

## **“A JOURNEY THROUGH THE GOSPEL OF JOHN” SERIES**

### **#17: “Jesus Heals a Man Born Blind” (Part 2)**

**SCRIPTURE:** John 9:13-41

***<sup>13</sup> They brought to the Pharisees the man who had formerly been blind. <sup>14</sup> Now it was a Sabbath day when Jesus made the mud and opened his eyes. <sup>15</sup> 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.” <sup>16</sup> 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. <sup>17</sup> 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.”***

***<sup>18</sup> 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 <sup>19</sup> and asked them, “Is this your son, who you say was born blind? How then does he now see?” <sup>20</sup> His parents answered, “We know that this is our son and that he was born blind. <sup>21</sup> 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.” <sup>22</sup> (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.) <sup>23</sup> Therefore his parents said, “He is of age; ask him.”***

***<sup>24</sup> 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.” <sup>25</sup> He answered, “Whether he is a sinner I do not know. One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see.” <sup>26</sup> They said to him, “What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?” <sup>27</sup> 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?” <sup>28</sup> And they reviled him, saying, “You are his disciple, but we are disciples of Moses. <sup>29</sup> We know that God has spoken to Moses, but as for this man, we do not know where he comes from.” <sup>30</sup> The man answered, “Why, this is an amazing thing! You do not know where he comes from, and yet he opened my eyes. <sup>31</sup> 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. <sup>32</sup> Never since the world began has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a man born blind. <sup>33</sup> If this man were not from God, he could do nothing.” <sup>34</sup> They answered him, “You were born in utter sin, and would you teach us?” And they cast him out.***

***<sup>35</sup> Jesus heard that they had cast him out, and having found him he said, “Do you believe in the Son of Man?” <sup>36</sup> He answered, “And who is he, sir, that I may believe in him?” <sup>37</sup> Jesus said to him, “You have seen him, and it is he who is speaking to you.” <sup>38</sup> He said, “Lord, I believe,” and he worshiped him. <sup>39</sup> Jesus said, “For judgment I came into this world, that those who do not see may see, and those who see may become blind.” <sup>40</sup> Some of the Pharisees***

*near him heard these things, and said to him, "Are we also blind?" <sup>41</sup> Jesus said to them, "If you were blind, you would have no guilt; but now that you say, 'We see,' your guilt remains."*

First of all, note that

***THE PHARISEES QUESTIONED THE MAN EXTENSIVELY.***

First, they asked him what Jesus had done. He told them about the spittle, the mud, the washing in the pool of Siloam, and being able to see for the first time in his life.

Then they asked the man what he thought about Jesus. He replied, "***He is a prophet.***" In other words, "He is from God."

The Pharisees rejected such an opinion, of course, but they and the other Jews were hard-pressed to explain what had happened and who Jesus really was.

Second, note that

***THE JEWS WERE DIVIDED OVER THE HEALING OF THE BLIND MAN.***

When they brought the man to the Pharisees, they asked the man how he had received his sight. He told them that Jesus had put mud on his eyes, he washed in the pool of Siloam, and now he could see.

Instead of praising God and giving thanks to Him for restoring the man's sight, some of them said, "This was done on the Sabbath; this Jesus is a Sabbath-breaker!" Other Jews responded with, "How could he do such a wonderful miraculous thing, if he's not from God?"

But they're not divided long; most defer to the Pharisees and their accusation of Sabbath-breaking. So, a miracle-investigation becomes a Sabbath-breaking investigation. The radical Pharisees at that time held the majority in the Jewish high court, the Sanhedrin, so they nearly always got their way.

Isn't that the way it is even today? The squeaky wheel gets the grease. If your case is weak or even in the minority, turn the tide by being loud and long.

In this instance, while a marvelous miracle should have gotten the attention and praise, a case of Sabbath-breaking became the issue.

Thirdly,

***THE PHARISEES BROUGHT IN THE PARENTS FOR QUESTIONING.***

Not believing the man's testimony that he was blind but could now see as a result of something Jesus had done, these Pharisees subpoena his parents.

They ask them, ***“Is this your son? Is this the one you say was born blind? How is it that he can now see?”*** (v. 19).

The parents testify that he is their son and that, yes, he was born blind and now he can see. But we have no idea how it happened or who is responsible. They say, ***“Ask him. He is of age; he will speak for himself.”*** (v. 21).

John tells us that the parents lied about knowing what happened and who opened his eyes ***“because they were afraid of the Jews.”*** (v. 22). They were afraid of the Jews, that is, the Jewish authorities, because they were excommunicating – barring from the synagogue – anyone who would say that Jesus was the Messiah.

Some Christian groups today excommunicate people for what they see as heresy and other lesser charges. In some groups, it’s called “shunning.” The New Testament describes something we call “disfellowshipping” in 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 5, where a man in the congregation was having an affair with his father’s wife.

