

John 9

JESUS AND THE BLIND MAN

Last week in John 8 immediately after dealing with the scribes and Pharisees over the woman taken in adultery Jesus proclaimed cf:

John 8:12 Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.

Now in John 9 he sets about to prove it by bringing light to the eyes of the blind a miracle the prophet Isaiah foretold the Messiah would work.

Isaiah 35:5 Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. **35:6** Then shall the lame *man* leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing: for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert

This miracle is reported only by the Gospel of John, remember that he alone gives a report of the ministry of Jesus in Judea. Apparently it occurred on the same day, only a few moments after Christ had escaped from the attempt to stone Him. It was on the Sabbath day and it occurred on the same day as the events of the last chapter. Notice the term: "passed by" in the previous chapter.

John 8:58-59 Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am. **8:59** Then took they up stones to cast at him: but Jesus hid himself, and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by.

John 9:1 And as *Jesus* passed by, he saw a man which was blind from *his* birth.

Then this chapter begins with the same term: "As Jesus passed by." When we remember that there was no break into chapters and verses when John wrote this book, it seems certain that he designed to say that this occurred immediately after.

Blindness from birth is usually incurable even by modern science.

Like most such handicapped people during that age, the man was a beggar.

John 9:2 And his disciples asked him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind?

The disciples observed the Savior's look, resting lovingly on the suffering blind man. They ask the solution of a troublesome question. It was the current opinion of the Jews that such an infliction was a punishment for some sin. Traces of this belief are often found in the Scriptures.

When Job was suffering his friends insisted that he must have been a great sinner. The prophet Isaiah describing the sufferings of Christ, declared that the people would say cf: Isaiah 53:4 He is "smitten of God and afflicted."

When Paul placed the bundle of sticks on the fire after the shipwreck, and the viper came out and fastened on his hand, the barbarians decided at once that he was a murderer or, at least, a great criminal. The world still believes that great calamities are judgments. Even Christ had said to the paralytic at the pool of Bethesda, "Go, and sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon thee."

Usually our sorrows are the direct result of our own sins. Men are broken in health, reputation, or fortune, because they have transgressed. When the drunkard has the D.T's, or an outcast woman is dying in shame, we all say they are all reaping what they have sown. The disciples knew well that the sins of parents are often visited upon the children. Many a child has received the legacy of a feeble constitution, or a hereditary disease, or of vicious habits, or of a shameful name, from its parents.

John 9:3 Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him.

This is just the ordinary course of Divine providence. Jesus, does not say that they were sinless, but that their sins were not the cause of his blindness. Thus we are not always justified in asserting that one who suffers is necessarily a sinner. Christ here shows that there may be other reasons for sorrow than personal or family sins.

But that the works of God should be made manifest in him. By his miraculous cure the work of God shall be made manifest. What is the work of God? It is the work of God to believe on Christ cf:

John 6:29 Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.

The blindness of this man and his healing became the occasion of faith being produced not only in him, but others. Thus Christ shows a nobler use of suffering. It is often a means of grace, and the saints are often called upon to suffer.

"The Father chasteneth every son whom he loveth." "If ye be without chastening ye are not sons." "The blood of martyrs is the seed of the church."

John 9:4 I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work.

Jesus will miss no opportunity to do and teach good. The works of God are to be made manifest in the blind man; Christ must work those works while the short day of life lasts; the night of death soon cometh to everyone when no man can work. It is probable, when these words were spoken, the afternoon was moving toward night when the work of the day would be over. His night of death was near at hand, and He was diligent to finish His work. It is the same with us: If we have not "worked out our own salvation with fear and trembling," it will be too late.

John 9:5 As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.

He was like the sun that is the source of light and heat but He is the source of all spiritual light to the soul. He sheds moral and spiritual light upon the world. It was prophesied that he should give sight to the blind. He not only opened blind souls but blind eyes. At that very moment He was about to be light to one who had been wrapped in darkness all his life.

