

LESSON #15 CHAPTER 9: 1-41***Spiritual Blindness***

Divine Attribute: Light

Theological concept: spiritual blindness

Geographical location: Jerusalem

Chapter Structure

9: 1-12 Jesus Healed the Man Who Was Born Blind

9: 13-34 The Pharisees Investigated the Healing

9: 35-41 The Lesson of Spiritual Blindness

Spiritual Principles:

P1 Live as a Christian with spiritually healthy eyes

Today's lesson...

In the last lesson, Jesus pointed out a critical truth to the people: every man is a slave to sin, and only the truth can set them free.

The lesson today is on spiritual blindness. The Lord used one of the most controversial theological topics as an entry point to teach people the pathetic dilemma of spiritual blindness - unable to see the most important truth - Jesus is the Son of God.

Chapter 9 starts with a man who was born blind. Jesus healed him, and he regained his sight fully. The entire community was set in commotion because this was undoubtedly a miracle. If his impairment was postnatal, it could probably be healed with medicine.

A.9: 1-12 Jesus healed the born blind man

1. A controversial theological topic

"¹ As he passed by, he saw a man blind from birth.

In many parts of the world, disasters are perceived as divine retribution. The Jews are no exception, especially when God is not just the Creator but also the Judge. Job's friends are typical examples..

² And his disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?"

It may sound strange to us to assume that a man can sin before he is born! At that time, Some Rabbis believed that a man's sinfulness begins to set in action in the womb, and they cited Esau and Jacob's fighting in Rebecca's womb (Ge 25:22) as an example. The disciples wanted to know whether such a doctrine was correct. But the Lord Jesus negates both.

"It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him."

Let us not assume that God caused the man to be born blind so that he could be healed by Jesus and God would be glorified. Our body defects are generally the consequence of the fall. God may or may not intervene. But for every man whose name is written on the Book of Life, God's intervention or non-intervention has a specific good purpose, that is, "that the works of God might be displayed in him."

In ancient times, a blind man, especially one born blind, could only live on begging (9:8). The Lord Jesus was compassionate and wanted to heal him. Such is the work His Father sent him to do that the light of life may shine forth and bring people out from the darkness. So Jesus said, "4 We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming, when no one can work." Every day on earth is a 'day' to our Lord; it is work time, even when it is a Sabbath. The time will come for him to hand himself over to the evil men, and his public ministry will end. "Seize the day," the Lord said.

Life application

Verses 4 and 5 show us the urgency of doing God's work. The closer the day of crucifixion approaches, the harder our Lord works. Indeed, there will be a time when all work shall cease for everyone; it will be the day Jesus descends from heaven on the big white throne. There will also be a time for each individual to stop working; it will be the day of departure from this world. Dear saints, let us seize the day to do God's work before our body becomes old and weak.

2. The Lord healed the blind man

"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.

Jesus healed a blind man using his saliva alone at Bethsaida (Mark 8:23) and a blind man at Jericho just by touching his eyes (Mat 20:34). The Lord used different ways to heal blindness so that we may keep an open mind on the form of a ministry as long as it is proper; contents is the most important.

Even though he did not see Jesus, the blind man did not resist Jesus but followed his instructions to go to Siloam. Immediately he regained his sight after he washed. John purposely pointed it out to us that Siloam in Hebrew means "sent". The blind must go to "the One sent" to receive healing because Jesus is the one sent by God, and with him is the divine power to make us whole.

The miraculous healing divided the community members who knew the blind man. Some recognised him as the blind beggar they saw day in and day out in the neighbourhood. Some did not think they were the same man. The blind man silenced the dispute by giving a personal testimony for Jesus, "I am the man" (9:9). Apparently, they found it hard to believe, for he had to keep telling them (9:9).

"11 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."

He was brought to the Pharisees, for that was a Sabbath, and they saw it as a religious-related matter: Does the action of making mud with saliva constitute 'working'? The Pharisees, who were the experts of the Law, would decide that.

B. 9: 13–34 The Pharisees Investigated the Healing

1. The first inquisition

The blind man simply stated the facts of how he was healed to the Pharisees. The Pharisees decided that Jesus had broken the Sabbath by working. Some of them thus concluded that **“This man is not from God, for he does not keep the Sabbath.”** However, some questioned this conclusion. Because while it was possible for a blind man to be healed through medication, it was unheard of for a man born blind to be healed, and what happened was truly a sign. The power of Jesus couldn't be denied. Thus, they said, **“How can a sinner perform such signs?”**

We can see that both conclusions have flaws.

