

John 9:8-41 – I was blind, but now I see (Part 2)

Intro

- Last week we started this chapter that centers around the healing of a blind man.
 - o (6-7) The actual healing takes up only 2 out of the 41 verses.
 - o As with many/most of Jesus' miracles in the Gospels, the conversations and teachings that surround the miracle are the Spirit-inspired author's main point.
 - o These miracles help us better understand who Jesus is and what it looks like to be his follower.
- Jesus himself has already indicated that this man's blindness will be the means of God's glorious works being revealed.
 - o That starts with the miraculous healing itself and continues with this man being drawn to full saving faith in Jesus.
 - o Jesus sending him to wash the mud off his eyes gives him an opportunity to show that he trusts Jesus enough to obey him and today we will see how his faith grows.

(8-34) People Respond

(8-12) As you would expect, his acquaintances are amazed at what has happened.

- (8-9) The blind beggar has been "a fixture" at this location for years. He has never been anything else, and suddenly someone who looks just like him is walking around but is clearly not blind.
 - o He has to repeatedly assure them that he is indeed the guy who was blind from birth, not some coincidental doppelganger or long-lost identical twin.
 - o We are reminded how shockingly unbelievable Jesus' miracles were.
 - This is an undeniable exercise of divine power, not some cheap trick relying on a plant in the audience or emotional manipulation to produce a temporary placebo effect.
 - Jesus gives us these repeated previews of his absolute authority that will one day banish sickness, death, and grief forever (cf. chapter 11, Revelation 21).
- (10-12) For now, this man has only a foggy idea of who Jesus is.
 - o He knows this is the work of "the man called Jesus" and describes the whole rather strange procedure with the mud and the washing in the pool of Siloam.
 - o He can't tell them anything else about this Jesus person.
 - o I think that at this point he is still trying to process what has happened and everything that it implies.

(13-15) Some of the Pharisees question him.

- (13-15) He is taken to tell his story to the leaders of the local synagogue (the place to meet for prayer and Bible study).
 - These leaders are Pharisees: the group known for emphasizing the need to carefully follow the commands of Scripture *plus* their own traditional rules.
 - Since God is at work, they're going to be excited, right?
 - Well, the first thing they latch onto is not that a miracle has occurred, but that this was done on the Sabbath.
 - (16) This causes their opinion to be divided at first.
- Some are quite sure that Jesus is a terrible sinner because he broke *their* rules for the Sabbath.
 - God's Law to Israel commanded that they observe the Sabbath (Saturday) as a day of rest – a day to take a break from your usual employment & labor.
 - Pharisees had traditions defining dozens of everyday activities as “work prohibited on the Sabbath.”
 - They claimed that these traditions were handed down since the time of Moses (even though they weren't recorded in Scripture).
 - These traditions made the Sabbath more burdensome than restful
 - Jesus has broken several of these traditional prohibitions.
 - No healing/medical treatment unless life is in danger (and clearly the man's blindness was not life-threatening).
 - No anointing the eyes (a non-lifesaving medical or cosmetic treatment).
 - No kneading (which Jesus did when he made mud).
 - They are using their own manmade traditions and non-biblical beliefs to condemn the work of God.
 - This is a constant point of conflict between Jesus and religious people.
 - That is as true today as ever – e.g. condemning...
 - ...songs that aren't hymns
 - ...instruments used in church other than the piano or organ
 - ...Bible translations other than the KJV
 - ...Bibles that are displayed on a screen rather than printed on paper
 - ...church clothes that aren't dressy
 - ...teachings that contradict your preferred political party's views
 - ...sermons that don't end with an “altar call”
 - ...offering received by some means other than passing the plate
 - ...anything else not done “the way it's always been done” or calling into question personal beliefs from a source other than Scripture.
 - We must not fall into this kind of tradition-bound religiosity that has always been a tool of Satan to turn people away from true faith in Jesus.

- Among the religious leaders, there are some who recognize something amazing is happening and are willing to consider the matter rather than dismissing Jesus out of hand.
 - o After all, in the OT, the healing of the blind is a sign of the coming of the Messiah and his kingdom (e.g., Isaiah 29:18, 42:7)
 - o (17) They ask the formerly blind man who he thinks Jesus is.
 - He has progressed to the point where he realizes that Jesus is a prophet – a man of God who speaks the words of God and does the works of God.
 - His understanding is growing as he reflects on what Jesus did for him.
 - This man quickly sides with Jesus rather than throwing him under the bus like the sick man from chapter 5.

(18-23) The Pharisees question his parents.

- (18-20) His parents confirm that this is indeed their son who was born blind: there is no doubt that a miracle has taken place.
- (21-23) His parents are afraid to discuss Jesus and throw the question back on their son.
 - o Apparently, the Pharisees have all gotten on the same page now and are prepared to exclude from the synagogue anyone who expresses faith in Jesus as the Messiah.
 - They have quickly realized that Jesus being the Messiah is the most likely conclusion if he's not a Sabbath-breaking sinner.
 - Talk of the Messiah is politically dangerous (it threatens their position of authority) and they will have none of it (see John 11:45-53).
 - o The parents, realizing this, would rather be acceptable to their society than associate themselves with Jesus – in spite of what he has done for their son.
 - This is a tragic decision.
 - The approval of society or acceptance into a community means less than nothing if it makes you ashamed of Jesus or unwilling to follow his leading (Mark 8:34-38).

(24-34) The Pharisees question the man again.

