

The Gospel of John
Week Fifteen
John 9:1-34

Day One

1 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."

v. 1 – So now we look at one of my favorite stories in all the New Testament, the story of the man born blind. If this happened right after the Jews attempted to take His life, we see how focused Jesus was. He could have gone home to sulk or reflect. Instead He looked for an opportunity to do good. At the same time, He looked for an opportunity to make a statement to His tormentors, for the day Jesus saw this blind man was the Sabbath and Jesus knew any good act on that day would get Him into more trouble.

v. 2 – The disciples held a common belief that someone's bad fortune was a result of sin, whether it be the sin of that person or a family member. Thus they asked the question about whose sin caused the man's blindness. **How could Jesus have known this information, unless the disciples considered Him to be whom He claimed to be – God Himself?** Only God could know that kind of information.

v. 3 – Jesus declared that this man's blindness was not the result of sin, but occurred so that God could be glorified! That is a tough statement to comprehend for sinful minds, for that would seem to be unfair for the man to suffer in such a way. Yet we are reminded of what the Lord said in Exodus:

The Lord said to him, "Who gave human beings their mouths? Who makes them deaf or mute? Who gives them sight or makes them blind? Is it not I, the Lord?" (Exodus 4:11).

The Lord had ordered this man's life so that at this exact time He would cross paths with the Son and be healed. When that happened, God would be glorified. **Isn't God magnificent?** Look how He can order all of our steps to be in the right place at the right time to do the right things! **Are you confident in this fact? Are you resting in it?**

v. 4 – Jesus felt some urgency in what He was doing, for His death was just a few months away. He had to work while He had the chance – while it was still light – for darkness was coming on the earth for a short time. Of course, ultimately the disciples would be doing the works that Jesus did, so Jesus could not have been referring to a permanent time of darkness when no good deeds were done.

v. 5 – Notice that Jesus was making a statement that He was the light of the world and He was going to deliver this man from the darkness of blindness to prove His point. He was the truth that others should follow and He had the spiritual power to make that happen. **Are you walking in the light of the world? Do you trust Him for your insight and provision?**

Day Two

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. 8 His neighbors and those who had formerly seen him begging asked, "Isn't this the same man who used to sit and beg?" 9 Some claimed that he was. Others said, "No, he only looks like him." But he himself insisted, "I am the man."

v. 6 – This was certainly a strange way of performing a healing, but Jesus knew exactly what He was doing. Jesus had just left a heated debate with the Jews who wanted to kill Him because He healed on the Sabbath in John 5. **Well, guess what?** It was the Sabbath again and this time, Jesus was not only going to heal a man, he was going to violate another Sabbath regulation!

The teaching of the Jews was clear: there was to be no kneading on the Sabbath, which of course was directed at anyone making bread. Here Jesus stooped down, spit and mixed up a small amount of mud. He was saying to the Jews, "In your face!" as our modern culture would express it. He was not only going to heal, He was going to do it in a way that drew attention to the fact that God the Father was merciful on every day of the week, including the Sabbath.

v. 7 – Jesus smeared the mud on the man's eyes and told him to go and wash. The man obeyed! We are not told if Jesus had explained what was going on, or if the man even knew who Jesus was. For whatever reason, the man cooperated with the strange act and went to wash at the pool. There are many people who refuse to be helped when they have a problem, wanting rather to stay in control of their problem and its cure. I find this as I function as a life coach. Someone comes with a problem, I suggest a solution and they reject it, sometimes nicely and other times quite vigorously. **Do you manifest that kind of behavior? Are you open to input from others that can help you correct some weakness or problem?** I hope so.

v. 8 – The man went and washed and came home able to see! The man born blind was now a man with perfect eyesight. Remember that Jesus had declared Himself to be the light of the world and performed this miracle in the context of that statement. The spiritual implications are impossible to miss. If Jesus can touch and heal physical blindness, then He can cure spiritual blindness as well. I have documented many biblical instances when the Lord opened blind eyes to see something right in front of that person. I am thinking today of the story of Hagar:

God heard the boy crying, and the angel of God called to Hagar from heaven and said to her, "What is the matter, Hagar? Do not be afraid; God has heard the boy crying as he lies there. Lift the boy up and take him by the hand, for I will make him into a great nation." Then God opened her eyes and she saw a well of water. So she went and filled the skin with water and gave the boy a drink(Genesis 21:17-19).

