

## **The Hopelessness of the Stubbornly Blind**

Scripture: John 9:35-41

Code: 43-51

Open your Bible to the ninth chapter of John.

And for those who haven't been with us in our previous studies of the ninth chapter, apologies, because you're going to miss the opening two sessions of this great ninth chapter. So let me see if I can't condense it for you just very briefly.

Jesus is in Jerusalem. He's going through one of the temple entrances, temple gates. And He comes across a blind man who has been born blind. He's never seen. He has some kind of congenital blindness. He is reduced to being a beggar. So, he sits there with the rest of the beggars at the temple entrance because that's where most people come and go who are concerned about honoring God, and who may be more sensitive to doing what they should do, doing right, and giving alms to beggars. And so, those entrances and exits were occupied by beggars. Jesus comes across this man who is blind, who obviously can't see Him. Jesus walks up to him, gives him eyes, gives him new eyes, creates new eyes. Because as John tells us, nothing was made except what He made. Everything that was made, He created, and He is still the creator, and He creates eyes for this blind man.

He is immediately able to see, and then some encounters begin. First of all, his neighbors are trying to figure out how this happened, how this man they know who is blind can now see. So, he goes through an interrogation with his neighbors, and he can't really answer who did this because he never saw Him, doesn't know just exactly how this happened. But, he is convinced that whoever did this is from God. He then is brought to the Pharisees, who are supposed to render some kind of explanation, some kind of spiritual explanation or religious explanation, or some kind of divine explanation as to how this could happen. Because, as the blind man says, it's never been heard in the history of the world that anyone blind was made able to see. And so, there's an interrogation by the Pharisees.

They already have their verdict before they start the questioning. They believe that Jesus is an insane, demon-possessed, satanic imposter. And with that conclusion, their investigation is going to go nowhere. So, they reject the testimony of the man, they reject the testimony of the neighbors, and they eventually end up throwing the man who can now see out of the building, and really, out of the life of the nation, out of the life of Israel. He's already been an outcast, because anybody who was born blind was believed to have been cursed by God for sin. Maybe the sin of his parents, maybe his own sin, and so he's already been out of the synagogue, unable to interact in the synagogue. He has been a pariah and an alien, and consequently a beggar. His own family is embarrassed by him. We know he has a mother and a father. They show up in the story and they throw him under the bus to protect themselves. But think about it: if they had any love for a blind son, he wouldn't have been a beggar. They would've cared for him, as any sensible, normal parent would do.

So, this is a man who has been completely rejected by everyone. And now, when he can see, he's struggling to get people to accept what has happened. Those who are his neighbors see it, but can't explain it. The Pharisees see it but refuse to see it for what it is. His own parents treat him with disdain. And finally, when the interrogation is over, verse 34, the Pharisees' last words: "You were born entirely in sins, and are you teaching us?" So they threw him out. They reject Jesus. They reject the Man. They reject the miracle.

Jesus is not there at this point. He had healed the man, and then He fades out of the story, and the man is taken to the Pharisees by the neighbors for this interrogation, which ends up with him being thrown out, continuing as an outcast, even though he can now see.

Jesus enters the scene, then, in verse 35. And we read this. Jesus heard that they had put him out, and finding him, He said, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" He answered, "Who is He, Lord, that I may believe in Him?" Jesus said to him, "You have both seen Him, and He is the one who is talking with you." And he said, "Lord, I believe." And he worshiped Him. And Jesus said, "For judgment I came into this world, so that those who do not see may see, and that those who see may become blind." Those of the Pharisees who were with Him heard these things and said to Him, "We are not blind too, are we?" Jesus said to them, "If you were blind, you would have no sin; but since you say, 'We see,' your sin remains."

Now we're moving from physical blindness to spiritual blindness. The healing? That's physical. This section that climaxes this amazing story is about spiritual blindness and spiritual sight. And throughout the Bible, really, throughout the whole Bible, blindness is used metaphorically to represent the human condition of corruption and fallen-ness, and the inability to comprehend God and divine truth. In fact, in Isaiah 43:8, we read of the people who are blind even though they have eyes. In Jeremiah 5:21, the people who are foolish and senseless, who have eyes but do not see. In Isaiah 56:10, the corrupt leaders of Israel are described as watchmen who are blind, all of who see nothing. Jesus called the Pharisees blind men, and then He called them blind guides.

