

# De-Masked on the Road to Damascus

by Brian Long

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of knowing God and the consequences of not knowing Him, using the story of Saul of Tarsus as an example.*

**Duration:** 49:50

**Scripture:** Acts 9:1

**Topics:** "Damascus"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher focuses on the story of Saul's encounter with Jesus on the road to Damascus. He emphasizes the importance of truly knowing Jesus Christ and challenges the audience to examine their own relationship with Him. The preacher refers to 1 John chapter 4 to provide examples and evidences of someone who does or does not know Jesus. He prays for God to strip away any masks of hypocrisy or self-righteousness and bring everyone into the fullness of God's presence and truth.

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## Transcript

Thank you, brother. Okay, thank you. Good evening again, brothers and sisters, friends.

It's good to see everybody again tonight. We're going to turn to Acts chapter 9 tonight is where we'll begin. Acts chapter 9, the message that God has put on my heart.

I'm giving a title, De-masked on the Road to Damascus. De-masked, have the mask removed on the road to Damascus. We've been talking about fresh encounters with the Lord Jesus Christ, a fresh encounter with God, and we're about to read of about an awesome encounter with Jesus Christ here.

Before we read our text, though, I feel a real need to remind us of a scripture in 1 John. Listen carefully as I read. This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all.

God is light and in Him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with Him and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another and the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses us from all sin.

God is light and in Him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with God and yet walk in darkness, we're lying. We're lying to God, we're lying to ourselves.

One of the ways a person walks in darkness is to hide behind a mask, any kind of cover. It can be a mask of hypocrisy, a mask of pretension, it can be hidden sin that a person is not willing to repent of. There are many ways we can hide under a cover and walk in darkness.

And if you're walking in darkness behind a mask, you do not know God. It's very clear in Scripture. Now, we come to Acts chapter 9. With that in mind, let's read our text here, starting in verse 1. Then Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest and asked letters from him to the synagogues of Damascus, so that if he found any who were of the way, whether men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.

As he journeyed, he came near Damascus, and suddenly a light shone around him from heaven. Then he fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? And he said, who are you, Lord? Then the Lord said, I am Jesus whom you are persecuting. It is hard for you to kick against the goads.

So he, trembling and astonished, said, Lord, what do you want me to do? Then the Lord said to him, arise and go into the city and you will be told what you must do. And the men who journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice, but seeing no one. Then Saul arose from the ground and when his eyes were opened, he saw no one.

But they led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus. And he was three days without sight and neither ate nor drank. Now, let's pray together again, please.

Heavenly Father, I thank you, Lord. For your holy word and your word says that you look upon the one who is broken and contrite and who trembles at your word. I pray tonight, Father, there would be a trembling at your word.

An awesome fear of you, O God. And I pray, Lord, because I'm so mindful. That I can do nothing apart from you, Jesus.

That you would empower me and fill me with your spirit, O God, and speak to every single one of us tonight. Strip away every mask of hypocrisy, of false humility, of self-righteousness, of every mask that you see, O God. I pray that you bring each and every one of us into the fullness of the light of your glorious presence and truth tonight.

For your glory and honor, we pray that you would move among us in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen.

Though Saul of Tarsus could physically see with his physical eyes as he was going on this journey to Damascus, spiritually, he was blind as a bat. Though he thought that he knew God and he thought that he was actually serving God and doing God's service, he was actually really serving the devil and he didn't know God at all. He was spiritually blind, blind as a bat.

When he had this awesome encounter with Jesus on the road to Damascus, he was suddenly de-masked, his blind eyes were open, and he asked the Lord two very vital questions. I don't know of two more important questions in all the Bible than these two questions that Saul of Tarsus asked when he met Jesus Christ on the road to Damascus. The two vital questions are these.

The first one's found in verse 5. Who are you, Lord? Who are you, Lord? The second one's found in verse 6. Lord, what do you want me to do? Who are you, Lord? Lord, what do you want me to do? I feel

especially impressed to preach on the first one tonight. Lord, who are you? I don't know of a more vital question. And it's a question that even a little child can answer and answer correctly if they know the Lord.

Even a little child can come into a relationship with Jesus Christ, be born again of the Spirit of God and know the Lord Jesus. But at the same time, it's a question that even the most mature saint, even the Apostle Paul could not plumb the depths of the answer to this question. Who are you, Lord? I want to know you, Jesus.

