

John 9:35-41 “Do You Believe in the Son of Man?”

JOH 9:35-41 Jesus heard that they had thrown him out, and when he found him, he said, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" 36 "Who is he, sir?" the man asked. "Tell me so that I may believe in him." 37 Jesus said, "You have now seen him; in fact, he is the one speaking with you." 38 Then the man said, "Lord, I believe," and he worshipped him. 39 Jesus said, "For judgment I have come into this world, so that the blind will see and those who see will become blind." 40 Some Pharisees who were with him heard him say this and asked, "What? Are we blind too?" 41 Jesus said, "If you were blind, you would not be guilty of sin; but now that you claim you can see, your guilt remains.

We have finally come to the end of this passage dealing with the blind beggar who we met way back in verse one of this chapter.

JOH 9:1-7 As he went along, he saw a man blind from birth. 2 His disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" 3 "Neither this man nor his parents sinned," said Jesus, "but this happened so that the work of God might be displayed in his life. 4 As long as it is day, we must do the work of him who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work. 5 While I am in the world, I am the light of the world." 6 Having said this, he spit on the ground, made some mud with the saliva, and put it on the man's eyes. 7 "Go," he told him, "wash in the Pool of Siloam" (this word means Sent). So the man went and washed, and came home seeing.

The rest of chapter nine records for us how Jesus was to use this blind man to bring glory to the Father along with teaching a very important principle of how sin blinds us to the things of God until our Lord opens our eyes and enables us to see.

And so as we come to our text let us seek the Lord who gives us eyes to see and ears to hear what the Spirit of God says.

Last week we left the Pharisees scratching their collective heads as many of them were not willing to recognize that God had done a legitimate miracle in their midst through Jesus Christ. But since Jesus didn't perform this miracle on their terms, since He healed this man on the Sabbath, they weren't willing to look to the obvious.

When it came to embracing spiritual realities, or their own religious baggage, they choose the baggage that drags them down, instead of choosing Christ who desires to elevate them to the Father in heaven.

And in the process they insult Moses by suggesting that the law that Moses gave to Israel from God is the means by which the Jews have a relationship with the Father.

JOH 9:28-29 You are this fellow's disciple! We are disciples of Moses! 29 We know that God spoke to Moses, but as for this fellow, we don't even know where he comes from."

The Pharisees equate the law, and the keeping of the law, with salvation. Jesus had pointed this error out earlier in this same gospel.

JOH 5:39-40 You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me, 40 yet you refuse to come to me to have life.

In other words, you study the law for life instead of understanding that the law points to a person who gives life.

The law was only a shadow of things to come. This is precisely what the writer of Hebrews points out.

HEB 10:1-4 The law is only a shadow of the good things that are coming - not the realities themselves. For this reason it can never, by the same sacrifices repeated endlessly year after year, make perfect those who draw near to worship. 2 If it could, would they not have stopped being offered? For the worshipers would have been cleansed once for all, and would no longer have felt guilty for their sins. 3 But those sacrifices are an annual reminder of sins, 4 because it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.

These Pharisees missed the mark and instead of realizing that the Scriptures spoke of the Son of God who came to take away the sin of the world they relegated salvation to a set of rules; don't touch this, don't taste that.

And in His grace and mercy Jesus comes along and places in the laps of these Pharisees a glimpse of God's goodness found in healing this blind beggar who has been given his sight back, but more important his hope back, which would be found in a new life

touched by the living God, not just in this world but in the next to come.

But instead of rejoicing with this man, who has been given his sight back, they are looking for any excuse to condemn Jesus and therefore are not willing to accept the testimony of this man that Jesus could not be a sinner, but must be a prophet sent from God for the sake of Israel.

And that's where we ended last week as this man continues to testify of this Jesus.

JOH 9:31-33 We know that God does not listen to sinners. He listens to the godly man who does his will. 32 Nobody has ever heard of opening the eyes of a man born blind. 33 If this man were not from God, he could do nothing."

And of course the Pharisees will not be lectured to by such "nobody's" and they do what any good religious zealot who is not open to the truth will do. They shut him up.

JOH 9:34 To this they replied, "You were steeped in sin at birth; how dare you lecture us!" And they threw him out.

As I said last week, this is the best thing these religious leaders could have done for this man. And by the way, this was no small thing in terms of being thrown out because this was more than just being dismissed from their presence.

