

**I Was Blind, Now I See**  
**John 9:1-41**

A. Scholar N.T. Wright tells the following contemporary story that shows the **relevance** of this biblical story in John 9:

“I was just waking up, listening to the radio, when a news item caught my attention. Someone had been dismissed from their job for holding heretical views about the afterlife. I listened more intently. Who was it? What job had they been doing? Was it, perhaps, a leading theologian, a bishop even, denying the *resurrection*?

No. It was a football coach (soccer). The man then in charge of the England national football squad had said, on the record, that people who suffered from birth defects and disabilities were **being punished for sins they had committed in a former life [that's the question in 9:2-3]**. This is a belief held by some within the broad Hindu tradition (though many Hindus might reject the idea). If you believe in *karma*, the unstoppable chain of cause and effect running from the present life into a future one, and on to another and another, it is quite conceivable that what someone does in one life will be rewarded, or (as it may be) punished, in another one.

But there was a public outcry. Groups that support the rights of the disabled were, understandably, furious. They raised a storm in the media. And before too long the English football authorities asked the coach to step down from his job. Some people wondered if that was a case of religious discrimination.

There was so much confusion among the British media that a few journalists, unable to tell one religion from another, and assuming that any belief in the afterlife was just like any other, described the coach as a ‘born-again Christian’, by which they seemed to mean ‘someone who takes religion seriously’.

In all this confusion, few commentators noticed that there is a passage of the New Testament ... which addresses this very issue.”

He's speaking of our text here. **Who sinned to cause this condition?**

It's not only a very relevant story; but it's also a very enlightening & inspiring story....

B. It's **enlightening** because it sheds light on the Messiah.

- One of the expectations about the coming Messiah was that He would give sight to the blind. (**Isa 29:18-19; 35:5-6**; and Israel's mission - 42:7).
- Jesus actually does this a lot in the gospels. **It's like Jesus' favorite healing. Why?**
- **There are more miracles of the blind seeing attributed to the ministry of Jesus than any other category of healing** (**Matt 9:27-31; 12:22-23; 15:30-31; 21:14; Mark 8:22-26; 10:46-52; Lk 7:20-23**)
- Doug Moo points out that you don't read of any accounts in the OT of giving sight to the blind, and that none of Jesus' followers actually do it. (In the OT, we read only a few statements about God being able to do it. (Ex 4:11; Ps 146:8)
  - The closest thing in the NT is when Ananias lays hands on Saul, and his temporary blindness disappeared.

- Therefore, as we read John 9, we should see it as a glorious sign of Jesus' identity as the Promised Messiah.

And for John, this is his sixth **sign** of Jesus' identity.

- And it's a continuation of the "**light theme**" of 8:12 at the feast (see 9:4).
- We need no chapter division here.

Coming to Jesus is coming out of darkness into light;  
it's coming out of blindness into sight.

- **This is the testimony of every Christian, "I was blind but now I see."**
- We have many descriptions of Xian conversion, but this is a great one! (Acts 26)

C. It's not only enlightening, but it's also **inspiring**.

After a very dense section in John 5-8, this story is refreshing.

- **We've had all the theory; all the argument in detail, and now an illustration of life change, of a man coming out of darkness into light.**
- It's a very lively story, filled with **personality and drama**.
- **Like the healing of the lame man in John 5, the miracle is followed by a debate.**
- Both miracles were performed on the Sabbath, and the religious leaders take offense in both texts. In this story, the religious leaders take action against the healed man; he's essentially excommunicated.
- **This is the first act of persecution against Jesus' followers.**

It's inspiring because it's so fantastic.

**If we had been there, we would have cheered!**

- Even a British Presbyterian might have cheered.
- We would have cheered over **Jesus' power and grace to totally transform this man (first physically then spiritually – he becomes a worshiper of Jesus, v 38).**

And we would have **cheered** at the **boldness and response** of this formerly blind man.

- The man healed is one of my **favorite minor characters in all of Scripture!**
- **A former beggar, who has never been to school, challenges the religious leaders.**
- **He's a very fine and articulate witness.**
- **He's cool and coherent; if he doesn't know an answer he says so.**

So we have a little bit of everything: relevance, truth, and inspiration.

**C.K. Barrett:** A man who has studied John his whole life says:

**"This chapter expresses perhaps more vividly and completely than any other John's conception of the work of Christ."**

- He says, This is what Jesus came to do!
- It shows humanity's complete hopelessness apart from Christ. They're blind.
- And it shows the radical transformation that happens when one is changed by the Savior's grace and power.