I want to know you so much more than I do. I don't know of a more vital question. And I've prayed this afternoon that the Spirit of the living God would brand this question upon the forefront of your mind, brand it into your conscience, burn it into your heart so that even tonight as you go to bed, there is a desire, a quickening in every single one of us.

Lord Jesus, who are you? I want to know you more. I want to know you more. I want you to draw me closer.

I want you to take me deeper. Who are you, Lord? Why is that question so vital? Why is it so important? Number one, because your eternal destiny hinges upon the answer to that question. Do you know the Lord Jesus Christ? Really know Him.

Why is it so vital? Because your eternal destiny hinges upon whether you know the Lord or not. This is life or death. This is heaven or hell.

This is a matter of living for the purpose of God in which you were called and created or totally wasting your life. The answer to this, do you know? Do you really know the Lord Jesus Christ? This, my friends, is eternal life. I don't know if you know this or not, but the definition of eternal life, according to Jesus Christ, is found in John chapter 17, verse three.

John 17, verse three, Jesus Christ Himself gave us the definition of eternal life. Eternal life is not just going to heaven when you die. Eternal life is not just something that we think about.

Well, I said a sinner's prayer. I was baptized going to heaven when I died. That's eternal life.

This is eternal life, according to Jesus Christ. John 17, three. This is eternal life, that they might know you, the only true God and Jesus Christ whom you have sent, that they might know you, Jesus, that they might know you, Father, the only true God.

Who are you, Lord? The question is, do you know? Do you really know the answer? And what does it mean to know the Lord Jesus? First and foremost, this knowledge, this knowing of Jesus, the same word know here is the word that was used in the Old Testament, for example, in Genesis chapter four, where it says that Adam knew his wife Eve and she conceived and gave birth to Cain, knew his wife. It's the most intimate kind of word, knowledge. When the angel came to Mary and said, you're going to give birth to a son, you shall call his name Jesus.

She said, how can this be, seeing that I do not know a man? And here he says, this is eternal life, that you might know God, that you might know Jesus Christ. It's not head knowledge. It's not head knowledge.

It's a heart revelation. It's a heart relationship with Jesus Christ. And many people are going to miss heaven and end up in hell because they know a whole lot about Jesus, but they do not know him.

Did you know you can know a whole lot about God and not know God? Did you know that you can come to church week after week after week? Your name can be on the membership roll. You can have been baptized in water. You can be giving money every single week and miss eternal, not have eternal life because you don't really know God.

Do you know you can know this book? You can know the Bible. You can quote it chapter and verse. And have a bunch of it crammed up here and yet not truly know God.

But this is eternal life, that you might know him, that you might know Jesus Christ. You can be a very religious person and yet not know God. God says himself in Jeremiah chapter nine, verse twenty three.

Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom. Let not the mighty man glory in his might. Let not the rich man glory in his riches, but let him who glories glory in this, that he understands and knows me.

God wants you and I to know him. He wants you and I to know him intimately. He wants you and I to know his heart.

He says in Psalm forty six ten, be still and know that I am God. A person can think that they know God and yet not really know him at all. Saul of Tarsus here in Acts chapter nine thought that he knew God when in truth he didn't really know him at all.

If you were to ask Saul at that time if he knew God, he would have adamantly and emphatically said, of course I know God. I'm Jewish. Circumcised on the eighth day of the stock of Israel of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews concerning the law, a Pharisee.

I'm a keeper of the Ten Commandments concerning zeal, persecuting the church. Of course I know God. But he was blind.

He was behind a mask. He was blind. He didn't know him at all.

And if I were to ask many today, some today, perhaps, do you really know God? Of course I know God. I'm Mennonite. Of course I know God.

I'm Pentecostal. I'm Baptist. I'm charismatic.

I'm whatever. Of course I know. Here's the worst one of all.

Of course I know God. Me and God have this understanding and not know God at all. We can claim to we know God and not really know him.

But here's what always gives us away. The road we travel always gives us away. The road we're going down always gives us away and tells the truth whether we really know him or not.

If Saul of Tarsus had known God, he wouldn't have been going down the road he was. Where was he? He was on the road to Damascus, breathing threats, anger, murder toward the followers of Christ. This man lived, ate and breathed hatred for Jesus Christ and hatred for his followers.

