

The blind shall see!

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[0 : 00] Thank you. All right. If anybody's tempted to look behind you at the time, the clock's wrong.! We're going to read the first six verses, Josh.

Just the first six verses. And I'll work our way through it because I'm going to attempt the ridiculous and get through the whole thing. Because there's just really one theme here. So we're going to read, first of all, chapter 9, verses 1 to 5.

And then we'll pause. As he went along, he saw a man blind from birth. His disciples asked him, Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?

That's nice to meet you. How are you, isn't it? Neither this man nor his parents sinned, said Jesus. But this happened so that the work of God might be displayed in his life.

As long as it is day, we must do the work of him who sent me. Night is coming when no one can work.

[1 : 29] While I am in the world, I am the light of the world. I can't tell you how much that verse, verse 4, means to me.

Many, many years ago, I was just a new Christian. And Eric Delve came to preach at Castle City Hall. So he must have been a big deal, Eric Delve, in those days.

There were thousands of people there. And he got up to preach and he said, John, go.

Well, that kind of got my attention. And he was talking about John the Baptist. But then his text was that verse, John chapter 9, verse 4. As long as it is day, we must do the work of him who sent me. For night is coming when no man can work. And that's altered the course of my life. What I sought to do for the rest of my life is to share the light of Jesus, who is the light of the world, so that people in darkness, as I was, could find salvation in Jesus.

[2 : 43] Very much remembrance of that. Just thought of that as I read. I was going to start with Helen Keller. Helen Keller was well-known to me as a child.

I don't know why. I must have seen a film. But I think she was just well-known. And I was surprised to discover she only died in 1968. I thought she died before that.

She was famous as a blind woman. But she was actually blind and deaf from infancy. Maybe she got rubella. Maybe she got scarlet fever. But it rendered her deaf and blind.

And then a lady called Anne Morrison came into her life. She was really bitter and unhappy with her lot. And she was an indisciplined child who just made life really, really difficult for her parents.

And this lady came into her life and took a fairly strong hand with her and taught her to spell out words, taught her sign language, and then helped her to speak as well.

[3 : 52] And Helen Keller is famous because she was the first person in the United States ever to get a college degree who was deaf-blind. And she became an ambassador for the United States.

She went to Japan in 1948 to try and help the recovery of relationships after the Second World War. She met Winston Churchill. She was internationally known.

And she was a great advocate for the blind and for the deaf right up until the end of her life. She was once asked a question about her blindness.

Did she think it was the worst kind of disability or were there worse? Is there anything worse than blindness, she was asked.

And she said, Oh yes, there is something worse than being blind. It is being able to see and not having any vision. Being able to see and not having any vision.

[4 : 52] She went on to say, I have walked with people whose eyes are full of light, but who see nothing in sea or sky, nothing in city streets, nothing in books.

It were far better to sail forever in the night of blindness with sense and feeling and mind than to be content with the mere act of seeing. The only lightless dark is the night of darkness in ignorance

and insensibility.

Now, Jesus would have said the same. Jesus would have said to people who had eyes to see but could not see who He was and who God was, that you'd be better off being blind and seeing than having sight and not seeing.

Indeed, at the end of this passage, He says, because you claim to see, your guilt remains. If you were blind, you would have an excuse.

Imagine a blind person in a room and you switched on the light and you said to that blind person, can you see? They would say, of course not, I'm blind.

[6 : 06] But you wouldn't blame them for that, would you? But if somebody said, switch off that light, I don't like the light, then such people have not appreciated what it is to see.

Jesus is the light of the world, John chapter 8 verse 12 says. He's the light of the world. And He says, the one who follows Me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life.

He will have the ability to see the way of eternal life and to follow in it. I love the way Eugene Peterson puts it.

I think I have it on a quote here. Our eyes are remarkable and accurate signs, he says, of our inner spiritual health. They narrow into slits when we hate, envy, and scheme.

They give you away. You ever seen somebody roll their eyes at you? That's a giveaway, isn't it? Some people are very good of rolling their eyes, aren't they? You know what they think of you.