Some Catholics are calling for the excommunication of our President and other members of his political party because of their adamant support of abortion-on-demand. To a Catholic, excommunication means denial of Communion, which is a major thing for them.

Fourth,

***THE PHARISEES BROUGHT THE MAN IN FOR QUESTIONING A SECOND TIME AND EXCOMMUNICATED HIM.***

They wanted the man to agree with them that Jesus was not the Messiah. He was drawing the favor of the people toward Jesus, and they didn’t want that. They said to him, ***“Give glory to God. We know that this man is a sinner”*** (v. 24).

But the man wouldn’t buy it. He said that all he knew was that he was blind, but he could now see.

He makes a statement in verse 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.”*** It was a teaching of that day that God would not hear the prayer of a sinner, but we know that that’s not really true. The man believed that, however, and used it in defense of Jesus, implying that God apparently hears Him since I can now see.

A second time they asked him to describe how Jesus did it. He said that he’d already told them, so why did they want to hear it again? “You didn’t listen the first time.” Then he asked them if they wanted to be his disciples too. This really ticked them off.

They probably screamed at him, ***“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 comes from”*** (vv. 28-29).

The man said, ***“If this man were not from God, he could do nothing.”***

The Pharisees retorted, ***“You were born in utter sin, and you would teach us?”*** What arrogance! Just who here was really blind?

Then John relates, ***“They cast him out.”***

Finally,

### ***JESUS’ RESPONSE.***

Verses 35 through 38: ***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.***

Notice the progression of this man’s faith. In verse 11 he sees Jesus as just a man. In verse 17 he sees him as a prophet. And now in verse 38 he sees him as one sent from God who must be believed and worshiped.

How does your progression of faith compare to this? In his book, *Will Our Children Have Faith?* John Westerhoff describes four stages of Christian faith development. As we go through life, we may expand into (add-on) the needs and elements of the later stages, but only after the needs of the earlier stages are met. The stages of faith are like rings of a tree. Just like a tree adds one ring on top of another, we do not leave the needs of the earlier stages behind after we expand into the next stage. We continue to need the faith experiences of the earlier stages throughout our lives. Westerhoff labels the four stages of faith development: experienced faith, affiliative faith, searching faith, and owned faith.

*Experienced faith* grows by participating in the customs and rituals of our faith tradition with other Christians. It is the lifelong foundation of our faith. Experienced faith is also the faith of our senses.

The second stage of faith, *affiliative faith*, develops by belonging to (being affiliated with) an accepting Christian community. According to Westerhoff, research shows that most adults have had their faith “arrested” in the affiliative faith stage.

The third stage of faith development, *searching faith*, is the faith of questioning and internalizing what we have long been taught.

The final stage of faith development, *owned faith*, rarely occurs before young adulthood. Because of the serious struggle with doubt that precedes it, owned faith may appear as a great illumination or enlightenment. It's been called the "come to Jesus" time. It's now our own faith and no longer merely the faith of our parents, family, etc. Even though doubts and questions remain, those who own their faith want to witness it by personal and social action and are willing and able to stand up for what they believe in as mature disciples of Jesus Christ.

*Owned faith* is God's intention for everyone, even though (according to Westerhoff) most adults have had their faith arrested at the affiliative stage. Therefore, it's important for churches to provide opportunities that address the needs in each and every stage of faith development, and thereby help as many as possible to reach their full faith potential.

So, this man, who has gained his sight but lost his membership the synagogue, membership that he was physically able to exercise for the first time in his life, makes a beautiful, simple profession of faith: "Lord, I believe."

Butler comments: "Jesus finds the beggar who has been cut off from the Israel that is passing away and makes him a member of the new Israel that is coming."

Jesus responds to his profession of faith by saying, "***For judgment I came into this world, that those who do not see may see, and those who see may become blind***" (v. 39). Back in John 3:17 and in 12:47 Jesus says He didn't come to judge. Now He says He came into this world for judgment. What goes here? Did He or did He not come in judgment. The truth is, He came *for* judgment, but not *to* judge. He came to deliver the true message of God for the new age, the age of the new covenant of grace. Those who choose to reject it or disobey it judge themselves and condemn themselves.

When the Pharisees standing nearby heard this, they knew He was talking about them and their blindness. They said, "***Are we also blind?***" And Jesus responded with, "***If you were blind, you would have no guilt; but now that you say, 'We see,' your guilt remains.***"

No man is so blind as one who will not see! The Pharisees remained guilty of sin because they chose not to see. Isn't this the problem with so many non-believers today? They see but they don't see. Evidence of God and His will for them is everywhere! They see but they don't see. How can a person consider creation and the intricacies of each life form and reject the existence of God? They see but they don't see. They are without excuse. They are lost. They will perish.

**IN CONCLUSION...**

**The message of this incident is not the message of physical healing but the message of spiritual blindness and the recognition and acceptance of spiritual truth. While the man born blind, who could see for only a few hours, saw the truth in what Jesus spoke, the Pharisees, who could always see, would not believe.**