

## John 9:1-41

### II. Jesus Reveals Himself to the World (1:19-12:50)

#### N. The Woman Caught on Adultery (7:53-8:11)

#### O. The Sixth Discourse – The Light of the World, Part One (8:12-59)

#### P. The Sixth Sign – Healing the Man Born Blind (9:1-41)

The narrative continues directly from chapter eight into chapter nine, as evidenced by those opening words *as Jesus passed by*. As Jesus was eluding the Jews, he and his disciples stumbled across another man who was in need of help: *a man who was blind from birth* (v. 1). The state of this man caused a question to arise among the disciples: *Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?* (v. 2)

We note well the underlying assumption of the disciples' question: for someone to be handicapped in this way, sin was surely involved. In other words, when bad things happen, it can and should be traced back to the presence of sin. To varying extents, we often have this mindset. Everything good comes from God; everything bad comes as a result of sin. And, that's not necessarily unreasonable. We suffer physical hardship and tragedy because of the Fall and the presence of sin in the world. Had Adam and Eve not sinned, and had sin never entered the world, there would be no capacity for such infirmities.

With that being said, though, we must continue on into v. 3 to see Jesus' response to this question. He rejects the premise of their question! *Neither this man nor his parents sinned*. . . As we begin to see the disciples' brains fire up to ask a follow-up question, Jesus continues . . . *but that the works of God should be revealed in him*. Jesus gives us an alternate explanation for the presence of suffering and hardship, one that we are hesitant to accept. The second half of Jesus' answer tells us that sometimes (perhaps even all the time?), circumstances are such so that God would be glorified through them.

This might grate against our sensibilities at first. Am I saying that God will bring about – perhaps even ordain? – difficulties in our lives for a purpose greater than ourselves? I believe the Word of God answers that question with a *yes*. We must understand, we are not the center of the universe. Our earthly happiness is not God's ultimate goal. Such man-centered and self-centered thinking is a product of the flesh, not the Word of God. Instead, God has tasked us with trusting Him in those circumstances (cf. Hab 2:4), and submitting ourselves to His name and His glory, as He is the center of all things. Displaying the *works of God* takes precedence over our temporary happiness (cf. Luke 13:1-5; Rom 5:1-5; 9:10-24; James 1:2-8; 1 Pet 1:6-8). When we view our present circumstances through the lens of God's glory and purposes, we are well on our way to making the best use of our trials, which is glorifying Him in the midst of them!

With that, Jesus *worked the works of Him who sent Him* (v. 4), healing the man through a non-FDA approved method (vv. 6-7). Nevertheless, it worked! The man *came back seeing* (v. 7). This starts another major stir in Jerusalem. The *neighbors* notice first (vv. 8-12), and the man answers truthfully that *a Man named Jesus* healed him (v. 11).

From there, the neighbors *brought him*. . . *to the Pharisees* (v. 13; cf. vv. 13-34), to whom he gave the same answer. The Pharisees are outraged, *because He does not keep the Sabbath* (v. 16). Once again, we're back to Sabbath breaking (cf. 5:1-18; 7:21-24). They label Jesus a *sinner* (v. 16). Outraged, they start looking for anyone to blame. The man born blind admits Jesus needs to be at least *a prophet* (v. 17). They called his parents to the scene to confirm that their son was indeed born blind. Maybe it's an

elaborate ruse and he was never actually blind to begin with! They ask, *Is this your son, who you say was born blind? How then does he now see?* (v. 19).

Not wanting to draw the ire of the Pharisees, they choose their words carefully. *We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind; but by what means he now sees we do not know, or who opened his eyes we do not know* (vv. 20-21). In other words, “Don’t get us involved in this mess! We’re happy for him and all, but it doesn’t mean that we’re going to go to bat for this Jesus guy!” And for good reason, as John goes on to explain in v. 22 that anyone confessing *that He was the Christ* was to *be put out of the synagogue*!

The Pharisees then turn their attention back to the man. They want him to repudiate Jesus and *give God the glory* (v. 24). In other words, deny who Jesus is, and worship the god whom the Pharisees served. In my mind, I see the man putting his hands up in the air, saying *Whether He is a sinner or not I do not know. One thing I know: that though I was blind, now I see* (v. 25). What a response! “Look, if you have another explanation, I’m all ears!” They press him again, and the man responds again, “It sounds as if you would like to be His disciples, you’re so interested in what He’s doing!” (v. 27 paraphrased).

Completely antagonistic at this point, the Pharisees call the man one of Jesus’ disciples, while they themselves are disciples of a true prophet, Moses (v. 28). They *know that God spoke to Moses*, but they don’t know where Jesus is from (v. 29). The formerly blind man gains confidence. Look again at vv. 30-33. In other words, “it seems to me this Man certainly knows what He’s doing and is from God!” With that, the Pharisees *cast him out* (v. 34).

Jesus then re-enters the scene, finding the man He had healed. He asks him, *Do you believe in the Son of God?* (v. 35) When the man asks Him who the Son of God is (v. 36), Jesus then identifies Himself as such (v. 37), at which point the man believes and worships Him (v. 38). The exchange ends with this curious statement in v. 39: *Jesus said, “For judgment I have come into this world, that those who do not see may see, and that those who see may be made blind.”* It’s not those who think they have their act together that benefit from the Son of God’s sacrifice; it’s those who know they are in need of Him that benefit. The Pharisees, thinking they were righteous on account of their works, were *made blind*. Meanwhile, the man who was healed, knowing he needed help, was made to *see* (cf. 1 Cor 1:18-31).

The chapter ends with the Pharisees overhearing Jesus’ words, asking Him if they were the blind ones to which Jesus referred. Jesus essentially answers them in the affirmative, telling them that their *sin remains* (v. 41).

Once again in Jesus’ ministry, we see a miracle give way to an object lesson of sorts. Jesus heals a man who was blind from birth, and turns it into a discourse on what it means to be truly blind. Being physically blind is not the mark of being disadvantaged; being spiritually blind is. Thus, we must believe in Jesus, the Son of God, that we would have life.