

August 7th, 2016

BLESSED ARE THE BLIND, FOR THEY SHALL SEE

John 9:35-41

Matthew Henry once said “There is no greater hindrance to the salvation of souls than self-sufficiency.”¹ The heart that says “I don’t need help, I can rely on my own strength, my own wisdom” is in more danger of the judgment than the man who sits on death row. Or as Solomon says it: “Do you see a man who is wise in his own eyes? There is more hope for a fool than for him.” (Proverbs 26:12) In the proverbs, the fool is seen as the worthless man. And the godly are told to not to put their trust in them. Solomon says “Whoever sends a message by the hand of a **fool** cuts off his own feet and drinks violence...Like an archer who wounds everyone is one who hires a passing **fool**...Like a dog that returns to his vomit is a **fool** who repeats his folly.” (Proverbs 26:6, 10-11) The fool in proverbs is a worthless man, whose situation is utterly hopeless because he goes astray from the word of the LORD. But Solomon immediately adds “Do you see a man who is wise in his own eyes? There is more hope for a fool than for him.” “Even more hopeless than the situation of the fool, is the situation of the stubbornly, unteachable person,”² who thinks he is wise. Who thinks he can see.

Jesus says in our passage today “For judgment I came into this world, that those who do not see may see, and those who see may become blind.” (v.39) Meaning “I came into the world to save the spiritually blind, the lost and ungodly and they will cry to Me for sight and I will give it, but for who say they

¹ Matthew Henry, *A Commentary on the Whole Bible, Vol. 5: Matthew to John*, (Iowa Falls, IA.,: World Bible Publishers,), pg. 1027

² ESV Study Bible, (Wheaton, IL.,: Crossway Publishers, 2008), pg.1180 “After 11 verse describing the terrible state of the fool, this verse becomes a powerful punch line: even more hopeless than the situation of the fool is the situation of the stubbornly unteachable person, who is wise in his own eyes (see v.5). The reference to a better hope for the fool indicates just how dire the situation is, since the fool is describe as one who already considers his way to be “right in his own eyes” (12:15). Yet there are digressive folly and some of the more thoughtless types of fools can sometimes be reclaimed.”

see, the arrogant, those who are wise in their own eyes, I will leave them blind. Blessed are those who know they are blind, for they shall see. But cursed are those who think that they see for they shall be blind.'

The Big Idea...

Jesus Christ came to heal the blind, therefore we must come to Him as our only hope of seeing

- ☆ The Blessing of the Blind
- ☆ The Sentence of Those Who Say They See

I. The Blessing of the Blind

Overview

John chapter nine is one event. Jesus miraculously heals the man born blind at the beginning of this chapter. This healing was shocking to everybody, because it was assumed that this man's sin was the decisive cause of his blindness. 'Only people who do righteous deeds,' *they thought*, 'deserve anything from God.' But what Jesus is showing us, is that no one deserves anything from God but judgment. It is by grace alone that sinners are brought into the kingdom of God.

As this grace is put on display, it has a two fold effect: 1) The man born blind gains more and more spiritual sight. He moves from seeing Jesus as a man (v.11), to seeing him as a prophet (v.17), sent by God (v.33) and finally to worshipping Him as God (v.38). 2) On the other hand the Pharisees become more blinded. They argue that Jesus is not from God (v.16), to threatening excommunication for anyone that confesses Jesus to be the Christ (v.22), to calling Jesus a sinner (v.24). And this blindness on the part of the Pharisees caused them to excommunicate this man who could now see.

And so what we see is that this passage is not mainly about physical sight at all. It's about spiritual sight. It's not mainly about Jesus healing a blind man, it's about *how* Jesus heals spiritually blind men and spiritually blind women.

Blindness represents inability not disability

So we must ask ourselves, does this man's blindness represent a disability or an inability? There's a big difference between the two. If a person has a disability, they just need a little help added to their own performance. A person who is disabled in his legs needs the help of a wheelchair, which he can then move himself. If a person has an inability, they depend entirely on someone or something else. A person who can't breathe on their own needs a ventilator to push that oxygen into their lungs. If it stops they die.