[7 : 10] They open wide in wonder when we live in adoration and generosity. Wow. It's amazing how the eyes do that. I just tried it.

My eyes don't open very wide, but wow. What obstructs your vision of God, he asks. What stops you from saying wow when you look at this world and you see that the creator who painted those skies of those pictures that were being shared on Facebook, who painted those skies, who created that beautiful panoramic view of the countryside, who created the night sky with its myriads of stars, causes us to say, wow, speak in something worthy of a God.

And those who have eyes to see know that our Father in heaven made this. So the question that John 9 is concerned about is do we have eyes to see?

Do we have eyes to see Jesus clearly? Or are we blind to the truth and the grace that he offers us in our world?

And so the first thing I want us to see is that there's a discussion of a question of blame, a question of blame. As I say, the disciples saw this man and didn't say, oh, poor blind man, let's try and help him.

[8 : 37] They said, who sinned, this man or his parents? All right, so clearly they're telling you a lot about their theology of sin. It's called hamatology, if you like the proper word in the theological colleges.

Their theology of sin. This man is blind, so somebody must have done something wrong. He must have done it or his parents must have done it.

So there is the idea of original sin here. He inherited that sin. But there's also perhaps a suggestion that his parents were immoral. The suggestion is that he was made blind probably as a result of venereal disease.

So he was blind from birth and somebody was to blame. Now there's no sympathy or compassion in their question, is there?

The question reflects a view of the world that says, if something is wrong with you, you must have done something to deserve it or somebody else did.

[9 : 45] That's what the Hindus call karma. Yeah? The idea of what goes around comes around. And in a sense, the Bible teaches that kind of thing when it says, the soul that sins will die or you will reap what you sow.

But the Bible doesn't really teach it at all because karma, you see, it doesn't leave room for compassion. You know, there's just this endless recycling of life, what they call reincarnation. This samsara, this going round in an endless wheel and there's no way off it. You're like a hamster on the wheel, there's no way off it. And you get what you sow and you just can't have that. So the poorer you are, the more disabled you are, well, you must have deserved it over lots and lots of generations.

It's just working its way out in endless justice. But the gospel is not like that because the gospel offers us a way out.

Jesus offers salvation even to those who have lived a life of sin and debauchery and people might be tempted to say, well, they're getting what they deserve. Even for those, he offers compassion and forgiveness.

[11:02] And this man should have been the object of pity, compassion, and forgiveness, not of judgment. We have to be very careful, you know, when we engage in theological discussion about certain people's behaviors and practices.

Of course, we can condemn the sin. But Jesus always teaches us to love the sinner. Not to kind of point the finger and make people feel bad about themselves, but to remind them that there is mercy and grace in our Lord Jesus Christ.

So Jesus reframes the narrative here. He says, neither this man nor his parents sinned, but this happened that the work of God might be displayed in his life.

Wow, that's a reframing of the narrative. You see, they were thinking, who is to blame? And Jesus is saying, who am I to bless? Who am I to bless? The worse you are, the better the outcome can be.

For where sin abounds, grace much more abounds. See, I'm always amazed when I look at the person who tells me he was a drug addict or he was a violent man or a violent woman or they did this and that and the other.

[12:16] And then I found forgiveness and salvation in Jesus and I always think, wow, that's great. I never sit there thinking, well, you don't deserve that. God should have kept you hanging for a bit.

Never think like that. Because grace is about forgiveness. It's the opportunity for God to display his love and power in your life.

That's the way to reframe suffering and sickness. And even as I walk with Jesus in a life of discipleship, whenever sickness or suffering comes, I think, how is God going to glorify himself through this in me?

There is always a reason and a purpose for what God does. But interestingly, Jesus says, it is always with a desire that God may be glorified in it.

That helps us to make sense and to reframe our experiences. God has a purpose in this. I don't know what it is, but there's a chance for me to glorify God. There's also a chance for me to feel miserable about myself and rather Job likes to sit on an ante and feel miserable, but that's not going to get you anywhere.

