

John, Part 41: "I Can See!" (Part 2)

John 9:13 ESV They brought to the Pharisees the man who had formerly been blind. **14** Now it was a Sabbath day when Jesus made the mud and opened his eyes. **15** So the Pharisees again asked him how he had received his sight. And he said to them, "He put mud on my eyes, and I washed, and I see." **16** Some of the Pharisees said, "This man is not from God, for he does not keep the Sabbath." But others said, "How can a man who is a sinner do such signs?" And there was a division among them. **17** So they said again to the blind man, "What do you say about him, since he has opened your eyes?" He said, "He is a prophet."

- I. Last week we told the story of this unnamed blind man from John 9 that Jesus had miraculously healed by spitting onto the ground, making mud from the dirt and spit, applying that mud to the man's eyes and telling him to go wash it off in the pool of Siloam. John 9:7 **"So he went and washed and came back seeing."**
 - A. What I hope to do today with the rest of the story is demonstrate the difference between spiritual sight and spiritual blindness; demonstrating how that religion, in combination with our sin, is often the root cause of our spiritual blindness.
 1. Some of you know exactly what I'm speaking of. Others have always assumed that religion is a good thing; associating it with church, morality, or other things that have a generally good reputation.
 2. But I want to show you that religion differs from the gospel in that religion always represents man's doomed attempts to get to God. But the gospel shows God's determination to move heaven and earth to get to you.
 - B. As a result of this miracle, many of the man's neighbors weren't even certain that he was the same man as the blind beggar with whom they were so familiar!
 - C. But he insisted that he **was** the man who once was blind, but now could see! Astonished, **"They brought to the Pharisees the man who had formerly been blind."** It is unclear whether these men were part of the Jewish ruling council known as the Sanhedrin, or just respected religious pillars. It will be revealed later in the story, however, that they were men with influence in the community.
 1. So first we learn that when God does something, especially in a way that is exceptional or unexpected, people will attempt to validate or dismiss what has happened on the basis of human opinion rather than on God's action.
 - a) For example, though he is often found to be in conflict with the teachings of scripture, Catholics insist that the pope speaks infallibly, with the representative authority of God, vicariously for Christ on earth!
 - b) Some other respected teacher might say the gifts of the Holy Spirit are no longer operating; but can produce no scripture taken in context that says that God ever intended to change the playbook of how he works!
 - c) Other teachers affirm any bizarre behavior that some person will attribute to the Holy Spirit; claiming signs and wonders **alone** are authoritative, regardless of scripture. **Mark 12:24 ESV** Jesus said to them, "Is this not the reason you are wrong, because you know **neither the Scriptures nor the power of God?**" Though the Word and power work "hand in glove", people tend to get out of balance by their long-standing prejudices.

2. We must not deny the clear display of the power of God, like the Pharisees, but it is also dangerous to affirm any old sign, claiming it to be a show of God's power, without clear teaching or precedent mined from the written Word of God.
 3. The true display of God's power will never contradict the clear revelation of the Bible. We don't need men's opinions to either confirm or discredit the work of God, what we desperately need is a better handle on scripture.
- D. But there was another problem. Once again, Jesus had ruffled their feathers by healing this man on the Sabbath like he did in John 5 with the paralyzed man! This was a clear violation of rabbinical tradition, but not a violation of the Mosaic Law; Consider also the fact that the "violator" of their traditions had declared himself to be the "Lord of the Sabbath" in Matthew 12:8.
1. This simple action drew a swift judgement from them. **"This man is not from God, for he does not keep the Sabbath."**
 - a) The scribes and Pharisees of his day had formulated their judgements by taking the Law of Moses and adding a moralistic buffer zone around it, heaping laws and traditions on top of what was handed down on to Moses on Mount Sinai to make absolutely sure that the people didn't violate what they thought God wanted. But Christ had said to them:
 - b) **Mark 7:13b CSB** You *nullify* the word of God *by your tradition* that you have handed down.
 2. Complicating matters further, not all of the Pharisees shared the same conclusion based on the clear evidence of a miracle. **"How can a man who is a sinner do such signs? And there was a division among them."** (v. 16)
- E. So they ask for the healed man's opinion. "What do you think about him?" they ask. "He's a prophet", the man responds. This is an incredible thing for him to say for a number of reasons:
1. First, to the Jews, calling him a prophet doesn't simply imply that he is someone who has visions of the future, but that he is someone who is the direct, anointed, chosen spokesman for Yahweh God. Chapter 8 tells us that this is already a point of disagreement and irritation for the Pharisees.
 2. Second, if Christ is God's prophet, that is highly significant! This is because Israel has not had a prophet among them for almost 500 years, with the exception of John the Baptist, who's ministry they also did not acknowledge.
 3. Thirdly, it is amazing because of the change in the man's estimate of who Christ was. In verse 11 he called him "the man called Jesus". Now under legal examination, he calls him "a prophet".
- II. **John 9:18 ESV** The Jews did not believe that he had been blind and had received his sight, until they called the parents of the man who had received his sight **19** and asked them, "Is this your son, who you say was born blind? How then does he now see?" **20** His parents answered, "We know that this is our son and that he was born blind. **21** But how he now sees we do not know, nor do we know who opened his eyes. Ask him; he is of age. He will speak for himself." **22** (His parents said these things because they feared the Jews, for the Jews had already agreed that if anyone should confess Jesus to be Christ, he was to be put out of the synagogue.) **23** Therefore his parents said, "He is of age; ask him."

