

G R A C E

Reformed Baptist Church

Soli ♦ Deo ♦ Gloria

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

Sermon Notes

Jesus Heals a Man Born Blind, part 2

John 9:13-34

October 16, 2005

Introduction / Review

- Chapter 9 introduces the Sixth (6th) of the Seven (7) Signs of the Gospel of John
- The actions of Jesus in Chapter 9 [(1) spitting on the ground, (2) making clay, and (3) applying it to the eyes of the blind man] are very significant:
 1. Jesus takes the initiative. The blind man does not cry out to Jesus, the Lord simply acts in mercy.
 2. The Old Testament Law revealed that bodily fluids, such as saliva and blood, were forms of ceremonial pollutants, or dirt. Read Leviticus 15:8. “Thus, blood and saliva generally pollute, but in certain contexts blood cleanses and saliva cures” (Andreas Kostenberger). Therefore, by using something that is normally a pollutant (saliva) to heal a man, Jesus is claiming a degree of spiritual authority with respect to the Law. Read, also, Matthew 8:1-4.

Through His actions, Jesus is not asserting that He is “above the Law,” but, rather, that as the “fulfillment of the Law,” He possesses the authority to properly interpret the Law and understand its intended meaning and significance.

NOTE: The blind man was healed, in part, by the saliva of Jesus. Today, we are cleansed spiritually by His blood He shed on the Cross.

3. John Calvin, in his Commentary on the Gospel of John, notes that by placing clay on the eyes of the blind man, Jesus “in some respects doubles the blindness” in order to magnify the works of Christ. This is not too dissimilar to the pouring of water on Elijah’s altar on Mt. Carmel in 1 Kings 18:34.
4. Many of the early church Fathers viewed Verse 6 as an allusion to Genesis 2:7. In this Verse, God creates man “of dust of the ground.” In Verse 6, then, Jesus, in an **act of creation** [not simply restoration], used dirt of the ground to create sight for a man born blind.

It should also be noted that Jesus Christ is the agent of Creation, for through Him, God [the Father] “made the world.” **Through Him and by Him all things are Created and sustained for Him.**

Verse 13

- They brought “the man who was formerly blind” “to the Pharisees.”
 - John does not inform the reader who “they” refers to; however, the Pharisees served as the local synagogue leaders.
 - In first century Palestine, the synagogue was the center of Jewish life in each community.
 - Therefore, it is likely that the people who brought the man to the Pharisees were simply seeking advice from the primary leaders of the community.

Verses 14 – 16

- John, then, informs the reader of very significant point regarding the healing of the man born blind: it occurred on the Sabbath.
- One must not forget that, to the Pharisees, there were two specific laws that carried significant weight:
 - **Circumcision**: the ceremonial Sign of the Abrahamic Covenant
 - **Sabbath**: the ceremonial Sign of the Mosaic Covenant

Therefore, to break the Sabbath was, in some way, to be guilty of breaking all of the Laws of Moses.

- This is why the Pharisees are so concerned [Verses 15, 19, 26] with **how** Jesus healed the man.
- Also, the verb in Verse 15 implies a continuing process of asking...an interrogation.
- The Pharisees held to the authority of not only the Written Law, but the Oral / Rabbinical Tradition as well. The Oral Tradition is what is sometimes referred to as the “hedge.”



Hedge;
Oral Tradition;
Rabbinic Tradition

- Example of the Law vs. the Oral Tradition
 - Law: Remember the Sabbath and Keep it Holy.
 - Rabbinical Tradition: Is it lawful to eat an egg laid on the Sabbath?

- To ensure that the Sabbath Law was not broken, Jewish rabbis defined thirty-nine types of work that were prohibited on the Sabbath:

“The main classes of work are forty save one (39); sowing, ploughing, reaping, binding sheaves, threshing, winnowing, cleansing crops, grinding, sifting, kneading, baking, shearing wool, washing or beating or dyeing wool, spinning, weaving, making two loops, weaving two threads, separating two threads, tying [a knot], loosening [a knot], sewing two stitches, tearing in order to sew two stitches, hunting a gazelle, slaughtering or flaying or salting it or curing its skin, scraping it or cutting it up, writing two letters, erasing in order to write two letters, building, pulling down, putting out a fire, lighting a fire, striking with a hammer and taking out aught from one domain to another. These are the main classes of work: forty save one (39). (*Sabbat* 7:2).”

Also, “(On the Sabbath) a man may borrow of his fellow jars of wine or jars of oil, provided that he does not say to him, ‘Lend me them.’” (*Shab.* 23:1). This would imply a transaction, and a transaction might involve writing, and writing was work and therefore forbidden.