[13:28] Job realized that. Don't sit on your ante. Don't lament all of the time. Yeah, get it out of your system. Lament is good. The Psalms are full of lament.

But when you've got it out of your system, say, God, how are you going to glorify yourself in my life now, in my circumstances, with all of their troubles? There will be a purpose.

He reframes the narrative. And then he stresses the urgency of participating in God's work. As long as it is day, we must do the work of Him who sent me, for night is coming when no one can work.

And do you know what I love about John 9? The reason I took it all in one go is because the man who was blind and then who was healed became an evangelist to his family and his neighbors.

He who was in darkness received light and he shared that light and he did the works of God. And you know, you know when Jesus comes into a person's life because they can't keep it for themselves, to themselves.

[14:29] They want to tell others and other people get sick of hearing them and tell them to shut up but it's not going to stop them because once the light shines, you can't remain in darkness anymore.

The light of life and I want to share that life with others. And then Jesus declares his identity in verse 5, while I am in the world, I am the light of the world.

While I am in the world, while I'm here, you have an opportunity to see. And after I've gone, the rest of us have an opportunity to participate because he moves from saying, we must do the work of him who sent me.

Not just I will do it, we all must do it. We must all bring that light as light bearers of Jesus. We must bring Jesus into the world. And there can be no better compliment given to you, you know, than somebody say, I can see that there's something different about you.

See, what does light do? Well, light either makes you feel great because you can see or it makes you feel uncomfortable. And Paul says, in the world, he changes the analogy a little bit here.

[15:44] He says, in the world, you've got to smell an aroma. Aroma sounds nicer than smell, doesn't it? An aroma of life to life, but an aroma of death to those who are dying.

People might not like you because there's something about you that makes them uncomfortable. You have to accept that. That is what Jesus brings. But then he brings wow, there's something about you that's different.

That's a nice smell. Jesus smell. It's all over you. Life is full of tragedy and difficulties, isn't it? It's full of blind men and deaf people and invalidated people and people who are suffering for all kinds of reasons. But these first five verses tell us that there is hope in Jesus because there is light in the world and light is there for you.

And then from verses six to twelve we have a miracle which involves mud, water and obedience. Or we would say clat water and dean what you tellt.

[16:57] That's Geordie. Let's read it. Having said this he spit on the ground. You know, most of us think spitting is a bad thing.

Sometimes it's a good thing. There you go. Having said this he spit on the ground made some mud with the saliva and put it on the man's eyes. Go, he told them wash in the pool of Siloam.

This word means scent. That's going to be important. So the man went and washed and came home seen. His neighbors and those who had formerly seen him begging asked isn't this the same man who used to sit and beg?

Some claimed that he was. Others said no he only looks like him. I think it's funny this. But he himself insisted I am the man. Come on. I haven't changed that much.

My eyes are open but I'm the man. I've still got the same white hair and the same wrinkles. Maybe if that's what he had. Oh, that's good, isn't it?

[17:53] How then were your eyes open? They demanded. He replied, The man they called 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. Where is this man? They asked him. I don't know, he said. It's great. So there's an unusual method isn't there here?

Jesus spits on some mud and he makes it into clay and he puts it on the person's eyes. He uses a very ordinary thing. Saliva has some healing property, healing value.

That's why if you get a sore in your mouth it heals quickly. So it has some healing value and people say, Oh, he's kind of engaging in a kind of ancient medicine. No, he's not. Do you remember when he healed Bartimaeus and Bartimaeus' mate?

All they said was, Lord, I want to be healed and he spoke a word and they were healed. He didn't need the mud. This wasn't trickery. The mud is important for a lesson that we're going to learn from it here.

[18:57] He didn't need the saliva. He didn't even need the pool. But he used all of those things in this case because it's important for the spiritual lesson that's drawn out.

So something deeper is clearly going on here. What is it? Well, in order to spit on mud and then to make clay you have to knead it.