Apostle Paul, according to Acts 26, was sent with the gospel to the nations "to open their eyes that they may turn from darkness to light." That had happened to him on the Damascus road, hadn't it? He had been blind, spiritually. He was blinded, physically. And then, he was given sight both physically and spiritually in that Damascus road experience. All sinners, says the apostle Paul in Ephesians 4, are darkened in their understanding. In John 3, our Lord said that sinners love the darkness rather than the light because they cherish their evil deeds. Revelation 3:17 characterizes the world of sinners as wretched, naked, miserable, poor, and blind.

So, the Bible speaks of blindness as a metaphor for spiritual ignorance, spiritual darkness, spiritual corruption, the inability to know God or to know the truth. That natural blindness, because of sin, is compounded by Satan's power and deception, which makes a kind of double-blindness, spoken of in 2 Corinthians 4: the god of this world, Satan, has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. Naturally blinded, satanically blinded.

When this blindness is persistent, and impenitent, when this blindness continues relentlessly, there is a third kind of blindness, a divine judgment blindness that brings about a terminal blindness. Isaiah said, Isaiah 44:18: "They do not know, nor do they understand." Why? Because God "has smeared their eyes so that they cannot see and their hearts so they cannot comprehend." That's exactly what

God said to Isaiah in the vision in chapter 6. They will hear and yet not understand. They will see and yet not perceive. They will not believe, because they have been hardened as a judgment of God.

In John 12:39 and 40, those who persist in unbelief cannot believe, because, as Isaiah said, “He has blinded their eyes, hardened their hearts, that they would not see, perceive, and be converted.” At that point, judicially blinded by God, they cannot see, they cannot perceive, they cannot be converted. Paul wrote of such a judgment in Romans 11:8. “God gave them a spirit of stupor, eyes to see not and ears to hear not, down to this very day.” This is dangerous reality. Natural blindness is damning. Compounded satanic blindness is even more damning. Terminal blindness is a judgment of God, is the removal of all hope.

According to Proverbs and Ecclesiastes, sinners walk in the ways of darkness. According to Isaiah 5:20, they substitute light for darkness and darkness for light. According to Ephesians 5:11, the whole world is full of people who participate in the unfruitful works of darkness, because, as Colossians 1:13 says, they are part of the domain of darkness. Blindness, darkness. Metaphor for the condition of sinners.

And in the Old Testament, when God begins to talk about the Messiah, He talks about the Messiah coming to bring light. Isaiah 9, Isaiah 29, Isaiah 42, Isaiah chapter 60. All of those places, the Messiah is seen as the one who brings spiritual light to the world in the midst of darkness. A light will shine when Messiah comes. And as the New Testament opens up, what do we hear? “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word is with God, and the Word was God.” Everything that was made was made by Him. “And in Him was life, and the life was the Light of men.” So that the initial introduction of the Lord Jesus Christ, in His supernatural reality, is as light. And later in John chapter 8, He says, “I am the Light of the world; he who follows Me will not walk in the darkness, but have the Light of life.” And in John 12:46, “I have come as Light into the world, so that everyone who believes in Me will not remain in darkness.”

In Matthew, you remember chapter 4: “The people who were sitting in darkness have seen a great Light. And those sitting in the land of the shadow of death upon them, a Light shined.” That’s the Messiah arriving to bring light to the darkness.

So, when Paul writes to the church at Thessalonica, true of all believers, he says: you are all sons of light, not of the night or of the darkness. 1 Peter 2:9 speaks of the Lord as Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.

Okay, all of that to give you the sense that God, in His divine purposes, has designed to use blindness and darkness as a metaphor for the spiritual condition. Consequently, when we come to this text in John 9, you can look at it; this is all set up for the concluding verses that I just read to you. Verses 1 through 34 are about physical light, physical sight. But also, there are overtones of spiritual blindness and spiritual darkness manifest by the Pharisees. When we come to verses 35 to 41, the subject changes from physical sight and light, completely, to spiritual sight and light, and spiritual blindness and darkness.

