
Before we move on to the final verses in this story about the man born blind, I want to talk about how we can apply the details of this story to our own lives. In the same way that this man needed the mud applied to his eyes and then to wash with the water, we need to do the same in order to experience the deep inner healing of our wounds which Jesus wants to administer in our lives.

What we find out at the very beginning of this story is that this man was born blind in order that the works of God might be revealed in Him. Up until the time that he met Jesus, this man's life must have been horrible. He was disenfranchised from so much of life and was even forced into the streets to beg. Not even his family took care of him. Believe me, this created some serious wounds in this man's soul; yet, we see that it was this very condition that God used to prepare this man heart to be open to God's unique purposes in his life.

[Chart 1] In the same way, it has been necessary for each of us to be wounded by God. Each of us has experienced a unique level of trauma that for some started when they were just babies. From our perspective the cause has been parents, society, bad people, uncontrollable circumstances, physical disabilities, and so on, and we have internalized all this pain and trauma without ever realizing that it came from the hand of God, purposefully allowed in our lives, so that the works of God might be glorified in our being.

The reason the trauma has been necessary is that left unto ourselves we would never even stop and consider God (even as believers it is not a natural thing for us to consider God in every part of our lives). From the beginning of creation when man swallowed the lie that with the knowledge of good and evil we can be like God we stopped looking to the divine for our answers. As a result, we look all across the realm of humanity in order to try and comprehend what has happened in our life and to find both answers and help.

Simply said, no one on their own seeks God and this is notwithstanding the fact that God has made His presence known through the marvel of creation, through the prophetic revelation of His Word, and through the sending of His own Son. But rarely does that seem to be enough to break through the darkness and deception of our hearts. Therefore, God has to make His presence known to us in the language that we understand and which gets our attention—pain. It is through our wounds that we come to grips with the limitations of our humanity and start to realize that we cannot be God and that we have no answers within ourselves. It is through our pain that we begin to realize that we actually need God. It is also through our wounds that we can come to see God's intimate and unique dealing with each of us: what He has allowed in each of our lives has been uniquely tailored to work within our soul based on the unique way that He created each of us.

These wounds occur deep within our soul and often have a very long lasting and potent impact on our lives. Time does not heal them, people cannot heal them, and there is no medicine for them. Therapy and self analysis may help us understand them, and come to accept them, but they never really cure the festering infection. God is the only one who can do supernatural healing and unless we let Him apply His mud to our wounds and wash those wounds in the water of His Spirit, they sit and fester and often become so infected that they have an overwhelming, confusing, and detrimental impact on how we relate to others, to ourselves, and most definitely to God.

It's as if the pain of each wound has found its outlet through our old sinful nature. If anyone even comes close to touching a sore spot we react in some fleshy way which is our attempt to protect and care for ourselves. Our reactions are rarely rational, but they have been imbedded into our subconscious as a way to protect and defend ourselves from further harm and this happens when we are quite young

and incurred the wound. Thus, it would not be a stretch to say that a big piece of whom we are today, and the health of our relationships, is a direct result of the wounds we incurred and the methods by which we protect and care for ourselves.

This is why Jesus came to be our Savior: to save us not just from eternal judgment but to redeem our lives back to Himself and save us from each and every wound that we have received. Yes, He caused the wounds, but it was necessary and now He wants to apply His mud to your wounds so you can be healed. In order for that to happen you have to first believe that every wound was unfortunately necessary. God did not enjoy allowing you to be wounded; not at all. But because of the darkness in your hearts it was the only way for Him to get you to look to His hands for help. He knew that the pain which you received would only be short lived compared to the eternal life which He will give you; eternal life which begins not when you die but here and now in this lifetime.

You must come to terms with the fact that everything He allowed to happen in your life has been an expression of His love for you; it is the only reason you are now in relationship with Him. In the same way, all that He allows to happen to you now is also an expression of His love for you. He still knows exactly what you need in order to cause you to look to His hands, and not your own, for help.