You know, like you do with bread. That's a work. And John tells us that this was done on the Sabbath day. You were not allowed to knead on the Sabbath.

So he knew that once word got out that he did this he would be in trouble with the Pharisees. He liked a little bit of provocation to Jesus when it came to the Pharisees.

He knew it would upset them. He would knead the mud into place. And then he would put it on the man. John uses a very specific word here.

[19:58] The word epikreor. It means to anoint. Ah, you can't anoint people on the Sabbath because that's a work. According to the Mishnah anointing was permitted on the Sabbath but anointing with special substances for healing was forbidden.

And mud was not a substance you usually anoint people with. So Jesus is deliberately doing something here that made the miracle necessary in the way that it was done.

He didn't need the mud. He didn't need the water. He didn't need the pool. But he wanted to provoke the Pharisees to a reaction. He crossed their man-made boundaries.

Their petty Sabbath keeping that forbid them from seeing a man who was blind healed. Or a man that was invalidated for 38 years healed on the Sabbath day because Jesus engaged in some kind of work.

He said to the man go down to the pool of Siloam which he tells us means sent and wash there. Why is that important? Well first of all when Jesus came and saw this man the man was not asking Jesus for anything.

[21 : 19] The disciples observed him. The man didn't say please Jesus I hear you're a healer will you heal me of this blindness? He didn't ask. He wasn't seeking Jesus. Jesus was seeking him.

And now the question is does the man have faith? Well we'll see won't we? If he goes down to the pool and washes then we'll see if he has faith.

By acting in faith by saying yes I will do what you say Jesus I will go and wash in that pool and then I will see the man was demonstrating that he had true faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

and you remember the pool of Siloam was the pool of chapter 7 where the feast of tabernacles took place. It was a place where they poured out water. With joy shall you draw waters from the wells of salvation according to Isaiah 12 and Jesus says I will give you water that will rise up within you and you will never thirst again.

So again this is symbolic of the grace that was coming into the man's life. And John says and that word Siloam means sent. Why is this important?

[22 : 28] Because John 4 says John 9 verse 4 says while it is day I must do the work of him who sent me. And then I am sending you to the pool of Siloam and you are going to be sent to your neighbors and you're going to tell them that light has come into the world.

So this is highly symbolic. And again it shows them the majesty of this gospel. Everything is significant. John is very careful about how he selects things.

He wants us to see that what Jesus is doing has a specific purpose. A purpose that acts as a sign to point to the reality of who he is.

And this is why Jesus is challenging the Pharisees at the same time. But notice that the breakthrough for this man came as he acted in obedience.

Remember when the stewards in John chapter 2 were concerned that there was no wine. Jesus says well fill up your water jars with water.

[23 : 41] Well that will help Jesus. We want wine. Nobody is after water at this wedding. Or when the disciples were going to feed thousands of people.

And the little boy says I've got my picnic. Five barley loaves and two fish. Well that's not going to work. There's not enough there. That will hardly feed more than a dozen people.

At best. And he has this blind man. Yes, yeah. Blindness no problem. He has a woman and spit. It feels and sounds ridiculous.

The point is that through all of these means Jesus performs a miracle. He seems to ask us to obey and follow the impossible. But his point is faith's response to the words of Jesus is simply to go and do.

To go and obey. It's not to question. Jesus knows what he's doing. And we should respond by faith to his word.

[24 : 49] And if we respond by faith to his word there will be marvelous transformation. If you want to keep your life Jesus says you must lose it.

If you want to do the works of God you must believe in him who sent me. You just must believe. You want to do works to earn your way. I'm just telling you just believe.

Whatever he says to you Mary says do it. And again that's the heart of a believer you see. When light comes into the heart the light in you says whatever he says I will do.

he gives us grace he gives us enlightenment that we might obey him and understand him.

And then he comes to his neighbors this man and his neighbors have this kind of bizarre conversation. Here's the guy you imagine him they're all gathered around and there he is sitting there and they're all saying well who's he?