Now, as we look at these just brief verses, straightforward and simple, I just want to break them into two sections: spiritual sight, verses 35 to 38, that’s the beggar; spiritual blindness, verses 39 to 41,

that's the Pharisees. You have here a comparison build on this miracle, between spiritual sight, which the beggar receives, and spiritual darkness, in which the Pharisees remain.

Now, let's look at the spiritual sight and the beggar, the opening verses 35 to 38. Just to give you a little bit of a pattern to follow, four things define this spiritual sight, okay? Four things. He's going to be an illustration of one who not only sees physically for the first time, but who will see spiritually for the first time. There are four elements. First of all, and this is very important. The first element is: spiritual sight requires divine initiative. Spiritual sight requires divine initiative. This man doesn't have any capability to make himself see physically, nor does he have any capability to make himself see spiritually. That's why this transition is made, because it's such a graphic illustration. He can't do anything to help himself. There's no such thing in those ancient times as a surgeon who can fix something in his eye and enable him to see. There's no way that he can have spiritual sight on his own. It can't happen. Humanly speaking, it can't happen on a temporal, physical, natural level. If he is going to see, heaven has to come down and find him, locate him, and that's exactly what happens.

Verse 35. The buzz around the temple area and wherever it was that this interrogation took place is still going on, so Jesus hears that they had put him out. And I love this. "And finding him." This is parallel. You remember back in chapter 5, the man at the Pool of Bethesda picked up his bed and walked, ran into the Pharisees, the same kind of interrogation, the same kind of encounter. And it says there in that same chapter, chapter 5, and I think it's verse 14, "Jesus found him." Jesus found him. This is how you receive spiritual sight. It all started in a divine initiative. It all started by a sovereign purpose in the mind of God. Luke 19:10. Jesus says the Son of Man is come to seek and save that which was lost. Not just the saving, but the seeking. Romans 3, no man seeks after God. We wouldn't know where to go, wouldn't know who to look for. So he's the seeker. He says to His apostles in John 15:16, "You have not chosen Me. I have chosen you." Matthew 18, "The Son of Man has come to save that which was lost." That's why He came. He's the finder. He's the one who is seeking us.

The Lord initiates spiritual sight, just like He initiated physical sight with this man. There were a lot of beggars. There were a lot of ill people, a lot of sick people. I told you there were a lot of blind people in the ancient world. He sought this man for His own purposes, His own sovereign kingdom intentions. He sought him out when this man could've never found Him. Totally blind. Christ is always the initiator of salvation, always the seeking Savior. Again, the blind man has no power to give himself physical sight; neither does the sinner have any power to give himself spiritual sight. It has to be initiated, inaugurated in heaven.

And so, Jesus finds the man. This is where spiritual sight begins. This is a powerful illustration of it, a very powerful illustration, because this is a helpless, hopeless man, and so is every sinner. So is every sinner.

So He finds him, and He initiates a conversation. Very short. This, again, is cryptic. These accounts in the New Testament are condensed. We don't think the conversation was limited to this, but this is the essence that God has revealed to us. He says, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" That's a really important question. Very important question. This man is well-schooled in the Old Testament, even though he's not been in a synagogue. This man has absorbed the Old Testament truth even though he can't read. We don't know how, but he's very wise. He knows, for example, that there's no record ever in history of anybody being healed of blindness. He knows that. He also knows what characterizes a prophet. And so, already he has said of Jesus, "He is of God." He has

said, "He's one who does the will of God. He is one who God hears. He is a prophet." So, he's a very astute man. He also knows the title, Son of Man. He is familiar with Daniel 7 where that Messianic title stands out.

Listen to what Daniel chapter 7 says. Daniel is given a vision, and it's in the night. Chapter 7:13. I kept looking in the night visions, and behold with the clouds of heaven, one like a Son of Man was coming. That's a Messianic title. This introduces the coming of Messiah to establish His kingdom. He came up to the ancient of days, that's God the Father, was presented before him, to Him was given dominion, glory, and a kingdom that all the peoples, nations, and men of every language might serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion which will not pass away, and His kingdom is one which will not be destroyed. And this is not God, because this is one who comes to God. This is one to whom God gives this eternal, everlasting universal kingdom. It is the Messiah, and He is the Son of Man, which is a prophecy that He will be incarnate.

