

## John, Part 40: "I can see!" (Part 1)

**John 9:1 ESV** As he passed by, he saw a man blind from birth. **2** And his disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" **3** Jesus answered, "It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him. **4** We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming, when no one can work. **5** As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world." **6** Having said these things, he spit on the ground and made mud with the saliva. Then he anointed the man's eyes with the mud **7** and said to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" (which means Sent). So he went and washed and came back seeing.

**8** The neighbors and those who had seen him before as a beggar were saying, "Is this not the man who used to sit and beg?" **9** Some said, "It is he." Others said, "No, but he is like him." He kept saying, "I am the man." **10** So they said to him, "Then how were your eyes opened?" **11** He answered, "The man called Jesus made mud and anointed my eyes and said to me, 'Go to Siloam and wash.' So I went and washed and received my sight." **12** They said to him, "Where is he?" He said, "I do not know."

- I. We finished chapter 8 with Jesus once again equating himself to the Great "I Am", Yahweh God. He had declared to the Jews that "Before Abraham was, I AM."
  - A. This was a very big deal, because Abraham was (along with Moses) the most important figure in their history. It was to Abraham that, some 2000 years before Christ, God first entered into the covenant that resulted in the Jewish nation.
    1. What the Jewish leaders did not understand, however, was that Abraham's purpose was not to found a mere nation (in the earthly sense), but to be the forerunner of an entirely new **people of God**. Paul puts it like this...
    2. **Galatians 3:7 ESV** Know then that **it is those of faith** who are the sons of Abraham. **8** And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify **the Gentiles** by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, "In you shall **all the nations** be blessed." **9** So then, **those who are of faith** are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith.
  - B. So by saying that he was not the benefactor the covenant, but in effect, as God himself, the originator of it, Jesus was committing a hybrid of blasphemy and treason! Therefore chapter 8 ends like this: "So they picked up stones to throw at him, but Jesus hid himself and went out of the temple." (John 8:59)
- II. When the story picks up in John 9, it may seem that one phase of the story has ended, and another begun. But look carefully you will notice a divine progression and unity in the story that goes on to chapter 10. That is definitely the case in this account of the sixth miraculous sign performed by Christ in the book of John.
  - A. **John 9:1 ESV** As he passed by, he saw a man blind from birth. **2** And his disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?"
    1. At some point, the disciples rejoin Christ in the Temple, and they stumble upon an unfortunate man; the victim of congenital blindness. The disciples

- respond with aloof curiosity, and even a little assumptive judgementalism. “What happened Jesus? Who’s evil is responsible for this man’s condition?”
2. But while the disciples only saw a theological dilemma, the Bible says Christ, “saw **a man** blind from birth” (notice verse 1 doesn’t say “they” saw a man, but rather, “he” saw a man).
  3. When you see someone who is on welfare, or homeless; an unwed mother; someone addicted to drugs, alcohol, or sex; a person deceived by false doctrine or cultish religion; the immigrant or refugee; the person whose sin has resulted in personal injury or disease, what do you see?
    - a) Many years ago, I was serving as a Youth Pastor when a young woman who had visited our church became pregnant out of wedlock. Sadly, her child died at birth. One Sunday morning, I heard one of the older ladies in our congregation boasting about how she had told this devastated, grieving young woman that God had taken her baby because of her sin, even co-opting and twisting scripture to make her point!
    - b) In my youthful zeal I went full-on berserk and confronted her! What message was being sent to that poor woman? What must she imagine God to be like in a world where children are born healthy in single parent homes all the time; yet others die who are born to the most spiritual and stable of couples? Why would she believe God had singled her out?
  4. When people are suffering, can I recommend that we master the art of holding our tongues and judgments in reserve, seeing as we are not God?
- B. **John 9:3 ESV** Jesus answered, “It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him. Christ was not cold and distant like his disciples! He sees an opportunity for God to step into the spotlight and display his glory in the man’s suffering! What do you see?
1. Jesus’ impulse towards hurting people is always compassion. The word “compassion” is used 12 times in the KJV version of the gospels. It is the Greek “splanchnizomai” (SPLONKH need zo mye). It means more than mere pity or mild concern, but to care for someone from the depths of your guts; to take their burdens as your own.
  2. How much more effective would we be in expanding the Kingdom of Christ if we were determined to love people from our guts instead of merely arguing theology for theology’s sake? Correct theology matters **a lot!** To love without the theology of the Gospel is a hopeless dead-end; but theology divorced from genuine acts of love is meaningless and empty hot air.
- C. **John 9:4 ESV** “We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming, when no one can work. **5** As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.”
1. Although some versions interpret this differently, note the personal pronouns in that first sentence: “**We** must work the works of him who sent **me**”.
    - a) Christ’s use of the plural “we” is because Jesus is reminding us that we are never on mission alone! But also that he expects his followers to be doing **exactly** what he is doing at any given moment. We share **his** mission - we don’t get him to sign off on **our** ambitions! It’s HIS mission!