This undoubtedly was a declaration by these religious leaders that he was cut off from the Synagogue and its privileges, which means that he was cut off from the blessings of Israel. This was precisely what kept his parents from giving too much information about what happened to his son so as not to jeopardize their place in Israel.

JOH 9:21-23 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." 22 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. 23 That was why his parents said, "He is of age; ask him."

The common Jew feared the Pharisees in this respect. And since the entire life of a Jew was defined by their religious experience found in the Synagogue and the temple you can see how no one

would want to place themselves in a position of being put out of that environment, or being excommunicated from the Synagogue.

You would be branded for life. Your neighbors and friends would be forced to shun you. You would not be able to participate in the privileges of the Synagogue and therefore would not be able to participate in the religious practices of Israel, presumably even the sacrificial system which enabled sinners to find forgiveness through the use of that system by faith.

And so, from a practical standpoint, as far as Jewish custom dictated, you are in the outer darkness with no ability to find favor in the eyes of God. This is where this former blind man has been placed by these Pharisees. And this is where Jesus Christ meets him.

JOH 9:35 Jesus heard that they had thrown him out, and when he found him, he said, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?"

I love this. It appears that this man was on his own and that no one was concerned with his plight. And yet it is quite obvious that Jesus was keeping tabs on him. He was concerned for this man and probably had people in place who would tell him the outcome of the Pharisees' decision, though He already knew.

But after hearing of this man's situation Jesus does what I find the most meaningful and exciting part of the story.

JOH 9:35 Jesus heard that they had thrown him out, and when he found him, ...

Jesus found him because He sought him out. Jesus went to this man with the express purpose of meeting him where he was, (in the outer darkness, if you will), after he was excommunicated from the religious institution of his day.

That sort of thing should give us all hope because it shows us that what man has instituted, as a way to God, the Lord is not bound by. This former blind man may have been put out of the Synagogue by these Pharisees, but in so doing he has been placed in a position of really meeting God without all of the encumbrances of man-made religion.

In fact, that's where I was at a point in my life when I met the Lord. I was excommunicated from the Roman Catholic church, not by any official of the Roman church, but by my own choices to

renounce their system. And if one renounces any of their dogmatic positions they are declared to be anathema.

For example, I arrived at the conclusion that the position of the Pope was not one handed down by God through Peter, whom the Roman Church believes was the first Pope.

Well, the official statement of Rome in the first Vatican Council in 1869 under the head of Pope Pius IX , which is upheld today, reads this way.

“If anyone says that blessed Peter the apostle was not appointed by Christ the lord as prince of all the apostles and visible head of the whole church militant; or that it was a primacy of honour only and not one of true and proper jurisdiction that he directly and immediately received from our lord Jesus Christ himself: let him be anathema.”

This also means that to reject any function of the Pope is to be met with similar anathema's, for example his infallibility when it comes to matters of faith and practice when he speaks Ex Cathedra, which of course I had a problem with, and which Vatican I addresses in its summary on the Pope's rule.

“So then, should anyone, which God forbid, have the temerity (audacity) to reject this definition of ours: let him be anathema.”

Of course I had problems with all sorts of things regarding the Roman church from the Mass to indulgences, to Purgatory, which the First Vatican Council addresses in their section called “Profession of Faith.” And they sum up that section with this statement.

“Likewise: all other things which have been transmitted, defined and declared by the sacred canons and the ecumenical councils, especially the sacred Trent, I accept unhesitatingly and profess; in the same way. Whatever is to the contrary, and whether heresies have been condemned, rejected and anathematised by the church, I too condemn, reject and anathematise.”

“This true catholic faith, outside of which none can be saved, which I now freely profess and truly hold, is what I shall steadfastly maintain and confess, by the help of God, in all its completeness and purity until my dying breath, and I shall do my best to ensure that all others do the same. This is what I, the same Pius, promise, vow and swear. So help me God and these holy gospels of God.”

When I rejected these teachings I became anathematized and therefore cut off from the grace of God unto salvation, according to Rome, not unlike how the former blind man in our text was cut off from the religious institution of his day. But, instead of being denied grace, God abounded in grace to this man when He asks in verse 35, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?"

Now, in some of your translations that same question is posed this way. "Do you believe in the Son of God?"