The first time we read about him is in Acts chapter seven. Look at this with me. Acts chapter seven in verse 58.

Sorry, let's go back to verse 57. Then they cried out with a loud voice. Then this is, of course, in the context of Stephen, this godly man being stoned to death because of his faith in Christ and because of what he preached.

He preached the truth. It says, Then they cried out with a loud voice, stopped their ears and read at him with one accord. And they cast him out of the city and stoned him.

And the witnesses laid down their clothes at the feet of a young man named Saul. And they stoned Stephen as he was calling on God and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. Then he knelt down and cried out with a loud voice, Lord, do not charge them with this sin.

And when he had said this, he fell asleep. Now, Saul was consenting to his death. At that time, a great persecution arose against the church, which was at Jerusalem.

Saul was consenting to his death. Verse three. As for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering every house and dragging off men and women, committing them to prison.

Do you know God, Saul? Of course I do. But the road you're going down gives you away. You do not know him at all.

Do you know Jesus Christ tonight, my friend? What is your answer? Do you truly know him? I want to give you some examples and evidences of a person that does and or does not truly know him from the word of God, not my opinion, but from Scripture. First John, chapter four. Let's go on a little journey here because we're building up to something.

First John, chapter four. And look with me at verse seven. The Bible says, Beloved, let us love one another for love is of God and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God.

Everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God, for God is love. In this, the love of God was manifest toward us, that God has sent his only begotten son into the world, that we might live through him in this is love, not that we love God, but that he loved us and sent his son to be the propitiation for our sins.

Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. He who really knows Jesus loves Jesus. First Peter, chapter two, tells us that to you who believe he is precious.

If you really know Jesus, then Jesus Christ is precious to you. If you cannot honestly say tonight that Jesus Christ is precious to me, you do not know him. Those who know him, love him, and those who know him love one another.

He who does not love does not know God, for God is love. First John, chapter two. Verse three, he says, Now by this we know that we know him.

If we keep his commandments, he who says I know him and does not keep his commandments is a liar and the truth is not in him. But whoever keeps his word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in him.

He who says he abides in him ought himself also to walk just as he walked. Brethren, I write no new commandment to you, but an old commandment which you have heard from that had from the beginning and that old commandment. He's taking us back to the commandment that Jesus gave in John 13 when

he says a new commandment.

I give you that you love one another as I have loved you. By this, you know, if you really know Jesus, you keep his commandments. You are very sincere and serious about obeying the word of God.

If there's not a passion in you to obey the word of God, you do not know God according to the word of God. And the greatest of commandment of all is to love God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength. The second is like it.

Love one another, Jesus said, even as I have loved you. First Thessalonians, chapter four. First Thessalonians, chapter four, verse three.

For this is the will of God, your sanctification, that you should abstain from sexual immorality, that each of you should know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, not in passion of lust like the Gentiles who do not know God. Can you continue in sexual immorality and lust and sexual sin and adamantly say, but I know God. Not according to scripture.

Not according to scripture, if you're hiding behind a mask of unconfessed, unrepented sin, if you're hiding behind a mask of hatred for your brother and you do not love. Hiding behind a mask of lust and sexual perversion, according to this, you're like the Gentiles who do not know God. Titus, chapter one.

Titus, chapter one, verse 15. To the pure, all things are pure, but to those who are defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure, but even their mind and conscience are defiled. They profess to know God.

They say that they know God, but in works they deny him being abominable, disobedient and disqualified for every good work. The point is very clear. If we continue in willful sin and rebellion, if you're going down the wrong road, headed in the wrong direction, it's a good sign.

You do not really know God. And those masks and cover ups are keeping you from knowing Jesus truly and intimately, just like Saul, though you thought you knew God, you need to meet the real Jesus, the one and only true God. And when you meet the real Jesus, the masks come off.

How do you know God? By first meeting Jesus Christ. That's what happened to Saul of Tarsus. He's suddenly smitten with a light that shone round about him from heaven.

He falls to the ground and hears a voice saying to him, Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? He asked, who are you, Lord? And what is the answer? I am Jesus whom you are persecuting. To know God, we have to meet Jesus. Saul of Tarsus, thinking he knew God, thinking he was doing God's service, going to arrest Christians, suddenly has this encounter, this revelation with Jesus Christ.