Why not ask God to open your eyes to any situation to which you have grown blind but need to see? Don't be surprised when He answers your prayer.

v. 9 – This man's life had been reduced to begging, but then Jesus set him free. He could see and the people were amazed and disputed whether or not it was the same man. When Jesus touches people, they are sometimes unrecognizable to those who once knew them. That is the power of spiritual sight. It changes your entire being!

Day Three

10 "How then were your eyes opened?" they demanded. 11 He replied, "The man they call 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." 12 "Where is this man?" they asked him. "I don't know," he said. 13 They brought to the Pharisees the man who had been blind.

v. 10 – The man kept telling them he was the one who used to sit and beg as a blind man. He knew who he was if no one else did! **Who are you? When people question who you are, what do you tell them?** The people demanded to know how he was healed. I contrast this man with the man in John 5 who had been healed after 38 years of being an invalid. The man in John 5 seemed tentative and hesitant to talk about Jesus. The man born blind was more noble, and he was not hesitant at all.

We see the truth of what Jesus said that this man was born blind to glorify God! The people were asking questions, the man was giving his testimony and ultimately the man found Jesus in addition to seeing again. This is why we must trust God when things happen that we don't understand. This man could have been angry with God for his blindness only eventually to find out that God had a purpose in it all.

Do you need to resolve some matter in your life that God has ordained for some purpose that you cannot see and don't yet understand?

v. 11 – The man recounted exactly how Jesus had performed the miracle. I think it is interesting that Jesus didn't instruct the man, "Now please don't say how I healed you, for that will get Me in a lot of trouble with the authorities." Jesus also didn't say, "Come back tomorrow and I will heal you when it is not the Sabbath." Jesus had an opportunity to do good and He did it, regardless of what day it was or how "public" opinion would react.

Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due, when it is in your power to act (Proverbs 3:27).

Are you putting off doing anything good because of what someone else may think, including those closest to you?

v. 12 – The people wanted to know where Jesus was. The man did know that His name was Jesus. **Why did they want to know where the man was?** I would assume they wanted to begin the investigation into the healing, which was remarkable but had occurred on a Sabbath day when it was “unlawful” to heal. **Can you imagine that there was a day on which it was not “lawful” to do good?** Preposterous! The people should have been rejoicing with the man who could finally see, but instead they ruined his celebration with religious thinking. **Have you ever ruined anyone’s celebration because of your religious traditions? Has anyone ever done that to you? How did it make you feel?**

v. 13 – The people launched the investigation by bringing the man to the Pharisees for interrogation and investigation. In many ways, this investigation was about God and His right to do good on any day He chooses. This is another ludicrous picture of a group of sinful men gathering to pass judgment on a perfect God! I cannot be too harsh on them, for I have done the same thing at points in my life. I have thought I knew better than God! My only consolation in that is that Job did the same thing!

Then the Lord spoke to Job out of the storm. He said: "Who is this that obscures my plans with words without knowledge? Prepare to defend yourself; I will question you, and you shall answer me. "Where were you when I laid the earth's foundation? Tell me, if you understand. Who marked off its dimensions? Surely you know! Who stretched a measuring line across it? (Job 38:1-5).

Day Four

14 Now the day on which Jesus had made the mud and opened the man's eyes was a Sabbath. 15 Therefore the Pharisees also asked him how he had received his sight. "He put mud on my eyes," the man replied, "and I washed, and now I see." 16 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. 17 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."

v. 14 – Jesus was not backing down from doing His good works, and doing them on the Sabbath day. He knew that this would infuriate the Jews, which seems in part to be why He did it. Jesus could have simply spoken a word of healing, but He chose to make the mud, which was a second Sabbath violation on top of the healing itself.

v. 15 – The Pharisees interrogated the man for a second time (the other time had been the crowd and neighbors). The man did not hesitate to answer and give all the information, even that which was to prove controversial. I cannot help but compare this man to the one in John 5, the latter seeming fearful of the Jews and hesitant to honor Jesus. This man

in John 9 did not exhibit those tendencies. He was blind and now He could see and He was going to answer all their questions without reservation.

v. 16 – Some of the Pharisees already had their minds made up: Jesus was not of God, which made Him an evil man. What a misinterpretation of God this was! They did not focus on the healing but the circumstances surrounding the healing. **Could the devil heal as Jesus healed?** Obviously the Jews thought that the devil was capable of doing such a good deed. Strange.