So the question is, what does this man's blindness represent? Inability or disability? Inability. This man was entirely unable to see the light of day. He was a beggar, abandoned by his parents, stigmatized by society, an utter outcast, cut off from hope in the world. If Jesus did not take the initiative to give Him sight, He would have died blind. And this is the state of all born into this world. We are blind to the gospel of Jesus Christ. If God doesn't take the initiative, we will not be saved. This has been the theme over and over again in John.

John 6:44 "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him."

John 6:63 "It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh is no help at all"

John 6:65 "This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted him by the Father."

John 15:16 "You did not choose me, but I chose you"

As D.A. Carson has said “Jesus did not come to a world of sinners aware of their need, and eager to be rid of their sin.”³ Jesus came into the world full of sinners who loved the darkness. **John 3:19** “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.” Jesus came into a world full of blind sinners who would never seek salvation on their own. **Romans 3:10-11** “None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands; *no one seeks for God.*”

That’s what this blind man represents—total inability. Just as the physically blind are unable to give themselves sight, so the spiritually blind sinner is unable to see Christ on his own. If Christ doesn’t give sight first, no sinner will ever see Christ, let alone come to him for salvation. If we have eyes that see Jesus as the beautiful Savior, it’s because He gave us those eyes. Christ gives eyes, and then we see.

The Sovereign Grace of the Son of Man

That is what happens to the man born blind. Jesus gives him physical sight at the beginning of the chapter, and when he was excommunicated from the synagogue, Jesus comes to him and gives him spiritual sight.

v.35-38 Jesus heard that they had cast him out, and having found him he said, “Do you believe in the Son of Man?” He answered, “And who is he, sir, that I may believe in him?” Jesus said to him, “You have seen him, and it is he who is speaking to you.” He said, “Lord, I believe,” and he worshiped him.

Three things to see from these verses. **First** Jesus calls Himself the Son of Man. This title refers both to Jesus being fully human and fully God. He was fully human in that he was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit by the virgin Mary. And he had an earthly father—Joseph.⁴ And He was fully God. The

³ D.A. Carson, *The Pillar New Testament Commentary: The Gospel According to John*, (Grand Rapids, MI.: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1991), pg. 378

⁴ “He is born of a virgin. He had a human father but he didn’t have sex with this virgin until Jesus was conceived.” <http://www.desiringgod.org/interviews/why-is-jesus-called-son-of-man>

title Son of Man was given in Daniel 7⁵—“And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him;” (v.14) Jesus Christ comes to sinners not as merely a human prophet, but as the God-man. Only the God-man can save sinners. Jesus had to obey as a man, in order to give us the righteousness that we need to stand before a holy God. And He had to be God in order to swallow up the terrible wrath of God on the cross for sins. Anything less than a God-man cannot save.

Second, Jesus asked if the man believed in the Son of Man. Jesus was not just asking if the man knew if the Son of Man *existed*. The demons believe in Jesus (Mark 1:24; James 2:10) The demons believe that Jesus died on the cross for sinners (Acts 19:15). There will be people who believe in Jesus but still go to hell. **Matthew 7:22-23** “On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?’ And then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.’” Saving faith is personal trust. It’s looking to Christ and saying “I trust you with the most valuable object I have—my eternal soul. Jesus I depend on you and no other.”

Third, the man believed and worshipped. The word for worship is προσκυνέω *proskyneō*. It’s where we get the word prostrate. This man laid himself out before Christ and adored Him as God. This man lost command of himself in the presence of Christ.⁶ This man who was excommunicated from his synagogue, abandoned by His parents, now gained the greatest treasure in existence: Christ! Salvation is a treasure *mainly*, not because we live forever but because we gain Jesus.

