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Sight to the Blind

John 9:5-7

Intro: As mentioned before, there are only 7 miracles recorded in John's Gospel and these particular miracles were chosen for the spiritual lessons they provide. The miracles are: changing water into wine, healing of the nobleman's son, healing the lame man at the pool of Bethesda, feeding of the five thousand, Jesus walking on water, restoring sight to the man born blind and raising Lazarus from the dead. Many more could have been included in this Book but John himself tells us that these were chosen so that those who read them might be led to faith in Jesus as the Messiah and the Son of God (20:30-31). To John, these miracles are significant because they teach spiritual truths.

This fact has become more obvious as our study of the miracles has progressed. The first miracle showed Jesus at a wedding, making wine. This miracle reveals Him as One who enters into human joys and who actually gives joy. Of course, this is not really a very profound lesson because other people could do that. But, in later miracles, we see Jesus as the One who is able to restore lost health, provide for all human needs, and even save people when they aren't necessarily looking to be saved. In these later miracles we begin to recognize the full truth of our own terribly lost condition, of God's sovereignty in electing sinners to salvation, and the irresistible nature of His grace.

This particular miracle that we've now arrived at is especially significant in teaching this spiritual truth. I can't speak for all of ancient literature but I can say that there are very few accounts of the blind receiving their sight in the Bible. In fact, there is no story of giving sight to the blind anywhere in the OT. Nor is this functioned performed by any of followers of Jesus in the NT. The closest we come to it is when Ananias laid hands on Saul of Tarsus and prayed that his temporary blindness would be reversed, but this case in no way compares to the giving of sight as Jesus gave it. On the other hand, there are more miracles of giving sight to the blind by Jesus recorded in the gospels than healings in any other category (7).

This miracle bears particular significance because in the OT, giving sight to

the blind is always attributed to the work of God Himself (Ps 146:8). It's also the activity of the Messiah (Is 29:18, 35:5, 42:5-7). The significance of this miracle in the NT is that it is a **divine** function, a function of God's own Messiah; that Jesus fulfills when He gives sight to the blind. Thus, the events of this chapter are significant in John's design in showing Jesus as the Messiah. But, at the same time, it also shows the helpless condition of the lost apart from any divine intervention. But, before we get into the details of this miracle, we must look at and address vs5.

5- As Jesus excused Himself from the blood thirsty mob of religious leaders who wanted to kill Him at the end of ch8, He passes by and notices a man begging beside the temple gates, a man who had been born blind. The disciples ask Jesus if the blindness was caused by this man's sin or his parents. Jesus' response was that neither assumption was correct but the man was born blind so that the works of God might be revealed in his life. Jesus then reiterates the singular focus of His ministry was to accomplish the works that the Father had given Him to do while He was in the world. He also clued the disciples in that His earthly ministry was time stamped and it would not last forever. Then He concludes this short theological conversation with the statement in vs5.

It's appropriate for Jesus to speak of doing the works of the Father while it is day because He is the Light of the world. A wonderful statement to be sure, but there is also an air of urgency in it and Jesus may well be hinting that His time on earth is drawing to a close, in fact, it would not last more than a few months after this event. Thus, the work He had to do must be done quickly and in accordance with His character as the light of the world. The rest of our text today is in fact an acted-out parable that illustrates how Jesus is the Light of the world

Now, we are aware that the disciples are listening to these statements of Jesus but so is someone else. The blind man is listening to this entire conversation because the group stopped right in front of him when Jesus first noticed him. Imagine the sinking feeling in his stomach when he heard the disciples ask their "theological" question. He probably endured similar questions nearly every day because that's what the rabbis of the day taught: suffering is the direct result of sin. How many times has he served as a wretched object lesson of some pious gasbag expounding on things they were totally and willfully ignorant of? How often was his suffering

compounded by false doctrine?

But not this time! This time he hears a voice speak like he's never heard before. There's a tone of compassion in this voice, a distinct note of authority that he has never encountered before. Then he hears what he's been waiting his entire life to hear – the true purpose of his blindness (3b). What was it like for him to hear this?

