

Two Kinds of Blindness
John 9:1-41

July 24, 2016

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A. Introduction

1. Today's Text

- a. is the entire ninth chapter of the gospel of John
- b. now, as this is too long for us to read through completely at one go
 - (A) so as to retain the words in our memory through the message
 - (B) let us read it in sections from the NKJV
 - (C) then we shall comment on those sections
 - (D) re-reading such verses as needed to help our understanding

2. The Light of the World

- a. In John 8, Jesus announced Himself as such
- b. the one who gives spiritual light to a world lying in sin's darkness
- c. this chapter is a living parable of that fact
- d. our outline consists of 5 words:
 - (A) Healing
 - (B) Wondering
 - (C) Interrogating
 - (D) Confessing
 - (E) Judging

B. Healing..... 9:1-7

- 1. `1 ¶ Now as Jesus passed by, He saw a man who was blind from birth. 2 And His disciples asked Him, saying, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" 3 Jesus answered, "Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but that the works of God should be revealed in him. 4 I must work the works of Him who sent Me while it is day; the 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 When He had said these things, He spat on the ground and made clay with the saliva; and He anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay. 7 And He said to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" (which is translated, Sent). So he went and washed, and came back seeing.' (John 9:1-7 NKJV)

2. The Disciples' Questions (vv 1-2)

- a. how they knew this man to be blind from birth is not revealed
 - (A) it may have been common knowledge from his years of begging (we shall find out in a moment that he had been begging)
 - (B) or, he may have voiced it in his cry for alms
- b. "Rabbi, who sinned?"
 - (A) This was a great rabbinical debate
 - (1) of course the fundamental reason for all suffering stems from the sin of Adam in Eden's garden, which sin we all inherit
 - (2) but the rabbis saw and taught that each sin had its own particular associated punishment
 - (3) a parent's sins could be visited in suffering upon the children (Exodus 20:5) – in practical terms that is illustrated today by the condition of babies born to drug or alcohol addicts
 - (4) and a person's own sins could likewise result in such suffering – Deuteronomy 28 lists many ways this could happen – and again examples could be cited where sins boomerang back to harm those who commit them
 - (B) so, perhaps out of curiosity, they ask the Master

3. The Master's Action (vv 3-7)

- a. "neither that this man sinned, nor his parents; but it was in order that the works of God might be displayed in him", said Jesus
 - (A) this does not mean God deliberately caused this child to be born blind, so that years later Jesus could show God's glory
 - (B) rather, God overruled in this disaster, so that growing to a man he should behold God's glory when Christ opened his eyes to see
 - (C) it is now time while Christ was still in the world, to work this work of the Father's, because the day of Jesus's presence was closing
- b. Jesus spat on the ground, making mud, & anointed the blind eyes
 - (A) the Jews thought that saliva & mud had medicinal properties, but that is not the point here – this allowed Jesus to test the man
 - (B) "Go and wash in Siloam's pool" – nor was there any more special healing in that pool than there was in Jordan's waters when Elisha had Naaman dip in it seven times and be healed of leprosy
 - (C) this is another example in which Jesus gave a command, and in the obedience of faith to that command,

a miracle takes place

- c. the man born blind saw for the very first time
 - (A) the man obeyed: he went and washed
 - (B) and coming from the pool, he could see
 - (C) which left those who were acquainted with him

C. Wondering 9:8-12

1. `8 ¶ Therefore the neighbours and those who previously had seen that he was blind said, "Is not this he who sat and begged?" 9 Some said, "This is he. " Others said, "He is like him." He said, "I am he." 10 Therefore they said to him, "How were your eyes opened?" 11 He answered and said, "A Man called Jesus made clay and anointed my eyes and said to me, 'Go to the pool of Siloam and wash.' So I went and washed, and I received sight." 12 Then they said to him, "Where is He?" He said, "I do not know.'" (John 9:8-12 NKJV)

2. The Man Had Changed

- a. that is evident in the differing identifications made of the man
- b. he seems to have returned to his home quarter of the city
- c. they recognize the clothes, his face; but he is different: he can see
- d. many of those who come to trust in Jesus Christ as their own personal Saviour have the same reaction from old acquaintances