And it absolutely shakes him to the core and removes every mask off of his face and opens his spiritually blind eyes. He had an encounter with Christ, and that's what we all need. And here's another evidence, brothers and sisters, and this is really where I'm moving to tonight.

This was the beginning. This was his conversion. It starts out with who are you, Lord? Now we're going to go to Philippians chapter three, and this is toward the end of his life.

And guess what question he is still pressing into. I want to know you, Lord, who are you, Lord? Philippians chapter three. Watch this.

He says in verse seven. But what things were gained to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. Yet indeed, I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Jesus Christ, my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith.

Now watch this. Verse 10. This is his prayer.

This is his passion. That I may know him and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his sufferings being conformed to his death, if by any means I may attain to the resurrection from the dead. Those who know Jesus want more than anything else to know him more.

That's one of the evidences that you know the Lord. You cannot get enough of him. You want to know him more, even though the conversion started off with who are you, Lord? Now he's at the end of his life and he's still got this all-consuming passion.

In fact, the passion has increased. The fire in his bones is greater now, later on in his conversion, as he gets closer to approaching the day of actually seeing Jesus face to face. There's an even greater passion in him.

Oh, that I may know you, Jesus. I want to know you more. And if that is burning in your heart tonight, that's evidence that you know him.

If there's not that burning in your heart, you have every reason to question where you are in your relationship with God, whether you know him or not. Those who know Jesus want to know him more. And can we all admit that there is so much more of him to know than we know? God is infinite.

Christ is inexhaustible. There is so much more to know of him than than, you know, so many Christians somehow believe because they've supposedly walked with God for five, 10, 15, 20 years that they sort of arrived, you know, they know him. Do you really know him? How many are in our board in the house of God and board with the Bible because they really don't know Jesus and don't have this all consuming passion to know him more? Do you really know him? Have you really plumbed the depths of knowing him? You may as well try to plumb the depths of the ocean.

There are places in the ocean that man has never gone. In fact, someone says we know more about outer space right now than we know about the depths of the deepest ocean. Yet God says he holds the ocean in the hollow of his hand.

Do you really know all there is to know of Christ? You may as well say that, you know, the very number of the stars in the heavens and all the galaxies, try to count them, try to count all the stars in this universe, the next and all the galaxies man never has, man never will. And yet God himself says that he calls them all by name. He's an awesome God.

He's a big God. He's an infinite God. Christ is awesome.

He is infinite. He's inexhaustible. In fact, the scripture says that he inhabits eternity, that he's the alpha and he's the omega.

He's the beginning and the end. You and I have not even scratched the surface of truly knowing Christ the way he wants us to know him. And he's inviting us, come closer, let's go deeper.

But there's got to be an all consuming passion within you to want to know him. And there's got to be a desire and a willingness for him to remove every mask and every scale that we allow to cover us and to keep us from having a full vision and revelation of him. Those who know him want to know him more and that and we will never plumb the depths.

And that's why heaven will never get boring. Do you honestly think that heaven's all about gold streets and pearly gates and a mansion over the hilltop? Is that what you're looking forward to? Not me. You can have all of that.

Give me Jesus. Give me Jesus. Heaven is heaven because Jesus is there.

And like David, I can say whom have I in heaven but you. And there's no one on the earth that I desire beside you. Jesus is everything.

And that's what the apostle Paul, that's the revelation he got, the closer, the longer he grew in Christ. Is that Jesus is everything and nothing at all can ever compare to him. And the other thing we learn from the apostle Paul here in Philippians chapter three is that knowing Jesus is worth losing everything.

That's a bold statement, but do we really believe it? Knowing Jesus is worth losing everything. Is he that precious to you? He was to Paul. Look at what he says in chapter three.

If we back up to verse. Let's go to verse four. He says, though I also might have confidence in the flesh, if anyone else thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I'm more so circumcised the eighth day of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews concerning the law of Pharisee, concerning zeal, persecuting the church, concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.

He says, but what things were gained to me, these I've counted loss for Christ. In essence, he's saying knowing Jesus is worth losing all of this. Yet and yet, indeed, I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish that I may gain Christ.

Now, there's two things that we must lose in order to to know Jesus Christ this way. Two things. Unrighteousness and self-righteousness, unless we're willing to lose both of these, we cannot know Christ this way.

