

John 9:1-41

### Introduction

This miracle story demonstrates the Lord's power over deformity and suffering in the physical world, but it is also full of spiritual truth about Him and our response to Him. Whenever the Lord comes and takes action, His presence has a divisive effect. It brings challenge. He points to a crossroads and asks, "Which way will you take?"

Preliminary comment – there are no Old Testament stories of the miracle of giving sight to the blind. Nowhere do Jesus' apostles work this miracle (the nearest is Ananias healing of Paul's temporary blindness of three days after his conversion). But in the miracles of Jesus, there are more miracles of giving sight to the blind than any other kind of healing. All miracles of giving sight to the blind are pointing to the fact that, in a spiritual sense, Jesus Christ is the light of the world.

Going to look at this miracle, and beyond it, to the spiritual truth which it conveys. Especially concerned with man born blind and his response in faith. Then going to look at those who rejected Christ, who refused to believe in His power, and faced dread consequences.

### Faith begins as the man responds to God's initiative

As Jesus went along He met a very common sight by the roadside – a blind man, the picture of helplessness. He was begging. Unlike Jesus, who was concerned to show compassion and help, this man was a theological problem to the disciples. Who sinned, this man or his parents, that caused him to be blind? Many still worry about the problem of the link between suffering and sin. Even though the book of Job was written to deny suffering is in proportion to sin, many still believe there is a link. Jews assumed that if someone had suffered an affliction from birth, it must be because they sinned in the mother's womb, or in a previous existence. Either that, or it was caused by the parent's sin.

In all of this, none of these ideas is right. In this particular case, it was to be the means whereby God's power and glory would be seen. And Jesus had urgency in helping the man. Our opportunities will not last forever. He acted as the light of the world while He was in the world. Do not keep delaying, or your last chance will have come and gone before you know it.

So Jesus spat on the ground. He made clay or mud with His spittle, and put it on the man's eyes. He told him to go and wash in the Pool of Siloam. Jesus used a variety of means to perform healing – His hands, fingers, a word (Mark 7:33). Here, and in the case of the deaf and dumb man, He used spittle. Seems unhygienic and repulsive to us today, but in the ancient world there was a belief that spittle had curative qualities. He used it to gain the man's confidence, so that raised expectations quickened his faith. There was no power in the spittle or the clay, but in the Lord. C.f. the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper – tangible things we can handle, no power in them as

such, but they strengthen our faith. They are crutches so that we can get in touch with spiritual realities.

This whole episode was a wonderful display of God's compassion and power. The case was totally beyond human skill. The blind man was defected from birth. There was no accidental cause which might have yielded to human skill. So Jesus took the initiative and worked a miracle on him. The whole incident began with the Lord. In all God's dealings with men and all experiences of Him, the first move is always with God. It was He who sent His Son. **Not that we loved God but He loved us and sent His Son to be the atoning sacrifice** (1 John 4:10).

So in our experience, the first move is always with God. Spurgeon said, "One night I was sitting in the house of God. I did not think much of the sermon, and did not believe it. Then the thought struck me – How did you become a Christian? I sought the Lord. But how did you come to seek the Lord? The thought flashed across my mind – I should not have sought Him unless there had been a previous influence on my mind to seek Him. I prayed. Then I asked myself, Why did I pray? I was induced to pray by reading the Scriptures. What led me to do that? Then in a moment, I saw that God was at the bottom of it all. He was the author of my faith. So the whole doctrine of grace was opened up to me."

So if men are saved, God has all the glory. But hasten to add that if men are lost, it is their own fault. There is sufficiency in Calvary's Cross to save you. He gives you the warmest and sincerest invitation to come. He will never cast you out. Here is something above our minds, but it is the teaching of the Bible. **I revealed myself to those who did not ask for me. I was found by those who did not seek me** (Isaiah 65:1). He sought me long before I heard, before my sinful heart was stirred. But when I took Him at His word, I was forgiven, and He lifted me.

All who are saved can trace God's prior action in their lives – the Christian home, Christian witness, a book we read, a meeting we went to, a yearning and seeking within. It was not good luck or chance – it was the Lord. Yet there must be a response to His initiative. The man went, washed, and came home seeing. There has to be response to God's revelation of Himself. There must be a forsaking of the way we were going, an about turn. There must be clinging to Christ. A crown has to be placed on His head. We repent once and trust Him as Saviour. Then there must be submission to His Lordship. He makes us see the issues of salvation. God sets before us life and death. We are brought to a crossroads. Left or right turn? Cannot drift into salvation. Already of the road to destruction – must make an active decision to get off that road. The faith of parents will not help. This must be a personal response.

#### Faith stood firm in face of opposition

The blind man soon discovered that responding to Christ was not to walk a primrose path. Ahead was plenty of discouragement and difficulty, ridicule and scorn. This man was faced with formidable opposition. The Pharisees were religious and moral leaders, experts in Jewish law. They were so zealous that they kept not only the written law, but also hundreds of extra laws or their own traditions. They heaped scorn on him. Jesus was not from God; He was a law-breaker, a rogue. He must have got it all wrong. They hurled insults on him, and claimed to know what they were

talking about, since they were the experts, disciples of Moses. “You were steeped in sin at birth – how dare you lecture us.” And they threw him out.