- **Because of the Oral / Rabbinical Tradition of the Pharisees, they held that the once-blind man could have broken the Sabbath in the following ways:**
 1. Since this was not a life or death situation [he was *born* blind], Jesus could have [and actually should have] waited until the next day to perform the miracle.
 2. Jesus had to knead clay with his saliva to make the mud [and kneading was forbidden on the Sabbath].
 3. Later Jewish tradition stated that it was unlawful to anoint the eyes on the Sabbath (*b. 'Abod. Zar.* 28*b*).
- This is why immediately following the man’s description of how Jesus healed him, John writes, “Therefore, some of the Pharisees were saying, ‘This man is not from God, because He does not keep the Sabbath.’”
 - John Calvin personally believed that Jesus Christ intentionally performed this specific miracle on the Sabbath because of the publicity that it would generate, and so “The truth of the miracle shines more brightly.”
- However, some of the other Pharisees present were not as quick to pass such a judgment, for they said, “How can a man who is a sinner perform such signs.”
- Therefore, a division arose among the Pharisees regarding the person of Jesus Christ.
- The group that was, at least tentatively, supporting Jesus must have been small, as this is the last we hear of them.
- However, it should be noted that the Pharisees who opposed Jesus were well aware that the ability to perform miracles was not necessarily a sign of God’s anointing.
 - One of the clearest examples of this truth is the Egyptian magicians in Pharaoh’s court [e.g. Exodus 7:22].

- Also, read **Deuteronomy 13:1-5; 2 Thessalonians 2:9**

Verse 17

- The Pharisees once again ask the man, but this time, they asked him what his opinion of Jesus was.
- The man's response was simple, and identical to the Samaritan woman at the well in John 4:19: "He is a prophet."
- Likely, this man was stating that he was placing Jesus in the highest place that he knew.
- Also, some historians think that it was a common Jewish belief that a prophet had authority even over the law of the Sabbath.

Verses 18 – 23

- As "the Jews" could not successfully discredit the miracle by questioning the man, they decide to approach and question the two individuals who could substantiate [or deny] the most significant aspect of this miracle: that the man was **born** blind. These two individuals were, of course, his parents.
 - After all, he may not have been born blind, it just may be that he cannot remember seeing.
- The Pharisees ask the parents of the man two questions: (1) Is this your son? and (2) *How* does he now see?
- In their answer, the parents *unwillingly* establish the truthfulness of the man's testimony, for they say, "He is our son...he was born blind...he now sees."
- However, the parents insist that they do not know *how* he now sees or *who* "opened his eyes."
- They, then, attempted to turn the attention away from then and back to their son: "Ask him..."
 - Interestingly, the parents were well aware that a miracle occurred [as they knew he was born blind and that he could now see]; yet, they were not willing to say that Jesus accomplished it, for they were afraid of the Jewish authorities.
 - It is very possible that the parents even knew that it was Jesus who performed the miracle, for John states, "His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jews; for the Jews had already agreed that if anyone confessed Him to be Christ, he was to be put out of the synagogue."
 - To "be put out of the synagogue" was to be excommunicated from the local assembly.
 - "Since the synagogue was the center not only of Jewish religious life but also communal life, expulsion from it represented a severe form of social ostracism."
 Andreas Kostenberger

- ❑ Once again, John remarks that because the parents were afraid of the Jewish authorities, they said, “He is of age, ask him.”
 - To be “of age” in Jewish culture was thirteen (13) years and one (1) day. At this age, a young male was old enough to give legal testimony.
- ❑ Although the parents were afraid of the authorities and did not intentionally confirm the miracle; they clearly establish that a miracle did, in fact, occur.

Verse 24

- ❑ After meeting with the man’s parents and still not discrediting the miracle, they return to the man.
- ❑ The Jews command the man born blind, “Give glory to God...”
 - This phrase can be interpreted several ways:
 1. In the spirit of Joshua 7:19 [Then Joshua said to Achan, ‘My son, I implore you, give glory to the LORD, the God of Israel, and give praise to Him; and tell me now what you have done. Do not hide it from me.’]. In other words, “Before God, own up and admit the truth...Remember that God sees you, and give him due honor by speaking the truth.”
 2. The Jews may be implying that all Jesus did was put clay on the eyes of the man...**He** did not heal him – God did. Therefore, the man should not glorify Jesus, but he should glorify God. [NOTE: Unlike every other miracle-worker in the Scriptures, Jesus was the one performing it. He had the authority and the inherent ability to overcome the laws of physics and nature – for He created these laws.]
 3. Ironically, the Pharisees were commanding the man to do something that he was already doing: “giving glory to God.” To command the man to “give glory to God” would be like commanding a fish to swim or a human to breathe.
 - The Pharisees then state, “we know that this man is a sinner.”
 - Once again, this statement adds to the irony in the Gospel of John. The Pharisees, the teachers of the Law, were so confident in their ability to understand the Law, yet they denied the very Person to whom the Law pointed.