But the Jews all understood the Messianic title, the Son of Man. By the way, it appears 13 times in the gospel of John because it's familiar in the conversation of the Jews because they know Daniel 7 is referring to the Messiah. So, our Lord says to him, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" Do you believe in the Messiah? Do you believe in Messianic theology? Do you believe the Messiah is coming to establish His kingdom? Do you believe that?

So here is the first step in bringing spiritual sight. A darkened, spiritually blind man is found by Christ, for Christ's own saving purposes. All spiritual sight initiates from heaven because God is the seeker.

The second thing that I want you to see here in this case of spiritual sight, is that spiritual sight not only begins in divine initiative, but it requires faith. It requires faith, verse 36. This is just an amazing statement. He answered, "Who is He, Lord, that I may believe in Him?" What an amazing statement. Here is a man who is ready to believe. He just wants to know who to believe in. I wish I had the time to develop that as a theology, because what you're seeing here is the essence of the doctrine of regeneration at work. This man is ready to believe. He just wants to know what to believe. This is not easily understood. It is not because of what we say that people believe. It is because of what God has done to open them to believing that they respond to what we say. This is an amazing thing. Here is a man who is saying, "I'm ready to believe. Who do I believe in? Show me who to believe in." That's a prepared heart. That's good soil.

So, who is He, Lord? See the word Lord there, and it's lower-case sense, sir? He doesn't know who He is, so he's not calling Jesus Lord in the upper-case sense. The word *kyrie* can be used at "sir," like you would see it in an Old English, the lords and ladies kind of idea. So, here, I think he is still using it in the common sense. Who is He, sir, that I may believe in Him? Something has been happening in his heart. This divine initiative is not only physical, not only Jesus finding him, but God, by the power of the Holy Spirit is opening his heart to believe, and all he needs. It's like Lydia, whose heart the Lord opened. Remember in the Book of Acts? The man's heart is opened. All he wants to know is: who?

What an amazing, divine miracle. This is not some kind of rational act where you've convinced this guy he needs to believe based on facts. The Holy Spirit has enabled him to believe, even before the facts become clear. So, divine initiative and a response of faith. Who is He, that I may believe in Him?

There's a third feature in spiritual sight. It starts in divine initiative. It requires faith. Thirdly, spiritual sight confesses Jesus as Lord. Where there is the miracle of spiritual sight, there will be a confession of Jesus as Lord.

Notice verse 37. Jesus said to him, he's saying, who do I believe in? "You have both seen Him." You've seen Him. You're looking at Him, "and He's the one who is talking with you." Wow. It's interesting to me that I don't know how much this man had heard Jesus teach. Certainly, he hadn't seen any miracles. Something, there were lots of people who saw miracles. The whole population saw miracles. Couldn't overcome spiritual darkness. But God is overcoming his spiritual darkness by giving him faith. And all he wants to know is who he's supposed to put that faith in. Jesus says, "You've seen Him, and He's the one talking with you." It is I. Remember back in chapter 4 when the woman at the well, the Samaritan woman said, well, we know that the Christ is going to come, and Jesus responds by saying, "I who speak to you am He." I'm the One. And she believed, and the whole village of Sychar believed.

This is a divine miracle. He said, "Lord, I believe." He didn't say, "Could you give me some evidence why I would believe that?" I don't know what he had heard, what he had known. It was sufficient for him that Jesus had made him able to see, that he had already declared about Jesus all those things I said. He's from God. He's of God. He is heard by God. He is a prophet. Now he knows He's a prophet from God. And if a prophet from God says, "I am the Son of Man. I am the long-awaited Messiah," that's enough for this man. Prepared heart. And he said, "Lord, I believe." And now, Lord gets an upper-case. It's *Kyrie* in the upper-case. He's gone from sir, to the Lord of lords.

This is Lord in its fullest and most lofty and elevated sense. Lord, I believe. And even though the word is the same, there's a huge difference. When he says "Lord" in verse 36, he's asking a question. Who do I believe in? Now, he believes, and he says "Lord" in a completely different sense because he immediately does what? Worships.