- A. The Jews are so opposed to Christ that instead of wrestling with the implications of a bona fide miracle in their midst, they doubt the man's story! So they call in a grown man's mommy and daddy hoping to smoke out the truth.
 - 1. Although the story doesn't tell us, I can only imagine that most of these men passed by this poor beggar every day. Never before had they cared for who he was, the story of his affliction, or how to alleviate his suffering.
 - a) Only now that his healing could confirm the claims of Christ (their enemy), have they taken an interest. Even when the disciples had first encountered this man, they dehumanized him, asking Christ whose wickedness had resulted in his sad condition-his own or his parent's sin?
 - b) But unlike the Pharisees or the disciples, the text states that Jesus "saw **a man**", had compassion on him and healed him.
 - 2. Religion will always use you to expand it's own influence, build it's cathedrals, do it's work, pay it's bills or make it's case. Jesus, on the other hand, will rescue you, heal you, deliver you, comfort you, empower you, and befriend you. Religion makes pawns, Christ makes princes and princesses.
 - B. The parents however, are worthless witnesses for the Pharisees! They verify that he was their son, and that he was born blind. As for how he was healed, though, they plead the 5th. They send the leaders back to their adult son, since he is a big boy and can speak for himself.
 - 1. This is how we know that the villains were men of some influence: we're told they had the power to excommunicate people from the synagogue.
 - 2. So the parents choose to avoid the question, throwing it back on their son. Why weren't they rejoicing because of the miracle performed on him? That is one thing missing from everyone in the story - the Pharisees certainly aren't rejoicing, nor the parents. Only the man that was healed rejoiced.
 - a) **Proverbs 29:25 ESV** The fear of man lays a snare, but whoever trusts in the Lord is safe.
 - b) Religion will blind you to the glory of God's working and intimidate you into silence about the freedom found in Christ. Many of us haven't freely shared the gospel in years (if ever) because our gratitude to God and love for the savior has been muted by our fear of what others will think or say.
- III. **John 9:24 ESV** So for the 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." **25** He answered, "Whether he is a sinner **I do not know**. One thing **I do know**, that though I was blind, now I see." **26** They said to him, "What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?" **27** He answered them, "I have told you already, and you would not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you also want to become his disciples?" **28** And they reviled him, saying, "You are his disciple, but we are disciples of Moses. **29 We know** that God has spoken to Moses, but as for this man, **we do not know** where he comes from."
- A. Notice the pharisaical tendency to use the phrase "we know": "We know that this man is a sinner." and "We know that God has spoken to Moses". There is an inherent tendency in religion to speak boastfully about what it is confident about; it's doctrine, traditions, preferences, rituals and ceremonies.

