
Let's continue with the story of the man born blind.

John 9:1-12

As He passed by, He saw a man blind from birth. And His disciples asked Him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he would be born blind?" Jesus answered, "It was neither that this man sinned, nor his parents; but it was so that the works of God might be displayed in him." We must work the works of Him who sent Me as long as it is day; night is coming when no one can work. "While I am in the world, I am the Light of the world." When He had said this, He spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and applied the clay to his eyes, and said to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" (which is translated, Sent). So he went away and washed, and came back seeing.

There has been a lot of speculation about this verse mainly in terms of why Jesus used such strange methods to heal this man. Why did He not just make Him see; why the whole mud and wash routine? In ***Chapter 4*** He healed the son of a government official with just a word and the boy was not even there. He was in another town altogether. Then in ***Chapter 5***, Jesus healed a man who had been sick for 38 years just by saying: "Stand up, pick up your sleeping mat and walk." He did not even touch the man or require anything of Him. In ***Chapter 2*** He turned water into wine while seemingly doing nothing. He had some servants fill up jars with water and then He told them dip some out and suddenly it was the most incredible wine they had ever tasted.

So we know He could have healed this man with just a word. Why then did He make this poor blind man find his way across town to this pool just to wash mud

from his eyes? And why the pool of Siloam when there were many other pools he could have gone to around Jerusalem? I believe Jesus used this whole healing event to convey a word picture of the gospel message.

Exodus 4:11

Who makes mouths? The Lord asked him. Who makes people so they can speak or not speak, hear or not hear, see or not see? Is it not I, the Lord?

From before time, God chose for this man to be His own and God knew exactly what was needed, what this man *had* to experience in his body, in order for him to want to let the light of Jesus penetrate the darkness in his heart. God used the tragedy of this man's blindness to prepare his heart to receive the Savior. In fact, the central point of this story is not the healing, but that God chose to intervene in the life of this man in order to free him from spiritual blindness. Notice that this man was not begging Jesus to heal him, but Jesus and the disciples came to him. This man's physical blindness, the mud, the pool of Siloam, and the water are all symbols revealing the gospel message.

Before we connect the dots between the symbols and the message we first of all we have to remember that our heavenly Father is perfect (***Matthew 5:48***). Thus, when man sinned separation ensued, and we were all plunged into spiritual darkness. We all became blind. Sinful man could no longer live in the light of a perfect God and since this condition infected every man, woman, and child (for everyone has sinned by nature and by choice), there was no way for any person to remedy this problem. Being imperfect, man had no means by which he could restore himself to that place of perfect fellowship with the Father.

That is why God had to come down in the form of man (*Philippians 2:7*) so that perfect God could live as a perfect man and become the perfect sacrifice for our sin. Then in *Genesis 2:7* we are told that the Lord God formed man of dust from the ground. So the *dirt* from which Jesus made mud signifies God becoming a man. The *mud* on the eyes signifies that it is only when we apply Jesus to our condition of spiritual blindness that will be able to be set free from our darkness.

As far as the pool of Siloam, we are told in *verse 7* that Siloam means “sent” and therefore represents the Father sending the son.

John 8:42

Jesus told them, “if God were your Father, you would love me, because I have come to you from God. I am not here on my own, but He sent me.

The Son of God became *man* and was *sent* to earth by the Father in order to become our living sacrifice so that He could be applied to our sickness and we could be *washed* with the water of the Spirit of God and be cleansed from our sinful condition.

1 Corinthians 6:11

...but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God.

Through the washing and cleansing by the Spirit of God we no longer have to live as blind men, but we can live in the light of His perfect love. Our relationship

with the Father is restored through Jesus Christ and we can once again boldly come into His presence and fellowship with Him.

Hebrews 10:22

Let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.