## Part 1: The Blind Man's Transformation (9:1-12)

V. 1: No specifics are given. Not sure where this. But it's on the heels of the Feast.

- **Here's hope for the hopeless.**
- **He had no employment, no prospects for marriage, no formal education, and no social honor.**
- He was utterly dependent on people, but that's about to change!
- **Jesus makes this guy — this guy! — one of his early disciples, and the first to experience persecution!**

2: Here's an age-old question: **Do we suffer because of our sin, or perhaps someone else's sin?** They don't give a third or fourth option!

- The disciples are preoccupied with the cause of his blindness, but Jesus directs their attention to the **purposes of God**.
- This is important. **Remember Job's friends blamed it on Job's past.**
- **They were good comforters until they started talking!**

In suffering, first reaction should not be to try to **entangle the problem** of suffering and trials, but to **exalt God in the problem**.

And to remember one day the Lord will **remove** this problem forever!

- **How may we glorify God in our suffering? (1) By trusting God, resting in his sovereignty; (2) by looking for ways to glorify him; (3) by asking him to make you more like Jesus in the suffering; (4) By hoping for glory, and turning loose of your love for the things of this world; (5) By bearing witness to Jesus to those around us.**
- **When we pray for the sick, we're not to be overly concerned about the cause, but with a concern for how this sickness will advance the purposes of God in this person's life, in the church's life, and within the kingdom of God.**

**There's something is more than health, wealth and prosperity: conformity the Son of God, and the glory of God.**

- It's also important — though not emphasized here — to remember that our God understands human suffering. **We don't have a God on a deck chair** (just casually watching human suffering); **we have the Son of God on across.**

**Not only do we want to be more like Jesus in our suffering, but we have the presence of the Suffering Servant with us in our suffering!**

**3a:** It can be the case at times that sin and suffering are related (**you make bad lifestyle choices and you will suffer**), but in this particular case, Jesus' insists otherwise.

- Jesus will say *it's not about karma, it's about kingdom....*

**3b:** There is a greater purpose: *that God's works may be displayed.*

- **Doesn't call it a miracle. For us, it is a miracle, for Jesus it's just Tuesday.**

**4:** Jesus speaks about the urgency of doing this work; the opportunity will be gone soon.

- **Jesus' stay is short in the incarnation.**
- His incarnation is a **preview** of things to come!

**5:** Further, this happened *so that Jesus would reveal himself as the light of the world.*

- **This miracle is connected with the Feast of Tabernacles, a water and light festival.**
- **As the light of the world, he can remove our darkness and give us light.**

**6:** You don't see this coming! **A life verse for baseball players!**

- **"Jesus spits."**
- He bends over, gets a bit of **mud**, places it on the man's eyes, spits and sends him off to wash his eyes in the pool of Siloam. **Every middle schooler's fav verse!**
- **What a series of events!**
- This is probably **an allusion to the creation account**; Jesus has wrought a creative act (Gen 2:7); he's **acting out the creation account in miniature, giving a preview of the coming new creation.**

**7:** Notice where he sent him: **The Pool of Siloam.**

He likely chooses this pool for three reasons:

1. **This was the water source for the Feast of Tabernacles water ceremony — Jesus is the fulfillment of all those hopes.**
2. **Siloam means "Sent."** Jesus is the "sent one." (We've seen this over and over again, and will see it more). Going to the pool is a reminder of who Jesus is. He is sent from heaven.
3. **The waters of Siloam are mentioned in Isaiah 8:6, which speaks of the coming Messiah.**
  - God told Israel of coming judgment because they refused the waters of Siloam that He provided. Sadly, history will repeat itself as many will reject the Sent One, Jesus Christ.

**7b:** Quite an understatement. **A non-dramatic report: A man born blind can now see.**

- **For the first time he sees! Imagine that!**
- This is what happens in the gospel – by grace we see! **All things are made new.**
- **C.S. Lewis: "I believe in Christianity as I believe that the sun has risen: not only because I see it, but because by it I see everything else."**

**8-9:** There's much discussion that takes place, as some recognize him as the former beggar.

- Others insisted that he was not that man; but the formerly blind man kept saying, **"It is I."**
- **His physical transformation is radical.**
- **Ill: Robby Gallaty texts me every Sunday morning; his testimony, "Are you T-Bone?" His drivers license before he met Christ.** It was a glorious transformation.

9: He keeps saying, “I am the blind man! I am the blind man!”

10: The Question: **How were your eyes opened?**

11: His answer: The man responds with a clear concise summary of the miracle.

