

ONE THING I KNOW!

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By the Book™ A Chapter by
Chapter Bible Study Series
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Let's Begin

A college student was experiencing difficulty from one of his professors who insisted on chiding the Christian faith that the young man had not long before embraced. "How do you account for all of the contradictions in the Bible?" he asked. "What about the variants in the Greek text of the New Testament? Not to mention the chorus of different interpretations of the Bible through the centuries!" he continued to banter.

The young man sat there in silence for a moment as pockets of giggles could easily be detected from his fellow classmates. He finally broke his silence:

"To tell the truth, I haven't the faintest idea how to answer your questions. Nor did I even know the New Testament was written in Greek, much less that variants exist. But one thing I do know. Last year at this time, I would not be in class this morning; I would be in bed from a hangover being drunk all weekend. And I also know you would not be standing there because I would have already left my seat and would have been pounding your nose to the back of your skull for talking to me like that. I just know when I fell before Jesus a few month's ago my life changed. That's all."

Sometimes the only evidence needed is a changed life. The college student was only doing what the blind man did in John 9—bearing witness to what Jesus had done for him.

As you have probably discovered already, many chapters in the New Testament lend themselves to a focal passage which serves as a central theme for interpreting the other verses. Chapter nine is such a passage. Thus, as we follow the outline below, remember our central theme revolves around the miracle of the man born blind.

- I. The Compassion Jesus Has (vv. 1-5)**
- II. The Command Jesus Makes (vv. 6-7)**
- III. The Change Jesus Causes (vv. 8-12)**
- IV. The Criticism Jesus Provokes (vv. 13-34; 39-41)**
- V. The Confession Jesus Deserves (vv. 35-38; vv. 24-25)**

I. The Compassion Jesus Has (vv. 1-5)

Jesus healed all kinds of sicknesses and disease, not to mention those who He raised from the dead. Yet, out of all the miraculous healings mentioned in the gospels, Jesus cured blindness more often than any other affliction.

Five times we have on record Jesus restoring someone's sight. Thus, His compassion is more visibly directed toward the blind than any other physical malady. Observe the physical condition of the man: "And as Jesus passed by, he saw a man which was blind from his birth" (v. 1).

What a narrow world to which this man was confined. He had never looked into the eyes of the mother who nurtured him from infancy. He had never worked the fields with his dad or played hide-and-seek with his sister. No brightly blooming flower which signaled spring ever captured his eye, nor did a sunset give reason for awe. Led around like a family pet, the blind man lived his life. The only job for a man like him was being a beggar, sitting day-in-day-out depending on the pitiful moods of other people.

As pathetically as we might paint this canvass, the Bible reveals another blindness that is more horrible than the blind man's plight. Allow the Apostle Paul to state it for us: "Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart" (Ephesians 4:18).



Reflection Connection

Ponder for a moment the beauty of a sunrise glistening across a lake. Is it possible to imagine never having seen such beauty? Does this exercise assist you in understanding how people who do not know Jesus cannot see things as you see them? Explain.

Here Paul does not indicate the corruption of our optic nerves or the decay of the retinas. Instead, he speaks of the sheer blindness of our souls and the darkness of our hearts. The Lord Jesus had already hinted at such to the Pharisees when He said, “Ye shall die in your sins” (John 8:21, 24). He further indicated their spiritual blindness when they inquired of Him if they too were blind: “If ye were blind, ye should have no sin: but now ye say, we see; therefore, your sin remaineth” (v. 41).

Perhaps most disheartening, however, was the response of Jesus’ disciples, who, through their initial response to the blind man revealed their own inadequate understanding. Thus note the spiritual callousness of the disciples.

II. The Command Jesus Makes (vv. 6-7)

After Jesus offered His initial words, indicating His compassion for the blind man, He did not hesitate to give explicit instructions: “And [He] said unto him go, wash in the pool of Siloam, (which is by interpretation, sent)...” (v. 7). The preparation for such washing was the balm He made to anoint the man’s eyes (v. 6).

Interestingly, the balm was made of spittle and dirt; a bona fide oddity for us today. Yet this was only to emphasize the man’s blindness. Even more it symbolizes our lost condition upon contact with the Lord. In the presence of Jesus, no one of us may plead purity.

The man made haste and did as Jesus instructed (v. 7b). His obedience to Jesus’ command stands in stark contrast to others’ responses. For example, the rich young ruler refused to sell all he had and give to the poor for an opportunity to follow Jesus. On the other hand, when Jesus told Zacchaeus to come down from the tree and follow Him, Zacchaeus did so without the least hesitation (Luke 19:6).

The important thing here is not the clay or even the water of Siloam. Instead, the issue is obeying the Lord Jesus. It is the same with us. No task is too insignificant if the Lord commands it. That is a lesson we would do well to learn.

Furthermore, to obey the Lord results in greater insight. In other words, the more we obey, the more grace seems to rule and overflow from our lives. The biggest gap today may very well be the obedience gap—the gap between what God says and what we do. The Lord insists we must forgive 70x7. We find it difficult to forgive one time only, much less repeatedly. The gap between what Jesus says and what believers do is no less than embarrassing.

Resulting from the man’s obedience came the blessing of sight for the very first time: “He went his way therefore and washed, and came seeing” (v. 7). Think of it! He could see the fresh water in the pool for the first time. He could identify his friends by only their voices before.

Now he could look into their eyes and see for himself their love for him. He could see the sun that warmed him, the dogs that barked and the children running and playing. No words could capture the moment of seeing for the very first time.