Yet there were some who were noble-minded and concluded that a sinner could not do such magnificent deeds. Jesus had divided them, which was not His intent. His intent was that they all put their faith and trust in Him. When some refused, that became the dividing issue. We see this principle right through the book of Acts when synagogues and whole communities were divided over the message of the gospel. Some saw Jesus as the Son of God while others opposed His presence with violence. **Nothing has changed in 2,000 years, has it?**

v. 17 – The Pharisees were divided, so they turned to the man and asked his opinion. It was easier to unite against him than to unite around Jesus. They asked his opinion and then castigated him when he gave it! These leaders were lame. They were capricious, whimsical, and mean-spirited. It is so sad that this man could not rejoice over his healing, but rather had to defend himself and the veracity of his healing before unrighteous, hardhearted men. They could not sit, listen and give glory to God. They had to ruin the occasion with their unbelief. **How sad is that?** Yet that is just how a religious spirit operates – with no joy!

Day Five

18 The Jews still did not believe that he had been blind and had received his sight until they sent for the man's parents. 19 "Is this your son?" they asked. "Is this the one you say was born blind? How is it that now he can see?" 20 "We know he is our son," the parents answered, "and we know he was born blind. 21 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.

v. 18 – The Jews not only believed Jesus was a fake, but also that the healed man was lying! They sent for the man's parents to corroborate his story. Why would he lie? That lie would be easy to expose, for someone would have known him and the truth. The Jews were not interested in proving the rightness of what happened, but the wrongness of it. That is what happens when you have your mind made up before you investigate. You aren't really looking for the truth, but rather for confirmation of what you already know or suspect. Your preconceived notions taint your investigation.

vs. 19&20 – The Jews asked the parents rapid-fire questions. The parents stuck to the basic facts, confessing that he was indeed their son and that he was born blind. It is a

hard thing to answer only the questions that are being asked, but the parents were fearful, so they only gave what information they had to provide. That is a good rule to follow, especially with a hostile adversary: Only answer the questions being asked and say as little as possible.

When there are many words, transgression is unavoidable, but he who restrains his lips is wise (Proverbs 10:19 NAS).

v. 21 – The parents had probably heard how their son was healed, but they were not about to become embroiled in the controversy. They told the Jews what little they knew, kept their mouth shut about the rest, and referred the investigators to their son, who was of age to speak for himself.

v. 22 – John reported why the parents were so tight-lipped. The Jews had decided that anyone who publicly confessed that Jesus was the Christ was to be expelled from the synagogue. This shows the power of a dominant culture. The leaders threatened that people would be ostracized or expelled, and the people were fearful. The only one who was not fearful was the blind man. On the other hand, the parents gave into fear and refused to speak. Even they were not rejoicing at their son's healing, but rather were intimidated by the angry Jews.

The parents were not exactly false witnesses, but they didn't exactly offer all the truth either. **Are you intimidated at times not to tell the whole truth where it may be needed or asked of you? Why are you scared?**

Is your witness of the truth about Jesus compromised in any way by fear or what others may think, like these parents? Remember the words that Jesus spoke about that very subject:

“If any of you are ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of you when he comes in his Father's glory with the holy angels” (Mark 8:38).

Day Six

23 That was why his parents said, "He is of age; ask him." 24 A second time they summoned the man who had been blind. "Give glory to God," they said. "We know this man is a sinner." 25 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!" 26 Then they asked him, "What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?"

v. 23 – The parents were afraid of public rejection and humiliation. That was more important to them than their son's healing. It was almost as if they wished he had not been healed. How sad! This is what religion can do to someone. They had lost all their joy and compassion, trading them for the privilege of belonging to a church. Forgive us, Lord! **Where were there priorities? Where are you priorities?**

v. 24 – The investigation continued. They summoned the blind man a second time to ask him the same questions. They tried to give him a chance to revise his story, but the man remained faithful to what he knew was the truth. The Jews tried asking him a leading question, but the man became feisty and combative with his interrogators. This makes me want to stand and cheer the man on!

v. 25 – The man stated the truth, that he and none of those around him could judge Jesus as a sinner. Only God knew the truth. The man did know, however, that he was blind but then could see. The man stuck to giving his testimony, which no one can ever dispute.