Firstly, Jesus did not break the Sabbath. He simply didn't follow the Pharisees' way of keeping the Sabbath.

Secondly, the presumption that all miracles are from God is not biblical. Moses warned them in Deuteronomy 13:1-5 that if any of them performed a miracle and led them away from Yahweh, then they were not to follow him because the man is not from God.

In their desperation to come to a consensus, they found a way to explain the whole matter without reckoning Jesus as a man from God: It is a conspiracy because this man was not the man who was born blind! The way to prove the conspiracy was to seek the witness of the parents. So they summoned the parents of the blind man.

“Is this your son, who you say was born blind? How then does he now see?” (9:19)

The parents were aware of the delicate situation here. Their religious leaders had already agreed that if anyone should confess Jesus to be Christ was to be put out of the synagogue. (9:22) They knew they were treading on a minefield.

Traditionally, the daily worship prayer in the synagogue included a curse on their enemy of God, which said, “let all the evil doers perish in a moment”. After AD 70, in order to drive Jewish Christians from the synagogues, the Sanhedrin obtained Roman approval to reconstitute this prayer to change the curse to “let the Nazarenes and heretics perish in a moment”. Jewish Christians would have to keep silent on this curse and thus expose their faith. Thus the forewarning of the Lord for his disciples before his crucifixion was fulfilled, **“they will put you out of the synagogues”.** (16:2) (F.F.Bruce' commentary on the Gospel of John)

The parents acknowledged that the man with sight was indeed their son born blind. But they denied knowledge of how it happened. **“Ask him; he is of age. He will speak for himself.”** (9:21)

2. The threat

Failing to establish evidence for the conspiracy, the Pharisees decided to coerce the man to change his testimonies through threat. So they summoned him for the second time, and they started by saying to him,

“Give glory to God. We know that this man is a sinner.” (9:24)

“Give glory to God” means “own it up! Tell the truth” in the setting of the court. Its origin goes back to the Old Testament. When Achan’s sin of taking some of the devoted things from Jericho was exposed by lot, Joshua said to Achan, “My son, give glory to the LORD God of Israel and give praise to him. And tell me now what you have done; do not hide it from me.” (7:19) My son, give glory to the LORD God of Israel and give praise to him. And tell me now what you have done; do not hide it from me.

The Pharisees were saying, “We know Jesus is a sinner. A sinner couldn’t have healed you so miraculously. So you better stop pretending. Tell !”

But fearlessly, the man replied, “Whether he is a sinner I do not know. One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see.” (9:25)

This reminds us of what Peter fearlessly said to the high priests when they were filled with the Holy Spirit, “And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.” (Acts 4:8,12)

With the help of the Holy Spirit, the man who was born blind has been living without a skill, had no exposure to readings and has been living by begging, spoke the truth that God illumines him fearlessly to the religious experts and authorities,

“Why, this is an amazing thing! You do not know where he comes from, and yet he opened my eyes. 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. Never since the world began has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a man born blind. If this man were not from God, he could do nothing.” (Acts 4:9,12)

Do you admire such spiritual courage? When the Lord Jesus told the disciples how they would be persecuted for his sake, he promised, “And when they bring you before the synagogues and the rulers and the authorities, do not be anxious about how you should defend yourself or what you should say, for the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say.” (Luke 12:11-12) As true as it is for the blind man, it is true for you and me!

The testimonies of the man glorify God indeed!

Life application

Do not have to fear when you share the gospel or stand up for the truth. Pray to the indwelling Spirit and implore him to help you glorify God. He will help you explain the truth clearly.

C. 9: 35–41 The Lesson on Spiritual Blindness

1. The Blind Man’s Confession

“Jesus heard that they had cast him out, and having found him he said, “Do you believe in the Son of Man?” He answered, “And who is he, sir, that I may believe in him?” Jesus said to him, “You have seen him, and it is he who is speaking to you.” He said, “Lord, I believe,” and he worshiped him.”

The blind man believed that Jesus was a prophet from God (9:17, 33) this knowledge is correct but is incomplete and insufficient for him to be saved from sin. He must believe that Jesus is the Son of God and

has the power not just to heal his physical blindness but also to forgive sin and deliver him from death. The Lord loves his own to the end, and he comes to look for the man.