Unrighteousness and self-righteousness. And Paul refers to both of them here in verse eight as rubbish. And I think that's too nice of a word.

The old King James says dung. That's what he says, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as dung that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith, that I may know him. All of our unrighteousness, all of our self-righteousness is referred to here as dung.

Do you think that Nelson, when he's cleaning out his barn there, has to wonder, does he really want to get rid of this manure, this cow manure or not? Should he let it pile up? Is it is it really valuable? Should we let it pile up? And actually, cow manure has some value to it, at least. He can scoop it out of there and go put

it on a field. But if you don't mind, let me be a little more graphic.

When you and I, when you use the bathroom, do you have to think twice about whether or not you should flush that toilet? Should we? Should I or should I not? I know that's graphic, but that's the way you and I need to look at our unrighteousness and our self-righteousness. Do you know what unrighteousness and self-righteousness looks like in the sight of God? I do count all this as but dung. Lose it.

Flush it. Get rid of it. And one of the things that will keep us from pressing in and going deeper and drawing near to Christ is the refusal to lose these things.

First of all, unrighteousness. Hebrews chapter 12, verse one says, since we are therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight and the sin which so easily ensnares us and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith. He's saying very clearly that sin that is so dear and precious to you, that sin that you have refused to let go of, flush it.

Get rid of it. He's saying cast it off. This is what keeps us from pressing in to know the heart of Jesus more.

Unrighteousness must be gone. It must be repented of. You cannot hang on to bitterness.

You cannot hang on to lust. You cannot hang on to anger. You cannot hang on to pride.

It's got to be repented of. But secondly, self-righteousness. The Apostle Paul says in in verse four, in following, he gives this list of all the wonderful things about him before Christ, all the things that he might have confidence in the flesh about and all this self-righteousness.

And yet he says, you know what this looks like in the sight of God? Rubbish, dumb. It must be repented of until we come to the place of Jesus and Jesus only. The mass that blinds so many of us is self-righteousness and pride.

It runs deep and the roots of it go deep. It's a spiritual veil of darkness that covers our face and blinds our eyes so that we cannot see. Saul of Tarsus, though physically he could see spiritually, he was blind because of his self-righteousness and pride.

He was a proud, religious, highly educated Pharisee. And he thought for certain that he was doing God a favor when in reality he was persecuting Jesus Christ himself. He was blind to the fact that the very God he thought he was doing service for was deeply grieved.

And I want to say that to you, my friend. If you're one who is constantly looking, looking at the sins of others, constantly criticizing others, constantly pointing the finger, constantly quick to pass judgment, and you're proud of the fact that you're not like they are and you're proud of the fact that the way you give and the proud of the abilities you have and proud of the way you dress and proud that you're not like this person or that person or the other person, I tell you, you're a first class hypocrite, Pharisee, full of self-righteousness and pride. And that will keep you from knowing the heart of God.

It will keep you away from this revelation of the real Jesus. Self-righteousness and pride blinds us like nothing else. Why do you think Jesus said? Before you go and help your brother get the splinter out of his eye, first take the plank out of your own.

You and I will never, ever, ever, ever find a splinter in our brother's eye that is bigger than the plank of self-righteousness and pride that was in ours. Ever. He doesn't say ignore that splinter in your brother's eye.

We do have an obligation as a brother or sister to help our brother, to help our sister. But you better go carefully. Because no matter what they have, it's not bigger than this, than the plank that was in your own.

And that plank is self-righteousness and pride. Let me show you from Scripture how this happens. This pointing of the finger until we have an encounter with Jesus.

Isaiah chapter five. Look at this with me. Isaiah chapter five.

In Isaiah chapter five, we read a phrase over and over again. And Isaiah is preaching and he's preaching truth. But notice he says in verse eight, woe to those who join house to house.

They add field to field. There is no place where they may dwell alone in the midst of the land. Notice he says, woe to those.

And then we come to verse 11. Woe to those who rise early in the morning that they may follow intoxicating drink, who continue until night, till wine inflames them. Woe to those.

Verse 18. Woe to those who draw iniquity with cords of vanity and sin as if the card of a rope. Verse 20.

Woe to those who call evil good and good evil. Verse 21. Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes.

Verse 22. Woe to men mighty at drinking wine. Verse 22.