When is the last time you gave a testimony of what God did for you? Perhaps you could write it instead of looking to speak it? To whom would you send your testimony if you wrote it?

v. 26 – The authorities had already asked the man to answer these questions, but they repeated themselves, hoping perhaps to trip him up so that he would give conflicting testimony. They also wanted to hear how Jesus had profaned the Sabbath during the healing, so they could confirm in their own minds that Jesus was in the wrong when He performed this right.

It is a dangerous thing to interrogate God to find fault with Him, yet people do it all the time. I have done it in my own life, questioning God's motives and faithfulness. It is a result of the Fall that man questions what God has said and done, reserving for himself the right to decide what is good and not so good. We can see this in the book of Job, where Job's friends concluded that there must be something wrong or sinful with Job, while Job concluded that there must be something wrong with God. Jesus came, not to take sides in that debate, but to glorify God in all things rather than to lead a debate about God.

Have you ever “judged” God? Are you judging Him now? If so, obviously you must repent of believing a lie about God, for God is nothing but faithful and true.

Day Seven

27 He answered, "I have told you already and you did not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you want to become his disciples, too?" 28 Then they hurled insults at him and said, "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." 30 The man answered, "Now that is remarkable! You don't know where he comes from, yet he opened my eyes. 31 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." 34 To this they replied, "You were steeped in sin at birth; how dare you lecture us!" And they threw him out.

v. 27 – This man was bold and feisty. He threw the questions back in the face of his interrogators, sarcastically wondering if they wanted to become Jesus' disciples. I have

to assume he had properly discerned that they did not want to follow Jesus, or else they would have been rejoicing in his blessing and glorifying God.

vs. 28&29 – The leaders were on the defensive, and responded to the man that they were Moses' disciples. It is ironic that their forefathers didn't believe that God had spoken to Moses, just like they did not believe God had worked through Jesus. Yet in Jesus' day they were venerating Moses! What hypocrites! What's more, they heaped insults on the man for his willingness to engage them as equals in the discussion. The amazing thing is that the man, a commoner and up until a few hours earlier a blind man, knew more than the learned officials!

Do those in leadership intimidate you because they may know more than you?

Don't ever assume that is true! Don't be disrespectful of or arrogant toward those in authority, but don't cower either. You must honor what you see as unique to you and never assume that anyone else sees what is obvious to you.

v. 30 – The man was correct. It was a remarkable thing that the leaders did not see that Jesus was from God and he was amazed. The man was blind but had spiritual insight; the leaders could see but were spiritually blind.

I wonder how John got all the information about this encounter between the man and the officials? Did he interview the man? Did he get it from one of the leaders who was present during this meeting? I'm just glad he did get it, for this is one of my favorite stories.

vs. 31&32 – The man went on to lecture the leaders that God listens to those who belong to Him. There were instances of people recovering their sight, but no known cases of anyone healing a man born blind. This man had been born blind but could see because of Jesus. In the man's mind, he had all the proof he needed that Jesus was from God.

You must admire his boldness when compared to the man in John 5 or even the blind man's parents, who said as little as possible to the authorities. This man could finally see, and he was seeing many things clearly! **How courageous are you when confronting a wrong attitude or behavior? In yourself? In others?**

v. 33 – The man came to the correct conclusion: if God did not empower Jesus, then Jesus could do nothing, especially heal a blind man. The man knew more than the officials and spoke about it with confidence and without fear. **How confident are you in the things of God that you know that you know? Are you proclaiming those things? To whom and when?**

v. 34 – Authoritarian leaders are angry and arrogant. They were angry that this peasant man tried to teach them, assuming incorrectly that they had nothing to learn from him. **Are you open to anyone who may have something to teach you? When you lead, can you also follow? Is your attitude one of humility that you don't know it all or arrogance that you are an expert in your field?** If it is the latter, then you may miss

some obvious truths and information not because you aren't smart, but because your thinking has rendered you blind to the obvious.

The authorities put this man out, presumably not only from their presence but also from the synagogue. He was excommunicated because Jesus had healed him! **How ridiculous was that?** Yet the man went from their presence with his eyesight restored and in next week's study we will see that he found something even more precious when he left the presence of the leaders – He went on to meet the Son of God face-to-face!