John 9:6 When he had thus spoken, he spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and he anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay,

Why He did this we do not know, it is not a medical cure. The ancients believed there was a virtue in saliva, but one way of healing was as easy to Jesus as another. It is probable that He used this means in order to send the man to the pool of Siloam to wash. It was Christ's rule to give all who were healed something to do as a test of faith. He had volunteered the cure in this case; he therefore anointed the blind man's eyes and bade him go and wash off the ointment.

John 9:7 And said unto him, Go, wash in the pool of Siloam, (which is by interpretation, Sent.) He went his way therefore, and washed, and came seeing.

Hebrew Shalach meaning He sent or a gift from God. This was a pool in Jerusalem, called Siloah or Shiloah in Neh. 3:15 and Isa. 8:6 which is South of the temple mount. Sent is the name of the pool and was also one of the titles of Christ. He was the Shiloah the one Sent from God. The blind man went in obedience, just as Naaman the Syrian went and washed in the Jordan. The result in each case was the same. The divine power healed, but an act of obedience was demanded of the man.

God had foretold the rulers would reject the miracle of Shiloah.

Isaiah 8:6 Forasmuch as this people refuseth the waters of Shiloah that go softly, and rejoice in Rezin and Remaliah's son;

John 9:8 The neighbours therefore, and they which before had seen him that he was blind, said, Is not this he that sat and begged?

Beggars have a language and mannerisms of their own.

John 9:9 Some said, This is he: others *said*, He is like him: *but* he said, I am *he*.

This miracle was not done in private but in public but this man appeared different. The only doubt arose from the fact this man could see. Apparently, he was a well-known beggar, but their surprise was so great that it required his affirmation before they were sure of his identity.

John 9:10 Therefore said they unto him, How were thine eyes opened?

John 9:11 He answered and said, A man that is called Jesus made clay, and anointed mine eyes, and said unto me, Go to the pool of Siloam, and wash: and I went and washed, and I received sight.

The man had never seen Jesus, he couldn't see Jesus spit and make the clay, so how the clay was made he does not know.

They were astounded and in surprise they ask for an explanation. The literal translation of what the blind man did is, "And going, and washing, I see."

John 9:12 Then said they unto him, Where is he? He said, I know not.

This question may have been asked out of curiosity.

These questioners were the neighbors of the blind man.

John 9:13 They brought to the Pharisees him that aforetime was blind.

It was a marvelous event that demanded investigation and the Pharisees are determined to find out if it was done legally. Hence they brought him to the religious men of great power and influence. These Pharisees were then the ruling sect, and the blind man is brought to leaders among them for an informal investigation of his case.

The Pharisees, as a sect, were hypocritical, but among them were upright men such as Nicodemus, Joseph of Arimathea, Gamaliel and Saul of Tarsus, were all of this sect.

John 9:14 And it was the sabbath day when Jesus made the clay, and opened his eyes.

Saturday, was the Jewish Sabbath. We have found in the case of the miracle at the pool of Bethesda how they were angered by any apparent violation of the Sabbath day. They tried to observe the day in the letter of the law plus they added the traditions of men and they constantly broke the law in spirit. Works of necessity and mercy were never forbidden

John 9:15 Then again the Pharisees also asked him how he had received his sight. He said unto them, He put clay upon mine eyes, and I washed, and do see.

John 9:16 Therefore said some of the Pharisees, This man is not of God, because he keepeth not the sabbath day. Others said, How can a man that is a sinner do such miracles? And there was a division among them.

The Pharisees questioned the man and learned that his eyes had been smeared with clay. Then they declared that Jesus had broken the Sabbath. The Jewish doctors of the law, were binding burdens that God had never imposed, declared that on the Sabbath no man could even anoint one of his own eyes with spittle. Hence, according to their logic, Jesus had broken the Sabbath, and was not a man of God.