3. His Testimony

- a. "Jesus did this" – and here is what he did ...
- b. He does not know much – not even where this Jesus is – but what he does know he is ready and eager to tell
- c. he has answered their questions, but there will be more to answer
- d. for now the Pharisees become involved

D. Interrogating 9:13-34

1. the Man

9:13-17

a. `13 ¶ They brought him who formerly was blind to the Pharisees. 14 Now it was a Sabbath when Jesus made the clay and opened his eyes. 15 Then the Pharisees also asked him again how he had received his sight. He said

to them, "He put clay on my eyes, and I washed, and I see." 16 Therefore some of the Pharisees said, "This Man is not from God, because He does not keep the Sabbath." Others said, "How can a man who is a sinner do such signs?" And there was a division among them. 17 They said to the blind man again, "What do you say about Him because He opened your eyes?" He said, "He is a prophet." (John 9:13-17 NKJV)

- b. This miracle had taken place on the Sabbath and that meant that the religious authorities – the Sanhedrin – should adjudicate
 - (A) The Sadducees – mainly priests, with a few scribes – were one party in the Sanhedrin, and they admitted only the authority of the written books of Moses: not the prophets nor the writings
 - (B) The Pharisees were the other party, and they admitted not only the authority of the written books of Moses, the prophets and the writings, but also the oral tradition supposedly handed down from Moses to Joshua to the elders to themselves
 - (C) so they heard the details of Jesus' healing the man (verse 15)
 - (D) according to the oral tradition, the act of kneading (mixing together as for example in making bread) constituted work
- c. So part of the Pharisees stated, "This man is not from God, because He does not keep the Sabbath." (verse 16)
 - (A) they presumed that their oral tradition and God's law were one and the same
 - (B) if a person broke the Sabbath laws – and if you read through the prophetic books of the OT you will find how important that particular law was deemed to be – then he was a flagrant sinner
 - (C) their logic was that all people who are from God keep God's law, and so this Jesus could not be from God
- d. The other, and evidently smaller, part of the Pharisees asked, "How can a man who is a sinner perform such signs?"
 - (A) they raised some doubt about Jesus being a sinner
 - (B) it was the greatness of the signs that Jesus did, that raised doubt
 - (C) maybe, just maybe, there is some explanation to this puzzle
- e. so the two sides ask the man what he had to say about this Jesus who has opened his eyes – perhaps there may be something in his words that they can use to take action against this Jesus
 - (A) his words are straightforward
 - (B) "He is a prophet" (verse 17)
 - (C) He possesses the miracle working power of such prophets of old as Elijah and Elisha
 - (D) the man has provided no ammunition about Jesus – remember that their plan is to kill him as seen in the previous chapters – so they move to the interrogation ...

2. his Parents

9:18-23

- a. **18 But the Jews did not believe concerning him, that he had been blind and received his sight, until they called the parents of him who had received his sight. 19 And they asked them, saying, "Is this your son, who you say was born blind? How then does he now see?" 20 His parents answered them and said, "We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind; 21 but by what means he now sees we do not know, or who opened his eyes we do not know. He is of age; ask him. He will speak for himself." 22 His parents said these things because they feared the Jews, for the Jews had agreed already that if anyone confessed that He was Christ, he would be put out of the synagogue. 23 Therefore his parents said, "He is of age; ask him."'** (John 9:18-23 NKJV)
- b. to discredit Jesus with respect to this miracle, the Pharisees take the next step – to prove that there never was any miracle
 - (A) the parents of the man are summoned
 - (B) a double-barrelled question is shot at them, with a side issue
 - (C) "Is he really your son, the one who was born blind (and indeed was that the case that he was blind from birth)?"
 - (D) "If he was really blind, as you say, how is that now he can see?"
 - (E) the skepticism in these questions bear out verse 18: **"The Jews therefore did not believe it of him, that he had been blind, and had received sight"**
- c. The parents have no difficulty in answering the first question
 - (A) "This is definitely our son"
 - (B) "Definitely he was born blind"
 - (C) These are facts – known not only to ourselves, but to relatives, neighbours, and many others
- d. The second question they are more evasive
 - (A) they may have heard from their son what happened, but they are not going to state this on the witness stand as if it were their own knowledge (what in courts is called hearsay evidence)
 - (B) "we do not know how or who; he is of age – he is a competent witness – ask him"
- e. There was a strong reason behind this evasion
 - (A) verse 22: **"His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jews; for the Jews had already agreed, that if anyone should confess Him to be Christ, he should be put out of the synagogue."**
 - (B) this was a major punishment to a Jew
 - (C) it meant to be cut off from religious, social & economic ties
 - (D) the result was to be removed from God's covenant with Israel
 - (E) it was a major blow; no wonder they avoided answering

f. but the damage is done: they cannot deny the miracle, so they return to the interrogation ...