“Whom have I in heaven but you? And there is nothing on earth that I desire besides you. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.” (Psalm 73:25-26)

⁵ see Daniel 7:13

⁶ John Calvin, *Calvin’s Commentaries Vol. XVII*, (Grand Rapids, MI.: BakerBooks, 2009), pg. 389

There was a blog this week on the Gospel Coalition's website entitled "China's Christian Future." The author, a Chinese man named Yu Jie tells of his being kidnapped and beaten because he was loved Jesus Christ:

"On the night of December 10, 2010, as the Nobel Peace Prize ceremony honoring Liu was taking place in Oslo, I was kidnapped by the secret police and taken to the outskirts of Beijing. They beat and tortured me for hours, breaking my fingers one by one. I blacked out and was taken to a hospital. A hospital in Changping, a suburb of Beijing, refused to take me, saying I was "hopeless." Then I was taken to a hospital in Beijing. My life was saved. For days my wife was under house arrest and did not know my whereabouts, or even if I was alive. She was seized by a sinking feeling and could not eat or sleep. In a few days most of her hair fell out. Before I lost consciousness, I prayed: "Lord, if you take me, then make me a martyr. *I am not worthy, but I am willing.*" In that moment, I clearly heard his voice: "As surely as I live, not a hair of your head will fall to the ground." And: "Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul."⁷

Why would this man endure such torture for Christ? Because he was once blind but Christ gave him sight. And because Christ bled for him, he was willing to bleed for Christ. Every broken finger was an act of worship. Like the blind man, he was willing to lose all for Jesus. That is worship. **[Experimental.]** That is what Christ has done in this passage. He gave the man spiritual sight of His beauty that so that He could adore Christ.

II. The Sentence of Those Who Say They See

For judgment I came into this world

Jesus continues in v.39 "For judgment I came into this world, that those who do not see may see, and those who see may become blind." At first glance, this may look like a contradiction. In John 12:47, Jesus says "I did not come to *judge* the world but to save the world" (also cf. John 3:17) But here he says "For *judgment* I came into the world." So how do we fit these verses together? When

⁷ <http://www.firstthings.com/article/2016/08/chinas-christian-future>

Jesus says “I did not come to *judge* the world,” He means that *His main mission* in His first coming was to save souls, *not* to condemn them. However there is a condemnation present for those who reject the gospel.⁸ But this condemnation wasn't Jesus' main mission. It would be a bit like going to get an operation to remove a life-threatening tumor. And you ask the doctor, as you lie on the operation table: “Did you come to cut me open?” And then the doctor responds “No, I've come to save your life.” We know what the doctor means. Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. That's why the Father sent Him. When He speaks the truth of the gospel, many believe and are saved; but others continue in disbelief and rebellion. And therefore they are under the wrath of God. In their current state, they are under the judgment.

We can see in the rest of v.39 “For judgment I came into this world, *that those who do not see may see, and those who see may become blind.*” Jesus is no longer talking about physical sight, but spiritual sight. When Jesus says “those who do not see may see,” he means that those who have come to understand that they are lost and in spiritual darkness, Jesus has opened the eyes of their heart to believe in Him. On the other hand, when Jesus says “those that see may become blind” He means those that think they can see, who don't think they lost or in the darkness, will become more blind.’

Are we also blind?

Some of the Pharisees were enraged when they heard Jesus say this and asked: “Are we also blind?” That little word “also” reveals how these Pharisees viewed themselves. They could have said “Are we blind?” But instead, they inserted the word “also.” Are we *also* blind?” Meaning, they could agree with Jesus that everybody beneath them were blind, because they were not part of their elite club, but surely Jesus would not dare include them *also* as being blind! They are the religious elite. The teachers of Israel. The instructors of the law.

⁸ John 3:36 “...whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.”

Jesus responds in v.41 “If you were blind, you would have no guilt; but now that you say, ‘We see,’ your guilt remains.”