- b) Like the rich young ruler, Christ expects us to “sell everything and follow him”, spiritually, emotionally, relationally, and yes, often materially!
    - c) “Count the cost, and if you’re not willing to bear Christ’s cross, go away to your farm and to your merchandise, and make the most of them. Only let me whisper this in your ear - ‘What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his soul?’” -CH Spurgeon
  - 2. Note that Jesus begins this comment with urgency, “We **must** work”. Moving intentionally toward the blind man is given the highest priority on Christ’s agenda.
    - a) He is not saying, as we often mistakenly believe, that we **must** work to **earn** something, or to **prove** something. The reason he gives for his urgency is that “night is coming, when no one can work.”
    - b) The “night” he is speaking of here is his redeeming death, resurrection and ascension. Those events will signify the end of his earthly ministry. Everything that he was born to do in order to display the glory of God, and proclaim the Kingdom of God must be done before that terrible day on Calvary! He will not procrastinate, disregard or edit his mission.
  - 3. The same is true for you and I! Many of us have squandered 10, 20, or 50 years of productive service for the glory of King Jesus. We think we have lots of time, or that other pursuits are more important. How foolish! If only we could see from eternity’s vantage point, knowing all that was left undone! How would our values and priorities change? Night is coming!
- III. **John 9:5 ESV** “As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.” **6** Having said these things, he spit on the ground and made mud with the saliva. Then he anointed the man's eyes with the mud **7** and said to him, “Go, wash in the pool of Siloam” (which means Sent). So he went and washed and came back seeing.
  - A. Jesus’ initial thought connects the reader back to chapter eight; and the purpose of it’s repetition will become abundantly clear next week. **John 8:12 ESV** “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”
  - B. So Jesus, intending to demonstrate the brightness of his glory, does the most common, unspiritual thing you could have imagined. He spits into the dirt, makes mud balls, and smears them into this poor, unsuspecting blind guy’s eyes!
    - 1. This man **literally** could not have seen this coming (pun intended). The text does not even indicate that Jesus spoke to him before he did it! What did the blind man think? That he was being victimized again by the cruelty of people in a time where kindness to the disabled was a rare commodity?
    - 2. Have you ever been in a place of great pain convinced that you were being mocked, harassed, or insulted because of what was happening only to discover that God was actually setting up your deliverance? I have!
  - C. And why did Jesus have to do it this way anyway? He had healed people many times with a touch or a word, even from far away! Why did this guy have to be the “spit mud ball” guy! Well, I don’t pretend to know for sure why Jesus chose to heal him this way, but let me offer an “informed speculation”...

1. Remember what the “burr under the saddle” of the Jews was? Christ had claimed all through chapter 8 to be the Great I AM, and they did not like it one bit! From their perspective, he was a mere mortal man and certainly not God! In their hardness of heart and unbelief, he didn’t pass the smell test.
  2. But how **would** the Jews have identified God? Through some demonstration of power that proved him to be sovereign King and Lord? Perfect Judge? Or perhaps as **Creator**? **Genesis 2:7 ESV** then the Lord God **formed the man of dust from the ground** and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and **the man became a living creature.**
- D. Could it be that Jesus was putting an “exclamation point” on his claim to be the one true Yahweh God by using the same method, with the original materials, to create for this man brand new eyeballs, confirming who he had claimed to be?
- IV. So here is the man, mud smeared across his eyelids, (What a sight he must have been!) and Jesus gives him a specific instruction. “Go and wash in the pool of Siloam”. Without question, he responds in faith that is demonstrated by obedience.
- A. Bible commentator Alexander MacLaren points out that though Jesus often gave specific instructions to people he was healing (such as “Stretch forth your hand” or “Take up your bed and walk”), other times he simply said, “Be made whole”. What is he illustrating here by making this man’s healing conditional on his obedience?
- B. MacLaren postulates that the healing of the soul, which the story will go on to reveal was God’s purpose with this man, **always** requires a step of obedience (unlike some of Jesus’ other physical healings).
1. To those who would be saved, Christ **always** attaches requirement. “Come to me. Trust me. Obey me, and you will be saved from your blindness.”
  2. MacLaren states that, “Obedience brings sight”. “Whoever **follows me** will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.” (John 8:12)
- C. Many would seek to be saved from sin, or despair, or some other seemingly impossible situation. There is no doubt that Jesus is able to save you, to heal you, to deliver you. But perhaps you’re where you are because Jesus’ desire is bigger than just to make you comfortable. Perhaps he, in his perfect combination of righteousness and mercy, is just waiting for you to obey him.
1. You may sincerely ask. “How do I know what Jesus wants from me?” Good question. The only place to find the answer is within the pages of his Word.
  2. There you can discover his nature and his will. There is no need to wait for highly subjective feelings, voices, and visions to know God’s will. Everything you need to know about how to obey and please him is written down for you already. The question is, are you willing to discover it? Are you willing to heed and obey? Let me give you a nudge in the right direction...
    - a) If you are a Christ follower, start here: **I Thessalonians 5:15 ESV** See that **no one repays anyone evil for evil, but always seek to do good to one another and to everyone. 16 Rejoice always, 17 pray without ceasing, 18 give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.**