3. the Man Again

9:24-34

a. `24 So they again called the man who was blind, and said to him, "Give God the glory! We know that this Man is a sinner." 25 He answered and said, "Whether He is a sinner or not I do not know. One thing I know: that though I was blind, now I see." 26 Then they said to him again, "What did He do to you? How did He open your eyes?" 27 He answered them, "I told you already, and you did not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you also want to become His disciples?" 28 Then they reviled him and said, "You are His disciple, but we are Moses' disciples. 29 We know that God spoke to Moses; as for this fellow, we do not know where He is from." 30 The man answered and said to them, "Why, this is a marvelous thing, that you do not know where He is from; yet He has opened my eyes! 31 "Now we know that God does not hear sinners; but if anyone is a worshipper of God and does His will, He hears him. 32 Since the world began it has been unheard of that anyone opened the eyes of one who was born blind. 33 If this Man were not from God, He could do nothing." 34 They answered and said to him, "You were completely born in sins, and are you teaching us?" And they cast him out.' (John 9:24-34 NKJV)

(A) here is the real heart of the history of this miracle

(B) the one who was blind, who now can see; is also the one who can see spiritual truth before these spiritually blind Pharisees

(C) as the saying goes, "There are none so deaf as those who will not hear, none so blind as those who will not see."

b. First they attempt to get him to say that Jesus did not heal him

(A) While the phrase, "Give God the glory" can be used (as it was with Achan by Joshua) to urge someone to tell the truth, it seems better to understand it here in the most obvious way

(B) "Confess that it is God who has healed you; not Jesus"

(C) "We are the legal experts and we know Jesus is a sinner"

(D) "You will just have to trust us, believe in us, rescind your words"

c. But though this man spent years in the physical darkness of blindness

(A) though he has been only a poor beggar

(B) he has a clear understanding of truth

(C) "I cannot argue with you on the matter of Jesus' sinfulness"

(D) "one thing I do know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see." (v 25)

(E) many the Christian who is unable to answer all the questions and objections thrown at them by unbelievers

- & skeptics has been able to take refuge in a simple, personal testimony such as his
- (F) he will not recant; he will not change his testimony
- d. The Pharisees return to the question of "How?"
- (A) this man is of sterner sort than his parents and he begins to stand up forcibly against his antagonists
- (B) "I have already told you: do you want to become disciples too?"
- (C) that obviously rankled them, so they counter with "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." (vv 28-29)
– they will not even use the name of Jesus
- (D) their words are dismissive "You, and after all, who are you? ... but as for this fellow we do not know his origin."
- (1) they had no excuse for not knowing his origin
- (2) on a human level they knew it quite well
- (3) on a spiritual level Jesus had told them repeatedly
- (4) and their statement struck the once blind man as strange, too
- e. "what a marvel is this", he says:
- (A) "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." (vv 30-33)
- (B) the man has been blind from birth and yet he knows the OT
- (C) the selective hearing of God to attend to the godly but to ignore the prayers of the wicked is repeatedly stated
- (1) one instance is Psalm 66:18, "If I regard wickedness in my heart, The Lord will not hear;" (Psalms 66:18 NAS)
- (2) in fact it was one of the Pharisee's own arguments thrown back at them
- (D) and every evidence is that the restoration of his sight was unique in the annals of history, without precedent
- (E) and these Pharisees who supposedly knew the Law did not know this one who had worked this great miracle
- (F) so, his experience overrides and overwhelms all their theory and theology: this man, Jesus must be from God
- f. they reply with insult

- (A) "You were born entirely in sins, and are you teaching us?" (v 34)
- (B) in their anger they confessed one thing that they have been trying to disprove – he really had been blind from birth
- (C) so they put him out: out from their midst, and, it would seem, out of the synagogue as well.
- (D) but as Psalm 27:10 says, "Though my father and mother forsake me, the LORD will receive me." (NIV)

