

WE HAVE SEEN HIS GLORY

Sickness to the Glory of Christ

INTRODUCTION

I have compiled some topics under the rubric: *Things I Wish I Had Known*. Over the last few years I have been made aware of some critical realities that I wish I had known before I started ministry. One of these topics involves some of the *seemingly* paradoxical truths in the Bible. In Christ I have found great comfort and great rest in these *seemingly contradictory* concepts of the Christian faith. That too is paradoxical!

One of these puzzling truths can be stated this way: We are called to do what only God can do. I am convinced that when you understand that, you have a good understanding of what it means to be a Christian. When you get that, you get what sanctification is. That truth is wrapped up in these statements of Paul:

"I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me" (Galatians 2:20, ESV); and "But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me." (1 Corinthians 15:10, ESV)

When you can wrap your mind around those verses, you understand sanctification; you understand how to live the Christian life. That idea emerges from the passage we are looking at today. For that we need help – immense help. Let us pray.

TEXT: [John 9:1-12 \(ESV\)](#)

THE STORY

This story is a continuation of Christ in Jerusalem. He has attended the Feast of Tabernacles. John 8:12 forms the foundation of this story (*"I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."*). As Jesus and his disciples were walking around, they see a man "blind from birth". This would have been a known fact among the people. The disciples ask Jesus, "Who sinned, this man or his parents?" It was a common belief among Jews that physical suffering and illness was directly due to sin. Of course this passage and even the Book of Job show that's not always the case. "*Jesus answered, "It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him."*" (John 9:3, ESV).

Please remember, the story is about a miraculous healing, but that's not the theme. The theme is Jesus is the Light of the World. Jesus reminds his disciples that while he is here among the Jews, it is daytime – the light is among them. This is the heartbeat of John's Gospel:

- John 1:4 (ESV) ⁴ In him was life, and the life was the light of men.
- John 1:7 (ESV) ⁷ He came as a witness, to bear witness about the light, that all might believe through him.
- John 1:9 (ESV) ⁹ The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world.
- John 3:19–21 (ESV) ¹⁹ And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. ²⁰ For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed. ²¹ But whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his works have been carried out in God."

So Jesus reminded the disciples that God had sent him to do this work and they are now part of this same ministry of light. Notice: *"We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming, when no one can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world"* (John 9:4–5, ESV). That statement is key.

"Restoring sight to the blind was one of the miracles Jews expected to see in the Messiah."¹ But the restoration of sight was a key indicator of the promised Messiah. Isaiah several times points to this reality: [Isaiah 8:19-9:7](#); [35:1-5](#); [42:6-7](#), etc. You will recall that as the news about Jesus spread throughout Judea and Galilee, John the Baptist sent two disciples to ask Jesus about His identity. This is what we read in Matthew 11:3–5 (ESV),

³ and said to him, "Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?" ⁴ 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.

This story is especially important to the first readers. They are getting clear evidence that Jesus was the promised Messiah. Now sitting right in front of Jesus and the disciples is this blind man. He was born blind. It was not his sin nor his parents that caused it. In one of the greatest statements of God's sovereignty over evil and sickness, Jesus says this: This man was born blind so "that the works of God might be displayed in him."² As Grant Osborne writes, "Jesus is stressing the sovereignty of God in this situation. He is in charge, and neither the sin of the parents nor of the child can account for this blindness. Rather, God allowed it to prepare for this very moment, when his works were to be displayed."³ Dr. D.A. Carson writes this: "John certainly does not think that the occurrence of blindness from birth was outside the sweep of God's control, and therefore of his purpose."⁴ This is an important point. If our suffering and illness is under of God's control, then all of it – from start to finish has

¹ Gangel, Kenneth. Holman New Testament Commentary - John: 4 (p. 180). B&H Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.

² [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Jn 9:3). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

³ Osborne, G. R. (2018). [John: Verse by Verse](#). (J. Reimer, E. Ritzema, D. Thevenaz, & R. Brant, Eds.) (p. 236). Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

⁴ Carson, D. A. (1991). [The Gospel according to John](#) (p. 362). Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, MI: Inter-Varsity Press; W.B. Eerdmans.

purpose. We don't know how old this blind man was but think of it: every day of his life had purpose and meaning even while he was blind.

We read that Jesus prepares a muddy salve and anoints the blind man's eyes; tells him to wash in the Pool of Siloam. He obeyed and "came back seeing" (v7). When his neighbors saw the miracle, they were confused. "Can this be our neighbor who was born blind?" The blind man confirmed that he was. "How did you come to see," they asked? "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."⁵

In the story to follow, this man will be interrogated by the Pharisees; his parents will be interrogated by the Pharisees; and he will undergo another interrogation by the Pharisees. But in the end when asked if he believes in Christ, he answers, "*Lord, I believe, and he worshiped him.*" (John 9:38, ESV).