Notice, however, that application of the mud and the presence of the water did not cure this man of his blindness. He still had to *choose* to go to the pool and wash. It still had to be his decision. Being in the presence of the Lord and even being touched by Jesus did not heal this man; the man had to *choose* to wash. In the same way, no one is made clean just by going to church or by even having some kind of spiritual encounter with God. No! Each person must *choose* to be washed clean of their sin by the Spirit of God; that is the only way to experience new life and perfect fellowship with the Father. You have to *choose* to let Him be both your Lord and your Savior.

Isn't this so cool that the entire gospel message is preached in this man's healing? God choose us (this man did not ask Jesus for a healing); God prepares us to meet Him (the reason He was born blind); our absolute depravity and neediness (absent a miracle this man would continue to live in darkness); God bends down to love and serve us (God sent His Son to become flesh); our need to receive Jesus into our hearts and apply His life to our wounds (the mud on the eyes); our need to choose to receive His love (this man had to go wash); and our true healing (the Spirit of God cleanses our sin and causes us to see). This is one beautiful picture.

Now we are going to find out the “rest of the story” or the other side of the gospel message. While there are those who willingly come to the light, there are many more who want nothing to do with it and grip tightly to their darkness. They refuse to acknowledge their need for God, refuse to receive His love, and will do anything to not let the light of Jesus penetrate their darkness. They will persecute and hurt those who bear the light and they will do it in the name of God. They are so blind that they cannot see their own hypocrisy, they cannot even see how illogical and irrational they are, and they cannot understand the truth that is right in front of their eyes. But the most amazing thing is from whom this response comes—those whom you would otherwise think see clearly.

John 9:8-13

Therefore the neighbors, and those who previously saw him as a beggar, were saying, "Is not this the one who used to sit and beg?" Others were saying, "This is he," still others were saying, "No, but he is like him." He kept saying, "I am the one." So they were saying to him, "How then were your eyes opened?" He answered, "The man who is called Jesus made clay, and anointed my eyes, and said to me, 'Go to Siloam and wash'; so I went away and washed, and I received sight." They said to him, "Where is He?" He said, "I do not know." They brought to the Pharisees the man who was formerly blind.

To understand what is going on here remember the backdrop of the tension in Jerusalem. The religious leaders had a choke hold on the entire Jerusalem community and they were all living under the threat of serious repercussions if they even said anything positive about Jesus.

John 7:12-13

There was a lot of grumbling about him among the crowds. Some argued, "He's a good man," but others said, "He's nothing but a fraud who deceives the people." But no one had the courage to speak favorably about him in public, for they were afraid of getting in trouble with the Jewish leaders.

This dynamic helps explain the way both the “neighbors” and this man’s parents reacted the way they did. These “neighbors” would have been very familiar with the blind man; they likely walked by him every day for years. They were naturally shocked and confused to find him seeing and walking around. It must have seemed so surreal and did not fit into anything they knew to be true in their little world. He therefore kept assuring them that he was the same man. So the neighbors asked him how it happened. He said it was Jesus. Enough said! All they had to hear was that name and all of a sudden their fear and personal self interest overtook their amazement and even their practical sensibilities.

They wanted to know where Jesus was at not because they wanted to worship Him for this amazing miracle, but because they wanted to drag Him to the religious leaders. They were so paranoid and controlled by fear that they could not even appreciate the unbelievable, and never before heard of, miracle that just took place in their own community. They could not even stop for a moment to thank God; they just did not want to get in trouble so they took this man to the priests.

John 9:14-17

Now it was a Sabbath on the day when Jesus made the clay and opened his eyes. Then the Pharisees also were asking him again how he received his sight. And

he said to them, "He applied clay to my eyes, and I washed, and I see." Therefore some of the Pharisees were saying, "This man is not from God, because He does not keep the Sabbath." But others were saying, "How can a man who is a sinner perform such signs?" And there was a division among them. So they said to the blind man again, "What do you say about Him, since He opened your eyes?" And he said, "He is a prophet."

