meant. At some breakfast when in college (we had a click), we were having coffee together and I stated, “You know, I don’t believe I’ve ever sinned.” Yikes. By the way, nobody corrected me. Nobody said, “Boy, you are in trouble.” I wish they had. I wish someone would have been there and maybe later pull me aside and say, “You know, not so much. . .” Much later there was someone in my life who did that—my wife Cheryl! Ha.

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.*

—*Summary*—

Our faith is not based on whether we sin, or what the blame is about, the technique of healing or non-healing, the technique of keeping days, the religiosity of religion, or any of those things. No, our faith is based on discipleship from the Lord Himself in our life, in us, Christ in us the hope of glory, the flow of grace and mercy from the very throne of God. This comes from within us which He has poured out from the Heavens. There cannot be a day that we don't look to the heavens for our salvation. Yesterday, today and tomorrow.

Understanding and Belief

Jesus wants us to understand not just blindly follow this faith that He has given to us and His instruction. Rather He wants us to UNDERSTAND Him so that belief becomes so much a part of our fabric, our DNA, that we cannot help but worship Him. If we were in prison for a hundred years, we could not stop worshiping Him. Even if the enemy separated us from our friends and loved ones, we couldn't stop our worship of our Lord Jesus, no matter what, just as apostle Paul could not do when he was in prison.

Jesus has spoken to us this morning through the songs we were singing and the exhortation about these very things:

*Luke 4¹⁸ "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;
¹⁹ To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord."*

Not just Jesus, but Jesus *in us*. The gospel to the poor is not just for us but for those we know. If we don't do anything next week, find a broken heart. They aren't hard to find. Speak healing to them even in tongues, if you have to, as you are walking away, but bring healing to the broken heart. Many times I feel and understand a broken heart but am unable to speak a word, but I am going to pray for them.

Proclaim freedom. Every time I read a headline about what is going on in different countries, I pray for the Christians in those countries, and there are many, that they bring the truth to their people. Most of all in light of this scripture, to bring sight to the blind. Not just those who

are blind physically but more importantly, those who are blind spiritually. That includes many who are in the church! Many.

There was a song someone wrote just recently this week about how we should hate President Trump. It was from an evangelical minister! I thought that man is definitely not seeing with spiritual eyes. I don't care if you are Republican or Democrat. It doesn't matter. You have to see with the Spirit not with agenda eyes.

Forgive us, Lord God. Forgive us for seeing with our own eyes. As a country, Lord, forgive us for seeing with our own eyes. Political parties, forgive us for seeing with our own eyes. For the political stances we take personally, forgive us for seeing with our own eyes. Bring us into seeing with Your eyes, Lord God, that we would pray for those who are so totally broken. And that we would try and understand why they are brokenhearted. Maybe they have never seen true justice in their life. Never. They are hoping that there is some justice somewhere.

Well there is justice, Lord God. Since You died on the cross, since You were raised at the right hand of the Father, and You sent Your Holy Spirit down upon us, since the day of Pentecost, it is the acceptable day; every day is the acceptable year of the Lord. Today is the day and the year of Jubilee also tomorrow and forever because of the Lord Jesus Christ. He has rescued us from being blind just as this man was blind and not understanding anything but street doctrine.

Oh but now this man knows so much more, When I get to heaven there are certain people I'm going to look up. Number one on my list is actually Isaiah's mom! But next I want to meet this guy. He's number two. I want to find out what was going on with him, all the things he went through after this miracle. How did it change him? How was his discipleship? Was he a part of the church in Jerusalem or was he sent out? Our lives somehow are hidden from history also. Not one of us can be found on Wikipedia. Not one. It doesn't matter. Our lives, our names are written somewhere in the Book of Life and that's the biggest Wikipedia in eternity long after the idea of the internet has faded and been forgotten. The Book of Life will be remembered.

A lot of the reasons that teenagers are not here in church is that they do not believe that. All they see is their cell phone, their smart phone and their computers and what the next video game is going to bring. They don't want to go to a heaven without those things. That's a sad testimony of what Jesus is supposed to mean in their life. If any-

thing I teach my grandchildren, there is no substitute for the Lord Jesus Christ. There is no substitute for His compassion. You cannot find that on the net, nor on any video game or 3-d movie. It's not going to happen.

So, Father, we ask You, Lord God to go before us as a community of believers that You would fill us again with the excitement we should have by knowing You, just as this blind man was excited, not just receiving his physical sight, but receiving spiritual sight also. He needed both. Lord, I pray that you would still be the Lord and are the Lord who rescues us even when we might have the "door nailed closed." Even when it is hopeless because of the squalor that we have invested in and swim in and put all around us, Lord, You are about cleaning the way before us, about clearing a path! You promised to be a lamp to our feet and light to our pathway. Your promises are true, O Lord God. No matter how dark it is, there is a way for those people and for those we have prayed for and for ourselves. We thank You, Lord, for giving us the guts, the spiritual guts to stand up and say, "***We will not EVER stop worshiping You, Lord Jesus. It cannot happen.***" I pray in Jesus' name. Amen