Remember, His desire for you has always been, and will always be, that He gets to be the Lord of your life. This is because He knows that you will never be safer, more secure, more protected, more loved and more cared for than when you drop your walls of defense and let Him in to these wounded places in your life and let Him have control. Your methods of protecting yourself are not healthy and they always tend to further hurt you and others (especially those who are closest to you). But if you can understand why it was all necessary, if you are willing to ask Him to be the Lord of each wound, each hurt, and ask Him to bring healing into

your soul, He will do it. Ask Him to wash your pain in the water of His Spirit and He will bring healing to you as He did to the man born blind. However, make no mistake, He will ask you to let go and stop trying to be the lord of your own life; He will insist that you let Him have that role.

Maybe you have had so many wounds that you don't even know how to sort it all out and you might not even be aware how you defend and protect yourself—you just see the fruit of what it has produced in your life. Don't despair. He wants to help you sort it out and He has placed people here in this body that He has gifted in such a way that they can help you. However, although they can help you identify and understand both your wounds and your protective reactions, you will still be the one who has to make the choice to go to the pool and wash. No one can choose that for you. You have to go to Siloam.

Ultimately, this all comes down to a matter of belief verses unbelief; the truth verses the lie. You will have to decide that it is ok to let loose of your grip and trust yourself to His work of salvation—in the same way you trusted Him to give you life eternal. You are His, He loves you, you are precious to Him, and He knows exactly what you need to experience all of Him. He chose you before the foundations of the world and He wants all of you; all of you!

[Chart 2] In my own life I have found that as He has healed areas of my life their always remains a scar, similar to the scars that remain on His hands and feet. They have become reminders of how much He loves me and how much He has done in and through me. The scars also remind me of how dependent upon Him I must be. They remind me of how dark and destructive I can be in my old nature. When I think of how I reacted towards others and how much pain I have caused, I don't ever want to find myself in that place where things of this world (even the pain I have endured in relationships) have such a control over my life. Every time I see

my scars I am more convinced of the fact that He is the only One, He is the only Way, and that I need His Spirit to dominate and control every part of my life.

Let's move on in our text.

John 9:39-41

And Jesus said, "For judgment I came into this world, so that those who do not see may see, and that those who see may become blind." Those of the Pharisees who were with Him heard these things and said to Him, "We are not blind too, are we?" Jesus said to them, "If you were blind, you would have no sin; but since you say, 'We see,' your sin remains.

At first Jesus statement on why He came into this world might confuse you if you recall at all what Jesus said in ***Chapter 3***.

John 3:17

"For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him.

Ok, God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world but Jesus said, "for judgment I came into this world." A lot of people like to point to a passage like this and say that the Bible is filled with contradictions especially because this is one of those passages where the original Greek does not help you that much. Yes, there are two different words used for judgment but one is the root of the other so it would not be entirely genuine to try and make some big distinction in

the words. Rather, we have to look to the context of the conversation to derive its meaning. Remember, no verse stands alone, but it has to be interpreted based on the immediate context, the surrounding context, the people involved in the discourse, the nature and purpose of the writing and so on. For example, when a person says “I love you” it is the context of the conversation and your relationship to the person that will drive the true meaning of those words, which could range from deep friendship to intimate passion. It’s all dependent upon the context.

When we look to the immediate context surrounding these passages we will see that Jesus was addressing different issues and making different points. In *Chapter 3* He was talking to Nicodemus, one of the religious leaders, and He was explaining that a person must be born again to experience eternal life and the reason He came in to the world is to die as the perfect sacrifice so that people might have the opportunity for eternal life. In so doing, Jesus corrected the imbedded cultural wrong belief that when the Messiah came he would bring judgment to this earth. Yes, there will be a day of judgment when Jesus returns to earth, but first He came to die so we might live.

The context in *Chapter 9* is completely different; it is a chapter of contrasts. In fact, ever since His last trip to Jerusalem, Jesus has been pointing out contrasts: His legitimate priesthood with the illegitimate priesthood of the religious leaders; those who hear His Word and believe with those who hear the voice of the enemy and do his will; those who judge with human standards and His own righteous judgment which comes from His Father; those who love the light and those who love the darkness; those who know the truth and those who refuse to believe the truth; those who know the Father and therefore love the Son and those who are deceived into believing that they know Him all the while rejecting God’s very provision for their life; and those who see with those who are blind.