But on the other hand there was this wonderful miracle. How could one whom God did not empower open the eyes of one blind from birth! Hence, "there was a division among them." A schism.

John 9:17 They say unto the blind man again, What sayest thou of him, that he hath opened thine eyes? He said, He is a prophet.

They ask for each man's opinion and, finally, in their perplexity and division, turned to the blind man who was healed. A little while before he had said that "a man called Jesus" healed him; now he declares that "he is a prophet;" a little later he is prepared to receive him as the Son of God. His convictions constantly deepened.

John 9:18 But the Jews did not believe concerning him, that he had been blind, and received his sight, until they called the parents of him that had received his sight

In verses 13-17, the examination of the blind man was conducted by the Pharisees; now all "the Jews," the officials who have influence in Jerusalem, including also the Pharisees, undertake the investigation.

Their only way of escape from the admission that Jesus had worked an unprecedented miracle is to insist that the young man had not been born blind. They begin this examination by calling his parents.

It should be noted that this has now become an official examination.

John 9:19 And they asked them, saying, Is this your son, who ye say was born blind? how then doth he now see?

John 9:20 His parents answered them and said, We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind:

John 9:21 But by what means he now seeth, we know not; or who hath opened his eyes, we know not: he is of age; ask him: he shall speak for himself.

The Jews have asked the parents three questions: 1. Is this your son? 2. Was he born blind? 3. How was he cured? For the fact that he now sees is indisputable. The manner of asking the first question is designed to express doubts: "Is this your son, that you *say* was born blind?"

The parents reply: 1. He is our son; 2. He was born blind; 3. He now sees, but by what means he was cured we know not. They refer them to their son for further information as a competent witness. Being of age "he could speak for himself."

John 9:22 These *words* spake his parents, because they feared the Jews: for the Jews had agreed already, that if any man did confess that he was Christ, he should be put out of the synagogue.

John 9:23 Therefore said his parents, He is of age; ask him.

In other words he has stature and is full grown ask him. The parents were non-committal concerning how their son was cured because of fear of those same Jewish officials who were now questioning them. We learn that an agreement had already been reached that any one confessing that Jesus was the Christ should be excommunicated. Though Jesus had not openly proclaimed Himself as the Christ, this decision of the rulers shows that the people were considering that possibility and that the idea that He was the Christ was gaining ground. This resolution to expel all confessors of Christ from the synagogue became a fixed rule after the crucifixion, when the gospel began to be preached with such great success. Christ predicts it cf:

Matt. 10:17 But beware of men: for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues;

John 9:24 Then again called they the man that was blind, and said unto him, Give God the praise: we know that this man is a sinner.

Failing to obtain any satisfaction from the parents, they send for the son. They aim in this second interview to overwhelm him, and force him to the admission that there was some deception or mistake about Jesus having healed him. "Give glory to God" means, "Remembering that the eyes of God are upon you," and therefore, honor God by telling the truth. The evidence that they urge as proof of a deception is we know that this man is a sinner. Their proof of this was that he healed on the Sabbath.

John 9:25 He answered and said, Whether he be a sinner *or no*, I know not: one thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see.

His answer shows that he had a backbone and was not intimidated by the Jews. He enters into no dispute whether the Healer was a sinner or not, but of one thing there could be no doubt: he had been blind, but now he can see.

John 9:26 Then said they to him again, What did he do to thee? how opened he thine eyes?

They begin a cross examination in the hope that some flaw in the chain of proof might be developed.

Joh 9:27 He answered them, I have told you already, and ye did not hear: wherefore would ye hear *it* again? will ye also be his disciples?

He had answered these questions to the Pharisees who were an important part of "the Jews." His answers show a growing impatience. Will ye also be his disciples? This question is sarcastic. They seem so interested, have insisted on him telling the story of his cure the second time, ask so many questions; is it that they wish to be his disciples? The "also" implies that the man healed is becoming a disciple which is a believer.

