

WHAT COMES FIRST? Sunday School- April 29, 2012

Unifying Topic: HEALING THE BLIND MAN

Lesson Text

I. The Disciples' Question (John 9:1-5)

II. The Healing (John 9:6-12)

III. The Pharisees (John 9:13-17)

The Main Thought: Therefore said some of the Pharisees, This man is not of God, because he keepeth not the Sabbath day. Others said, How can a man that is a sinner do such miracles? And there was a division among them. (John 9:16, KJV).

Unifying Principle: People's critical personal needs often outweigh the rules and regulations made by other human beings. How do we decide which priorities in life come first Jesus put the blind man's need to see before the Jewish rules about Sabbath observance.

Lesson Aim: To show the students how Jesus came to give physical and spiritual sight to the blind.

Life aim: To help the students understand that God can use their weaknesses as a means through which to demonstrate His power.

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- 9:1 And as Jesus passed by, he saw a man which was blind from his birth.
9:2 And his disciples asked him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind?
9:3 Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him.
9:4 I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work.
9:5 As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.
9:6 When he had thus spoken, he spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and he anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay,
9:7 And said unto him, Go, wash in the pool of Siloam, (which is by interpretation, Sent.) He went his way therefore, and washed, and came seeing.
9:8 The neighbours therefore, and they which before had seen him that he was blind, said, Is not this he that sat and begged?
9:9 Some said, This is he: others said, He is like him: but he said, I am he.
9:10 Therefore said they unto him, How were thine eyes opened?
9:11 He answered and said, A man that is called Jesus made clay, and anointed mine eyes, and said unto me, Go to the pool of Siloam, and wash: and I went and washed, and I received sight.
9:12 Then said they unto him, Where is he? He said, I know not.
9:13 They brought to the Pharisees him that aforetime was blind.
9:14 And it was the sabbath day when Jesus made the clay, and opened his eyes.
9:15 Then again the Pharisees also asked him how he had received his sight. He said unto them, He put clay upon mine eyes, and I washed, and do see.
9:16 Therefore said some of the Pharisees, This man is not of God, because he keepeth not the sabbath day. Others said, How can a man that is a sinner do such miracles? And there was a division among them.
9:17 They say unto the blind man again, What sayest thou of him, that he hath opened thine eyes? He said, He is a prophet.

SYNOPSIS:

Chapter 8:33-43 —¹Jesus is in direct confrontation with the Jewish leaders again and they have completely rejected His claims to be Messiah and Son of God. Christ has been making these claims since He first arrived and they have continued to reject them. They have three different claims. The first claim is in verse 33, "We are Abraham's seed." The second claim is in verse 39, "Abraham is our father." The third claim is in verse 41, "We have one Father, even God." ²Jesus assumed that His hearers were slaves, but they emphatically denied being such. Jesus proceeded to clarify what He meant. Everyone who commits acts of sin becomes sin's slave. These Jews thought of themselves as occupying a privileged and secure position as sons within God's household because they were Abraham's descendants. Jesus now informed them that they were not sons but slaves. Jesus acknowledged that the Jews listening to Him were Abraham's descendants but only on the physical level. They desired to kill Him because they rejected His teaching; it did not reveal true spiritual kinship with Abraham. Jesus claimed to be God's Son as the Jews claimed to be Abraham's children. As their conduct showed, they were not Abraham's true children, so Jesus' words proved that He was God's true Son. Jesus proceeded to repeat the difference between them and Abraham. If they were God's true children, they would love Jesus rather than try to kill Him. They would acknowledge that God had sent Him. These Jews were having difficulty believing what Jesus was saying specifically about Himself.