It is in this context that Jesus says He came to judge and in effect turn the spot light of His truth on the hearts of all humanity. As that light turns, it reveals the true spiritual condition of every man's soul and as the light hits the soul it has the effect of either softening or hardening each person's heart. In this case, those who think they can see, the religious leaders who think they are the experts on God, continue to harden their hearts to Jesus such that even when a miracle that has never happened before occurs in their little community, a man born blind is healed, they cannot even appreciate that the hand of God is at work. With each exposure to Jesus, with each discussion, their condition worsens and what might have started as a case of near sightedness is now moving toward full on blindness.

In contrast, we have this man who got the short end of the stick when it comes to life, a man who I am sure was angry with God not understanding why he had to be born blind. But as the light turned toward his heart he started to see and discern that all along God had a plan for his life. He realized that even while this strange man was putting mud on his eyes, God was at work in his life. That is why he went to wash in the pool of Siloam. This man's heart softened and he was able to see with such unbelievable clarity that he went toe-to-toe with these religious leaders. In an unparalleled conflict he prevailed and they were once again, by the Spirit of God, made to look like complete fools.

So yes, Jesus came to judge. He came to sift. He came to sort out those whom the Father had chosen for Him and those who refuse to believe that He came from God. To one He gives increasing sight and to the other the effect of being exposed to His light causes deeper darkness. This phrase: "If you were blind, you would have no sin; but since you say, 'We see,' your sin remains" is a powerful reminder of the true nature of our relationship to God—utter dependence. If you think you are *good* in any way shape or form, if you think you are *able* in any way, shape or

form, you are living in a deception, you do not understand your absolute depravity, and there is a good chance that you may never come to an understanding of the truth: that there is no other path to eternal life; you need His light to see!

Remember what He said in **8:24**: “Unless you believe that I am who I say I am, you will die in your sins.” and **3:18-20**: “There is no judgment awaiting those who trust Him. But those who do not trust him have already been judged for not believing in the only Son of God. Their judgment is based on this fact: The light from heaven came into the world, but they loved the darkness more than the light, for their actions were evil. They hate the light because they want to sin in the darkness. They stay away from the light for fear their sins will be exposed and they will be punished.”

When I look around not just Boulder, but every place I have ever been, people walk around convinced that they do not need a Savior. And the more they are exposed to Jesus it seems the harder they become and their reaction becomes more extreme. That is why you can walk into any coffee shop and talk about Buddha, Mohamed, one of the thousands of gods of Hinduism, the local Yoga Master, or even some new age theory on the mystical force of life, and people seem to be so tolerant and accepting. But as soon as you start to talk about Jesus people want nothing to do with that conversation. They avoid it, shut it down, and even get angry with you. They simply hate the light and with each rejection of Jesus their hearts grow darker. This seems especially true with those who think they can see; those who think they are spiritually enlightened. As a result, they remain guilty and they will die in their sin. But those who can admit that they are blind and who understand that they are sinners in desperate need of God in every area of their lives are the ones who see and who are in a place to receive forgiveness of sins and

the Lord's salvation, which saves not only from eternal judgment but from every wound in their soul.

John 10:1-5

"I assure you, anyone who sneaks over the wall of a sheepfold, rather than going through the gate, must surely be a thief and a robber! For a shepherd enters through the gate. The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep hear his voice and come to him. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. After he has gathered his own flock, he walks ahead of them, and they follow him because they recognize his voice. They won't follow a stranger; they will run from him because they don't recognize his voice."

First a little bit of 1st century history. A "sheepfold" was just an enclosure or a large animal pen where the shepherds would herd their sheep at night in order to protect them from wild animals and thieves. Often it was built from stone and had briars growing up along the wall to prevent anyone from trying to climb over the wall. There was a gate or a door which was guarded and which was the only legitimate passage way into the pen. Thus, if someone tried to sneak in some other way it was clear that they had ill intent.