John 9:28 Then they reviled him, and said, Thou art his disciple; but we are Moses' disciples.

They are genuine Pharisees of a political party less than 200 years old.

John 9:29 We know that God spake unto Moses: *as for this fellow*, we know not from whence he is.

Hence they argue that they are on sure ground in clinging to Moses, but as to being the disciple of "this fellow, they do not even know whence he is."

John 9:30 The man answered and said unto them, Why herein is a marvellous thing, that ye know not from whence he is, and yet he hath opened mine eyes.

Now follows a marvelous scene, a ragged man who was only that morning begging his bread, is in this conclave of great doctors of the law, expounding theology to the very men who "sat in Moses' seat" and shows a better knowledge of the Scriptures than the self-righteous Pharisees who prided themselves so much on their doctrinal knowledge!

What is wonderful in deed is that people like you, who's business it is to distinguish good from evil cannot decide in a case so plain. He frankly declares it a "marvelous thing" that they do not know after the great miracle of opening his eyes. One who wrought such a miracle must be from God.

John 9:31 Now we know that God heareth not sinners: but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth his will, him he heareth.

His argument was the same as that of the distinguished "master in Israel," Nicodemus, who when he came to Christ declared cf:

John 3:1 There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews: 3:2 The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him.

In the same spirit the man cured of blindness declares that God only hears true worshipers and those who do his will.

John 9:32 Since the world began was it not heard that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind.

He was right. No similar miracle is recorded anywhere else in the Scriptures.

John 9:33 If this man were not of God, he could do nothing.

This unheard of cure, he insists, can only be due to the favor and power of God; hence Jesus must be a man of God.

John 9:34 They answered and said unto him, Thou wast altogether born in sins, and dost thou teach us? And they cast him out

Fulfilling the prophecy of Isaiah and showing the masters of Israel were blind

Isaiah 6:9-10 And he said, Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. 6:10 Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed.

In verse 2 the disciples asked: "Did this man sin that he should be born blind?" They, probably in reference to that belief, declare that he was born "in sins," yet he would presume to teach great doctors like themselves! In their rage there is an implied acknowledgement of the miracle. And they cast him out. Cast him out, not only from their presence, but also from their sympathy, and intercourse with them and the people. It is implied that he was made an outcast, and no doubt their act would be followed by exclusion from the synagogue of which he was a member.

Tholuck remarks: "The narrative of this miracle has a special value in apologetics. How often do we hear from non-believers the wish expressed that Christ's miracles had been put on documentary record; and had been subjected to a thorough judicial examination! Well, here it is ...

John 9:35 Jesus heard that they had cast him out; and when he had found him, he said unto him, Dost thou believe on the Son of God?

Jesus at once sought him. The man had lost the world, but Christ was ready to give him heaven. Dost thou believe on the Son of God? The man knew so little of Jesus that he did not know who was meant.

John 9:36 He answered and said, Who is he, Lord, that I might believe on him?

He does not ask this question in doubt, but that he may receive the information which will lead to a complete faith. He has full confidence in Jesus, but has not learned that he is the Son of God, and probably waits to hear him affirm it.

John 9:37 And Jesus said unto him, Thou hast both seen him, and it is he that talketh with thee.

Those two eyes that have been opened by Jesus are now permitted to see Jesus in the person of the great Healer who is the Son of God. It is a striking fact that this declaration of Himself, was given spontaneously, to the outcast from the synagogue. This only has one parallel case, the revelation of Christ to the outcast woman of Samaria cf:

John 4:25-26 The woman saith unto him, I know that Messias cometh, which is called Christ: when he is come, he will tell us all things. **4:26** Jesus saith unto her, I that speak unto thee am *he*.

John 9:38 And he said, Lord, I believe. And he worshipped him.

At once there is an outspoken confession of faith, followed by an act of homage. The believer believes with the heart, confesses with the lips, and shows forth this faith by obedience.