Verse 25

- ❑ The man, then, makes the most simple, yet profound confession in the entire chapter:

Whether He is a sinner, I do not know; one thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see.

- ❑ **This is why a biblical understanding of the nature/depravity of man [apart from Christ] is so important. Because, it leads to a biblical understanding of the nature of grace.**

- ❑ This man knew that he was completely blind...from birth. He had never once seen, but now he did. There was no question in his mind as to who was responsible, either. It was “the man they call Jesus...a prophet.”
- ❑ Many Christians today who were raised in the church, in Christian homes, believe that they have “no powerful testimony.” Yet, a proper biblical understanding of the depravity of man reveals that everyone is born blind, dead in our trespasses, enemies of God. Regardless of the specific sins of an individual, he or she is no more “dead” than the next. [Note: I have even witnessed Christian attempt to embellish their personal testimony in order to make it sound more dramatic.] Yet, each of us – whether we are raised in the church or on “the street” – has the same testimony of God’s grace: “I was once blind, once dead, but now I can see, I am alive!”

The most powerful testimony is not the one that appears to reflect the most “radical” conversion experience, but the one that reflects an understanding of the grace of God that radically saves all who believe in Jesus Christ as Lord.

Verse 26

- ❑ Once again, the Pharisees, want to know *how* Jesus healed the man born blind.

Verse 27

- ❑ The healed man now reminds the Pharisees that he has already answered their questions.
- ❑ Observe the sarcasm in this verse on the part of the healed man. He is basically saying, “Why do you keep asking me the same questions over and over again? Is it because you want to become a disciple of Jesus, too?”
- ❑ Also, this statement reveals that the man already views himself as a follower of Jesus.

Verses 28 – 29

- ❑ The Jews, now, reviled the man born blind.
- ❑ The Pharisees considered themselves “disciples of Moses”
 - This statement harkens back to the establishment of Israel as a nation through the giving of the Mosaic Covenant at Mount Sinai.
 - It also explains why they placed such emphasis on Sabbath-keeping, as the Sabbath was the ceremonial Sign of the Mosaic Covenant.
- ❑ They state, “*You* are His disciple...but as for this man, we do not know where He is from.”
- ❑ The Pharisees’ use of the phrase *this man* [Verses 26 and 29] is intended to reveal their contempt for Him.
- ❑ This is a classic case in this Gospel where the writer, John, places words of truth into the mouths of those who are enemies of God.

- ❑ Yet, this statement reveals that the Pharisees rejoice in their ignorance. As one scholar states, “they admitted and took pride in the fact that they did not know the origin of Jesus. Just so! This was their basic failure: Jesus had come to them from God, and they did not face this fact.”

Verses 30 – 33

- ❑ In Verse 30, the man born blind states, “Well, here is an amazing thing, that *you* do not know where He is from, and yet He opened my eyes.”
- ❑ It is as though this man is stating, “You, the religious experts, cannot work out a simple thing like this? Yet, I, a former beggar on the street, clearly see that this man is from God.”
- ❑ **The man cannot understand how anyone, especially the experts of the Law, could not see that Jesus is sent from God.**
- ❑ This statement seems somewhat similar to Jesus’ words to Nicodemus in Chapter 3: “Are you the teacher of Israel and do not understand these things?” (John 3:10)
- ❑ The once-blind man states, picking up on the assertion by the Pharisees that Jesus was a sinner [in Verse 24], that God does not hear sinners. [This is supported by several Old Testament passages: Psalm 66:18; Proverbs 15:29; Isaiah 1:15]
- ❑ He then states that “if anyone is God-fearing and does His will, He hears Him.”
 - In other words, if Jesus was a sinner, He would not be from God; God would not have heard Him; and He would not have performed the miracle He did.
- ❑ Finally, the man argues, no man who was ever born blind has been healed. [This is, in fact, true. Although there were rare cases where people received back their sight (2 Kings 6:8-23), no one who was born blind was ever given sight.
- ❑ Therefore, Jesus must be from God, otherwise He could do nothing.

Verse 34

- ❑ In this Verse, the Pharisees make another true statement: “You were born entirely in sins.” This is true because **everyone** is born entirely in sins. Where they are wrong is that the man’s former blindness was not a direct result of the sin in which he was born.
- ❑ The great irony here is that, in their rage, they reveal that the man was truly born blind!
- ❑ Also, they reveal that he is the one teaching them! A blind beggar teaching the Teachers of Israel!
- ❑ Finally, they excommunicate him from the local synagogue.