

John Chapter 9

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Date: 31 August 2014

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[0 : 0 0] The past few weeks we've been considering the miracles of the Lord Jesus Christ, as John records them for us on Sunday mornings mostly, and thinking about how those miracles not only reveal the reality, the truth that Jesus Christ is God, but how he continues to minister in the same way, that he is the one who does not change.

So we're going to look at the whole of chapter 9, but we're only going to read the first 12 verses now. And so the first 12 verses of John and chapter 9. Here is God's faithful word.

This is a true and historical account in every detail. As he, Jesus, that is, went along, he saw a man blind from birth.

His disciples asked him, Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind? Neither this man nor his parents sinned, said Jesus, but this happened so that the work of God might be displayed in his life.

As long as it is day, we must do the work of him who sent me. Night is coming when no one can work. While I am in the world, I am the light of the world.

[1 : 1 5] Having said this, he spat on the ground, made some mud with the saliva, put it on the man's eyes. Go, he told him. Wash in the pool of Siloam.

This word means sent. So the man went and washed and came home seeing. His neighbors and those who had formerly seen him begging asked, Isn't this the same man who used to sit and beg?

Some claim that he was. Others said, No, he only looks like him. But he himself insisted, I am the man. How then were your eyes open, they demanded.

He replied, The man they called Jesus made some mud and put it on my eyes. He told me to go to Siloam and wash, so I went and washed, and then I could see. Where is this man, they asked him.

I don't know, he said. We'll stop there and carry on the story a little later. Healing of the blind man. So let's pick up where we left off.

[2 : 2 0] Verse 13. They brought to the Pharisees the man who had been blind. The day on which Jesus had made the mud and opened the man's eyes was a Sabbath.

Therefore the Pharisees also asked him how he had received his sight. He put mud on my eyes, the man replied. I washed and now I see. Some of the Pharisees said, This man is not from God, for he does not keep the Sabbath.

But others asked, How can a sinner do such miraculous signs? So they were divided. Finally they turned again to the blind man.

What have you to say about him? It was your eyes he opened. The man replied, He is a prophet. The Jews still did not believe that he had been blind and had received his sight until they sent for the man's parents.

Is this your son, they asked. Is this the one you say was born blind? How is it that now he can see? We know he is our son, the parents answered.

[3 : 25] And we know he was born blind. But how he can see now or who opened his eyes, we don't know. Ask him. He is of age. He will speak for himself. His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jews.

For already the Jews had decided that anyone who acknowledged that Jesus was the Christ would be put out of the synagogue. That was why his parents said, He is of age. Ask him.

A second time they summoned the man who had been blind. Give glory to God, they said. We know this man is a sinner. He replied, Whether he is a sinner or not, I don't know.

One thing I do know, I was blind, but now I see. Then they asked him, what did he do to you? How did he open your eyes? He answered, I've told you already.

And you didn't listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you want to become his disciples too? Then they hurled insults at him and said, you are this fellow's disciple.

[4 : 27] We are disciples of Moses. We know that God spoke to Moses. But as for this fellow, we don't even know where he comes from. The man answered, now that is remarkable.

You don't know where he comes from, yet he opened my eyes. We know that God doesn't listen to sinners. He listens to the godly man who does his will. Nobody has ever heard of opening the eyes of a man born blind.

If this man were not from God, he could do nothing. To this they replied, you were steeped in sin at birth. How dare you lecture us?

They threw him out. Jesus heard that they had thrown him out. And when he found him, he said, do you believe in the son of man? Who is he, sir? The man asked.

Tell me so that I may believe in him. Jesus said, you have now seen him. In fact, he is the one speaking with you. Then the man said, Lord, I believe.

[5 : 27] And he worshipped him. Jesus said, for judgment I came into the world. So that the blind will see. And those who see will become blind.

Some Pharisees who were with him heard him say this. And they asked, what? Are we blind too? Jesus said, if you were blind, you would not be guilty of sin.

But now that you claim you can see, your guilt remains. I trust that God will help us and give us understanding as we come to think about these events in a few moments' time.

If you'd have John 9 open, we're going to go through this chapter together briefly this morning.

There are many things in life that we take for granted until, of course, we don't have them. Whether it be our health. Whether it be finance. Whether it be family, friends.

[6 : 24] All these sort of things. But I imagine that one of the things that is most dear that we take for granted is the gift of sight. Particularly, perhaps, if our sight is failing now.

Several people, of course, many people, haven't the gift of sight. They're either through injury or illness or because they were born that way, like this man here, have never seen the wonder and the beauty that we see.

But some have been helped, some have been through the scientific breakthroughs and all sorts of medical breakthroughs have been able to be given their sight. One man was a man called Bob Edens who was blind until he was 51 years old.

And then an operation was performed which allowed him to be able to see. This is what he said about it. I never would have dreamed that yellow is so yellow, he exclaimed.

I don't have the words. I'm amazed by yellow. But red is my favorite color. I just can't believe red. I can now see the shape of the moon. I like nothing better than seeing a jet plane flying across the sky leaving a vapor trail.

[7 : 40] Of course, sunrises and sunsets. And at night I look at the stars in the sky and the flashing lights. You could never know how wonderful everything is.

I imagine that the experience of Bob was very similar to the experience of this unnamed man who we have in John chapter 9. A man similarly born blind but no doubt with great elation and joy received his sight as Jesus miraculously gave it to him.

But this miracle of Jesus which is so laid out for us and the repercussions are so recorded by John for us teach us something very important.

Not only the blessings of sight and how we are to appreciate them. Not only the reality that Jesus Christ must be God to have done the things that he did in giving this man his sight.

But also as the story unfolds we begin to see that there is something much worse than being physically blind. And that is being spiritually blind.

[8 : 48] Notice what Jesus says near the end. For judgment I have come into this world so that the blind will see and those who see will become blind. He is not talking there about physical blindness or physical sight but something more than that.

Spiritual sight and spiritual blindness. Some of the Pharisees who were with him heard him say this. They understood what he was saying. What are we blind to?

Are we spiritually blind? Jesus said if you were blind you would not be guilty of sin but now that you claim you can see your guilt remains. So there is something worse than physical blindness.

Spiritual blindness. And in this story and the events and the repercussions of this story we see all sorts of different types of spiritual blindness. Almost as many types of spiritual blindness as there are causes of natural blindness in the world.

And I want us just to look at four of them this morning as they are evidenced here in the lives of these people. And ask ourselves something of the question do we suffer with a similar affliction?

[9 : 56] Is there such a thing as us? Can we say like the Pharisees are we blind too? Is our sight diminished or dimmed? Because each one of these people or groups of people was blinded to seeing God at work.

To seeing God at work. Notice that at the start when the disciples asked Jesus why was this man blind? Was it his parents who sinned or him who sinned? And sometimes there is still that superstitious understanding that to be in some way disabled or handicapped or for things to happen to us.

It must be a God's curse upon somebody. It must be a punishment for a previous life or some other nonsense. Jesus makes it clear that it's not because of the people's sin that they were afflicted in that way.

Neither this man nor his parents sinned. This happened so that the work of God might be displayed in his life. So that the work of God might be seen in his life. So it's a blindness to seeing the work of God.

The work of God particularly here in the miraculous healing of the man born blind. And as we go through the passage we see that this blindness increases and gets darker and darker until as we've seen at the very end we have those who are completely, permanently, spiritually blind.

[11 : 21] But all the way through we have the blind man or the man who was once born blind almost in stark contrast to each one of these blinded people. He stands out as a beacon of light whom Jesus has healed and he shows us what it is to have spiritual sights that we need more than anything else.

And the wonderful thing of course is this. Because Jesus healed that man of his blindness. Whatever affliction, whatever spiritual blindness we may have this morning. Whatever blackness we have to seeing the things of God.

The truth is that Christ can remove that barrier too. That he can heal us as well. So even if this morning as you've come into this building you've said you've come with a preconception.

I have no belief in God. I don't believe in these things. I don't have time for God or whatever it may be. Let me assure you that Jesus Christ can remove that barrier. And is willing to and wanting to.

So that you may see. That you may know that cure. That you might know what it is you've been missing out on all these years. So let's look at these four different types of blindness.

[12 : 34] The first people we come across are blinded by unbelief. Here we have them in verses 8 and 9. They're the neighbours of the man. The man who for all his life we don't know how old he was.

He's clearly an adult. Because his parents say he's of age. So let's imagine he's in his mid-twenties. His neighbours who'd seen him grow up as a child.

A blind. Grow up to become a beggar because he couldn't work. And seen him every day. Some of them still would not accept that this was the man who was blind who has been healed.

Some did. Isn't this the same man who used to sit and beg? Verse 8. Some claimed. Others said no. He only looks like him. They were blinded by unbelief. Here standing before them was a man who had been blind all his life.

Who they'd known all his life. And they would not acknowledge or accept that he was the same man because of unbelief. It could never really happen.

[13 : 32] Apparently, I don't know how true it is, but many stories came out of the Titanic disaster of those hundred and more years ago. But the story is that the captain of the Titanic refused to accept or believe that the ship was sinking until water was lapping, as it were, at his feet.

That ship could never sink. The claim was made. God couldn't sink that ship. So it wasn't until things were too late that the rescue message was sent out.

The SOS and the May Day was sent out so that others could come and rescue the people. That unbelief, that unwillingness to believe something until it's almost too late still afflicts many people today when it comes to spiritual sight.

People will say, I can't see God, so why should I believe in God? There's many things that we cannot see in this world, aren't there? But we know are real. Air is real. We don't see air.

We don't see heat. We feel it. But there's many things we cannot see. But they're there. They're real. So to say, I can't believe in God because I can't see God, is simply to be blinded by unbelief.

[14 : 45] There's again the unbelief, of course, that people have when they approach the Bible. And they say, well, the Bible is not really historically accurate. We can divide the Bible between what is rational, what we can accept, and what we can't accept.

We can't accept that the world was created by God's word alone. That's impossible to our rational mind, so we have to find another theory to explain it. And when we look at the miracles in the Bible, things like the parting of the Red Sea, the miracles of Jesus, especially his resurrection, those things are impossible.

So we won't believe them, we'll cut them out. Or we'll try to explain them in a way which seems more reasonable to us. But it's a blindness which is caused by unbelief.

Sadly, that blindness disables people from seeing God's work. The work that he has done and the work that he's willing to do and able to do in their own lives.

In one sense, it blinds them like the Titanic's captain until it's too late, until they lose out, until they end up with ruin. Are you like that this morning?

[15 : 58] Somebody who says, I will not believe. I can't see it, so I won't believe it. Then let me say this to you. Whether you think it or not, the reality is you're blinded.

You're blinded by unbelief. And it's not rational at all. It's irrational. But even as Christians, you know, those of us who put our faith in Christ, we can fall into something of a temporary blindness caused by unbelief.

As Christians, we can say things like this. God could never answer that prayer. God could never change that situation. God could never save that person.

Or God couldn't do that for me. What are we doing? We're acting with selective sight. As Christians. As Christians. We're separating what we think God can do and what we think he can't do.

We're showing that we have little faith in the power of God. That we lack a true vision of God. As he truly is. And as he's promised. We're limiting God.

[17 : 04] You see, this man who was once blind had no limitations. He wasn't blinded by unbelief. He knew what Christ could do because he'd experienced it himself.

When they said, no, he only looks like him. He insists, I'm the man. I'm the one who was blind and now I can see. You see, faith ultimately is surrendering our own limited judgment of God.

Our own limited view of God. And accepting that he has no limitations. However, any we might place upon him. There's that wonderful phrase that the angel spoke to Mary when he announced to her that she was to carry the Messiah, the Son of God.

He said this, nothing is impossible with God. As Christians, do we really believe that? If you are a Christian this morning, the incredible thing is that God has done something impossible already in your life by saving you.

You were dead. You were blind. You were deaf. You were lost. God has done an impossible miracle in making you a Christian. You could never have done it yourself. No doctor could do it. No priest could do it.

[18 : 21] No one could do it. God did it. You are a walking miracle. You are a walking testimony to the impossible working God. So if he's done that for you, why can't he do it for somebody else?

Why can't he do that in other ways? So there's people who are blinded by unbelief. Are you blinded by unbelief?

Then we find that there are those people who are blinded by prejudice. We see them. They're the religious leaders. They're called the Jews, but it wasn't all the Jews. It was the religious leaders, the Pharisees.

They brought the man to the Pharisees, verse 13, and spoke to him. Verse 16 says, some of the Pharisees said, this man is not from God, for he does not keep the Sabbath.

Others asked, how can a sinner do such miraculous signs? So they were divided. You see, they had preconceptions about how God could work. They had set up these rules and regulations that said that the Sabbath is a day in which no work is to be done, and therefore it's no work for God can do on that day.

[19 : 35] They had all these rules, regulations, about what God could do and what couldn't do, and they were prejudiced against Jesus because on the Sabbath he'd made some mud and he'd healed this man.

So they ruled out any possibility that God had done a miracle. They ruled out any possibility that Jesus was sent from God. They went to great lengths, of course, we see, calling the man twice, calling his parents as witnesses as well, to try to prove themselves right.

Such was their prejudice and their blindness to it. I wonder if you've got a prejudice against Christianity this morning.

Your prejudice, no, good, I'm glad to hear it, Dennis. People do have prejudice against the Christian gospel. Prejudice because, unfortunately, of what they've seen as the failings in some parts of Christianity.

They say, well, look at what those men did, so-called in the name of God. Look at what that bishop had to say. Look at how those people behaved.

[20 : 40] Look at this or look at that. It may be the prejudice, perhaps, of our upbringing. We're brought up in a very godless home, a home where we were taught that there was no God, or quite the opposite.

We were a strict Christian home and we rebelled against that. But whatever the reason, people come with prejudices against the gospel. And say, I will not be a Christian. I will not put my faith in Christ.

And in spite of what they see in the reality of real Christian lives, in spite of what they know in their own heart of hearts, there must be a God. In spite of the fact that they have experienced and known something of God's goodness in their lives, they will not bow before him and accept him as their saviour.

There's a prejudice that affects us. And the sad truth is that that prejudice is magnified by the media in which we live. The only stories that we see in the newspaper, on the news about Christians, so-called, is when they fall into gross sin, when the church does terrible things.

There's a prejudice. But there's never, sadly, the reality shown. Sadly, there's never shown the real Christian who honours the Bible, who lives for Christ, who loves his neighbour.

[22 : 03] There's a prejudice. Have you been blinded by that prejudice? Perhaps even this morning you've come with a prejudice. Again, the reality is that, as Christians, prejudice is something which can blind us.

When we come, as Christians, and we're brought into the life of a church, we find ourselves being influenced and sometimes prejudiced by those around about us.

We pass judgments on those who don't fit into our particular mould of Christianity or our pattern of Christian practice. We can set up our own rules about what a church should be and how a church should behave and what other Christians should do.

We've got to be very, very careful as Christians that we do not find ourselves prejudiced. Now, we can base our prejudices as Christians upon things that we read in the Bible, but we must be very careful.

That's exactly what the Pharisees did as well. I say this as a warning to myself as well as to us as a church. See, prejudice is not just about the colour of skin or nationality.

[23 : 13] Prejudice just picks up those tiny differences between one person and another, between us and them. And it can blind us to God's work in other people's lives.

We won't see what God is doing. But see, this man here was not willing to be prejudiced. When he was questioned by the Pharisees, when they tried to get him to speak against Jesus, when they questioned him, he wouldn't be prejudiced.

He brushes aside their nitpicky-ness about the Sabbath. He stands back and he looks at the big picture and he says to him, Look, I was blind. I know that I was blind. But this man gave me sight.

And therefore, it's clearly obvious that this man must be from God. He wasn't a great theologian or somebody who'd learnt lots of things. He was somebody who simply knew this man must be from God.

He's a prophet. God must be with him. He couldn't do it otherwise. The best way for us to get rid of prejudice is to realise that God has blessed and worked through people of all sorts of differing Christian tradition throughout history.

[24 : 29] Whether it be baptism, whether it be spiritual gifts, whether it be types of church government, whether it be musical styles of worship, all the things that we have a particular view on, God has blessed people and used people who were different to us.

And we should rejoice in that and delight in that. And we should remember, of course, this, that when God blesses us or them, he does not do it because we are correct.

If he blesses, it's out of his grace. Not because we've deserved his blessing or earned his blessing or done something to win his blessing. In spite of our sins, in spite of our failings, in spite of our imperfections, God is pleased to use us and to bless us, to meet with us and to help us.