Another miracle performed on the Sabbath; now it makes sense why these neighbors were so paranoid. They must have been thinking: if this was an illegal work we had better let the Pharisees know about it before the whole thing comes back to haunt us. Can you imagine even thinking that way? A blind man can see and they were freaking out over the fact that he had been healed on the Sabbath by this man whose name has been essentially blacklisted in the religious community.

If you look at the Pharisees line of questioning, it's clear that they knew that it was Jesus who healed this man for they don't ask him about "who" but "how" he was healed. They wanted to know His methods to determine if Jesus did illegal work as defined by the Law. They did not care that this man had been set free, they did not care that God must have been in the midst for no one can cure a man born blind absent the power of God—they wanted to judge the "how."

I know I have fell prey to this kind of thinking—judging the "how." When I first went to college I would from time to time go to this Pentecostal church where they would always have these healing services and it seemed that everything was focused on the theatrical. The man who was in charge looked like a used car salesman and he would always speak in tongues and call people forward to be healed and stuff. I was so uneasy about his methods and actually hated that part of

the service. But the reason I would go there is because it was the only place I found in that city where the worship was not just flat-lined. People truly worshiped and I was always drawn into the presence of the Lord.

But this man's methods did not fit into my personal paradigm or Christian worldview of "how" things are to be done. His methods were questionable, his theology was often more than questionable, and it seemed that most of the people attending went to the church because of what they hoped God would do for them. So I had a natural reaction, in my "spiritual flesh," and even judged the work that was done. And, of course, my judgment was based on what I considered to be rational "Christian" normative behavior; things I have seen or experienced in other churches. In other words, I had God shoved into a pretty tight little box.

But I could not deny that God was at work in this place. I saw Him do miraculous healings and supernaturally provide for many people. The testimonies and the work of God were simply awesome. And there I was judging. Can you believe such arrogance? Who am I to judge the hand of God and how, when, or even who He chooses to work through.

I still am not comfortable with many of the methods that were employed or the underlying theology, for I now understand how wrong belief causes serious and even detrimental damage to a person's walk with God. But regardless, I learned an important lesson; God does what He wants when He wants and His methods do not fit into any box I have created for him. Now when I am in similar situations, I ask God to help me be discerning for sure, but also to help me set aside my "spiritual flesh" and worship the Lord for the mercy and the grace that He shows to us blind and broken people.

Now there was a division in ranks. Some priests had partial sight and could

understand that God had to have been working but the others were so blind and overcome with darkness that they could not even give credit where credit is due. Instead they resorted to personal accusations based on their own religious ideas of “how” and “when” things are to be done. So they try and trap this man: “what do you say about Him?” They were hoping he would say that Jesus was the Messiah so they would at have someone to punish in order to take the attention away from the miracle. Fortunately, this man was shrewd and did not play their game but they needed some victim so their next move was to go after the parents.

John 9:18-23

The Jews then did not believe it of him, that he had been blind and had received sight, until they called the parents of the very one who had received his sight, and questioned them, saying, "Is this your son, who you say was born blind? Then how does he now see?" His parents answered them and said, "We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind; but how he now sees, we do not know; or who opened his eyes, we do not know. Ask him; he is of age, he will speak for himself." His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jews; for the Jews had already agreed that if anyone confessed Him to be Christ, he was to be put out of the synagogue. For this reason his parents said, "He is of age; ask him."

This is horrible; his parents were so afraid of these priests that they threw their son under the bus. Can you imagine how he must have felt? I am sure he was just staring at his parents in unbelief. It is hard for me to imagine why they were not totally freaking out and praising God. Their son does not have to beg anymore. The

burden they have carried has been lifted. The guilt that they must have felt no longer has to haunt them; he is free. But instead of breaking out in worship they are hiding and ensuring that they don't suffer any more social consequences at the hand of their son. It was now his problem and not theirs.