¹ <http://www.gty.org/Resources/Sermons/1523>

² <http://www.soniclight.com/constable/notes/pdf/john.pdf>

Chapter 8:44-49 — Finally Jesus identified the father of these Jews to whom He had been alluding (vv.38, 41). Their attitudes and actions pointed to the devil as their father for two reasons. They wanted to kill Jesus, and Satan was a murderer from the beginning of his career as a fallen angel. Liars not only speak untruth, but they also reject the truth. These Jews rejected Jesus partially because He spoke the truth. Obviously many of Jesus' critics thought He was guilty of committing sin. Jesus asked if any of them could prove Him guilty. This was one of Jesus' clearest claims to being God. Not one of His critics could prove Him guilty because He was not guilty. Jesus again claimed that His hearers did not accept His words because they did not belong to God. Since the Jews could not refute Jesus' challenge they resorted to verbal abuse. Perhaps they called Him a Samaritan because He had questioned their ties to Abraham. This may have been a Samaritan attack against the Jews as well. However, there are several other instances of the Jews' claiming that Jesus was demon possessed. Perhaps these superficial believers concluded that only a demon-possessed heretic would accuse them as Jesus did. Jesus had claimed that their father was the devil, and now they accused Him of being the devil's agent. Jesus soberly denied their charge. His claims resulted from His faithfulness to His Father, not from demonic influence.

Chapter 8:50-55 — Jesus' aim was to honor His Father by faithfully carrying out His will. The Jews' goal was to disgrace Jesus. They tried to do this by rejecting the testimony that the Father sent Him. Jesus did not try to justify Himself. He sought the Father's glory, not His own. The central purpose of Jesus' mission was not glory for Himself but glory for His Father through salvation for humankind. Keeping Jesus' word is synonymous with believing on Him. They believe they finally have Him. They judged that only a demoniac would claim that His words were more powerful than the revelations that Abraham and the prophets had received and passed on. Tasting death means experiencing death (Heb.2:9). If Jesus' words had the power to prevent death, then Jesus must have been claiming to be greater than anyone who had died. They missed the point that He had been stressing throughout this discourse and throughout His ministry, namely, that He did not exalt Himself at all. He simply did the deeds and said the words that His Father had given Him. Jesus rarely asserted His deity. He did not promote Himself. Jesus then refuted His critics' accusation that He was glorifying Himself. Any glory apart from glory that God bestows amounts to nothing. Rather Jesus said that it was the Father who was glorifying Him. Jesus next identified these superficial believers as unbelievers. They had not yet come to believe that He was God even though some of them thought that He was a crazy prophet. Jesus was, of course, referring to Abraham as the physical ancestor of His hearers, not their spiritual father.

Chapter 8:56-59 — Jesus said that Abraham anticipated His day. Jesus was claiming that He fulfilled what Abraham looked forward to. Clearly Abraham did know that his seed would become the channel of God's blessing to the entire world. The Jews did not understand Jesus' meaning because they disregarded the possibility of His deity. To them it seemed ludicrous that Abraham could have seen Jesus' day in any sense since millennia separated the two men. Jesus was obviously not that old since He began His public ministry when He was about 30 (Lk.3:23), and it only lasted about three and a half years. If Jesus had only wanted to claim that He existed before Abraham, He could have said, "I was." By saying, "I am," He was not just claiming preexistence but deity. The Jews understood that Jesus was claiming to be God. They began to pick up stones to throw at Him for making what they considered a blasphemous claim. However, Jesus hid Himself because His hour had not yet come. Then He departed from the temple. He did not protest or retaliate, another indication of His submission to the Father. The Light of the World now symbolically abandoned the Jews by leaving the temple and going out to humanity in general, which the man born blind represents.

LESSON:

John 9:1-5 The Disciples' Question

9:1 And as Jesus passed by, he saw a man which was blind from his birth. This was a set-up for the disciples question and Jesus' demonstration to open both the eyes of the man and the understanding of the disciples. ³The disciples had evidently been taught, through their upbringing in Judaism, that sin and hurt, injury and handicap are linked together; that human hurt is the result of human sin. They saw a problem but Jesus saw a purpose of a

³ <http://www.raystedman.org/new-testament/john/believing-is-seeing>
<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-sundayschool.html>

miracle. There was a blind man waiting as Jesus passed by. He had been blind since birth. There was something about the man that attracted both Jesus and the disciples.

9:2 And his disciples asked him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind?

Apparently, this was a session for the "*Teacher*" because the disciples needed to be taught. I know the parents probably also wondered why! The disciples came up with the question. As stated before they were taught that man suffered because of sin. So they wanted to know since this man was blind since birth, who sinned, he or the parents? If this man's sin made him blind, how did he sin before his birth? How did he sin in the womb? We first must be born before we can sin; therefore, his blindness was not of himself. Now, they ask about the parents. Jesus begins to open their eyes.

9:3 Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him.

