

Monday, March 23, 2009

Close your eyes for a few moments and imagine you suddenly lost your sight . . . for the rest of your life. How would you cope? I'm sure you thank God, as I do, for eye doctors God has gifted to understand and repair our eyes when they do not see clearly. But how do we fix blindness of the heart, or mind?

Luke 18:31-34 (Matt. 20:17-19) is a significant turning point in the earthly life of Jesus Christ. He turned His face with intentionality toward Jerusalem for a last time. The mission for which He had come to earth was nearing its zenith event . . . His atonement death and resurrection. John 11:55-57 is important to understand, for Jesus knew what awaited Him! Do you see, however, that His friends who had spent the last few months with Him, were oblivious. How could that be? I call it "movement blindness".

Look around our world . . . "movement blindness" is everywhere. It's the genocide in Darfur, it's the AIG debacle; it's athletes on steroids; it's the killing of two police in Northern Ireland last week; it's suicide bombers in the Middle East; it's frantic fans following a movie star or music band. "Movement blindness" is a condition which affects a huge number of us. It causes one to find their perception of truth/reality dulled or distorted by their passion for a movement. In some cases this distortion causes faulty decision making, to the point of hurting themselves or other people.

The disciples were so caught up in what they thought was a revolutionary "kingdom of God" movement, they refused to understand Jesus' ultimate purpose of redemption. Saul was so zealous for Judaism he was determined to exterminate those who he believed were deceivers, the Christians (Acts 8:1-3; 9:1-25). Could it be you suffer from "movement blindness" and it distorts God's truth and distracts you from knowing and following Jesus Christ fully? How do you explain the transformation in Saul's blindness (Gal. 1:11-24)? Have you had such an encounter?

Tuesday, March 24, 2009

Have you heard of "group think"? A mob smashing storefronts, burning cars, stoning policemen . . . their anger fueled by the adrenalin rush of "mob mentality". A frenzied group of teens "mashing" at a concert and some get trampled in the frenzy. "Movement blindness" as I called it yesterday, can be deadly! Are you able to discern if and when you are suffering from it? Are you strong enough to swim upstream, to get out of the quicksand before you are consumed? Why were Jesus' disciples shocked with Judas' betrayal of Jesus (Luke 22:1-6; John 13:21-30; 18:1-12)?

Is it possible "movement blindness" can be helpful? Globally about 400 people daily are executed because they refuse to deny Jesus Christ as God incarnate, Savior and Lord. Their passionate love for Christ, their confidence in His truth, their commitment to communicate Him to their world is what causes their deaths . . . and many die "blinded" to the horribleness of their murder. We call it martyrdom. Less graphically, what about you and others who feel no one understands your love for worshiping Holy God, or your application of God's Word truth to your life in high standards, or your refusal to involve yourself in pornography or business deceit, or tax evasion or alcohol misuse? Yes, the Holy Spirit gives us strength to withstand persecution, as our passionate following of Jesus "blinds" us to the pain.

I caution you regarding "blindness" to the attack of the dark kingdom (Ephesians 6:10-18; 1 Peter 5:8). It is critical we understand there is an enemy who hates God, God's people, God's truth, and especially Satan hates what Jesus accomplished in Jerusalem that Passover week . . . His death and resurrection defeated sin, Satan and the sin penalty of death! During this Easter season, be alert to ever increasing schemes of the dark kingdom (Col. 1:13) to draw you away from the vibrant relationship Jesus Christ desires for you and Him. I urge you to journal from now 'till Easter, every day, a brief paragraph describing your journey with Jesus. How does God involve Himself in your day . . . daily?

Wednesday, March 25, 2009

How close have you ever been to someone you very highly respected . . . the President, a very famous person, etc.? Did you try to reach out and touch them in the crowd? Did you courageously call their name, maybe even step up and introduce yourself to them?

In Luke 18:35-43 (Mark 10:46-52), a blind man had his life-changing encounter with the most famous of all people, Jesus Christ! Blind Bartimaeus, as Mark calls him, was "blinded by despair" . . . nothing but road-side begging every day. A passing crowd might have given him hope of a few coins in his cup. This day, however, Jesus was passing by. What do you suppose Jesus would have done if Bartimaeus had sat quietly, simply accepting blindness as his lot in life?