The earlier Greek manuscripts have Son of Man, but it changes nothing because both the term Son of Man and Son of God, as associated with the Messiah, were interchangeable. And in fact, Jesus associates Himself with both while identifying Himself as the Lord.

On one occasion He made the statement to a lame man that his sins were forgiven. Well, the crowd freaked to think that a man could make such a statement but Jesus quickly added in Matthew.

MAT 9:5-8 Which is easier: to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up and walk'? 6 But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins...." Then he said to the paralytic, "Get up, take your mat and go home." 7 And the man got up and went home. 8 When the crowd saw this, they were filled with awe; and they praised God, who had given such authority to men.

On other occasions He did refer to Himself as the Son of God, and in one instance He uses both terms together to identify Himself as the Messiah.

MAT 26:63-64 But Jesus remained silent. The high priest said to him, "I charge you under oath by the living God: Tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God." 64 "Yes, it is as you say," Jesus replied. "But I say to all of you: In the future you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven."

And so, all Jews would have understood the terms Son of Man and Son of God as identifying the promised Messiah of Israel, and that's exactly what Jesus is asking of this man. "Do you believe in the Son of Man?"

JOH 9:36 "Who is he, sir?" the man asked. "Tell me so that I may believe in him."

I like this response because it shows that despite how this man desired to know the Messiah of Israel he wanted to make an informed decision.

JOH 9:37-38 Jesus said, "You have now seen him; in fact, he is the one speaking with you." 38 Then the man said, "Lord, I believe," and he worshipped him.

Jesus addresses two senses. The sense of sight and the sense of sound. You have now seen Him is one this man could not have comprehended only hours before. Jesus is the one responsible for making this happen as only God could. And this Son of God, Son of Man, is now inviting him to faith as he says, "I am the Messiah who speaks to you now."

This by the way, is precisely what Jesus has been teaching all along. It's the same message these Pharisees heard and yet they would not believe. But here, a nobody in Israel who has just been kicked out of the religious foundation of what he has known for all of his life, is approached by the Son of God and offered life.

I remember thinking back in 1972 that if my religious background in the Roman faith was not worth putting much stock in, what was left? I didn't know, which is partly why I put out on a quest to "find" myself as I decided to hitchhike around the United States in the summer of '72.

Well, I backpacked around the country and guess what? I didn't find myself, but a number of months later God found me. And it has been an adventure ever since. One, which I might add, I have never regretted.

And like this man in our text I came to the conclusion that religion was not my salvation, but a person was. And that person, Jesus Christ, loved me enough to find me out and ask, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?"

My response was, who is this Son of Man that I might believe in Him? I knew all about Jesus Christ, and I knew all about His life, but it was an understanding which was relegated to the four religious walls I grew up in, where Jesus was defined as a Savior who only provided the grace for me to work my way to heaven through my good works.

I never had the assurance of salvation. I never had the assurance that I would go to heaven. And since I finally rejected the notion of purgatory that didn't leave me with much hope.

I wanted to believe that there was still a way to God, but it wasn't until God Himself opened my eyes, as He did with this blind man, that I finally saw what this salvation was really all about. And I joined with this man who said I believe and I have spent my life worshipping my God to the best of my ability in the power of the Spirit to His honor and glory.

JOH 9:38 Then the man said, "Lord, I believe," and he worshipped him.

When a person meets God, as this man did when he met the Son of God, the only appropriate response is one of faith and worship. How can a person do less? How can a person come into a relationship with the living God through faith in Christ and remain the same?

You simply can't. Not for long. And the reason for this is because once you were blind but now you see. And when you meet the One responsible you have to rejoice and be glad and thankful as you humble yourself before the God who gave you life.

This is why I'm always amazed at the notion that a person can make the statement that he or she has accepted Jesus as Savior but really hasn't come to grips with accepting Him as Lord.

And what they usually mean by this is that they have accepted the fire insurance but they haven't given themselves over fully to the one who delivered them from the fire.

Can you imagine being rescued from a burning building by a fireman who has risked his life to save yours and come out in the safety of the open air and not show a heartfelt gratitude to that fireman? It would be inconceivable.

And yet, that's what many people who claim to know Christ say of their own lives. And it's really nothing more than an excuse to have salvation on their own terms.