Woe to men valiant for mixing intoxicating drink. Isaiah is woe to them. Woe to those.

Woe to those. Woe to them. Next chapter, he sees the Lord.

He says in the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne high and exalted, high and lifted up. He says in verse five. When I saw him, I said, woe to them, woe is me.

What is the difference when you and I finally get a revelation and have an encounter with the real Jesus? Suddenly it's not woe to them. It's woe is me. Woe is me for I'm undone.

I'm a man of unclean lips and I live among a people of unclean lips and my eyes have seen the king, the Lord of hosts. This holiness and glory of Jesus illuminates the seriousness of our own sin and pride and self-righteousness. You say, Brother Brian, shouldn't we preach against sin? Amen.

I'm preaching against sin. Shouldn't we cry out against unrighteousness and injustice and all of this? Yes. But only after we have had an encounter with the real Jesus and only after we have allowed him to strip us of all this self-righteousness and pride.

Jesus Christ wept over Jerusalem before he ever went in to whip and judge. And many people today want to whip before they weep. Jesus wept before he whipped.

Before we say, let me help you with your splinter. We first need to have a revelation of the real Jesus and say, Lord, get this stinking self-righteous pride and self-righteousness off of me. Lord, flush it.

Cleanse me of it. I repent of it. And only then do we really have authority to say woe to them, woe to those.

Imagine the Saul of Tarsus. Physically blind for three days, the Bible says, but spiritually his eyes were being opened. And I can imagine him recalling all that he'd done.

Imagine this. Suddenly he thought he was so right. He thought he was so righteous.

And suddenly it strikes him like an arrow to his heart, consenting to the death of a godly man named Stephen. All those hundreds of Christians. And you know what? We're too dignified to do that today, but you know how you murder your brother today? With your tongue.

That's how you murder your brother, your sister. That's how you slay your wife, your husband, your children. And it's the same from self-righteousness and pride, slaying one another, murdering one another with the tongue.

And God hates it. We need a revelation of Jesus and all of his holiness and glory that will absolutely remove this mask and these blinders from us. Imagine Saul of Tarsus blind physically, but now being awakened spiritually and being under the conviction of how proud and arrogant he was.

And then to see the glorious Lord Jesus. And the Lord Jesus sent him a man named Ananias to lay hands upon him and pray over him, and scales fell from his eyes. He was under such conviction he didn't eat or drink for three days.

I bet he didn't sleep very much either. But when he was awakened and turned to the Lord, it was no longer the self-righteous, arrogant, proud Saul. It was the humble Paul.

He had turned to the Lord and the veil had been taken away. Look at this verse in second Corinthians, chapter three, second Corinthians, chapter three, one verse, verse 16. Nevertheless, when one turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away.

When one turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. That is the mask, the covering, the blinders from the eyes. Would you admit, brothers and sisters, that we all have blind spots? Would you also admit that none of us are immune to being deceived? It is a deception to think you yourself can't be deceived, especially when Jesus warned us throughout the Gospels and even throughout the New Testament, be not deceived.

Be not deceived. How can I know that I won't be deceived? I've got to constantly look to the Lord. That's when the mask is taken away.

That's when the veil is taken away. That's when the scales fall off of my eyes. Now, imagine this.

There's such a vast difference between knowing Jesus and just knowing about him. Imagine that there's a big difference between John, the beloved, and Judas, the betrayer. Both of them spent this probably about almost the same amount of time with Jesus.

Both of them ate with Jesus. They watched Jesus. They watched him perform miracles.

They listened to him preach. They listened to him teach. They watched him feed the 5,000.

They watched him perform miracles. They themselves were empowered to perform miracles and cast out demons. But John knew him.

Judas just knew about him. Judas was with Jesus all that time and yet did not really know him. Amazing.

Being with Jesus all that time, but never really, and knowing him up here, knowing a lot about him, but never knowing him here, and all the while helping himself to the money bag, and ultimately betraying the Son of God for 30 pieces of silver, and then going out and committing suicide. Do you know Jesus, or do you just know about him? There's a vast difference. Vast difference.

If I said, if I said, I know the President, that's like saying, I know about him. That's not going to get me in the White House, is it? But if I said, the President knows me, that's a whole other thing. And I want to ask you two questions tonight.