[25 : 55] I don't know who he is. I'm sure it's my neighbor no it's not him he can't see. Just don't ask him just ask him hello it's me I've been healed wow wow you're different.

Again you've heard me say this when I was converted I went round every door in my street to tell them about the light that was in me and the lady across the road she said you used to throw mud into my letterbox and I've told you before that lady then came to hear me preach and she was converted because there was light you see that shone light from Jesus that then went into a darkened heart so they're confused and they say well who is it that did it and he says quite rightly I don't know he'd never seen him had he he'd never seen Jesus he wasn't looking for him he went

down to the pool and his eyes were open but he had no idea who Jesus was or where he was so he was telling the truth well that won't do so the neighbors decide I know what we'll do we're going to take you to the Pharisees oh thanks very much that's great it's like you know these are the last people this guy needs they're friends of Jesus and so they take him to the Pharisees for interrogation and the Pharisees have this problem who did this to you what did he do the man says well I don't know and they say well what did he do well he took this mud and he spat in it he put it and they told me to get washed oh that's it that's it this man's not from God because he did a work he broke the Sabbath law now we know this from chapter 7 this has been going on a lot now the Pharisees are hearing about Jesus and they say they know about Jesus and even they know Jesus but actually they don't know him at all they're blind to his true identity they don't see him as the light of the world they see him as a Sabbath breaker they don't see him as the saviour of the world they see him as a sinner they don't see him as somebody in whom

Israel can hope they see him as somebody who needs to die and they will kill him if they can and so they have this dialogue with this man and they say he can't be from God and the man says and the crowd say well how can a sinner do such miraculous signs that doesn't make any sense and so they call his parents they will give testimony for their son they kind of throw him under the bus really the parents because they say well this is our son and he once was blind yeah absolutely but he's always grown up he can answer for himself we don't want to get involved why?

well John tells us because the parents knew they were afraid of the Jews they were afraid that they would put them out of the synagogue they would be excommunicated which was a big deal your neighbours wouldn't speak to you anymore people wouldn't want anything to do with you you would be treated as if you were a leper social leper they didn't want that and so they said well ask him he can answer for himself and then the man gets all the courage in his hand and the Pharisees say to him give glory to God and they say come on if you've been healed that's because God has done a miracle it's got nothing to do with this man and the man says well whether he's a sinner or not I do not know but this one thing I do know once I was blind but now I see can't argue with that can you? yeah they can try and explain this away all they like but this man knows that because of Jesus he who was formerly blind can see and then they get all angry with him you're this fellow's disciple they say we are disciples of Moses we know where Moses has come from we have no idea where Jesus came from and he says oh well that's funny he says you don't know who he is you don't know where he's come from and yet you're sure that he's a sinner and yet he opened the eyes of a blind man how ridiculous is that kind of response there is no one blinder than he who will not see in spite of the evidence that is presented to them and then as he tries to engage them in some theological discussion they say you were steeped in sin from birth how dare you lecture us or the arrogance of it

[31 : 03] I have my theological degree I'm a PhD in philosophy how dare you suggest that I do not understand about Jesus and the scriptures while they try to explain them all away as if they never happened you see people can be clever they can come up with all of their reasons why not to believe in Jesus and so on but the greatest defense against such lies is this I know what Jesus has done in my life I know once I was blind but now I see I know I was a sinner but now I'm saved by grace I know I was once held in darkness but now I'm set free for Jesus has set me free I know I know I know when I die that I will be absent from the body but present with the Lord I know because of what Jesus has done for me I am out of darkness

I am in light and then the man well he's cast out nobody wants to know him anymore not his family not his neighbors not the Pharisees nobody wants to know him anymore and yet Jesus finds the outcast that's what it tells us he found him in the beginning and he finds him now he seeks him out it says in verses 35 to 38 Jesus heard that they'd thrown him out and when he found him he said do you believe in the son of man who is he sir I've never seen him tell me so that I might believe in him Jesus said you have now seen him in fact he is the one speaking to you and the man fell down and worshipped I can't imagine what that must have been like because I've never been physically blind but to see again I can't imagine what that must be like but when this man sees again and he knows that this man in front of him did it how else can he respond but to worship oh I'm so grateful you've opened my eyes