6-7- We began this lesson talking about how the miracles in John are significant because they teach spiritual truth. So, as we move through these 2 verses, we're going to look at this story for what it has to teach us about the nature of our salvation. We will look at the blind man, at Jesus, at the means Jesus used in this miracle and the command He gives. The conclusion of all this is that we are all saved from our own spiritual blindness in the same way.

1) The blind man. What a pitiful situation! There's not much positive to say about him at the moment Jesus finds him. Later, he becomes something of a spiritual pit bull, tenaciously hanging onto what little he knows of Jesus. He turns out to be the only man in the NT besides Jesus who is willing to stand face to face with the religious crowd and tell them they are wrong and that's something! But right now, he's just a blind beggar condemned by his condition to a miserable, hopeless life of deprivation and suffering.

Of course, he couldn't see Jesus, even when Jesus stood right in front of him looking down on him as he begged. He could hear that someone was there but he didn't know who it was or what His presence signified. It's very likely that he didn't value sight very much. He'd been blind from birth and hardly had a concept of what sight was. Had he lived with good sight for 30-40 years and then lost it for some reason, we might expect him to bemoan his loss. But he had no clue of the world as we perceive it through our vision and, thus, couldn't fully value vision. Sure, he knew he was missing something but how could he value sight properly, having never seen? Also note that he didn't pray for sight. He's a beggar. It's a beggar's job to beg. But he didn't beg for sight. His condition was hopeless, and what's the use of asking for something that everyone knows cannot happen! The blind man certainly did not expect the miracle that was about to be performed by Jesus. How could he?

As pitiful as this man's situation was, he at least had 1 thing going for him. The one circumstance in favor of the blind man is that he was at least in the place where Jesus was likely to pass by. He hadn't planned it that way, of course. He sat at the gate of the temple because thousands of people passed through the gate of the temple and he could ask them for alms. Yet, whether he had planned it or not, this was where Jesus passed by. And Jesus found him.

Doesn't this accurately describe the vast majority of lost people we come into contact with on a daily basis? They are just like the blind man. For starters, they can't see spiritual truths. They may've heard the Gospel preached, may've read the Bible or other Christian books, but they don't understand what they hear or read. They cannot see Jesus even though He's right in front of them. More than this, they cannot properly value what they are missing! Since they've never understood spiritual truths, they have no sense of what they are and thus, cannot value them. Consequently, they've never prayed to understand them. As far as they know, their condition will never be changed by anything.

Imagine trying to describe a sunrise to someone blind from birth. We would start by elaborating on the bright blue sky, the brilliant reds and oranges of the clouds, the golden beams of sunlight shining through the gaps. If this was our way of explaining it, we would fail because the blind person has no sense of or wonder for color. They have no clue what blue, red, orange or gold is let alone bright light or contrast shadow or visual perspective. All of these are lost on them because they are unknown to them. In the same way, the glory of salvation and the wonder of our spiritual walk with Jesus are lost on those who've not experienced it. They have no clue what it is we're describing; it's a completely foreign concept to them, not just the reality of it but the need of it as well. Many times, that must be where we start, not at the blessings that come from salvation but the utter need for it (believing is seeing).

2) Jesus. To the blind man, He was just a man called Jesus (11a) but Jesus was more than just a man. The fact that He healed a man born blind was proof of that and there are many other proofs. Jesus is also God. He's the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and end. He's the King of kings and Lord of lords; the Ancient of Days; the Lord of hosts. He's the Savior. Jesus is all these things. And still, He is a man, and this is not a bad place to begin to

know Him.

Jesus was also a man's man. He was all about what was true and right and honorable. He was death to all pride and pretense, that's why the religious crowd was so desperate to be rid of Him. He could be moved with compassion and be very gentle but He could also be very tough: He didn't back up or back down to anyone or anything. This sheer strength was still His after hours of unspeakable agony in the garden of Gethsemane. Those who were sent to arrest Him fell back to the ground when Jesus revealed who He was. Jesus was a man of such stature and quality that He remained in command of every situation even when the odds were heavily stacked against Him.