Number one, I've already asked you, do you know the Lord? And if you do, then there's a, there's a heart cry within you. I want to know him more. And if you want to know him more, then you must look to the Lord and allow him to remove all the pride and self-righteousness from your eyes, that you may see him more clearly.

The second question, I think, is even more important than the first. And we could ask, what is more important than, do you know Jesus? Here it is. Does Jesus Christ know you? Does he know you? It's one thing for me to say, I know him.

That's another thing for him to say of me, he knows me. Turn to Matthew chapter 7, and I'm coming to a close. Matthew chapter 7, this is the, one of the scariest verses in all the Bible to me.

Scariest of scriptures. Matthew chapter 7, verse 21. Jesus said, not everyone who says to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter the kingdom of heaven.

Listen to this, not my words, but Christ. Not everyone who says to me, Lord, Lord, will enter the kingdom of heaven. But he who does the will of my father in heaven, many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in your name, cast out demons in your name, and done many wonders in your name? And then I will declare to them, I never knew you.

Depart from me, you who practice lawlessness. Terrified. But do you see the difference here? Those that Jesus Christ said of, I never knew you, are full of self-righteousness.

They're the kind that come before the Lord and say, but Lord, I've done this for you. I've done this for you. I've done this for you.

I've prophesied in your name. I've cast out demons. I've done many wonderful works to such people full of self-righteousness and pride.

Christ himself says, I never knew you. Those who know Jesus don't come before Jesus flaunting what they've done. They know their self-righteousness is but dung worthy of being flushed down the toilet.

They come before Jesus saying not, Lord, look at what I've done for you, but Lord, thank you for what you've done for me. And there's a huge difference when you stand before God on judgment day and every single one of us must appear before the judgment seat of Christ. It's not Lord, look at what I've done for you.

It's Lord, thank you for what you've done for me. And out of gratitude for what he's done for us, we turn back and serve him. Out of love and gratitude for what he's done for us.

The two most vital questions you will ever be asked, do you know Jesus? And more importantly, does Jesus Christ know you? Now the question tonight for someone, and I didn't have a message together for tonight. I'm going to just be straight up honest with you. In prayer this afternoon, I had an extremely strong burden that there are those gathered, and I don't know who you are.

God knows the heart of man, not me. But this I know I received a burden from the Lord that some here tonight are hiding behind a terrible mass of self-righteousness and pride. And it is vital that you repent of it tonight.

It is vital that you turn to the Lord and you call it what it is and you call it sin and let him strip it away. Unless you do, you will not go any further into the Lord. But there's something else for someone here tonight who has never met the Lord Jesus Christ.

That is the first step. You've never had an encounter like Saul of Tarsus on the road to Damascus. Tonight is the night.

Tonight is the night to humble yourself before the Lord, to humble yourself before the Lord. And it's very simple to come to the Lord Jesus Christ in repentance and faith, believing on him with all of your heart, getting honest with him. Jesus is not waiting for you to get all your act together.

Jesus is calling you to come to him just as you are and to confess that you are a sinner just as you are. There is nothing good in your flesh. There is nothing good that you can offer to God.

The only thing you can bring to God is your sin. And the Lord is calling you tonight to come to him just as you are. He requires humility.

He requires honesty. You come to him humbly. You get honest before him.

Lord Jesus, I am a sinner. And you confess your sin to God and ask him to save you. He will come and save you tonight.

My friend, does this grip your heart that one day, it could be very soon, you are going to stand before the King of glory, the righteous judge of all mankind, the one who bled and died for you, as we said last night on a cross, who loved you with boundless, indescribable love? Will you stand before him on that day as one who has rejected him? Terrifying. There is nothing more terrifying than those who will hear Jesus say to them, depart from me. I never knew you.

Nothing more terrifying. And only the Holy Spirit can convince you of that. But if he is speaking to you at all, if there is an ounce of conviction in your heart tonight, I plead with you in Jesus' name to come to him in repentance and faith, to bow your knee to Christ and confess him as Savior and Lord.

He will come and save you tonight. I plead with you to do that in Jesus' name. For those of you who are brothers and sisters in Christ, it's a very simple message, but it's a message of Jesus Christ himself calling us deeper, calling us, inviting us to know him more.

Let him strip away all the pride and self-righteousness. Look to him and you will know him more. Now let's stand together as we bow in prayer.

Johnny, if you'll come.

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