At once he discovered that responding to God landed him in trouble from religious experts. He had only just begun; he had no means of knowing what they knew. He had no support from his parents. They were prepared to affirm he was their son, born blind, but that was as far as they would go. They did not know how his eyes were opened. He was old enough – ask him. They were scared of the Jews, and did not want to cross their leaders in case they were excommunicated. If you were thrown out of the synagogue, no one would speak to you or trade with you. You would be totally ignored. They were not willing to risk that.

So the once-blind man stood all alone, bitterly opposed by the enemies of Christ, and unsupported by loved ones. But he stood, and would not give in. How was he able to stand? Where did his strength lie?

### Faith backed up by personal experience

He heard the accusations. He faced difficult questions, but his response was **One thing I know. I was blind but now I see** (John 9:25). This one thing he could not doubt. He could see now. There was no doubt in his mind, when he compared it to the total blindness of a short time ago. Many things he did not know, but he was sure of what had happened to him. He could not be challenged. He spoke from first-hand knowledge.

Nothing convinces so thoroughly as one’s own sense and feelings. No evidence is so satisfying and convincing. However, feelings and experience are not everything – it is possible to misinterpret experience. Faith has to rest on promises and statements of God’s word as well as experience. But experience of truth there must be, and it carries great weight. You may have little knowledge, feeble faith, confused doctrine, but if God has worked in your life, that is something which cannot be overthrown. You have gone from darkness into light, from being afraid of God to loving Him, from loving sin to hating it. Never rest till you know and feel and testify to God’s work in your soul. Never be content with empty profession and nominal Christianity. That personal experience brings conviction and confidence to us.

### Faith led to deepening knowledge and understanding of Christ

As we respond and obey the light, more light will follow. Amazing to see how Christ became increasingly real to this man. At the start of the story he describes Jesus as a man, **The man they call Jesus made some mud and put it on my eyes** (John 9:11). Next he calls him a prophet. **What have you to say about him? It was your eyes he opened. The man replied, ‘He is a prophet’** (John 9:17,18). Next he confesses he is Jewish Messiah. **Do you believe in the Son of Man** (title used in Daniel for the one who brought God’s kingdom to men)? **Then the man said, ‘Lord I believe’** (John 9:35-38). The man believes that Jesus is the one who, through His death, would bring salvation and eternal life, and he confesses Him as God. He worshipped Christ.

So his understanding grew as he responded to the revelation, and continued to confess Christ before men. The more we respond, God leads us on and teaches us. Then the

more we understand and the more precious Christ becomes. Some Christians start off well. Then they cease to grow, their faith shrivels, and they merely go on repeating experience of first years as a Christian, and get no further. The reason – failure to respond to God’s voice. Failure to confess. This is a thoroughly unsatisfactory and unhappy state.

*“Trust and obey  
For there’s no other way  
To be happy in Jesus”*

### Root of unbelief is pride and self-righteousness

Here are the Pharisees with their learning and religiosity and intellectual ability, but totally blind to Christ, His importance, power and meaning and glory. They embodied a mixture of bigotry, persecution, hatred and evil. When pride, prejudice and self-righteousness grip a life, then no evidence will change the mind. No proof will influence that will. They were determined not to believe. Like a man who shuts his eyes, ties a blindfold over them, and refuses to have blindfold removed. The same thing happened at the death of Stephen. **At this they covered their ears...** (Acts 7:57ff). Later they refused to listen to Paul when he was making his defence (Acts 22:22). So here, the Pharisees’ only answer to this man and his simple testimony is abuse, insults, threats and intimidation.

Many today have dismissed Christianity as of no account and irrelevant. They have great knowledge and education in some spheres, but are totally ignorant of the Gospel, the meaning of Christ and why He came and died. They dare not examine the evidence in case they are proved wrong and they would be compelled to eat their words and turn from their way of life. To admit their sin and their need of a Saviour, to humble themselves before Him and yield their lives to Him, is absolutely out of the question. It is more than their flesh and blood could stand. Their excuse is intellectual problems and difficulties. But real problem is a moral one. It is a matter of will and not of intellect at all.

There is no more dangerous state for a man or woman to be in. As long as a person is candid, fair, honest-minded, like the Bereans prepared to search the Scriptures daily to find the truth, prepared to ask God for light, and willing to act on it, then there is ground for hope, however ignorant the person is. God will reveal Himself to the honest seeker, but he needs to be humble, childlike and teachable. While this is so, need never despair of a man’s soul. But if determined not to believe and examine and weigh facts, unwilling to alter and change, then he loses whatever light he has. Goes into total and irreversible darkness. What desperate lengths prejudice, bigotry and pride will take, even in religious men.

### Conclusion

Here we are presented it with the fact of Christ, the undoubted power, glory and greatness of His person and character. Always has divisive effect whenever He is preached and offered. **For judgment I have come into this world, so that the blind will see and those who see will become blind** (John 9:39). When man is confronted with Christ, he passes judgment on himself. Like a magnet draws iron filings, and

leaves the brass, so the Light is torture to diseased eyes but brings gladness to sound ones.

Welcome Christ – He will be light, shining more and more to the perfect day. Turn from Him – and you will have blindness and darkness which is total. **Whoever has will be given more; whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him** (Mark 4:25).