John 9:39 And Jesus said, For judgment I am come into this world, that they which see not might see; and that they which see might be made blind

He came into the world to save it, but the effect of his coming is to reveal every man's true condition. The light reveals the stains that would otherwise be unseen, and Christ's presence reveals the presence and power of sin in the hearts of men. He is the touch stone. His coming not only gave sight to the blind but opened the eyes of those who were in the darkness of ignorance. Publicans and sinners were enabled to see, while "Jews" and Pharisees, who claimed to be enlightened, were left in darkness, because they closed their eyes.

John 9:40 And *some* of the Pharisees which were with him heard these words, and said unto him, Are we blind also?

The form of the question implies that these Pharisees supposed that Christ would answer in the negative. He had spoken of two classes, those who did not see who should see; and those who saw, or had the highest spiritual opportunities, who would become blind by wilfully closing their eyes. The Pharisees think that they belong to neither class.

John 9:41 Jesus said unto them, If ye were blind, ye should have no sin: but now ye say, We see; therefore your sin remaineth.

If they were blind, utterly without knowledge, they would have no moral responsibility, but they claimed to see and had the highest opportunities for knowing; hence, when they closed their eyes and thus wilfully refused to see, they were guilty. To other sins was added the sin of the rejection of the light. Our responsibility is measured by our opportunities.

PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS.

- 1. Sinners are blind to their own interests, to God, heaven, spiritual life.**
- 2. They are not only blind, but beggars, unable to cure themselves, needing help from God and man.**
- 3. The miracles are "parables of redemption." Observe: (1) The man is in darkness; the state of the sinner; (2) Christ is the light; (3) The condition of receiving the light is faith and obedience; (4) The man believes and obeys and "came seeing."**
- 4. The sinner is blind to his best good, to God's goodness and love, to Jesus, to the Bible, to heaven. He is blind and a *beggar*, needing help from others. Blind, and grinding in the mill, like Samson among the Philistines.**
- 5. None are so guilty as those who boast that they are enlightened and yet refuse to receive the light. Moral responsibility is measured by opportunity.**
- 6. Sometimes men are called to suffer that "the glory of God may be manifest." Bunyan could never have written the Pilgrim's Progress had he not been cast into prison, nor Milton, Paradise Lost had he not been blind and forsaken by the world. So, too, God's children are sometimes called to endure chastisement in order that they might yield the peaceable fruit of righteousness. They that bear Christ's cross shall wear his crown. They that wear the white robes on high are those who have come up through much tribulation and washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb. See Rev. 7:14.**

Sources: KJV, Clarks Commentary & mostly B.W. Johnson Commentary

Isa 59:7-10 Their feet run to evil, and they make haste to shed innocent blood: their thoughts *are* thoughts of iniquity; wasting and destruction *are* in their paths. 59:8 The way of peace they know not; and *there is* no judgment in their goings: they have made them crooked paths: whosoever goeth therein shall not know peace. 59:9 Therefore is judgment far from us, neither doth justice overtake us: we wait for light, but behold obscurity; for brightness, *but* we walk in darkness. 59:10 We grope for the wall like the blind, and we grope as if *we had* no eyes: we stumble at noonday as in the night; *we are* in desolate places as dead *men*.

Mat 6:23 But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great *is* that darkness!

Mat 15:13 But he answered and said, Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up. 15:14 Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch

2Co 4:4 In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.

Speaking of the false religion practiced by the Gentiles cf:

Eph 4:18 Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart:

I John 2:1 My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: 2:2 And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for *the sins of* the whole world. 2:3 And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. 2:4 He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. 2:5 But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him. 2:6 He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked. 2:7 Brethren, I write no new commandment unto you, but an old commandment which ye had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word which ye have heard from the

beginning. 2:8 Again, a new commandment I write unto you, which thing is true in him and in you: because the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth. 2:9 He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now. 2:10 He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him. 2:11 But he that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes.