

Spiritual Blindness

Part 1

John 9:1-12 (ESV)

As he passed by, he saw a man (*begging-us 8*) blind from birth. ² And his disciples asked him, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?” ³ Jesus answered, “It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him. ⁴ We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; 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 Having said these things, he spat 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. ⁸ The neighbors and those who had seen him before as a beggar were saying, “Is this not the man who used to sit and beg?” ⁹ Some said, “It is he.” Others said, “No, but he is like him.” He kept saying, “I am the man.” ¹⁰ So they said to him, “Then how were your eyes opened?” ¹¹ He answered, “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.” ¹² They said to him, “Where is he?” He said, “I do not know.”

Jesus performed miracles (signs) for 3 distinct reasons:

1. Compassion for human need
2. To illustrate a spiritual truth / create a conversation

This event illustrates the spiritual truth of Christ being the Light of the World. We too are born spiritually blind and need the gift of sight that only the Light of the World can provide. The Light of the World becomes our light when we put our faith in Jesus Christ.

3. And most importantly – they were His credentials.

Matthew 11:4-6 (ESV)

And Jesus answered them, “Go and tell John what you hear and see: ⁵ the blind receive their sight and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good news preached to them. ⁶ And blessed is the one who is not offended by me.”

3% of Americans 40 years old or older are legally blind or visually impaired (3.4M). This happens in the US about every 20 minutes. Yet the man we meet in this chapter was born blind. He had never witnessed the majesty of God's creation or seen the faces of his loved ones. When Jesus arrives on the scene everything changes for this man. His eyes are opened, eventually to the ultimate Truth – Jesus! So the greatest miracle was not the opening of his eyes, but of his heart to Jesus!

The disciples did NOT look at the man as an object of mercy but rather as a subject for a theological discussion. It is much easier to discuss the effects of sin than to minister to a person.

John 9:1 (ESV)

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

In ancient cultures, as in many modern cultures, blind people had no choice but to be beggars.

We have a tendency not to "see" those who are disabled or to treat them in ways that emphasize or trivialize their disadvantage. For instance, blind people are often treated as if they can't hear either, which is exactly what the disciples did on this occasion.

People appreciate being genuinely cared for, but resent being treated as a "case," "problem," or "curiosity." When dealing with people who are suffering or disabled, we must try to empathize with them. We should always strive to treat others in the way we would want to be treated were our situations reversed.

Matthew 7:12 (ESV)

“So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.

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

So the disciples were convinced that this man's sin or his parent's sin was the cause of his disability. Based on Ex. 34:7

Many people around the world believe that suffering results from sin. People tend to believe that displeasing God leads to punishment; therefore, they assume that whenever a person seems to be

undergoing punishment, there is reason to suspect wrongdoing. This misconception is addressed in the earliest book of the Bible.

All physical problems are the result of our fall in Adam, for his disobedience brought sin and death into the world.

Romans 5:12 (ESV)

Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned

To blame a specific disability on a specific sin committed by specific person is certainly beyond any man's ability or authority. Only God knows why babies are born with handicaps, and only God can turn those handicaps into something that will bring good and glory to His name. – Warren W. Wiersbe

Commentary - In Jewish culture, many believed that all calamities and suffering resulted from sin. But this man suffered so that God could be glorified. We live in a fallen world where good behavior is not always rewarded and bad behavior not always punished; therefore, innocent people sometimes suffer. If God removed suffering whenever we asked, we would follow him for comfort and convenience, not out of love and devotion. Regardless of the reasons for our suffering, Jesus has the power to help us deal with it. When we suffer from a disease, tragedy, or disability, we should not ask, why did this happen to me? or What did I do wrong? Instead, we should ask God to give us strength for the trial and a clearer perspective on what is happening.

The disciples were thinking about what caused the blindness. Jesus shifted their attention away from the cause to the purpose. Jesus demonstrated God's power by healing the man. Instead of worrying about the cause of our problems, we should instead find out how God could use our problem to demonstrate His power.

3 Jesus answered, “It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him (*his life* - NIV).

John 9:3 (MSG)

Jesus said, "You're asking the wrong question. You're looking for someone to blame. There is no such cause-effect here. Look instead for what God can do.

How can God be at work in a desperate situation?

There may be times when we have done everything possible to solve a problem. After we have explored the options, exhausted our resources, probed our motives, asked for advice, and

done what was suggested, we may have found that nothing seems to have changed. We may have persisted in prayer and asked others to pray for us, and yet perceive no answer. The truth is, the solution, resolution, or answer may not ever come in this life. But it is also true that regardless of our difficulty and whether or not our burden is removed, God is still at work.

- God may use our experience to help advise and encourage others who pass through the same trials.
- God may use our suffering to break through the hardness of another person and bring about change in them.
- God may use our unresolved need to motivate others to keep searching for a solution from which others will benefit.
- God may use our endurance in suffering rather than the suffering itself to be an encouraging example to other believers.

4 We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming, when no one can work.

John 20:21 (ESV)

Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you."

1 Corinthians 3:9 (ESV)

For we are God's fellow workers. You are God's field, God's building.

Convinced and compelled by the Spirit the disciples were diligent. What if they weren't? Why were they so driven? Why did Paul display such urgency? The fate of the world was at stake!!!

Commentary - Jesus' words held a note of urgency. It may be "day" now, but it won't always be so. We must not put off until tomorrow what God wants us to do now. Today is the day of salvation. If God presents an opportunity and also provides the strength, skill, or other resources to do it, we ought to respond immediately. The night is coming soon enough; then our day of opportunity will end.

What are you doing with eternity in mind?

5 **As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.” – Is Jesus in the world today? *We are the Light of the world!***

Isaiah 29:18 (ESV)

In that **day** the deaf shall hear the words of a book, and out of their gloom and darkness the eyes of the blind shall see.

6 **Having said these things, he spat 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 (*home-NIV*) seeing.**

These waters may symbolize the work that Jesus, the sent one, had come to do. They provided the deliverance and healing sent by God, illustrating the full deliverance from sin that Jesus provided for us.

8 **The neighbors and those who had seen him before as a beggar were saying, “Is this not the man who used to sit and beg?” ⁹Some said, “It is he.” Others said, “No, but he is like him.” He kept saying, “I am the man.” ¹⁰So they said to him, “Then how were your eyes opened?” ¹¹He answered, “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.”**

John 9:17 (ESV)

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.”

John 9:33 (ESV)

If this man were not from God, he could do nothing.”

John 9:38 (ESV)

He said, "Lord, I believe," and he worshiped him.

12 They said to him, "Where is he?" He said, "I do not know."

Close - From this point on, the formerly blind man began to see more clearly who Jesus was, while the Pharisees became more spiritually blind. While sin did not cause the man to be born blind, sin *did* cause the Pharisees' blindness.