How do you know when spiritual sight comes to someone? Well, it's initiated by God, the heart is prepared, the heart opens up to accept the truth and confesses Jesus as Lord. It's just an astounding and marvelous miracle, like the miracle of physical sight.

We're starting to accumulate a little roll call here of believers, aren't we? Back when we began the gospel of John, it was Peter and Andrew, and Philip and Nathaniel. And then, Nicodemus showed up, and maybe not a believer yet, but he's on the way. And eventually becomes a believer, shows up in the burial of our Lord. But as of now, we'd have to limit it to Peter, Andrew, Philip, Nathaniel, and then that Samaritan woman in chapter 4, and then the folks from the village of Sychar. And then some true disciples in chapter 6. And now we can add the blind man to our little roll call of true believers. Every one of them is a divine and supernatural miracle.

When our Lord said to Peter, flesh and blood hasn't revealed this to you, but my Father who is heaven, that wasn't just true of Peter. That was true of anybody who's ever been brought to faith. Everyone.

A poor beggar who had seen nothing all his life now sees physically, and more important, sees clearly the Son of Man. He's been given sight. He's gazing on the glory of God in the face of Jesus

Christ. He's been given sight. And finally, spiritual sight basically requires divine initiative, responds with faith, recognizes Jesus as Lord, and fourthly, results in worship. That's how verse 38 ends. He worshiped Him.

It's all in that simple statement, He worshiped Him, that the whole of what it is to be a believer is there. All of it is there. Every bit of it is there. John 4, do you remember verses 20 to 24? The Father seeks true worshipers who worship Him in spirit and truth. How do you know when someone's a believer? Because he becomes a what? Worshiper. How do you know you're Christian? Not because you prayed a prayer. Not because you asked the Lord to do something for you. Not because you got emotionally moved in a meeting and felt sentimental about Jesus. How do you know you're a believer? How do you know you've been transformed? Because you have become a worshiper, a worshiper. That's why I said to you earlier: this narcissistic, sentimental, self-centered approach to the gospel creates an endless dependency that the system that offered originally the answer to what everybody wants keep giving that person what that person wants. It's relentless. How do you turn that person into one who is a totally selfless worshiper?

This man falls on his knees in adoration. The opposite, back in verse 59 of chapter 8, when Jesus declared who He was to the Pharisees, they picked up stones to stone Him. That's what spiritual blindness produces. This is what spiritual sight produces. So, if you're asking the question: how do I know if I'm saved? Ask yourself if you love Christ, if you love God, if you love the Holy Spirit, if you desire to be obedient, if you desire to honor, to please the Lord, if you're a worshiper. We were talking in the elder's meeting the other night about some few people who don't come to church, and when we contact them, they give all kinds of kind of lame, well, you know, I've got other things, and so and so bothers me, and blah, blah, blah. The bottom line is: those people, very likely, aren't believers, because believers worship. That's the priority of their life. And I'm not saying that the only place you worship is in the collective assembly of the church. That's not. But this is what lifts you up and strengthens you and encourages you for the rest of those hours when you worship as an independent person. This is critical. This fulfills the longing of our heart, to honor the Lord, to hear from the Lord, to exalt the Lord, to praise the Lord. Worshipers.

So here is a man with two biographies. He is blind physically. He is blind spiritually. He is sought by the Lord, physically. He is sought by the Lord, spiritually. He's given physical sight. He's given spiritual sight. He's given an opportunity to testify about the Lord. He's forsaken by his family. He's hated by the enemies of the gospel. He's thrown out of the system of his day because of his association with Christ. He's kind of a picture of what it is to be a Christian. He takes his place at the feet of the Savior, becomes a worshiper. As all believers do.

In contrast to that, just quickly, spiritual blindness in the case of the Pharisees, verse 39. And Jesus said, "For Judgment I came into this world, so that those who do not see may see," like the blind man, like sinners who repent and believe, "and those who see," like the Pharisees, thought they saw. Like Jesus says, I've not come to call the righteous, the people who think they're righteous. I have come into this world "so that those who do not see may see, and those who see may become blind." Obviously a play on word on this whole concept of blindness, which is, as I said, is all over the Scripture. When Jesus sees this man worshiping Him, He compares this humble, confiding, trusting, believing heart of the beggar with the hostile, stubborn hatred of the Pharisees. And He admits: this is how it's going to be in my coming. Even though the Son of Man is come to seek and to save the lost, even though He doesn't come for judgment, as He says in John 3, He didn't come to judge the world but to save the world.