I can see you've changed my life I know the touch of God has come through you I know a great miracle has happened I know my life will never be the same again how can I not worship you Jesus because you've done all that for me and is that not the song of your heart too because you know

what Jesus has done for you isn't it the case that you cannot but help worship him now by the way if Jesus was not God incarnate he would not have accepted this worship for he knows the commandment that says you should only worship God the fact that he accepted this man's worship is evidence that God is here in the flesh right before this man right in his newly found eyesight what a wonderful thing this is and then he says to him do you believe in the son of man now

John does use that phrase son of man but he uses it in the sense of Daniel chapter 7 the one the ancient of days who appears one like the son of man so he knows his scriptures and he accepts the man's worship and the man sees that in Jesus the Messiah has come and now he's going to follow him as a sent one for the rest of his life and finally there's this warning and sight sight of judge the warning about sight and judgment in the end of the passage verses 39 to 41 Jesus said for judgment I have come into the world so that the blind will see and those who see will become blind some Pharisees who were with him heard him say this and asked what are we blind to how dare you do you not know that we've studied at the feet of rabbis do you not realize that we've kept our lives pure do you not know that we are the custodians of the law of Moses we are disciples of Moses are you saying we're blind

Jesus absolutely if you were blind you would not be guilty of sin but now that you claim you can see your guilt remains you really need to get this you are not saved by the knowledge of scripture you are not saved because you can quote from memory various scriptures you are not saved by your church attendance you are not saved by your moral life you are saved when you believe in Jesus and only when you believe in Jesus he pours his light into your life he gives you his grace he offers you forgiveness it's all him the work of God is to believe in the one who resent and no amount of learning or piety will substitute for that do you see that are you going to trust in that or are you going to rely on those other things claiming that you can see but not realizing that you are blind so there is a contrast isn't there

[36 : 54] John 9 is really about a contrast between a blind man who couldn't see but then discovered Jesus and saw him as the son of man and the saviour of the world and Pharisees who could see but thought they knew better and rejected Jesus to their own judgment and condemnation are you blind or do you see has Jesus opened your eyes are you trusting only in him for your salvation or are you hoping in the end that you'll find a way Jesus says I am the way the truth and the life no man comes to the father except through me when Bartimaeus was healed he cried out Jesus son of David have mercy on me and they tried to shut him up but they couldn't shut him up

Jesus son of David have mercy on me and Jesus said what do you want me to do for you he says I want to see go he says your faith has made you well and that's the way we come to Jesus have mercy on me I want to see I want to have this faith I want to have this hope I want to have this life that I see in other people I want it for myself and I need it and I need it now Jesus you alone can give me it Jesus I want to see is that your heart today is that your cry to him go your faith has made you well are you like a girl called Ramona once there was a blind girl named Ramona she hated herself because she could not see she had no eyes the only person in the whole world that she loved was her boyfriend Daniel and he loved her he was always there for her he told her that he wanted to marry her he didn't care that she was blind she told him that when she could see then she would marry him at

Christmas time that year someone gave Ramona a pair of eyes she was thrilled now she could see everything Daniel reminded her now that you can see will you marry me she looked up at him and was shocked for the first time she realized that Daniel was blind he had no eyes she shrieked I can't marry you you are blind you don't have any eyes I don't want to be married to someone that is blind Daniel walked away heartbroken his dreams were shattered he thought she loved him she was all he ever wanted later that night he wrote her a short note it simply said please take good care of my eyes I give them for you I love you do you see he shed his blood for you he gave you his eyes he offers you his life but so many people are blind to that sacrifice and they throw it back as it were in his face

Paul said he who knew no sin became sin for us so that we could become the righteousness of God in him his life given for us his salvation given to us have you eyes to see or are you blind let us pray