- “Don’t you see, it’s simple!”
- He seems to know little about Jesus, as he says, “the man they call Jesus.”
- **As the story unfolds, his knowledge of Christ will increase.**

12: the neighbors ask of Jesus’ location, but he doesn’t know his whereabouts. (read)

- **I don’t know! I was blind!**
- **That’s asking a bit much isn’t it?!**
- **I’m not a very good eye witness testimony!**

## Part 2: The Pharisees’ Interrogation (9:13-34)

The Pharisees now come **in opposition**.

### A. Interrogation of the healed man (13-17)

13: The neighbors go get the Pharisees (read).

- They assume this healing has **some religious element to it**, and the Pharisees are the one’s to seek for explanation.

14: John gives us the important **Sabbath** note (read).

- **Jesus did these miracles on the Sabbath, as a sign of His Messianic presence, the one who will give true rest.**

15: Here’s their first question to the man (read).

- The man again summarizes succinctly (**as one who admires the ability to synthesize and be concise, I like this man!**)

16: The Pharisees are divided. (read)

- Some saw this miracle as **violating** the Sabbath. And if one broke the Sabbath, then he certainly can’t be from God.
- Others were more **open-minded** about the event – a sinner couldn’t do such signs; notice the plural (cf v. 31)
- Therefore, **one argues from the principle of Sabbath, and one from the principle of the miracle.**
- **The group that seems to side with Jesus was probably the minority as we don’t hear from them again (Moo)**

17: The question shifts to the former blind man, as they want **his opinion of Jesus**. (read)

- He boldly declares, **“He’s a prophet!”**

- Again, his understanding will grow; he knew very little of Jesus, and prophets performed miracles in the OT. **So the prophet is as high a status as he knows.**
- The Lord gives him increasing wisdom.
- **I do believe in immediate transformation; but sometimes it's a journey to real faith...**
  - He advances as one to who allegiance should be given (27-28)
  - Then to “one sent from God” (33)
  - Then to the Son of Man to whom worship is given (35-38)

## **B. Interrogation of the man's parents (18-23)**

- They are ruthless. They go to the parents.
  - Those who set themselves against Jesus will do anything.

**18:** (read). The opposition is simply called “Jews” here – probably Jewish Leaders. I take this as the same group of people.

**19:** (read) The first is a basic question: Was he really blind from birth? Then they ask about him being able to see.

**20-21:** **The parents** aren't as firm as their son; **their reply is a timid one, and they deflect the question.** (read)

**22-23:** John tells us why they pass the buck – (read)

- **The Pharisees had already determined to take action against Jesus' followers.**
- **John says they fear being put out of the synagogue.**

## **C. Interrogation of the healed man again (24-34)**

This is the lively part of the chapter.

**The Jews press the healed man** and he doesn't cave in.

**24:** (read) The interrogation of the parents was fruitless, so they turn attention to their son again.

- They start very piously, “**Give glory to God**” – that is, tell us what we want to hear.
- They add, “We know this man is a sinner”

**25:** **The blind man** avoids the debate about sin, and simply responds, (read) “One thing I know; I was blind but now I see”

- This man could see – and **no amount of debate could change that.** This much he knew!

**26:** **The leaders persist**, going over the same ground again. (read)

- **They are bullying him, and trying to wear him down.**

**27:** I love his response. (read) **“Stop asking me this question. What are you trying to do? Do you want to be his disciples too?”**

- He’s now taunting them in some way.
- **The former blind man is including himself among the number of disciples, as the next verse shows....**

**28-29:** They align themselves with Moses (something Jesus previously rebuked them about – 5:39-46). (read)

- **They think they are speaking with certainty and authority, unlike this man.**
- “We don’t know where he comes from” also popped up earlier (ch 7).
- They took this as a point that damaged Jesus’ cause.
- But some believed one wouldn’t know where the Messiah was from, so their argument was less convincing than they thought.

**30:** The **former blind man** continues to impress. He launches into his own argument! (read)  
• Paraphrase: **“This is the really marvelous thing: your unbelief is more amazing than the miracle!” “You, religious experts are supposed to know everything!?”** (Moo)

**31:** He adds that since God listened to Jesus, and God doesn’t listen to sinners, then Jesus cannot be a sinner. (read)

**32-33:** He goes on (read). The restoration of the blind was uncommon – so uncommon that there are no accounts since the world began!

- Therefore, **Jesus couldn’t have done this, unless he came from God.**

**34:** The Pharisees remain unconvinced, or as Jesus will say, they are the one’s who are blind. (read) In pride, they remain un-teachable.

*A man convinced against his will*

*Is off the same opinion still (Carnegie) [cf. 7:17]*

- In hostility, they cast this man out of the synagogue.