Jesus says neither, the blind man nor the parents. He gives this surprising answer that really astonished them all! We live in a fallen world where good is not always rewarded and bad is not always punished. Therefore, innocent people sometimes suffer. Many modes of suffering cannot be traced to any particular transgression and then again some are. God has many purposes unknown to us, but one thing for sure that whatever a person goes through, there is a chance that the works of God; the power of God can be manifested in that person. Jesus begins to move His disciples from thinking of "*who sinned*," to "*the works*" God will manifest in him.

9:4 I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work. Do we know the value of our time? It is fleeting and Jesus knew that! Four points to remember:

1. God sent Jesus. Jesus had come into the world on God's mission.
2. It was God's works that had to be done:
 - a. There is the "*work of seeking man*" Jesus takes the imitative with this man, reaching out to help him. It was not the man that reached out for help. In fact, the man was blind. He didn't even know that help was available.
 - b. There is the "*work of caring for man*." God cares that the man is blind.
 - c. There is the "*work of love and compassion*." God loves and has compassion for the man in his blindness and darkness.
 - d. There is the "*work of delivering from darkness to the giving of sight*."
3. There is an urgency stressed in this mission.
 - a. The word "must" (dei) means compulsion and necessity—"I must work the works of him that sent me."
 - b. The time for work is limited—"while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work."
4. Jesus ties us to His mission from the Father. We too are in the world to do the works of God. Our very purpose for being on earth is to proclaim and show forth the works of God. "I must work the works of him that sent me." So include yourself! Sometimes we miss our opportunities to do the works of God, but I'm so thankful He always somehow gives us another chance. Praise God!

Time is drawing near for all of us to live in the purpose God has laid out for us before breath leaves the body.

9:5 As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world. Jesus was called the "*Light of the World*" and He Himself knew His purpose of being the Light of the world. He knew that as long as He was in the world, man had a chance to see. Man had a chance to overcome the darkness in his life. Man had a chance to receive spiritual enlightenment.

John 9:6-12 The Healing

9:6 When he had thus spoken, he spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and he anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay, —Reasons may be assigned for making this clay, and anointing the blind man's eyes with it.

1. ⁴One: the Jews regarded spittle as medicinal to the eyes when diseased; however, they forbade the use of medicines on the Sabbath. They regarded the Sabbath so strictly that they considered the preparation and use of medicines as contrary to the law. It was particularly forbidden among them to use spittle on that day to heal diseased eyes. He showed that their interpretation of the law of the Sabbath was contrary

⁴ http://www.studyLight.org/com/bnn/view.cgi?book=joh&chapter=009&verse=001#Joh9_1
<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-sundayschool.html>

to the intention of God, and that his disciples were not bound by their notions of the sacredness of that day.

2. Another reason may have been that it was common for prophets to use some symbolical or expressive action in working miracles.

All that was used was in God's power: The clay in which we are created, the spit from His mouth, and Jesus' point of contact. He touched the man eyes with His hands. He used the clay made moist by His spittle to anoint his eyes. Jesus didn't want the man thinking that it was spittle that cured him.

9:7 And said unto him, Go, wash in the pool of Siloam, (which is by interpretation, Sent.) He went his way therefore, and washed, and came seeing. The man now must go beyond clay anointed eyes, to a simple request of obedience by faith, to fully being healed. Here Jesus sends the man on a simple trip to a pool. ⁵The significance of this name (pool of Siloam) is two-fold. First of all, throughout this gospel Jesus is referred to as the one whom God has sent (51 times). It is not the mud and the spit that cures the blind man. It is the "One who has been Sent" -- namely Jesus. Jesus was sent as the "Word" to reveal the Father, so the blind man will seek to reveal Jesus to the Pharisees.