Now either these parents were just cold hearted and really bad parents or else the punishment for confessing that Jesus is the Messiah was the "curse." In those days the priests used excommunication as a weapon to enforce their control. This form of punishment was not just exclusion from the synagogue but also from the person's social network. For example, for more minor infractions a person was excluded from the synagogue for 30-days and during this time he was not allowed to come within 6 feet of either his wife or his friends. But for serious hard-core infractions, a person was excluded for life and could have no contact with anyone. People were only allowed to sell such a person the necessities of life; that is it. There was to be no other form of communication. They were truly the living dead which is why it was referred to as the "curse." Perhaps this is what the priests had threatened and if so it's no wonder everyone was afraid.

This next interchange is intense. This man knew he had to stand alone, but it seems he had decided that he was not going to be intimidated or manipulated by anyone anymore. He had been healed and no matter how powerful and vindictive these blind religious leaders were, he was not going to be forced to ever again live under a shroud of darkness.

John 9:24

So a second time they called the man who had been blind, and said to him, "Give glory to God; we know that this man is a sinner."

Basically they said, tell the truth and shame the devil. They wanted this man to give his oath and agree with them that Jesus is a sinner. The hypocrisy is oozing everywhere. On the one hand they bring God into the discussion as a way to create the illusion of religious legitimacy, but then they go and not only *judge* Jesus but *slander* Him as if their own behavior was somehow ok according to the Law. Besides, if keeping the Sabbath helped anyone become perfect and be in fellowship with God that would be one thing, but the Law never made anyone perfect and they just proved the point.

John 9:25

He then answered, "Whether He is a sinner, I do not know; one thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see."

This man is basically saying: are you serious, you are really going to judge, are you really going to talk about sin? Hello, I was blind and now I see. If you are going to judge at least examine the fruit and you will see that I have been healed.

Pretty much every believer has faced this situation when they first got saved as those who knew you before were not happy about the changes in your life. We may not understand how it happened, how Christ came to live in our bodies, but we know we have been cleansed from our sin. We know we have been touched by God and it is real; no one can tell us otherwise. We know we have a new nature and if they were to look at the fruit of our decisions it should be obvious to them. But that does not ever really matter; they just want the old you back. The new you causes them to feel bad about themselves. Similarly, as many of you have learned

to walk by faith in the Spirit of God you have received a similar pushback. Sadly, those who have judged you don't seem to care about the wonderful fruit that it has produced in your life; they just don't like that if what you believe is true they would have to change their lives.

John 9:26-34

So they said to him, "What did He do to you? How did He open your eyes?" He answered them, "I told you already and you did not listen; why do you want to hear it again? You do not want to become His disciples too, do you?" They reviled him and said, "You are His disciple, but we are disciples of Moses." We know that God has spoken to Moses, but as for this man, we do not know where He is from." The man answered and said to them, "Well, here is an amazing thing, that you do not know where He is from, and yet He opened my eyes." We know that God does not hear sinners; but if anyone is God-fearing and does His will, He hears him. "Since the beginning of time it has never been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a person born blind." If this man were not from God, He could do nothing." They answered him, "You were born entirely in sins, and are you teaching us?" So they put him out.

This man started to get annoyed with the ridiculousness of this situation. The amazing thing is that everyone in the community is deathly afraid of these religious leaders and yet this man is willing to get in their face. The only other men we have seen do a similar thing is Jesus and John the Baptist. They both went toe to toe with the Pharisees and totally shut them down in every encounter. What this tells us is that this man is speaking by the power of the Spirit of God. Obviously he has

been healed—he is no longer spiritually blind; he is standing for the truth about Jesus and not backing down no matter what the risk.

On the other hand, these religious leaders just don't get that you don't mess with the Spirit of God; they continue to embarrass themselves. Jesus already addressed this issue of where He came from. He told them straight up that He comes from above and that the Father sent Him. Jesus told them that His miracles and teachings testify to this truth. And now, another miracle has taken place which from every possible human perspective is impossible to explain away. Once again these "protectors of the faith," these "shepherds of the flock," stand totally humiliated so they reach for the familiar weapon of personal attack and abuse of power.