There is a vivid parallel here with spiritual sight. When God’s Spirit works His mighty work into our hearts, for the very first time we see clearly the Father’s love for us. We no longer remain blinded to His grace being poured out all over our lives. This brings us to our third truth.

Reflection Connection

How would you respond to instructions from the Lord that seemed a bit odd? How would you handle such a situation with your friends and family? Do you think such odd instructions are the Lord’s normal way of dealing with us? Why or why not?



Reflection Connection

Be prepared to share with the study group a visible change others noticed in you when you first received the Lord. Be specific.

III. The Change Jesus Causes (vv. 8-12)

The neighbors noticed the change in the blind man. He certainly looked the same. Yet, he was noticeably different: *“Is not this he that sat and begged?”* (v. 8). In fact, he was no different that some questioned if it was him at all! (v. 9)

Similarly, this is true when a person is saved. One may look the same outwardly but there is a discernible yet mysterious change inside. Someone well said salvation may not change a crooked nose, but it sure does change a crushed heart! When a person has genuinely met the Lord Jesus, it is impossible to conceal it from those around him. Before, Jesus was not primary; now He becomes the centerpiece of one’s existence.

IV. The Criticism Jesus Provokes (vv. 13-34; 39-41)

Note well that while the man’s neighbors noticed the change, the Pharisees resented the change (vv. 13-16). They ignored the obvious miracle in the man’s life, focusing instead on the possible breach of their rules: *“This man is not of God, because he keepeth not the Sabbath day”* (v. 16). When petty points take priority over people, one can be sure God is not in the point.

The skeptics questioned the man’s parents, looking for flaws in the miracle Jesus did (v. 18). The plan failed and they ended up kicking the man out of the synagogue (v. 34). Enemies of the cross are never concerned about getting the truth. Rather, they are primarily interested in getting something for which they may criticize Jesus.

Before Jesus leaves, the Pharisees seize an opportunity to trap Him: *“And some of the Pharisees which were with him heard these words, and said unto Him, are we blind also?”* (v. 40) Jesus had just had his final conversation with the man whom He had healed of blindness (vv. 35-39).

Evidently, the Lord went searching for him when he heard the Pharisees had banned him from the synagogue (v. 35). When the world rejects you for your faith, never question how God feels about you nor wonder where He is. Stand perfectly still; Jesus will find you: *“And when he had found him.”*

Not knowing what Jesus looked like since he was blind before, the man inquired: *“Who is he, Lord that I might believe on him?”* (v. 36). Immediately upon learning that he was speaking with the Lord, he believed and worshipped Jesus (v. 38). If ever the Lord personally identifies Himself, we will need no other evidence. We will bow and believe or walk away condemned in our sin.

It is this conversation that spawned the Pharisees’ question pertaining to their blindness. Jesus offers a hard commentary on the Pharisees’ spiritual status: *“therefore your sin remaineth”* (v. 41). No words could be more horrifying than these—your sin remains. Imagine for a moment the cross Jesus bore as a complete payment for the sin of the entire human race. Yet Jesus says your sin remains!

Because the Pharisees refused to believe on Christ, it was as if they took a sharp stick and poked their spiritual eyes out. Since Jesus was and remains the only way to the Father, if He is spurned, one needs no spiritual eyes to see. It makes no difference for sight is irrelevant when there is nothing to look at. Without Jesus, there is definitely nothing to see.

Reflection Connection

How well does the average Christian handle criticism? What ways may assist us in handling criticism better?



V. The Confession Jesus Deserves (vv. 35-38; 24-25)

The man Jesus healed was limited both in what he knew and understood. Upon the Pharisees' he finally said: "*One thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see*" (v. 25). The Pharisees insisted Jesus was a sinner who broke the law (v. 29). The blind man refused to agree. Out of the synagogue he was cast!

On the other hand, contrast the Pharisees with the humility of the blind man. He only knows one thing: "*Whereas I was blind, now I see*" (v. 25). There is a great lesson for us all in that one statement. When all other evidence we can marshal to speak a word about Jesus can be met by challenges, one piece of evidence will always stand the scrutiny of the most aggressive critic—our personal experience of grace and the changed lives that Jesus gives us when we give our lives to Him. This man was now a new believer. He had a new life. Though he knew little, that little was much!

You may not be able to put into correct language what you believe about Jesus. However, you can always testify what Jesus has done for your soul.

Reflection Connection

Has the church accommodated to the culture by abandoning the expectation that people should openly repent of their sin and trust Christ? Do you think the emphasis on "creating a comfortable atmosphere" in worship services has helped or hindered openly confessing Christ? Why or why not?

Golden Greek Nugget

John tells us that Jesus made clay with His spittle and anointed the eyes of the man born blind (v. 6). In ancient times, this was a common practice. Jesus no doubt did this as a way to encourage the man to believe since He knew there were no healing properties in such methods. Jesus then sends the man to the "*pool of Siloam*" to wash his eyes (v. 7). The term translated "*pool*" was a common word for a swimming area. Interestingly, John translates the Hebrew term for "*Siloam*" as "*sent*." The pool was located at the southern part of the city just outside the temple.

Wrap Up

The compassion Jesus has for us is translated into His ministry to us. The presence of Jesus changes our life! No wonder the change solicits a confession in us that Jesus is Lord. Do you have that change today? Has Jesus Christ worked the miracle of a changed heart in your life? If not, are you willing to surrender to Him right now? Don't delay. Do it today.