It was not uncommon for many shepherds to be in the same area so often this enclosure was full with everyone's sheep. But that did not matter to the shepherds for God made sheep with a very unique attribute and that is the ability to hear the unique call of their owner. Sheep will simply not respond to any other voice, in fact they will run away from the voice of a stranger, but as soon as their owner

calls them by name, they hear and respond. And, yes, it was common for a shepherd to name sheep in the same way that we name our dogs and horses.

John 10:6-10

Those who heard Jesus use this illustration didn't understand what he meant, so he explained it to them. "I assure you, I am the gate for the sheep," he said." All others who came before me were thieves and robbers. But the true sheep did not listen to them. Yes, I am the gate. Those who come in through me will be saved. Wherever they go, they will find green pastures. The thief's purpose is to steal and kill and destroy. My purpose is to give life in all its fullness.

This whole illustration was another stab at the illegitimacy of the religious leaders and their master, the enemy who wants to steal, kill and destroy. The phrase "all who came before me" may be a general reference to the myriad of people who had come before Jesus and claimed to be some sort of messiah, but specifically the context of the text points us to the religious leaders who have acted as if they control the passage way to salvation. They are the ones who call the shots in Jerusalem. They hold the Law over the sheep as a rod with which they beat others into submission; yet, they are willing to slander, lie, bias their judgment and use others to set a trap, accuse, threaten, excommunicate those in their way, hate, and even try and kill the one God sent. They refuse to listen to the truth and they try hard to ensure no one else does either. Their power derives not from God but from fear which is backed by the authority of the Roman government.

Jesus calls them thieves and robbers. You might just otherwise read over this but you have to understand there is a legal difference between thievery and robbery

and both of these terms give us insight as to the methods and tactics of the enemy. Thieves act with deception under the cloak of secrecy and execute their deeds by cunning and stealth. Like robbers, their purpose is to deprive another of personal property but it is distinct from robbery. Robbery involves the forcible stealing of property from another by violence or by putting the person in fear of violence. For example, a thief breaks into a house, steals the goods and leaves without ever encountering the homeowner. But a robber will approach a person and use force or the threat of force to take whatever they want.

Thus, by including both of these descriptions, Jesus is communicating that if the enemy cannot take what he wants through cunning and deceit, he will take try and take it by force. He may cloak himself in the draping of a shepherd—a religious leader or group of leaders—and if he cannot get you to follow through deceitful schemes he will demand, through others, that you conform to their wishes, their ways, and their systems or else!

Jesus says that the enemy's purpose is to lie, steal and kill. Let's talk about that. First of all, we know that those who are beholden to the enemy do not listen to the voice of God, which is evident because they do not accept the teachings of Jesus. They listen to the voice of their father the devil. We also know that whenever the devil lies he speaks from his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies. He is also a murderer and has always hated the truth (*John 8:42-56*); as a result, all these characteristics will be reflected in those who listen to his voice.

Look at the progression: lie, steal, and kill. We know that the only real weapon that the devil has against humanity is the lie—his flaming arrows of deceit (*Ephesians 6:16*). And he will say whatever he needs to in order to get you to not believe the truth. In fact, he will wrap up his lies in as much truth as you need to get you to swallow the lie. One of his favorite tricks is to take the truth and then

just twist it ever so slightly so that over time you eventually go down the wrong path. The devil knows that if you accept a lie, like leaven in a lump of dough, eventually it will corrupt you through and through. The devil will bring all sorts of lies against you, lies against your person, your identity, your perspective of God, lies about other people, lies about what you deserve, what you are entitled to, lies about what you should fear, lies about everything and anything to keep you from listening to and believing the truth. He wants you so fixated on yourself and on the “me” that you never are able to settle with the fact that you belong to God and have been appointed to fulfill His purposes and His alone.