And he'll do that with all those who are his own. Need to follow the example of the Apostle Paul who, when people were preaching the gospel who were different to him, could say this, what does it matter?

The important thing is that in every way, whether from false motives or true, Christ is preached and because of this, I rejoice. That's a real right attitude to have.

[25 : 52] If the gospel is preached, if the secondary issues are different, but the gospel is held to and the word of God exalted, that's what matters. And we should pray for and rejoice in those.

So prejudice can blind us, Christian and non-Christian. But then we see there are those people here who are blinded by fear. They're blinded by fear.

They're the parents of the blind man who are called to witness and to give testimony to the Pharisees. Look at what they say. We know he is our son, verse 20, the parents answered.

We know he was born blind, but how he came to see or who opened his eyes, we don't know. Ask him. He is of age, he'll speak for himself. His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jews.

Fear is a very powerful force. Fear controls people. Fear is used throughout the world to suppress people and to keep people from seeing what God is doing.

[26 : 57] There are nations around this world which are held under fearful religions. Religions that oppress, that reject anything which is true to Christianity.

Anything which gives people the opportunity of seeking or finding out for themselves. Religion is not good. Because it's man-made.

The worship of Christ, the knowledge of God, these are God's gifts. Religion is not God's gift in whatever form it takes. And then atheism as well, where that rules over lands, oppresses and afflicts and keeps people in fear.

Fear is a powerful force. Force. There are many people even today in the United Kingdom who are afraid to investigate the claims of Jesus Christ.

People who are afraid because of ridicule, because of prejudices against them, are blinded to what God is doing. They won't seek him.

[28 : 02] They won't investigate. They won't try and find out who this Jesus Christ is because of what their friends will say or their neighbours will say or their families will say. They're afraid of being pointed out, ridiculed, fanatic, a fool.

I wonder if that's anybody here this morning. You're afraid of what people would say to you if you were a Christian. You're afraid and fearful.

Let me assure you that there's nothing to be afraid of. If people will not accept you for who you are. And why do you want to be there, friends?

Those of you at school and college afraid to speak out for being a Christian at workplace. If they don't want to be your friends on your terms, then why be afraid of them?

As Christians, again, we can be fearful, can't we? We can be fearful of being that witness for Jesus, of speaking for him.

[29 : 09] Fearful. That blind man wasn't fearful, was he? In fact, he's quite articulate to say the least when they tried to force him.

Second time, verse 24, we're told they summoned the man who had been blind. Give glory to God. In one sense, it's actually an oath. Give glory to God. Speak the truth and tell us that this man's a sinner.

And he says, whether he's a sinner or not, I don't know. But I'm not afraid to tell you I was blind and now I see. And then he goes on, doesn't he? They hurl insults at him.

They try to belittle him. And in the end, he uses quite a lot of irony towards them and speaks fearlessly about the fact that this Jesus must be from God to have done the things that he did.

Dear friend, as a Christian, don't be afraid of what the world can say to you or do to you because you're a Christian. Don't be afraid of speaking up for him. Don't be afraid of saying, yeah, I am a Christian and I'm not going to do that.

[30 : 19] Or I am going to do this. And I did go to church yesterday. Fear will control you. Fear will oppress you. Fear will never give you freedom. Faith is what sets free.

Be a light this week. Let me challenge you in love to ask that God will give you an opportunity just to tell somebody that you're a Christian. Lord, I want to be brave.

Give me the courage. Help me as I go back to school. Help me as I go back to work. You don't have to give people a sermon. You don't have to make some great eulogy or answer all their questions.

But just go against the flow. You'll be surprised at what God can do and will do through you. Good.

And finally then, we find that there are those who were blinded to the work of God because they wanted to be blind. So there were those who were blinded because of unbelief, those who were blinded by prejudice, and those who were blinded by fear, but there's those who were blinded because they wanted to stay blind.

[31 : 30] And that comes out in the words of these Pharisees, these religious leaders who thought they knew so much and saw so much. They are the ones who are the blindest of all.

Notice that they have had all the evidence given to them. They've made careful examination of the man himself, of his parents. They've examined the miracle of Jesus that he's performed so that they could see with no doubt at all that this must be a miraculous work of God and that Jesus must be the Son of God and yet spitefully and willfully they deny it and they shut their eyes and will not accept him.