- b) If you are not yet a follower of Jesus, this is where you begin: **Acts 2:38b ESV** “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”
3. Be honest about where you are in this area of obedience! It may be the very thing that is keeping you from what you want from God. I urge you to say yes to God today and everyday. Give him your life!
- D. So in our story, the blind man obeys, stumbling to the pool of Siloam, and kneeling down, washes the mud from his eyes. As he begins to open his eyes, he notices immediately that something is radically different! Where once there was darkness and blackness, there is light and color! Shapes come into sharp relief and contrast! Familiar voices, smells, and tastes are now accompanied with visions of faces, flowers, and freshly baked bread sold in the marketplace!
1. He can see! No longer will he be a beggar, depending on others for everything! His sight is his freedom!
  2. His mind must have been racing! What did all of this mean? What would his future look like? The possibilities seemed endless! The power of Jesus changes everything! It did for this man and it will for you as well.
- V. **John 9:8 ESV** The neighbors and those who had seen him before as a beggar were saying, “Is this not the man who used to sit and beg?” **9** Some said, “It is he.” Others said, “No, but he is like him.” He kept saying, “I am the man.” **10** So they said to him, “Then how were your eyes opened?” **11** He answered, “The man called Jesus made mud and anointed my eyes and said to me, ‘Go to Siloam and wash.’ So I went and washed and received my sight.” **12** They said to him, “Where is he?” He said, “I do not know.”
- A. It’s interesting that John 7 and 8 are filled with the opponents of Christ wrestling with his identity. “Where is he from?” “Who is his father?” “Is he the Christ? The Prophet? Who is he?” The world always struggles to recognize that which is heavenly. Now look what happens to the blind man! No one can say with any certainty who exactly he is!
- B. “Wait. Isn’t that the blind beggar guy running and skipping and laughing in the streets like some kind of weirdo?” “Nah! Surely not! He just looks like him! That other guy was a Debbie Downer! I’ve never even seen him smile. Can’t be the same guy.”
1. Jesus wants to change your life to such a degree that no one will even be certain they recognize you.
  2. You may look similar, but your countenance, your habits, your ambitions and desires will be so altered, that they just can’t be sure. Instead being enslaved to every godless, worldly impulse (like they are), you will be consumed with and progressively transformed by Jesus! As 2 Corinthians 5:17 says, you will become a “new creation”!
- C. Before I became a believer in Christ at 16, I was easy to recognize.
1. I hung out with other blind people. Two of my best friends from my pre-Jesus days today are convicted sex-offenders, another is a drunk.

2. I had been suspended from school, but I rarely ever went anyway. I was enslaved to sexual sin. Had a violent anger problem and constantly contemplated suicide.
- D. But something happened in September of 1987 that changed everything. I trusted Jesus alone to save me from my disastrous life. And he did!
1. The guy who's now a drunk was so offended by the change in me, that he tried to ambush me at school. I had been in plenty of enraged fist fights with him before, but this time I wouldn't fight back (which really freaked him out)!
  2. So my friends changed. I threw myself into our youth group (and met Ginger! Woo-hoo!). I constantly bugged my pastor and youth pastor with a constant barrage of scripture, theological and life questions.
  3. I stopped going to the movies I used to go to, and listening to the music I listened to. I couldn't get enough of God's word, and devoured as much preaching and teaching as I could. None of this was because of some religious threat or fear. I had received my sight, and wanted as much of Jesus as I could get.
  4. God began to deal with my anger, unforgiveness, and sexual hang-ups; calling me to obedience. The appeal of sin was diminishing the closer I got to Jesus (and is still diminishing ever more to this day!)
- E. Like the blind man, when puzzled people would look at me and seem to say "Who are you?!?", I took great pleasure in declaring, "I am the man! The one who was blind but now can see, was lost but now am found!"
1. Time after time people (even my teachers!) would say, "How were your eyes opened?" I would tell them, "The man named Jesus graciously touched with fresh clay and fresher power! He recreated me, making me brand new!"
  2. "The Holy Spirit told me, **Acts 16:31b ESV** "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved." Though I stumbled, I obeyed his word! Now everything is finally clear! I can see! Thank God for his mercy, I CAN SEE!"
- VI. What about you? Are you tired of the darkness? Are you ready to see life as it really is, not just as you've imagined it to be? He will touch you with his re-creating hands and power. Will you obey him? Will you go and wash? Wash this morning, not in the pool of Siloam in old Jerusalem, but in the redeeming blood of his cross, shed for you.
- A. You should have died his death because you are sinful and guilty, but he loves you so much! So much that he took the punishment you deserved on his own holy person so that you might live forevermore.
  - B. He took darkness so that you could have light. Friend, as Ananias said to Saul of Tarsus in Acts 9, "Receive your sight!" You'll only find it at the foot of the cross. Obey his voice and receive your sight.