But there is no negotiating with God. He has given us everything in Christ and He desires that our lives be lived with eyes wide open and seeking the things above out of thanks and gratitude as did this man in our text who has tasted life in Christ instead of judgment which these Pharisees heaped on him.

JOH 9:39-41 Jesus said, "For judgment I have come into this world, so that the blind will see and those who see will become blind." 40 Some Pharisees who were with him heard him say this

and asked, "What? Are we blind too?" 41 Jesus said, "If you were blind, you would not be guilty of sin; but now that you claim you can see, your guilt remains.

This statement by Jesus is in the context of receiving life or continuing in a state of condemnation. And so, when He says, "For judgment I have come into this world," He is not contradicting Himself when He says, "For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him." (JOH 3:17)

John 3:17 describes the specific mission of Jesus Christ in this world, while our text describes the natural outworking of His testimony and ministry in the lives of people as they make the choice to either find forgiveness as they accept Christ, or remain in their sin and thus bring judgment on themselves.

There is no gray area as it relates to the person of Christ. We are either for Him or against Him. And in our text Jesus is saying that I have come into this world for judgment in the sense that people will ultimately make that judgment for themselves as they accept or reject the Messiah as we see in this case.

One man accepts Christ and worships Him as the Messiah, as the Spirit of God opens his eyes to the truth and enables this man to believe through the gift of faith. The Pharisees reject Christ and are judged by their denial of the Messiah.

JOH 9:39 Jesus said, "For judgment I have come into this world, so that the blind will see and those who see will become blind."

Jesus is equating the blindness of this man born blind, with darkness of sin, and He is stating that to come into the light one must be touched by God and then humbly come before the Lord seeking His presence.

Those who do this receive sight. But then Jesus makes the statement that those who see will become blind. And what He means by this is that those who already think they have spiritual sight and have the truth are not in the mode of thinking they need revelation, even when Jesus makes it clear that they are in need.

We've all met people like this. They feel that their religious association with a church, for example, is sufficient for their relationship with God. And you can give them all the light they need as you give them the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ, and

yet they feel they don't need this because what they've got is enough.

This was the case of these Pharisees where they believed that their eyes were wide open and that they already had the light found in Moses and the law. Jesus put this same truth in different terms on another occasion.

MAT 9:10-13 While Jesus was having dinner at Matthew's house, many tax collectors and "sinners" came and ate with him and his disciples. 11 When the Pharisees saw this, they asked his disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and 'sinners'?" 12 On hearing this, Jesus said, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. 13 But go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.' For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners."

The point Jesus was making was that sinners need a Savior. Since the Pharisees didn't see themselves as sinners and since they didn't see themselves as sick in need of a doctor, Jesus would serve them no purpose.

Until they become blind, until they see themselves as sick and as sinners who need the Messiah, they remain in their sins and have passed judgment on themselves.

JOH 9:40-41 Some Pharisees who were with him heard him say this and asked, "What? Are we blind too?" 41 Jesus said, "If you were blind, you would not be guilty of sin; but now that you claim you can see, your guilt remains.

The short answer is yes, you are blind. Yes, you are guilty of your sin.

It would appear that as this blind man was found by Christ there were Pharisees who were nearby. Maybe they were near the temple by this time and they see Jesus approach this man and out of curiosity they go over to see how Jesus deals with him.

And what they see is this man worshipping our Lord Jesus as he is given the hope of placing his faith in the Messiah. And now these Pharisees, who would love to have some sort of adulation of their own, understand Jesus to suggest that since the blind man has passed from judgment to life they take offense at the implication that they are still blind and deserving of such judgment.

Jesus doesn't hold back. He answers them honestly and says, yes you are blind and yes you are guilty of your sin.

JOH 9:41 Jesus said, "If you were blind, you would not be guilty of sin; but now that you claim you can see, your guilt remains.

Jesus simply means that if you didn't have the ability to see you would not be guilty, but since you have the light standing right in front of you and yet you reject it you have no excuse, your guilt remains.

And this is true of the world today. We have the light of life found in Christ and we must be giving that life to the world. But each person is responsible for receiving that light as they conclude that they are already blind and need someone to give them light, or that they already see and need no sight.

However people view themselves it should never change our message of hope. And every day that we can live for Christ should be a day we rejoice in the light as we live as one's redeemed by the blood of the lamb who is Lord and Savior.