

# Who is this Man Jesus?


Part 8

## The Man Born Blind

# TALKINGPOINTS WALKINGPOINTS

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**Talk** together about the glory of God's kingdom. —Psalm 145:11  
Love the Lord your God and **walk** in all his ways. —Joshua 22:5

## Questions for Reflection and Discussion

- Tell us about someone you know who's suffered greatly. What questions did they ask? Did they ever find satisfying answers? If so, how? If not, how did they cope with the uncertainty?

Did others offer them any *unbiblical* perspectives? Tell us about it.

- Jesus said that this man was blind "so that the works of God might be displayed in him" (John 9:3). How have you seen God work in and through *your* suffering? Tell us about the *process*.

Tell us about the *product*—how are you more godly now as a result of your suffering?

- Read 2 Corinthians 4:3-6 and 1 John 2:11, and review **point [2]** in the **Sermon Summary**. Then, tell us about when *you* were spiritually blind. Who tried to explain spiritual truths to you? How did you respond initially?

*How* did your response begin to change? Describe the process. Was it lengthy or brief? What questions or struggles did you encounter? Have your issues been resolved yet?

Read Titus 3:3-7. Which aspects of v. 3 do you recognize in yourself? Are they current or past?

To what degree do v. 4-6 describe you?

Does Titus 2:11-14 describe you?

*Afraid that you may be spiritually blind?*

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## Application-Challenge

- Reject the idea that sin *in particular* causes suffering *in particular* (even though it *is* true that sin in general causes suffering in general).
- Realize that until the Holy Spirit opens your eyes spiritually, you *cannot* see the reality of sin and the reality of grace.
- Ask God to open your spiritual eyes so that you can see clearly, just as he opened the eyes of the blind man in John 9.

# Sermon Summary

*Key Text: John 9:1-7, 35-38*

We have been looking at Jesus' miracles which John tells us serve as important signs revealing both Jesus' identity and mission. Today we are looking at the story of a man who was born blind (John 9). There are three important people in this passage, and we learn something from each.

**[1] From Jesus' disciples we learn about the source and purpose of suffering.** They (like we) assumed that people must have done something to deserve their suffering. This belief is rooted deep inside many of us; some call it karma. There are huge problems with this assumption. It fosters pride and self-righteousness among those who presently are experiencing a trouble-free life. But it's not consistent with reality—there are plenty of good people who suffer, and plenty of evil people who prosper. This assumption that particular sin results in particular suffering is incredibly cruel; it takes compassion and pity out of the equation. Jesus rejected that whole premise (v. 2-3). Although this man's suffering wasn't the result of particular sin, Luke 13:1-3 complements the truth found in John 9:1-3, yielding an incredibly nuanced understanding of suffering. When God created the world, there was no suffering (Gen. 1-3 and Rom. 8). Mankind's sin (in general) is the root cause of general human suffering. That's why Jesus could say, "Repent"—because of our fallen sinful state, we all deserve death. But John 9 balances this general truth showing that particular suffering is not necessarily the result of particular sin. All things—including suffering—work together for the good of God's children. We may not understand it this side of eternity; there is a mystery to suffering.

**[2] From the Pharisees we learn that spiritual blindness is a heart-problem** (v. 13-34, 39-41). They cannot see what is plain and obvious because they are spiritually blind. Spiritual blindness means that we're dead spiritually. We're physically alive and we're physically seeing, but we're spiritually dead until he gives us his life, and as a consequence, we're spiritually blind. Spiritual life and spiritual sight go together. Until the Holy Spirit opens our eyes spiritually, we can't see the reality of sin and the reality of grace. The Pharisees evidence this; despite a genuine miracle, they refuse to believe in Jesus. They had a serious case of spiritual pride: "You're nothing but a sinner. We're not sinners. We're disciples of Moses. How dare you lecture us? What do you know about anything?" Only when the Holy Spirit opens our eyes does our sin become real to us. We see the corruption in our motives. You begin to feel guilty. There's all this pride and self-righteousness. While previously you may have agreed that you were a sinner in a general sort of way, now you see it clearly, and it brings a sense of guilt. But along with this guilt comes the beauty of grace. Because when sin becomes real to you, grace also becomes real. It becomes beautiful! It becomes not just an abstraction, it changes you.

People who are brilliant and successful are at a great disadvantage spiritually, while those who are the most disadvantaged by the world's standards are the most advantaged. Why? Because Jesus saves people who know that they desperately need a Savior. The people who admit that they're not good, and that they need a savior—they're the saved ones. But brilliant, successful, proud people are at a disadvantage because the gospel says that we have nothing to commend ourselves to God; it's sheer grace. The proud Pharisees retorted: "Are you saying that we're blind?", and Jesus said, "Because you say you're not blind, you are." Their spiritual vision was impaired, but they were unwilling to admit it and go to the doctor. So, there was no hope for them. The deepest blindness is blindness to your own blindness. If that describes you, I am deeply concerned for you.