This is the kind of man we meet in [ch9](#). So, it's no surprise to find that after his healing, the formerly blind man only had thoughts for Jesus. To him, Jesus became the most important person in the world. He didn't know much about Him; he only knew Him as the man called Jesus. He hadn't even seen Him; Jesus had sent him away to the pool of Siloam, where the healing took place. Still, Jesus became closer to him than his neighbors, family, or the Pharisees.

All he can talk about is Jesus. He'll tell how Jesus had made the clay and anointed his eyes, how Jesus sent him to wash in the pool of Siloam, and how he came back seeing because of Jesus. In fact, in one sense, the miracle was not complete until he is found by Jesus the second time and comes to worship him as Lord. This is how it is for all who are found by Jesus! They might not know much about Him but it will be "Jesus only" for them after that.

3) The means of healing. It says Jesus spit on the ground, made clay from the dust and saliva and "anointed" the sightless eyes of the blind man. What are we to make of all this? Is it offensive (gross)? Does it seem inadequate or foolish? Does it seem harmful? In a sense it probably should; for the gospel, the means by which God gives spiritual light and sight; is all these things to the lost.

To many people, the Gospel is offensive. "Why do you always talk so much about blood and wrath and judgment?" It offends their sense of decency because it brings their own character or culture into question. I've heard it

said that we should change the Bible so it will be more palatable to Muslims and more will come into the faith. But, if you have to change the Gospel, all you end up with is another gospel and that won't save anyone either. It all seems old and irrelevant to them. But offensive or not, it is by means of the Gospel that God saves lost and sinful men.

To some, the Gospel is inadequate and even foolish. I mean really, dirt and spit! What good are they going to do? Well, the clay was made by Jesus and the spit came from His mouth. In the same way, it's the Gospel (that came from Jesus' mouth) that God uses to call men and women to repentance and salvation. It's even by the preaching of the Gospel, which Paul himself acknowledges as foolishness, that God is pleased to save those who believe. Still, they wonder what possible impact this ancient spiritual concept can actually have on the personal and social needs of modern man today, things that require psychiatry, politics and social action programs to properly address. Well, do what you must but these will never be a valid substitute for the Gospel. For as simple as it may be, the Gospel of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ, believed and acted upon, has transformed millions of lives for the better. It's made countless people into new creatures and, through them, completely transformed their social environment.

Finally, to some, the Gospel is harmful. To them, salvation through the unmerited grace of Christ seems to actually encourage sin. As they said in Paul's day, "Let us sin, that grace may abound." Is this true? Does the Gospel encourage sin? Not at all! In fact, the Gospel is the greatest purifying power to be found in the human life, as every true believer knows. This simple means has been a channel of great blessing and displaying of God's glory.

4) The command. What was it? "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam." It was simple; containing just seven words. It was personal; directed at the blind man and to him alone. It involved the test of obedience; for it involved a response to the Lord Jesus Christ. In the same way, the gospel that comes to you is simple—"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved." It's personal; you must believe. Above all, it is a test of obedience; for the question is, "Will you believe? Will you trust Jesus?"

What can be said for the condition of the lost? Hardly anything good!

They're lost and blind, and their condition is hopeless—apart from Jesus Christ. Does this describe you today? Still, like the man who was born blind, at least this can be said of you: you're in a place where Jesus is likely to pass by. You didn't planned it that way, but here you are. You're hearing these words. You can't see Jesus yet. But Jesus is seeing you. He's looking down on you, searching you out from head to foot, and thinking of what He's about to do in your life and what He will make of you.

Are you hesitating? Let the blind man be your guide. If you're hesitating, you are blinder than he was by far. What did he do? He was blind, but "He obeyed Christ blindly." As a result of his obedience he immediately received physical sight and then immediately started on a path by which he eventually received true spiritual sight as well.

What a wonderful thing the Lord Jesus Christ did for this man! What a wonderful thing He is prepared to do for all who obey Him! Will you obey Him? If so, He will begin by giving you spiritual sight and will end by making all things new. 😊