John 9:35-38

Jesus heard that they had put him out, and finding him, He said, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" He answered, "Who is He, Lord, that I may believe in Him?" Jesus said to him, "You have both seen Him, and He is the one who is talking with you." And he said, "Lord, I believe." And he worshiped Him.

So this man was excommunicated after all—put out. We don't know if it was temporary or permanent but imagine how emotionally disturbing this whole thing must have been. For years this man had been excluded from life and from the opportunity of being intimately connected to anyone. He was a beggar and probably spent most of his time alone. But all of a sudden in a very unexpected way he had the opportunity to lead a "normal" life and then before he could even really take a breath and bask in this freedom, wham, he is once again excluded, exiled. I am sure that if I were him I would have started to freak.

In the past he was not able to see, but at least there were a few good hearted people who had mercy on him, who would help him around, and care for him, but now his life is essentially over—he is totally cut off from his community and he cannot even rely on his own family for support (as if he ever could).

One encounter with Jesus and his life was turned upside down and inside out. On the one hand he can see (both physically and spiritually) but on the other hand, as far as he can tell, he is going to be even more isolated and alone than ever before. Have you ever felt that way? I know I have. It seems that the closer God draws me into Him the greater the separation I experience with a religious community to which I once thought I belonged. At first this was not easy. I spent a lot of time isolated and confused wondering what went wrong. Yet, at the same time God would not let me look back—He kept drawing me to Him and solidifying my belief and dependence upon His Word. Sure there have been times in the midst of persecution where I have just loathed what I have had to go through, but at the same time I would never want to go back, never. I need more and more of Him.

Jesus has also been so phenomenally gracious to me and did not just leave me in a place of isolation. He has led me into a community where the relationships are stronger, deeper and more intimate than I had ever before experienced—relationships where we are learning to love and trust the Jesus within each person. He is what binds this community and He is the reason we can legitimately enjoy each other regardless of how different we all are. It is a beautiful thing. The Lord's ways always seem inside out and backwards from how we would do things, but His ways are always intended to further our total dependence upon Him.

Despite the exile, this man did not complain about what happened to him. He did not ask Jesus to fix it and he was not obsessed with the “me” and what was going to happen to his life. He just believed in the Son of Man and worshiped.

Notice Jesus' play on words: "You have both seen Him, and He is the one who is talking with you." In the Greek, this word translated as "seen" has a dualistic meaning: to physically *see* and to *discern*, as with the spirit. It is the same word Jesus used when He says He only does what He sees His father doing or what He discerns that His Father is doing. It implies complete understanding or clear sight. In other words, while still physically blind this man was able to discern that Jesus came from God which is why He *chose* to go to the pool and wash. It was also why he stood for Jesus in the midst of oppressive and coercive religious opposition. This phrase was a clever play on the notion of having spiritual sight. It also speaks to us of the power of the Holy Spirit in the life of a believer. Here is this man standing and not bending; he is speaking with wisdom and power which only comes from the Spirit of God. This, I believe, is what we will also experience when we trust ourselves to the Lord's work in our lives regardless of what others might think.

Notice also the connection between belief and worship in *verse 38*. When you choose to believe that Jesus is your I Am, you will find that your entire being just desires to be near Him and to worship Him. It is a beautiful thing. The more you give up the more the "me" the more you want Him. This connection between belief and worship also sheds some light on Jesus comment about our quickly doing the works of His Father in *verse 4-5*. Remember that the works of the Father is first that we believe in His Son (*John 6:29*). When we believe He is our I Am, even our trials and persecutions just don't seem as big as they otherwise would. We still are compelled to worship.

We will close for tonight and next week we will pick up with the last 3 verses.

Let's Pray