The lies of the enemy are horribly wicked yet very effective. But beware; if he can't take you by deception and trickery, then he will often send people and situations into your life in an attempt to take you by force. The devil may use old friends, old lovers, old habits, old addictions, old enemies, old patterns of thinking, old emotions that you thought no longer had a grip in your life, guilt, family members, or whatever. He is not picky. Sometimes he will throw it all at you in an attempt to just be mean. He is ruthless and absent God's intervention, or your choosing to clothe yourself with the armor of God, he will stop at nothing to destroy you.

So what is the effect of the lie? The enemy steals from you the life that Jesus says should be yours. He steals the peace, the fulfillment, the rest, the strength, and the relationships that God has brought into your life. In fact, the destruction of relationships is his favorite work. But he will steal whatever he can, again, he is not picky; he just wants to hurt you. He will take whatever you give him. Before you know it you are in conflict and you are hurting the very people you are supposed to love. You start looking inward or to others instead of to Jesus for help and you get depressed, unnerved, and even hopeless. Before long you start to think

that this whole God thing can't be real and you become convinced that He might work for others but not for you.

So you start indulging your flesh as a way to try and feel better and it provides temporary moments of relief but it always ends up worse than you could ever imagine. The guilt and the shame are overwhelming and just lead to more depression, despair and feelings that no matter how hard you try you will never get it right; you are a failure. The cycle is powerful and when you are in its grips it seems that no reason, no logic, no truth, is able to pull you out of that dark hole. You try and read your Bible and it seems as if you are reading a foreign language and eventually the Bible finds its place on the shelf. You then start to separate from those in your life who are walking with God and you alienate yourself from fellowship so you can validate your worse fears, no one loves you. Soon even going to church becomes an effort. When you do come you sit there with attitude protecting yourself from who knows what and your mind is all over the place such that you cannot even receive. As a result, you start spending time with people who make you feel ok about yourself and the cycle just goes on and on.

There you sit in your despair and the devil has stolen your life, your light, your witness, and your life becomes so painful that it is hard to believe that you are even a Christian. He starts to then feed you doubts and you start to believe that maybe you are not saved or maybe you lost your salvation. You are in turmoil, you feel as if you are going crazy, and nothing is right; nothing at all. But he does not stop there; he still wants to kill you and he wants to crush the work that God had done in your life. If he had his way you would become so disillusioned and distressed that you shipwreck your faith and just turn and survive life anyway you can tucking your Christianity away into the corners of your mind so it fades away and

becomes nothing more to you than a phase in your life—a faint memory that couldn't have been real.

Each of us has traveled some distance down this path and some of us are on it right now. Please understand that what is happening to you is a result of a carefully drawn out plan to destroy your life. The enemy is constantly scheming against you (*2 Corinthians 2:11; Ephesians 6:11*). He studies you and watches everything you do. He prowls like a roaring lion stalking his prey (*1 Peter 5:8*) and he is very patient—just like a thief. He understands your weaknesses, he sees where you have not clothed yourself with the armor of God, and he plans his attack. You must also realize that the enemy is always active; even when he appears to be passive he is still actively planning because he hates you and hates God in you.

Part of his ability to be so successful in our lives is that he rarely shows up bearing his fangs. Instead he shows up as our best friend, our family member, our Christian brothers and sisters and even our religious leaders. He has many faces and they are always changing. Remember, he does not care how he gets you, he has no shame; he just wants to get you; he will use whoever whenever. He is results oriented and is not personally validated by his methodology. He is a liar, a thief, a robber, a murderer and he always has ill intent towards you; which is why we can give him no room in our life and make no concessions for our flesh.

We have to get it through our skulls that this is not a game. This is not about your needs and there is no time for pity parties or patronizing the “me.” This is war and the enemy is well trained and motivated by sheer hate. Therefore, you must realize that the impact of your personal indulgences is never negligible; every compromise sets you up for a later defeat and every defeat impacts those who love you.

We must find our safety and security in the sheepfold, for the Lord Himself guards the entrance. We must stay in a place of utter dependence upon the Lord or else we put ourselves, and others, at dire risk. We must stay focused on quickly carrying out the tasks that have been assigned to us by our Father and we cannot be idle and start obsessing on ourselves. Our *Old Man* readily listens to the lies of the enemy; therefore, we must realize that not only is our *Old Man* an enemy of God, he is our enemy and if we indulge him in any way, shape, or form, we will get hurt and we will hurt others; its just a matter of time.