THE MAIN POINT

Please be warned that we should not detour from the aim of this book ("*but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.*" (John 20:31, ESV)); and in fact, the purpose of this account "I am the light of the world;"⁶ and make this story about a theology of healing (although that topic is present); nor is it about mud and saliva. This story is in the Gospel of John for this primary purpose:

Restoring sight to the blind was one of the miracles Jews expected to see in the Messiah. And consistent with the style of Jesus, the physical healing of the blind man propels us to mankind's greater need of spiritual blindness. In fact, there is a profound connection between the man's physical blindness from birth and the universal problem of spiritual blindness from birth.

The spiritual point of this story is that every human being is born spiritually blind, spiritually darkened and the only antidote is the One who is the Light of the World, Jesus Christ!

THE BLIND CONDITION OF HUMANITY

The condition of people, who have not believed the Gospel, not trusted Christ as Savior, is spiritual blindness. Paul made that very clear in 2 Corinthians 4: "*And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.*" (2 Corinthians 4:3-4, ESV).

Its part of a larger condition called *Total Depravity* that teaches that every single faculty of humanity is impaired by sin. Notice Paul's words in Romans 3:

⁵ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Jn 9:11). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

⁶ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Jn 9:5). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

“. . . None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands; no one seeks for God. All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one.”⁷

Did you hear that word: worthless? It’s the Greek word meaning “useless” that comes from the root word “misty” or vanity or empty. The Divine judgment on humanity is complete and total impairment. They are described as those who do *“. . . accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.”* (1 Corinthians 2:14, ESV). In short, they are spiritually blind.

Just as the cause of spiritual blindness is clear from 2 Corinthians 4, the solution is also clear – clear to those who have eyes to see: *“For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus’ sake. For God, who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.”* (2 Corinthians 4:5–6, ESV). As Christ is proclaimed around the world and to those whom God chooses to reveal the glory of His Son, He says (just as He did in the beginning): “Let there be light!”

APPLICATION

So the truth is self-evident: only God can open blind eyes to see. Only God can heal spiritual blindness. Only God can declare, “Let there be light.” But we are faced with a mystery. When Paul was converted and commissioned with the Gospel, the Lord Jesus said to him “I am sending you to open their eyes, so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.”⁸

So who opens blind eyes? Jesus or Paul? And the answer is “yes”. Jesus said to his disciples as they met that blind man: “We must work the works of him who sent me.”⁹ The combination of a plural pronoun (*we*) and a singular pronoun (*me*) tells us that we are called to do with Jesus what only Jesus can do.

This is one of these great paradoxical statements in the Bible. It’s akin to Psalm 127:1 (ESV), *“1 Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain. Unless the Lord watches over the city, the watchman stays awake in vain.”*

The bottom-line is that no one will be saved unless the Lord Jesus Christ effectually calls to them, “Let there be light.” But that call is accompanied by the proclamation of the Gospel that Jesus Christ is Lord. That’s our task. *“And how are they to hear without someone preaching.”*¹⁰ So we are to go and do what

⁷ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Ro 3:10–12). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

⁸ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Ac 26:17–18). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

⁹ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Jn 9:4). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

¹⁰ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Ro 10:14). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

only God can do. There's another example of this concept in the Bible. Turn to 2 Timothy 2. Here we read starting in verse 24:

"And the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil, correcting his opponents with gentleness. God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth, and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, after being captured by him to do his will." (2 Timothy 2:24–26, ESV)

Who is to do the patient, kind teaching? Answer: "The Lord's servant". Who opens blind eyes? God! The servant teaches, but he teaches knowing that if God doesn't grant repentance there is no sight -- there is no release from Satan. The teaching is necessary, but the definitive, decisive act that brings results is God's and God alone. You are necessary to the opening of blind eyes; but God is determinative. So again, we are reminded of the words of Jesus, *"We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming, when no one can work."* (John 9:4, ESV)

It is possible to see in these verses an emphasis on the urgency and brevity of our own time of ministry. Our lives are a vapor. Time is short. Darkness surrounds us and seems to be ever increasing. We are reminded in a familiar hymn written in 1854 by an eighteen-year-old Canadian girl, Annie Louise Walker who penned these words:

*Work for the night is coming, work through the morning hours;
Work while the dew is sparkling; work 'mid springing flowers.
Work when the day grows brighter, work in the glowing sun;
Work for the night is coming, when man's work is done.*

Gospel →