- (24-25) The healed man is unable to argue theology with the religious leaders, but he knows that Jesus has made a huge difference in his life.
 - o *Give glory to God = You might as well admit that we're right because God is on our side* (cf. Joshua 7:19 for a proper use of it).
 - o Rather than jumping into a debate against “experts” on their own turf, he simply tells them what he knows to be true about Jesus.
 - This is a great example: even if you are not a theologian or Bible scholar, you can tell people what difference Jesus has made in your life.
 - Think about how your relationship with him affects your life: e.g., purpose, contentment, peace, courage & hope for the future, etc.

- (26-27) At this point, the man chooses his allegiance.
 - He realizes that the religious people just want to find fault and gives them a rather sarcastic answer while basically declaring himself to be a disciple of Jesus.
 - A disciple is someone who learns from the teachings and example of their master in order to follow in their footsteps and become like them.
 - This man realizes that Jesus is more than a prophet popping into his life to deliver one-time help...Jesus is someone worth following and learning from.
 - His faith is continuing to grow, and he willingly identifies himself as a follower of Jesus even though he knows it will cause him problems.

- (28-29) The Pharisees choose their allegiance and mock this man.
 - They would rather blindly hold to their traditions, which they wrongly attributed to Moses.
 - By holding to their traditions about Moses they have missed Jesus the Messiah to whom Moses pointed (see John 5:39-40, 45-46).
 - They have let the traditional trappings and beliefs of their religion distract them from who Jesus is as revealed in the very Scriptures they claim to value.

- (30-34) This man shows more wisdom than the Pharisees.
 - He recognizes that Jesus is sent from God – faith escalating from *prophet* to *man I should follow* to *man uniquely sent by God*.
 - As a result, he is thrown out of the synagogue (making him a social outcast) and labeled a fool and a sinner.
 - Often, part of the cost of discipleship is to be thought of as a fool and a wicked person (e.g., “narrow-minded bigot”), but that is a cost that we should willingly pay.
 - If you are not willing to give up being thought well of by society at large, you are not ready to be a follower of Jesus.
 - Count the cost and know that trusting Jesus enough to truly reflect him in our beliefs, attitudes, and actions will mean some degree of being treated like him (much more on that in chapter 16).
 - But know also that it is worth it (Matthew 5:11-12) – you are blessed by God, in good company, and will be richly rewarded

- At this point, Jesus reenters the story, speaking to both the man and the Pharisees (who apparently are close enough to overhear and butt into the conversation).

(35-41) Jesus Speaks

- (35-38) Jesus introduces himself as *the Son of Man*.
 - As used by Jesus, this is a title associated with the Messiah and with deity (Daniel 7:13-14 cf. Mark 14:61-62).
 - The Son of Man comes before the Ancient of Days (God).

- The Son of Man has the right to rule over the kingdom of God from the throne of God and receive the worship that belongs to God alone (i.e. He is God).
 - Jesus draws this man the rest of the way to faith in him as he willingly falls down before Jesus and worships him.
 - Jesus is not only a prophet, a great teacher & example, and a man uniquely sent by God the Father.
 - He is all these things, but he is also God himself – God the Son worthy of worship.
 - The darkness that this man suffered for years was God’s tool to bring him into the eternal kingdom of light.
- (39-41) Jesus declares the Pharisees’ guilt.
 - His coming into the world draws a clear dividing line between those who belong to him and those who stumble in the darkness that ends with condemnation.
 - Those who seem to have great spiritual vision and insight are shown to be spiritually blind if they do not recognize Jesus as their Lord and Savior.
 - Those who recognize their need for him are given spiritual life and light.
 - Those who (like the Pharisees) proudly claim to have it all together without Jesus’ help will find themselves declared guilty before God.
 - Not the main point, but an important application: Do not take spiritual advice from people who deny any part of what the Bible says about Jesus (1 John 2:22-23).
 - There are many celebrities who like to talk about the Bible, God, and even Jesus and may give spiritual advice but who deny the biblical Gospel and/or the unique person of Jesus Christ.
 - E.g. Jordan Peterson (Jungian psychology/Stoic philosophy), Ben Shapiro (Orthodox Judaism), Glenn Beck (Latter Day Saints/Mormon), Bart Ehrman (agnostic), Oprah Winfrey (New Age flavor of the month).
 - These are not people you should be listening to for help in understanding the Bible or living the Christian life.
 - They may get some things right, but according to God’s Word, they are spiritually blind...they do not actually know God the Father.
 - Why would you seek to learn spiritual things from people who the Holy Spirit has John refer to as *Antichrists*?!

Application

- The main point: trust Jesus to forgive your sins and transform your life.
 - He is the promised Savior – God the Son sent by God the Father to wash away our sins and bring us true life through his death and resurrection.
 - Trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ to save you on this basis is the only way to a right relationship with God as your Father (John 14:6, Romans 10:9-10)

- Do not be afraid to speak about the truth of God's Word and your allegiance to Jesus Christ when you have the opportunity.
 - That doesn't mean you have to start every conversation with it or shoehorn it into every interaction, but don't be afraid to speak the truth in love when you can.
 - Pray for wisdom to see and courage to seize opportunities.
 - Do not be held back by fear that someone will be offended or stop liking you.
 - ...and I'm talking here about offense taken at the content of the truth spoken in love, not condoning a belligerent or deliberately insulting manner.
 - Fear of man is a trick of the devil that keeps us from doing what God has called us to do. Trust him (Proverbs 29:25).
- One way to do this is to just tell others what Jesus has done and is doing for you.
 - Like the blind man saying "I was blind, but now I see."
 - It might not be something that flashy, but Jesus is constantly providing for us, transforming our lives, and giving us what we need to carry on.
 - Share bits and pieces of that as part of your conversation and see how God can use your testimony.