E. Confessing 9:35-38

1. '35 ¶ Jesus heard that they had cast him out; and when He had found him, He said to him, "Do you believe in the Son of God?" 36 He answered and said, "Who is He, Lord, that I may believe in Him?" 37 And Jesus said to him, "You have both seen Him and it is He who is talking with you." 38 Then he said, "Lord, I believe!" And he worshipped Him.' (John 9:35-38 NKJV)

2. Its Nature

- a. Jesus has two titles that are very similar, though quite different in their implications
 - (A) "The Son of Man" – emphasizing the redemptive purpose of the incarnation: the One come to seek and to save lost mankind
 - (B) "The Son of God" – emphasizing that Deity entered mankind at the incarnation: the fact of Immanuel, "God with us"
 - (C) the first was used in the OT in Daniel and the second in Psalm 2
 - (D) but in both instances they referred to the Messiah; to the Christ
- b. it was the decision of the Jewish rulers that if anyone confessed that Jesus was Messiah, he was to be put out of the synagogue
 - (A) this man by his standing up against those rulers had already suffered that punishment
 - (B) Jesus asks, therefore, about his personal belief in Messiah
 - (C) otherwise his punishment has been for nought
- c. the once blind man's response is unhesitating
 - (A) if you show me who he is
 - (B) then I will certainly believe in him!

3. Its Expression

- a. Jesus informs this man that

- (A) he has already seen the one who is Messiah
- (B) indeed Jesus, now talking to him, is the Son of God & Son of Man
- b. the man expresses his faith in word and action
 - (A) "I believe, O Lord!"
 - (B) and he worshipped Jesus – the word means to go to one's knees, and in John is always used of worship of Deity

F. Judging 9:39-41

1. '39 ¶ And Jesus said, "For judgment I have come into this world, that those who do not see may see, and that those who see may be made blind." 40 Then some of the Pharisees who were with Him heard these words, and said to Him, "Are we blind also?" 41 Jesus said to them, "If you were blind, you would have no sin; but now you say, 'We see.' Therefore your sin remains.'" (John 9:39-41 NKJV)
 - a. the word judgement here is used in two different senses in the NT
 - (A) it can have the sense of "distinguishing between truth & error, right & wrong, or innocence & guilt"
 - (B) or have the sense of "condemn", that is, effecting the punishment required by that error, wrong or guilt.
 - (C) in His first coming, Jesus did not come to condemn the world but that the world through Him might be saved (3:17)
 - (D) but so that men might avoid that punishment, Jesus declared unmistakably the danger in which their sins were putting them
 - (E) that is what Jesus does here
 - b. These Pharisees need this sharp warning
 - (A) they claimed a higher ability to see and understand spiritual truth than the masses that did not know the law
 - (B) they cannot claim ignorance for they have seen the truth, and in their words and actions they have rejected it
 - (C) so they remain in the sin that separates them from God

G. Conclusion

1. what a joy it is to be able to sing that hymn containing the words of this man, "Once I was blind, but now I can see!"
2. if you cannot, then take to heart that warning to these Pharisees before it is ever too late

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ASV	American Standard Version of 1901
AV	Authorized (King James) Version of 1769
NAS	New American Standard version © 1960, 1995 The Lockman Foundation (usually the 1995 edition)
NIV	New International Version © 1984 by the International Bible Society
NLT	New Living Translation © 1996 Tyndale Charitable Trust
NKJV	New King James Version © 1979 Thomas Nelson Inc., Publishers
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version © 1989 National Council of Churches of Christ
WEY	The New Testament in Modern Speech © 1902, 1912 R. F. Weymouth

Some of the commentaries and resources used in the preparation of this message are identified as follow:

- Bruce – *The Gospel & Epistles of John*, by F. F. Bruce, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, MI; 1983
- NICNT – *The New International Commentary on the New Testament*
The Gospel according to John, by Leon Morris
- NTC – *New Testament Commentary*, by William Hendriksen; Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, MI; 1954
- RWP – *Robertson’s Word Pictures of the New Testament*, by Dr. A. T. Robertson
- TEC -- *The Gospel according to John*, by George Allen Turner & Julius R. Mantey, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, MI; ca 1965