Think about this: **This is the first account of persecution of one of Jesus’ followers.**

- More will follow in the history of the church.
- We passed over a word quickly in **v 28:** They “reviled him.”
- They reviled someone else didn’t they?
- This new believer is enduring the same treatment of Jesus, and so do his followers.
- Paul also faced persecution in this city, and said those glorious words in Acts 20:24.

I love how this man responded to intimidation (Swindoll):

- 1. He appealed to the undeniable facts (15, 25, 32)**
- 2. He answered directly and briefly (17)**
- 3. He refused to argue (26-27)**
- 4. He remained fearless and resolved (30-33)**

This man who probably had no formal education stood up against the religious intelligentsia.

## Part 3: The Savior's Summation (9:35-41)

We now see the conclusion: (1) on the one hand, a confession of faith, and (2) on the other hand, an announcement of condemnation.

### A. Those who see worship Jesus (35-38)

35: (read). I love this. Jesus “heard” and then “found him.” (This is a foreshadowing of John 10, the good shepherd vs. False shepherds, notice also ref to blind man in 10:21).

- **He identifies with those who align themselves with the Savior, and suffer for his name.**
- So Jesus finds this man and asks him a personal, faith question, “**Do you believe in the Son of Man**” (the great figure of Daniel 7)?

36: The man’s **eagerness** comes out (read). “Who is he that I may believe?”

- **He’s humble and teachable** – “I am willing to believe.”

37: Beautiful words, “**You have seen Him, and have heard him**”

- **That must have been an extraordinary experience.**

38: Here’s his response (read)

- “Lord, I believe” – He calls him “**Lord**” as his insight is growing.
- He sees Jesus as the object of his faith.
- He then goes on to “**worship him.**” He gives him praise and adoration.

**Only Jesus can give spiritual sight to the blind,  
and those who see worship Him as Lord.**

### B. Some claim to see but are blind (39-41)

39: These words may have been spoken later, not immediately after this man’s confession (read).

39a: **At one level, Jesus didn’t come to judge but to save (3:17); but his coming does represent a judgment – for the human race is divided based on their response to Jesus.**

- His coming into the world shows **who is actually spiritually blind, and that is a judgment.**
- **Judgment, then, is an inevitable consequence of his coming into the world.**

39b: His saving intent is that the blind may see.

39c: (read). That is, **those who claim to have spiritual sight but really don’t (they think they see); are shown to be the spiritually blind people that they really are.**



**40:** It never occurs to these people that they are spiritually blind, even though they embody the principle of verse 39. (read)

**41:** Jesus final word is interesting (read)

- **The Pharisees surely expected Jesus to say they were blind.**
- **Jesus is saying that if you were really blind, that is, if you really had no knowledge, then you couldn't be blamed.**
- **But they knew the law and the prophets. And they have seen the Son.**
- **So since they have not responded appropriately to this truth, their sin/guilt remains on them.**

All you need is need, but they didn't have it.

They had a lot of pride, a lot of self righteousness, but no poverty of spirit.

As we've been saying, our prayer is not that you would become religious; but that you would come to see your hopeless condition apart from Christ, and come to him in faith for salvation. Jesus Christ.

If you have come into the light, if you were blind but now see, then here's our challenge:

**1. Worship the Lord Jesus, who gives sight to the blind.**

- **Several weeks now this theme: darkness/light; blindness/sight.**
- **This week is Reformation day, October 31, celebrate the recovery of the gospel.**
- **The motto of the Protestant Reformation was the phrase "post tenebras lux." (pōst- 'te-ne- bräs- 'lüks)**
- **Latin for, "After darkness, light."**
  
- **The reformation took place during a very dark time spiritually: But the lights went on, as people heard the gospel of grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone.**
  - **People were called out of the darkness of corrupt religion, of superstition, and idolatry.**
  - **They heard of what Christ, the light of the world had accomplished on their behalf.**
  - **They could see his work, and believe with the eyes of faith, and experience his freedom and life.**
  - **They were a little like this man, who had been born blind, but who could now see for himself.**
  - **They were like the people Isaiah described: "The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned." (Isa 9:2)**
- **Now, those who have been called out of darkness, should proclaim his excellencies!**
- **All of life lived in the light, to the glory of God.**

## **2. Share your story with others.**

- Tell the world how he opened your eyes and changed you.
- Your testimony is not the gospel, but it's a powerful illustration of it, and can be a bridge to present it.
- What's our story, "I was blind but now I see."
- "I don't have a remarkable testimony." Yes you do! Theologically, you were blind but now you see!

## **3. Be prepared for some measure of opposition.**

- Remember, you are identifying with Jesus.

## **4. Live in hope of the new creation to come.**

- The Messiah will come again, and once and for all eradicate all suffering – the blind will see, the lame will walk, and sick will be made whole!