1. But scripture tells us we should only boast in Jesus Christ. Jeremiah 9 eliminates every cause for boasting in humanity, except for one - "that he knows and understands me", says the Lord. (Jer. 9:23-24)
 2. Notice also what they **don't** know: "as for this man, we do not know where he comes from." Volumes of prophecies had testified to his coming. His miraculous power had been the talk of the nation. His teaching had awed the crowds. He had told them himself that he was the great I AM.
 - a) Yet they claim that they do not know where he came from! In Matthew 23 Jesus calls the Pharisees, "blind guides and hypocrites", and such they were! So this is really a story about the nature of spiritual blindness!
 - b) They were to be the instructors of Israel, yet the Hope of the Nations shows up in their lifetime and they are oblivious (blind) to his presence!
- B. By comparison, though, look at what the formerly blind man "knows" and "doesn't know"! **"Whether he is a sinner I do not know. One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see."** The blind man did not think to ask for Christ's moral resume. He does not know whether he goes to church, prays, read his Bible, tithes, or helps little old ladies cross the street.
1. But he is absolutely sure of **one thing**; that the power of God came upon him and changed his life forever. He knows that when he obeyed Christ's word, his darkness came to an end. And he attributes all of this to the one he recognizes as a prophet, Jesus.
 2. But where was the healing power in the synagogue all those years? Where was the compassion in the Pharisees standing before him now? When had he received and tender touch from a scribe? NO! The leaders represented shame, but Jesus alone was the fountain of love and healing for his soul!
- C. Enraged, they demand another account of his testimony. The man refuses, but asks them a question. "Why do you want to know what happened again? Would you like to become his disciples?" Well that was a little too much! They hurl what they think to be a devastating insult at him "You are his disciple!"
1. May God grant us all the mercy to be insulted in such a manner! May everyone who misunderstands, mocks, rejects us have no more cutting words for us than these, "You are his disciple!" A disciple is a follower; a student. May we always be found following and learning from our Lord.
 2. After Jesus' resurrection and ascension, God uses Peter and John to heal a lame man in the Temple. Following their arrest by some of these same men, look what happens: **Acts 4:13 ESV Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated, common men, they were astonished. And they recognized that they had been with Jesus.**
- D. On the other hand, the Pharisees align themselves with Moses. Big mistake. Moses delivered God's law to the people, but the New Testament makes it plain that the law was an instrument of conviction and instruction, not salvation.
1. **Galatians 3:10a ESV For all who rely on works of the law are under a curse**
 2. In pride they claim that they are Moses' disciples. Woe to everyone who thinks they will find life at the feet of Moses! They will find that Moses is their judge, the Law has already given sentence, and the justice of God shall be their executioner.

- E. **John 9:30 ESV** The man answered, “Why, this is an amazing thing! You do not know where he comes from, and yet he opened my eyes. **31** We know that God does not listen to sinners, but if anyone is a worshiper of God and does his will, God listens to him. **32** Never since the world began has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a man born blind. **33** If this man were not from God, he could do nothing.” **34** They answered him, “You were born in utter sin, and would you teach us?” And they cast him out.
1. Using all of the deductive reasoning and common sense he can muster, the now healed man points out the folly of these experts in Moses!
 2. The Marc Sharp Revised Version of the Bible reads, “You guys gotta be kiddin’ me! This ain’t rocket science fellas! He opened my eyes! Point to anyone else who has done or is doing that! You say he’s a sinner, but does God work this way through liars, drunks or perverts? Why, if God weren’t giving the stamp of approval, this never could have happened!”
- F. Let me assure you that religious people are not fans of such homespun common sense and rational thinking! But they are much less fans of those among the unwashed masses who would dare lecture them! So they cry out, “You were born in utter sin!” *Holos Gennao En Hamartia (Gk)*
1. The meaning is to be marinated in sin, to have sin as you basic nature, and to constructed of sin with every fiber of your being. There were two problems with this angry pronouncement over the man by the Pharisees.
 - a) First, the man never claimed to be anything else! But the discussion was not about him and his character, but about Jesus; who he was, and what he had done. When Christ’s reputation and the validity of his claims were logically upheld by the man’s testimony, they went into a rage!
 - b) Secondly, these men had no awareness that what they said about the man was absolutely true for themselves as well. We are all born in utter sin! This is the teaching of the Bible from Genesis to Revelation. Even their revered King David once said, **Psalm 51:5 ESV** Behold, I was **brought forth in iniquity, and in sin** did my mother conceive me.
 2. Missing this fact caused them to miss not only the identity of Christ but the benefit and salvation available through him. They were trying to float on the rickety raft of self-righteousness, yet would drown in the sea of their sin.
- G. So they responded the way religion always does: They booted him out of their club. Religion is always sizing people up to see how they measure up.
1. I remember touring the mormon temple on Frankford when it opened several years ago. It was truly one of the most manicured and elaborate buildings I had ever set foot in. I could not even begin to guess the total cost!
 2. But when our tour was over, our guide began his evangelistic speech! “Isn’t this a grand palace in which to worship? Wouldn’t you like to connect with the eternal in such a magnificent location? Well here’s all you gotta do...” And he gave us the list.
 - a) No free offer of grace! No unmerited rescue from my brokenness and sinful condition! Just the same old list of self-improvements in order to make myself holy.