Notice please, there were some arrogant, selfish people in the crowd who tried to keep blind Bartimaeus silent, or at least away from Jesus. Do you see that in our day? Are there some who make it difficult for others to find their way to Jesus? Let's look closely at ourselves to make sure none of us have any attitude or attribute which is causing others to turn away from Jesus as we journey to Easter this troubled 2009. Rather . . . what can each of us do to invite as many as possible, to the One who because of His Wounds . . . offers HOPE to anyone . . . remember Isaiah 53:5?

Do you see Jesus' responsiveness to the desperate cry of someone in need? It's one of the main reasons Jesus came to earth . . . to assure us that God hears our cry and understands our pain (Exodus 3:7, 8). What about Jesus' simple question to Bartimaeus . . . "What do you want Me to do for you?" Is the question fair? YES! Sometimes our most obvious need, is not our greatest need. You've heard me pray "Lord God please touch us at the point of our greatest need". Would you consider asking God to show you what HE knows to be your greatest need? Would you ask Him to touch you there, even if it resulted in a significant change in you at a very deep level? How much do you trust Him?

Thursday, March 26, 2009

Jericho . . . what do you think of when you hear the name of this place? Joshua chapters 2 & 6? Have you given thought to Joshua 6:26? Link it with 1 Kings 16:34!!

To this very same Jericho, several centuries later, Jesus went on His final trek to Jerusalem. (Modern day Jericho is on the same location and excavation has unearthed what they believe to be some of the fallen walls from Joshua's day!) Notice, two blind men in Jericho had life changing encounters with Jesus! One, Bartimaeus, healed from physical blindness (Luke 18:35-43) the other, Zacchaeus healed from a deep, inner blindness which held him captive to wealth, deceit and much more. Read both stories one right after the other . . . as an account of Jesus' visit to Jericho that day . . . amazing isn't it?

Look closely at Zacchaeus. How would you describe his "blind" lifestyle? Likely he was Jewish, thus viewed as a traitor by his people from whom he assured heavy taxes were taken. Being a "chief tax collector" he was a manager of other tax collectors and thus he likely took a "skim" off what they collected in taxes. While both Matthew and Mark tell us of Bartimaeus, only Luke tells us of Zacchaeus! Why?

Have you noticed how often Jesus did things that made the "religious leaders" uncomfortable? He treated women with respect, healed them and even spoke with them! He loved children. He healed blind people, lepers, and others whom people ostracized. He ate with "sinners" in their homes (Zacchaeus)!! What was Jesus trying to tell us about God's rejection of prejudice? What is God asking of you and me in regard to the people others push away?

How do you explain Zacchaeus' change of integrity? Link his statement with Jesus' words in Matt. 6:34 or 19:16-24 or 1 Timothy 6:6-10 . . . what do you conclude? This is really important friends, for it is the primary reason our economy has imploded in this past year! Now look closely at yourself, any "financial blindness"? Is all you have God's, on loan to you as His manager or do you own it . . . or does it own you?

Friday, March 27, 2009

This week we've been considering "blindness" in a variety of ways . . . "movement blindness", "despair blindness" and yesterday "prejudice blindness" and "financial blindness". Today, would you consider Ephesians 4:17-24 as another type of blindness? Do you see how "futility of thinking" is a first step to blindness? When you begin thinking in any way contrary to God's truth, it's the early stages of blindness. If you find yourself rationalizing your wrong thinking, or excusing your thinking because it seems "politically correct" or it buys into the prevailing thinking of a deceitful corporate environment or media mania . . . watch it friends, you're on a downward slide toward "thinking blindness"!