Contrast all that we know to be true about the enemy and about our *Old Man* with what Jesus says. He knows you by name. He will give you green pastures wherever you go and He will give you life in all its fullness. Of course, these promises are realized only in our *New Creation*—only when we are living by faith trusting ourselves to Him. The symbolism of the green pastures is that if we stay within the protection of the sheepfold and if we follow the shepherd where He leads, we will never be hungry. We will be satisfied, even in those hyper-sensitive areas where we have been so badly wounded. We have to trust that His Word is true.

If we do, He will work to separate us from the lie and from our dependence upon our *Old Man* in order that we will listen only to His voice and dwell only in His pasture. He will heal every wound and cause us to rest in the ever present reality of His love. He will fill us with Him such that He is able to overflow His love from deep within our soul to others, and that is the ultimate definition of the abundant life—His love, in all its myriad of faces, freely flowing from us to others.

I want to take a moment in closing to apply all of this to what is currently happening in the body. If you remember not so long ago God gave us a prophetic word. He warned us that the enemy was going to shift the nature of his attack from

external to internal and his goal was to absolutely crush the work that God is doing here. Well guess what that means; the only reason the enemy is able to plan an operation from within is because there are many places where we have not clothed ourselves in the armor of God; thus, we are not in a position to extinguish his flaming arrows of lies with our shield of faith. In addition, many of us are not quickly carrying out the tasks that have been assigned to us by the Father so the enemy is able to easily distract us and keep us focused on the “me.” When we are not in a place of total dependence upon God and are still holding on to areas where we insist on having control, we have a hard time hearing his voice and understanding what assignments the Father has for us. We become vulnerable to the onslaught of the enemy and as many of you know, he has been busy and it is starting to take its toll on the relationships in this body.

The enemy has been spewing out so many lies: your not loved, no one cares for you, you are not part of the “in” group, and so on. Then he points you to circumstances which in your mind validate everything he has been saying: see you were not invited again, they seem to get along so well, they seem to always be caring for each other but they are not caring for you, they seem to know how to be in relationship but they don’t seem to try with you, and so on. The enemy has been wrapping up some of you in so many lies you that you can not even see straight and the darkness has been creeping in.

In addition, you have no peace at all and your discontent is starting to infect others. You find those who might feel the same way you do and you fan the flames all the while feeling justified because you are not getting what you think you need from others. Can you see how excited this makes the enemy and can you see how you might even be playing a critical role in his attempt to crush the work of God. I

know that I have done my part of giving him access to my life and pushing his agenda. The thought of it breaks my heart; I wish I was immune but I am not.

It is important that we stop and consider that those who are experiencing deep and intimate relationships are 1) carrying out the assignments that God has given them, and 2) are at this place because their relationship has been forged in God's fires of conflict. I have first hand knowledge to know that many of the close relationships in this body have required a serious tearing away of the "me" and it has not been pretty and it has not felt good; but it has been good. In addition, what is going on in with them and the assignments that God has given them is not a reflection on you; God just has them busy with His work. We must not internalize what God is doing with others and make it about the "me." This is the pathway to becoming a tool for the enemy and it will kill your ability to walk in the Spirit.

It is time for us to regroup and fight this war and not let the enemy have any further victory in our lives. We need to regain the territory that he has cleverly and violently stolen. We need to get active just like the enemy is active. We need to start with repentance—agreeing with God that we have not been about His will and His desires for our life but about our will and our desires. We need to repent to those we have hurt. We need to actively walk in the assignments that He has appointed for our lives, even if right now that is about being alone with Him. We need to stop giving so much air time to the cries of the "me" and whenever we hear his voice we need to run to the Lord and return to the safety of the sheepfold where He will protect us from the thieves and the robbers.

Our protection must start with humility; the humility to let God be God and to let Him have control and to value others as more important than ourselves. This is the pathway to life. Let's Pray.