They hurled insults at him. You are this fellow's disciples. We are disciples of Jesus. We know that God spoke to Moses but as for this fellow, they can't even call him by his name.

He's just a fellow. This bloke, this ordinary person, we don't even know where he comes from. Of course they knew where he came from but they would not see it.

They persevere in claiming to be the ones who themselves can see. When the man who with humour and irony says to them this is remarkable, this man who's done this wonderful miracle, you're the religious leaders of the day and you don't even know where he's come from.

[32 : 48] What do they say to him? You are steeped in sin at birth. How dare you lecture us? The arrogance, the pomposity of these men and they threw him out.

There was a saying which could be written especially for them. There's none so blind as them who will not see. Theirs is the most hopeless case.

Incurable. They're like someone who has perhaps developed cataracts upon their eyes and knowing a simple operation will restore their sight refuses to let it be carried out.

They're worse than that. They're someone who even when all is blurred and dark won't even admit there's anything wrong. Isn't it sad that so many people go through life smiling and saying all is well but deep within their hearts they know there's something wrong.

They know there's something missing. They know that they haven't got peace with God. They know that they carry around guilt. They know that there is a need which cannot be met by money or pleasure or job or family but they just will not accept that the problem is within and that they are blinded to the work of God.

[34 : 04] They're people to be pitied pitied, pitied. And for this reason Jesus passes the most severe judgment against those who see but are blind.

Pharisees are we blind too? Us? Are we blind too? If you were blind you'd not be guilty of sin. but now you claim you can see your guilt remains.

And how different this man is isn't he? He was born blind but he's so different he can see the logic of the case that this man who healed him must be from God.

Nobody has ever opened the eyes of a man born blind. If this man were not from God he could do nothing. It's blatantly obvious to me he says that I can see that this man must be from God.

God why can't you see it? Because you don't want to see it. No wonder they were angry with him and threw him out. He had won the argument hadn't he?

[35 : 09] They had nothing to say. And so when he meets with Jesus Jesus tells him look there's one more thing you need and that's to put your faith in me.

And that's what he did. That's what he did. Now the wonderful thing is this dear friends this morning this Jesus still has the power to open blind eyes.

He's still the one who's able to take away the unbelief and the prejudice and the fear. But the question is are you willing? Are you willing?

Do you want to know God? Do you want to know that he is for you? Do you want to know his love? Do you want to know eternal life? Do you want to know all that Christ came into the world to give you?

Then you can but are you willing? One day Jesus asked a blind man called Bartimaeus what he wanted.

[36 : 12] He was a beggar at the street. What do you want? Jesus asked. What did blind Bartimaeus say? Did he say give me a lot of money so I don't have to beg anymore? Did he say give me a comfortable home and servants to look after me?

Give me some pleasures and excitement. Lord I want to see is all he said. And Jesus healed him. Let me ask you this morning dear friends what do you want from Jesus Christ?

What do you want? Do you want to see what is really there? A God who made and cares for you? Do you want to see life? Do you want to keep your eyes firmly shut?

Let's pray together. Lord Jesus you are the one who makes blind eyes to see.

And Lord we thank you again for opening the eyes of this man to see physically but more than that to see spiritually who you really are and to put his faith in you.

[37 : 29] Thank you for the way that you opened our blind eyes for all of us here at one time were blind. All of us were ignorant. All of us were held in captivity to fear or prejudice or unbelief.

And yet Lord in your grace and goodness you came to us and opened our eyes so that we could see just what a wonderful and marvellous God you are and just what a wonderful salvation you give to those who will receive you.

And we ask oh Lord that for those of us who do know you as our saviour that you would deliver us from those times of unbelief and of prejudice and fear which we still struggle with that we may be Lord again people who by faith live for you.

And we pray Lord for those of us here this morning who have never had our eyes opened even now as we've been listening there's been a cloud a blindness that's come upon us and says I don't want and I won't accept and you know alone why those shutters are down in our lives whether it's past hurt whether it's fear whether it's prejudice Lord I ask that you would open the shutters and let the light in and make us willing to receive the wonderful light of your goodness oh Lord set us free and cause us to see the beauty and the majesty and the loveliness of Jesus Christ Amen Amen