Notice Eph. 4:18, do you see "blindness of the heart" here? Hard hearts, resentful hearts, defensiveness . . . wrong thinking leads to "hardening of the heart"! That's why I ask so often "how's your heart", because if you aren't very careful you will find your heart affected by slick marketing and you will covet what you don't have or your heart will be wounded by a friend and you'll get resentful, etc. Have you learned to "guard your heart, it's the wellspring of life" (Prov. 4:23)? Have you found that your heart follows whatever you treasure? Do you have "heart blindness" and are you frantically pursuing the bait of bondage?

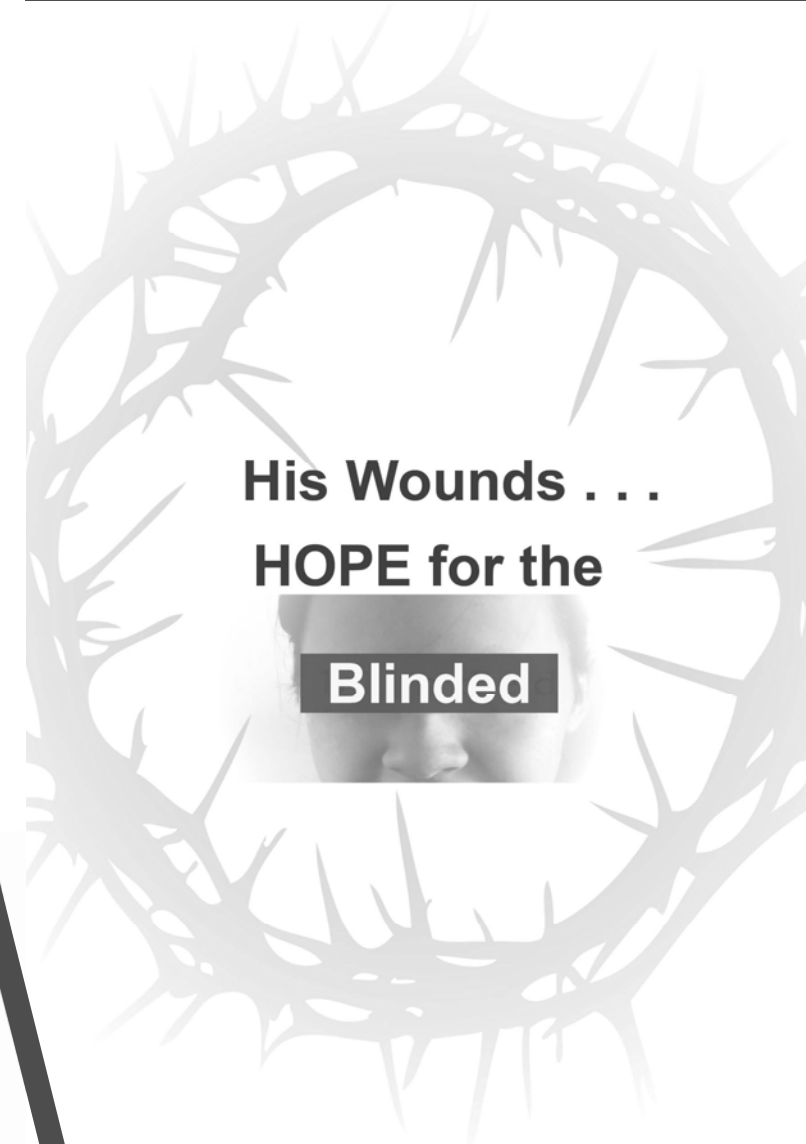
One more . . . how's the "blindness of selfishness"? Ephes. 4:19 is very powerful, read it slowly. Replace the word "sensuality" with "selfishness" . . . does it strike closer to home? When you lose sensitivity to the kind conviction of the Holy Spirit, you become selfish and when that begins to consume you, you'll find yourself in a desperate pursuit of that which will enslave you and sever your relationships with the ones who love you most and especially you'll find yourself distant from God!

God's response to this blindness is Eph. 4:20-24. Ask God for His truth about your blindness / put away anything He shows you is "old self" blindness / gain a new attitude with the mind of Christ and seek a fresh Spirit anointing!



Pastor Doug Anderson

March 23-27, 2009



His Wounds . . .

HOPE for the

Blinded



A Disciplemaking Tool
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