1. Jesus using the pool of Siloam as a concluding point of action. It may not be about the pool at all but just according to his obedience. When we look at the Messiah who was sent by God to give sight to the world, we are seeing Jesus' response to His Father. He takes action after being sent by God. There is power in being sent! The man has to take the same action as he is being sent by Jesus to go wash in the pool of Siloam which means Sent. It was a simple task, yet difficult for a blind man. Could he get there and would he overcome the religious offences? ⁶"The pool of Siloam" is the water that was used for Jewish ritual purification and baptism, including the water ceremony for the Feast of Tabernacles. To wash off mud and spit in it would have been an offence and a challenge to the religious leaders, setting Jesus up for another direct confrontation (2 Kings 5:10-14; Neh. 3:15; Isa. 8:6; 22:9-11; John 7:37-39). A similar story of being sent to wash is of the story of Naaman. He was told to wash in the Jordan River (2Kgs.5:10). Naaman didn't want to go. The blind man's response was much better than Naaman's. There is a miracle in obedience no matter how strange it may seem when God speaks it to you!
2. ⁷The blind man was told to wash in the pool of Siloam. Even though this man's blindness had nothing to do with sin, still this man was a sinner; and when a person meets God, the greatest benefit is that their sins are taken away. To wash in the pool of Siloam, was symbolic of the fact that because this man had met Jesus, he was now washed and cleansed from all of his sins. The reason that the man was told to go and wash as a part of his healing, was in order to demonstrate that the willingness to obey God is a necessary part of belief. If you are not willing to obey God and to do whatever he tells you to do, then you do not have New Testament belief. When the disciples believed in Jesus, they left their nets and followed Him. When Saul met Jesus on the road to Damascus, Saul said, "Lord, what will you have me to do?"

The man washed and came seeing. He received his sight because he did exactly what Jesus said. The man's eyes were opened and now he can be delivered from the darkness of sin and shame, death and corruption, hell and destruction by coming to Jesus and by obeying Him.

9:8 The neighbours therefore, and they which before had seen him that he was blind, said, Is not this he that sat and begged? Now, the man is confronted by neighbors and bystanders who had seen him blind for a while, since birth. They even knew he had begged, because of his blindness. There is confusion over the man's identity, yet they had seen him many times, but they still asked: "*Is not this he that sat and begged?*" The miracle had changed the man's appearance.

9:9 Some said, This is he: others said, He is like him: but he said, I am he. The people were all speaking different things but not coming to a conclusion. The religious leaders didn't want to face the truth that it was him. Finally the man just says, "*I am he.*"

9:10 Therefore said they unto him, How were thine eyes opened? Well, the next question of course is How? How

⁵ <http://www.crossmarks.com/brian/john9x1.htm>

⁶ <http://www.intothyword.org/apps/articles/default.asp?articleid=64436&columnid=3803>

⁷ <http://www.biblegems.com/JOHN8V52.HTM>

are you able to see? Nicodemus wanted to know *"How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb and be born?"(Jh.3:4)*. Jesus wants them to get away from "how" to experiencing "who." It wasn't about how it was done but in *"who"* did it (the works of God).

9:11 He answered and said, A man that is called Jesus made clay, and anointed mine eyes, and said unto me, Go to the pool of Siloam, and wash: and I went and washed, and I received sight. The blind man simply says a man called Jesus... The man had simply heard the Savior's voice; he didn't even realize who Jesus was yet. Just Jesus' voice caused faith to arise within the blind man because he certainly couldn't see Him. It was Jesus who opened his eyes physically and spiritually and he didn't even know it! It was Jesus who put clay on his eyes and anointed them and he didn't even know it! It was Jesus who told him to go to the pool of Siloam and wash his eyes there and he didn't even know it! The result of the blind man's obedience is, *"I have received my sight!" "Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed; blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed" Jh.21:29*. The man could have stopped at any stage and failed in his spiritual journey in knowing personally of Jesus' power and receiving from Him.

9:12 Then said they unto him, Where is he? He said, I know not. Now, they have finally turned from *"how"* to *"who"*. The neighbors wanted to know where is He? The man had encountered the Savior but didn't know where He was. He didn't know where He could be found. When the man returned from the pool, Jesus was gone.

John 9:13-17 The Pharisees

9:13 They brought to the Pharisees him that aforetime was blind. Because the man had been healed on the Sabbath the neighbors took him to the Pharisees. ⁸The Pharisees didn't want to know the truth about Jesus. They only wanted to find an excuse to condemn Him, and they wanted to condemn Him as a law-breaker. To make clay on the Sabbath was illegal. Jesus had performed three unlawful works: (1) making the clay with spittle, (2) applying the clay, (3) and healing the man. This had now become a problem. The blind man now stands before the Sanhedrin Council.