Still, even though He came in His incarnation to save, His salvation in itself becomes a dividing reality. There is a judgment bound up in it. Like Simeon said, "This child is for the rising and the falling of many." He's the divider. This is not final judgment. This is a kind of immediate judgment that happens at the point at which the gospel is introduced, at which Christ is introduced. There is a dividing that takes place between the believer and the unbeliever. Yes, He didn't come to judge in the sense of final judgment. He came to save. He came to be humbled, and go to the cross, and rise from the dead to save. But even that is a judgment rendered. In fact, in John 3, He says, "If you reject Him, you judge yourself." You judge yourself. You're already judged. If a person sees in Jesus who died on the cross for salvation, nothing desirable, nothing that that person wants, that is a judgment on that person. That's a self-condemnation.

If a sinner sees in Jesus nothing to desire, nothing to long for, nothing to want, nothing to put trust in, that's a self-condemnation. That's the Pharisees. They didn't need anything. They could see clearly. They saw it all. They knew God. They knew the truth. They knew that Jesus was a vile sinner, a satanic, demonic, insane man. Because they thought they see, they are totally blind. So that's the point of verse 39.

The first thing then, about spiritual blindness is: spiritual blindness brings judgment. Spiritual blindness brings judgment. Tragic. Judgment. Now, and in the future. Spiritual blindness, secondly, is stubborn, verse 40. "Those of the Pharisees who were with Him heard these things and said to Him, 'We're not blind too, are we?'" Again, speaking metaphorically, they refused to admit their blindness. We're not blind in the sense that, they say this with disdain, and arrogance, and scorn. You're not saying we, the most learned, erudite, righteous, holy, virtuous, representatives of God, you're not saying we're blind, are You? Well, that's exactly what He was saying. This man was spiritually blind, but now he can see, spiritually. You think you can see spiritually, which simply demonstrates that you are spiritually blind. Blindness, the idea of spiritual blindness to them is a joke.

There's a third point here, quickly. Spiritually blind people receive judgment, refuse to admit their blindness, and thirdly, reject sight when it's offered. Verse 41, the beginning, Jesus said to them, "If you were blind, you would have no sin." This is continuing this little play on words on the notion of blindness. But Jesus using the term in a completely different way. In verse 40, you are blind. You are blind, in the sense that you don't see your sin. You are blind. You are blind. But in verse 41, you're not blind. How do you do that? You're not blind. "If you were blind, you would have no sin." What does that mean? You are not blind as to the truth. If you were blind to the truth, if you had no knowledge of the truth, no revelation of the truth, if you didn't have the Scripture, didn't have the Old Testament, the law, all the prophets and holy writings, didn't have Me, didn't have all the demonstration of who I am, your sin would not be so severe. This would be like the times of the past when God overlooked people's sin because the revelation was incomplete. There's less punishment, a less severe judgment falls on those who have no knowledge. But you're not blind. You are blind in the sense that you don't see your own sin. You are not blind in the sense that you have been exposed to the truth. You have the law, the prophets, the covenants, everything. The promises, the Old Testament. You've had Me. You've heard My words. You've seen the miracles. You have no excuse. Yes, blind to your own sin; no, not blind to the truth.

Spiritual blindness then, receives judgment, refuses to admit its blindness, rejects the offer of light and sight when it's given, such as they had received. Finally, results in doom, end of verse 41. "But



since you say, 'We see,' your sin remains."

You're doomed. You are accepting the condition you're in, of spiritual blindness, as spiritual sight. You are doomed. You are hopeless. If you think you can see, you're doomed. Amazing play on words. Your sin remains. Finality. So, the light shines in the darkness. The darkness cannot extinguish it. The darkness cannot put it out, but the darkness rejects it. Came to His own, His own received Him not. He's in the world. The world was made by Him. The world knew Him not.

They are the religious elite. They are in the darkness. And a blind beggar, who's a total outcast, sees physically; more importantly, sees spiritually.

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