- b) If I pursued the list maybe -just maybe- I'd get a chance to earn my three-color laminated membership card as a good mormon, and get the privilege of worshipping in that beautiful building!
3. But I'm more grateful that Christ, with all of his scars of love and mercy marring his body, is my temple! I am safe there. I can rest there. There is true healing there. It doesn't matter if I have to worship him in a cardboard box, or one of the grand cathedrals of Europe - or no place at all. I am found in him everywhere, and nothing man can construct can compare to his majesty.
- IV. **John 9:35 ESV** Jesus heard that they had cast him out, and having found him he said, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" **36** He answered, "And who is he, sir, that I may believe in him?" **37** Jesus said to him, "You have seen him, and it is he who is speaking to you." **38** He said, "Lord, I believe," and he worshiped him. **39** Jesus said, "For judgment I came into this world, that those who do not see may see, and those who see may become blind." **40** Some of the Pharisees near him heard these things, and said to him, "Are we also blind?" **41** Jesus said to them, "If you were blind, you would have no guilt; but now that you say, 'We see,' your guilt remains.
- A. Our story began with Jesus **seeing** the man. Now he has **heard** of his trouble, and the Bible says, Christ "**found**" him. Jesus does not say, "Sorry I got you into all that trouble! If I'd only known, I wouldn't have healed you!" On the contrary, He asks the same old question that he asks you and I. "Do you believe?"
- B. To the formerly blind man, there is no more natural impulse than to trust this man who has brought him so much and given him a future. "Who is this 'Son of Man' so I can believe in him?" Jesus' answer is so cool..
1. "You have seen him" this would not have been possible had not the "Son of Man" opened his blind eyes. Jesus is pointing back to his helplessness in his previous state, and the fact that it is **Christ alone** who restored his hope.
 2. "it is he who is speaking to you" This indicates that he is a present God; close to us, and not far away; aware of us, and not aloof.
- C. So the man proclaims, "I believe!", and righteously worships the Lord.
- D. Remember that I said earlier that the whole point of this story was the nature of spiritual blindness? Jesus makes that crystal clear with his statement, "**For judgment I came into this world, that those who do not see may see, and those who see may become blind.**"
1. Not because of anything in the man, but because of his overflowing abundance of mercy and grace, Christ "judged" the man to be a candidate for healing, the restoration of **physical sight** so that **spiritual sight** might also be restored; that he might see the "Light of the World".
 2. The Pharisees on the other hand, were judged by Christ to be blind. To the man, the warm rays of the Light of the World fell across his face, warmed his soul, and illuminated the world around him. For the Pharisees the Light of the World was a blinding light, that distorted everything they thought they knew so well, and made them incapable of acknowledging the truth.
- E. Christ's declaration offends the hypocrites. "So I suppose we're blind, too Jesus?" How would you have answered that question? I would have said, "Heck yes, you're blind! Have you not heard anything I've said in the last three chapters?!?"

1. But Jesus says, "If you were blind, you would have no guilt..." He is not saying that if they were physically blind he would take more pity on them, but rather that if they acknowledged their utter helplessness, Christ would mercifully open their spiritual eyes the way he has opened the blind man's physical ones.
 2. But because they will not, their judgement is pronounced: "...but now that you say, 'We see,' your guilt remains." It is a grave error to assume you see clearly, especially when it comes to knowing Jesus Christ.
 - a) He is the measure of truth, you are not. He is the point of the story, you are not. He is the only hope of real life as it was meant to be lived. Your righteousness, your efforts, and your morality are not and never can be.
 - b) Notice Jesus didn't say, "because you see..." but, "Because **you say**, "We see". your guilt remains. It is necessary for us to admit our blindness when the Holy Spirit awakens us to the fact that we don't see spiritual things with any clarity. Only then will Christ in his mercy open your eyes.
- V. Has God been calling to you in your blindness this morning? Will you just admit that you need him to open your eyes so that you can truly see? He said if anyone comes to him he will in no way cast them aside. If you obey him, he will open your eyes.
- A. You may not understand everything about him, but you will go away saying, like the man who was blind, "**One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see.**"
 - B. Won't you come to Christ today? Come from the beggarly district of sin, of religion, of self-determination, from the streets of rebellion and depression, from addiction, greed and materialism. Come and obey his word that you might receive your sight.