9:14 And it was the sabbath day when Jesus made the clay, and opened his eyes. As said before, this was an act of healing on the Sabbath. ⁹These Pharisees and the people who brought him to the Pharisees are so caught up in the letter of the law, that they have overlooked the fact that a fantastic miracle has occurred here; a man blind from birth can now see! They reject the healing and the Healer!

9:15 Then again the Pharisees also asked him how he had received his sight. He said unto them, He put clay upon mine eyes, and I washed, and do see. The Pharisees really didn't want to know the truth. They only wanted to find an excuse to condemn the law-breaker. But¹⁰by telling his story over and over again in this text, the blind man doesn't seem to convert anyone -- in fact he seems to have made the Pharisees somewhat angry; but he learns much about his faith through his witness to the doubting questioners.

9:16 Therefore said some of the Pharisees, This man is not of God, because he keepeth not the sabbath day. Others said, How can a man that is a sinner do such miracles? And there was a division among them. There were some of the religious leaders (the Sanhedrin) that really didn't want to think that the Healer was of God, to do His will and work, because if He was, He would have known better. He wouldn't do such a thing on the Sabbath. That's just not the custom! Then others said, how could a mere ordinary man; a sinner do such miracles? Therefore, there was some division among the Pharisees. In other words, some believed that Jesus was the Messiah, and some did not believe. They were blind and didn't know it; blinded by their own man-made traditions.

9:17 They say unto the blind man again, What sayest thou of him, that he hath opened thine eyes? He said, He is a prophet. Since they couldn't make up their mind, they turn around and ask the blind man, what say you? What is your opinion of this man? I know this is not what they were ready for. To the blind man, he no longer sees Jesus

⁸ <http://www.biblegems.com/JOHN9V12.HTM>

⁹ <http://www.lovetheLord.com/books/john/27.html>

¹⁰ <http://www.crossmarks.com/brian/john9x1.htm>

<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-sundayschool.html>

just as a man but his spiritual eyes has become clearer, and he boldly declare, He is a prophet! ¹¹This recognition of Jesus as a prophet carried a strong negative thrust against the Pharisees' charge of Sabbath-breaking. 'Dummelow' pointed out that "*prophets had authority over the sabbath.*" We see that the blind man wasn't afraid to speak up.

SUMMARY:

As Jesus was exiting the temple (Jh.8:59), He saw a man who was blind from birth. The question posed by the disciples is whose sin caused this man's blindness; the man's or his parents (**vv.1-2**). Jesus gives them an answer they weren't expecting. He says, "*Neither, but that the works of God should be made manifest in him.*" The opportunity was now for God's works to be manifest; while it's day which indicate there will be a time when He will not be able to. He says, "*As long as I am in the world, I am the Light of the world*" (**vv.3-5**). ¹²The Lord's method of healing was unique: spitting on the clay, anointing it on the man's eyes, and then telling him to wash it off in the pool of Siloam (**vv. 6-7**). The neighbors and those who had previously seen the blind man, questioned if he was the one who sat and begged on the street (v.8). As they continued in their confusion, he said, "*I am he*" (v.9). Since his eyes were opened, who did it? He says, "*a man called Jesus*" did it (**vv. 10-11**). They then wanted to know where he had gone and he replied "*I do not know*" (**v.12**). Because of Jesus compassion and healing of this blind man He soon found Himself in trouble with the Jewish leaders. His act of deliberately healing the man on the Sabbath Day caused the Pharisees great concern. In their eyes He had broken the Law of the Sabbath. And since He had broken the Sabbath, He could not be of God. Others argued that it was impossible for a sinner to perform miracles. Since He did perform a miracle, maybe He was not a sinner (**vv.13-16**). So they asked the man his opinion of Christ. The beggar was not intimidated by the threats of the Pharisees but boldly responded that He is a prophet (**v.17**).

APPLICATION:

Don't allow people to down-play the miracles in your life just because they don't understand them. God's purposes always show up for our good. The right time might not be someone else's right time, but it's always God's right time and He establishes what comes first. While it is day, do the works of God instead of works of tradition.

¹¹ <http://www.studyLight.org/com/bcc/view.cgi?book=joh&chapter=009>

¹² <http://www.family-times.net/commentary/contentment-in-any-circumstance/>
<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-sundayschool.html>