I was finishing my sermon last night at Sharis and this young man had entered into conversation with me about this passage. When I was telling him about the passage, you should have seen his reaction. His was astonished at the way that Jesus spoke. “Who speaks like that?” God. I would argue that this is the chief evidence for the authenticity of Scripture, that when we hear sentences like this, we hear glory! “If you were blind, you would have no guilt; but now that you say, ‘We see,’ your guilt remains.” What is Jesus saying?

He is speaking ironically. He’s saying ‘if you were to recognize that you are in a hopelessly lost condition and cry out to Me to give you sight, then you would not be guilty of sin. That’s what Jesus means by the first part—“if you were blind, you would have no guilt.” But notice carefully how He phrases the second part. He says “But now that *you say ‘We see’* your guilt remains.” Did you hear it? Jesus added the words ‘you say ‘We see.’ In other words, Jesus is saying ‘you say that you are not spiritually blind, and lost, and because of that you reject Me. Therefore your guilt remains. You think that you are righteous within yourselves, and because of that you will never come to me for salvation.’ People who think that they are good within themselves will never come to Christ. Because they see no need for Christ.⁹ Unless the Holy Spirit grants the new birth they will not believe. This is why John’s gospel is so saturated with the doctrine of the new birth.

John 1:12-13 “But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.”

John 3:3 “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.”

⁹ This is similar to what Jesus said in another place: “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners.” (Mark 2:17)

John 3:5-6 “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

The new birth is what removes the blindness. The new birth is what grants sight. The new birth is what causes a person to repent of their sins and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. And unless that happens to a person, they will remain blind and under the guilt and condemnation of sin.

I can imagine a person asking at this point: “but how can a blind person be guilty of not seeing? We don’t condemn blind people for not seeing. We help them and give them aid. If we are responsible to see, but only the Holy Spirit can give that spiritual sight through the new birth, then how can we be accountable for our guilt? Because the blindness of sin is not the same thing as a physical blindness. It is a willful blindness. It is a rebellious blindness. It is a blindness that loves the darkness. “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.” (John 3:19) We are spiritually blind to the light because we don’t want to see it. Jesus did not come into the world to find a people who wanted to be saved. He came into a world of people who love the darkness and hate the light of life.

Application

Our Doctrine: Only the Blind Shall See

Dear unbeliever: The greatest danger you face is saying you see. The greatest danger you face is thinking that you are a good person. The greatest danger you face is by believing that you are a righteous person. As Solomon said “Do you

see a man who is wise in his own eyes? There is more hope for a fool than for him.” What Solomon is saying is that even a fool will grab ahold of the life raft when he is drowning. But the person who is wise in his own eyes will think that he is a good enough swimmer—that he can make it on his own. If you have not repented of your sin and turned to Jesus Christ, you are lost at sea. And that sea is the terrible wrath of God. God is angry at sin. At your sin. No amount of your own goodness will save you. The Scripture says that “...a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ...because by works of the law no one will be justified.” (Galatians 2:16) You need to be **justified** before God. Which means you need your sins forgiven and you need to be declared righteous in His sight. Oh friend, that is what Christ accomplished on the cross for all who put their trust in Him. Christ loves sinners. Jesus delights in saving the ungodly. Jesus didn’t come into the world because sinners loved Him. Jesus came into the world because He loves sinners. And there is no greater demonstration of love in the universe, than Jesus laying down His life for sinners. Look to Christ. See Him in your place bleeding for you. See Him in your place taking on the punishment you deserve. See Him as rising from the dead for you. See Him as the strength of your heart, and your everlasting portion. Come to Christ as a needy and blind beggar, and He will give you the light of life.

Our Duty: Come to Christ as Needy, Blind Beggars

Beloved: our need to come to Christ as needy, blind beggars never goes away. Martin Luther saw this truth. There was an account given of the great Reformer in which he said this “Most days I’m so depressed that I can’t even get out of bed. People try to make me a fixed star, but I’m not. I’m a wandering planet. No one should look to me for guidance.”¹⁰ Luther recognized that in himself, he was a wandering planet, a blind guide. And this coming from the man who stood against the most powerful empire in the world.