Jesus found him, as he always does, and asked him, do you believe in the Son of God?"(KJV)

Even though this was the second time he had met Jesus, he did not recognise the Lord because the last time they met, he was still blind. He expressed honestly that he did not know who the Son of God was, but he was eager to know him. This he asked, "And who is he, sir, that I may believe in him?"

This is the voice of the lost sheep, the great shepherd would come for him. Wherever men seek God, they will find God because God promises the perishing mankind, "For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened" (Matt 7:8). What great mercy this is!

The sheep knows the voice of his shepherd. When the man heard Jesus say, "37 You have seen him, and it is he who is speaking to you," he believed in Jesus. Through faith, he saw that Jesus was the God who healed him, and immediately, he bowed down and worshipped him as God. Praise God that the One sent by God not only opened his physical eyes but also the eyes of his soul!

Life application

Knowing who God is always brings unspeakable joy and great contentment to the soul, which drives us to do something for the Lord! The Samaritan woman went to tell people about Jesus immediately; Zacchaeus repented from his wrongful practice of collecting taxes; Paul returned to the Old Testament to find out what he had missed. And now this blind man gave Jesus his worship immediately. What did you do right after you accepted Jesus as your saviour? Is that first love and first joy still with you today?

2. The Pharisees' Blindness

We remember that Jesus said, "For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him." (3:17)

But here he said, "39 For judgment I came into this world, that those who do not see may see, and those who see may become blind."

There is no contradiction in Jesus' words. The Lord is saying that his work and his words compel his hearers to make a choice: believe him or reject him. Those who do not believe in him have been condemned, not by Jesus but by their own choice. When the final judgement comes, the judgement will be executed according to the condemnation brought about by their choice.

Instead of being alarmed by Jesus' warning, the Pharisees confronted Jesus for what he was implying. But Jesus spoke even more candidly, "41 If you were blind, you would have no guilt; but now that you say, 'We see,' your guilt remains."

Jesus was speaking about spiritual blindness, not knowing who the true God is. The Pharisees had the full knowledge of the law, the worship of the temple, the testimonies of the forefathers. Yet the spiritual sight became their pride and a stumbling stone that caused them to resist the Son of God. In this sense, they were all blind.

Today, many people insist on their own freedom to choose a suitable religion and disregard the truth. Some think they are wise to discern that religions are merely different ways of cultivating good character and are all the same. Because of their pride, even though they have saliva and mud paste on their eyes—they have heard the gospel of Jesus—they refused to go to Siloam to wash clean. As a result, they are still blind.

The fact is every man is dead in his own transgressions and sins. Every man has a blind soul. But if one reckons that he does not know who the true God is and is willing to look for Him, then he will find God, and God will forgive his Sins, because Jesus will find him. Conversely, if a man knows that Jesus is the true God and yet he resisted Jesus, his sin cannot be forgiven because he has blasphemed the Holy Spirit. ([Mark 3:29](#))

Closing

“I was blind, now I see,” The blind man’s words have been the joyful weeping of many people in church history! We who know the Lord are grateful that we were blind, but now we see!

Dear brothers and sisters, the sights of our souls are now restored. Thus we cannot stop here. The apostle Peter warned us about spiritual shortsightedness — if we only focus on the present world, live for the present world and do not cultivate the divine nature, including virtue, knowledge, self-control, steadfastness, godliness, brotherly affection and love. He said we would revert to spiritual blindness, “[9 For whoever lacks these qualities is so nearsighted that he is blind, having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins.](#)” (2Pe 1:5-9)

Therefore, let us avoid spiritual myopia. We not only project our vision into the perfected world, the new heaven and new earth, but we also acquire spiritual insight, understand the truth, know God’s heart, and see God’s work in our personal lives, families, and the church. Then, we will be joyful, grateful, and hopeful pilgrims in this broken world.

P1 Live as a Christian with spiritually healthy eyes

To have spiritually healthy eyes, there is no other way except to have a real and close personal friendship with Jesus. To have a real and close friendship with Jesus, personal devotion time is only one way — to meditate on his words, to dig deep into the truth revealed to us in the Bible, and to reflect before God our work and God’s work. Personal devotion time is the time to cleanse and restore the sight of our souls at Siloam. The One who sent us to Siloam said,

“The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light, [23 but if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!](#)” (Mat 6:22-23)

Take heed of Jesus’ warning, my dear brothers and sisters, let us cultivate the godly habit of personal devotion time together, that we may be a walking testimony of the Gospel, all we say and do will give glory to God!