¹⁰ From the 2003 movie *Luther*

We must adopt this same attitude. Christians are never exempt from blindness. Jesus wrote to the church, to believers, in Laodicea. He said “For you say, I am rich, I have progressed, and I need nothing, not realizing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked.” (Rev. 3:17) When we as Christians move away from the hope of the gospel in any part of life, we become blind. And this is our default. As one author says “The longer we are “Christian”...we can slowly and subtly begin to feel less needy. Self-reliance can creep in...awakening fresh confidence in our own energy and effort.”¹¹ We can start to feel wise in our own eyes. And we can become self-confident Christians as opposed to Christ-confident Christians.

But self-confidence is nothing less than self-righteousness. And we suffer from this self-righteousness every day. So let’s test ourselves:

What are we saying when we won’t forgive another person? *‘I’m more righteous than you because I would never do something like that.’*

What are we saying when we are impatient with our kids, or spouse, or friends? *‘Come on, come on, if it were me, I would have gotten this already.’*

Children what are you saying when you are disobedient to your parents? *‘My parents don’t know as much as me, so I have the right to not listen to them’* Children, that’s self-righteousness.

Even **anxiety and worry** can be a form of self-righteousness. *‘God I know you have told me to trust you, but I know that these circumstances are more threatening than your promises.’*

Spiritual lukewarmness is self righteousness. The spiritual lukewarm person says *‘God I know that you have said that I’m to worship you with all my heart, soul, mind and strength, but I think Sunday is good enough.’*

¹¹ <http://www.desiringgod.org/articles/when-our-hearts-revert-to-self-reliance>

Theological superiority is self-righteousness. ‘If those people only knew what *I know*, then they will have really arrived.’

In all these things, what are we doing? Acting like we can see in ourselves. Beloved when we do these things, we are forgetting the gospel. The gospel is not simply light for salvation, it is light for all of life. Jesus says “...apart from me you can do nothing.” (John 15:5) We need to come to Jesus recognizing what Luther said “God without you, I’m a wandering planet.” And apply to all of life.

“Jesus lead me in this conversation, because I am blind as to what I’m supposed to say. Jesus lead me in reading Scripture, because I can’t see without your light. Jesus help me love my spouse and kids, because with out the warmth of your light, my heart is cold. Jesus help me in my work today, because without your light, I will fail to see that work is worship.”

Our Delight: Christ Provides For Needy, Blind, Beggars

John Piper, who is one of the greatest preachers of our day, was recently asked if he had any regrets during his 35+ years in his ministry. He answered: “I regret everything.” Piper recognized that even through his ministry, he in himself was blind and made mistakes in everything he touched. How can he have peace with a statement like that? How can we have peace if we know that at age 70 we’ll probably say the same thing? Because of Christ! The gospel is big enough for a lifetime of regrets, a lifetime of blindnesses, a lifetime of neediness. Jesus is not waiting for us to perfectly forgive each other, or have perfect patience with each other, or to be anxiety free or spiritual zealots, before He accepts us. If we have come to Him by faith, we’ve been accepted. Even when we are faithless, He remains faithful for He cannot deny Himself (2 Timothy 2:13). Jesus is not the god who helps those who help themselves, He is the Savior who helps those who cannot help themselves. When we are blind, He is our sight. When we are weak, He is strong. When we are discouraged, He is

the joy of our hearts. Oh Beloved, rest in Christ. Rest in His promise that He will never leave you nor forsake you. That even after a lifetime of regrets, Christ will never disappoint you.

Prayer:

Communion

God has prepared this communion feast for us that we might remember that we are blind, but Christ is our light.

These are tokens of your blindness. But greater than that. These are tokens of the Savior's love in desiring to lead you and give you light.

Assurance of Pardon: In receiving these tokens by faith, you can be assured of your forgiveness before God.