**[3] From the blind man we that God wants to heal more than physical problems.** From v. 35-38 we know that Jesus also healed this man's spiritual blindness. Had John not added this last little bit about worship, we wouldn't have gotten to the heart of the issue of spiritual blindness and spiritual sight. Don't overlook how astounding it is that a Jew would worship another human being! He clearly saw Jesus' deity, and that's truly amazing! This is the ultimate healing of spiritual blindness because worshiping the wrong thing is the ultimate cause of our blindness. Worshiping the right thing, the God-man Jesus Christ, is the cure to spiritual blindness. Only then do we see moral unacceptability before God. Only as we worship God as our supreme joy in life do we find our sight clearing

# Digging Deeper in Your Daily Quiet Time

Blindness is the inability to see. Spiritual blindness is the inability to perceive spiritual truth. The mind of fallen humanity is blind to the glory of God revealed in Christ (2 Cor. 4:4). No amount of evidence can **compel** belief (John 12:28-29; Acts 3:7-10 & 4:16-17). Spiritual blindness is **not** the result of lack of intelligence (1 Cor. 1:18-31). The unregenerate person is: "arrogant" (Col. 2:18), "blind" (2 Cor. 4:4), "corrupt" (1 Tim. 6:5), "darkened" (Eph. 4:18), "deceived" (Col. 2:8), "defiled" (Titus 1:15), "depraved" (Rom. 1:28), "displeasing" (Rom. 8:8), "ensnared/captured" (2 Tim. 2:25-26), "fleshly" (Col. 2:18), "foolish" (Rom. 1:21), "futile" (Eph. 4:17), "hardened" (2 Cor. 3:14), "hostile" (Col. 1:21; Rom. 1:30 & 8:7; Exod. 20:5; Prov. 8:36; Luke 19:14; John 3:20; 7:7; 15:18, 23-24), "ignorant" (Eph. 4:18), "insubordinate" (Rom. 8:7; 1 Cor. 2:14), and "lethal" (Rom. 8:6, 13). The result of this spiritual insensitivity and revulsion to the things of God is that "...there is **none** who seeks for God" (Rom. 3:11).

If man ever is to "see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God" (2 Cor. 4:4), then a miracle must take place (John 3:3-8). At salvation, Christians are given a regenerated mental ability to comprehend spiritual truth. The mind, previously blinded by Satan, now possesses "the helmet of salvation" (Eph 6:17) to protect the mind against Satan's schemes (the Greek word "schemes" refers to mind-related attacks; Eph. 4:14 & 6:11). The redeemed mind then is capable of renewal (Rom. 12:2; Eph. 4:23; Col. 3:10). Since Scripture reveals the mind of God, in order to think like God, one must think like Scripture (2 Tim. 3:16-17). Although believers have been given a "new heart to seek God" (Eze. 36:26-27), we continue to need God's on-going help to correctly interpret his Word (Ps. 119:18; 1 Cor. 2:12-16; Eph. 1:18).

Jesus' "Parable of the Soils" is found in Matthew, Mark and Luke, each one giving a few details not found in the other accounts. When all three accounts are combined, rich insights are revealed. Since this is a "blending" of all three accounts, verse numbers cannot be used. The numbers in the left column represent "paragraphs" (henceforth indicated with this symbol: "¶") to assist us in our study.

## The Parable of the Soils

*Matthew 13:1-23, Mark 4:1-20 and Luke 8:4-15*

- ¶1 Jesus went out of the house and was sitting by the sea. And great multitudes gathered to him from various cities. Jesus got into a boat and sat down, and the whole multitude was standing on the beach. And He was teaching them many things in parables, and was saying to them in his teaching:
- ¶2 "Listen to this! A farmer went out to plant some seeds, and it came about that as he was scattering seed,
- ¶3 Some seed fell on a footpath, and it was trampled under foot, and the birds of the air ate it up.
- ¶4 And other seed fell on the rocky places, where it did not have much soil; and immediately it sprang up, because it had no depth of soil. But when the sun had risen, it was scorched; and because it had no root it had no moisture, and so it withered away.
- ¶5 And other seed fell among the thorns, and the thorns grew up with it and choked it, and it yielded no crop.
- ¶6 And other seed fell into the good soil and as it grew up and increased, it yielded a crop and produced thirty, sixty, and a hundredfold.
- ¶7 He who has ears, let him hear."

¶8 As soon as He was alone, his followers, along with the twelve, began asking him about the parables. Jesus answered them, “To you it has been granted to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to those who are outside it has not been granted. They get everything in parables. For whoever has, to him more shall be given, and he will have an abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has shall be taken away from him. Therefore I speak to them in parables; because while seeing they do not see, and while hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand.

¶9 In their case the prophecy of Isaiah is being fulfilled, which says, ‘YOU WILL KEEP ON HEARING, BUT WILL NOT UNDERSTAND; YOU WILL KEEP ON SEEING, BUT WILL NOT PERCEIVE; FOR THE HEART OF THIS PEOPLE HAS BECOME DULL, WITH THEIR EARS THEY SCARCELY HEAR, AND THEY HAVE CLOSED THEIR EYES, OTHERWISE THEY WOULD SEE WITH THEIR EYES, HEAR WITH THEIR EARS, AND UNDERSTAND WITH THEIR HEART AND RETURN, AND I WOULD FORGIVE THEM.’ (Isaiah 6:9, 10)

¶10 But blessed are your eyes, because they see; and your ears, because they hear. For truly I say to you that many prophets and righteous men desired to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it.”

¶11 And He said to them, “Do you not understand this parable? How will you understand all the parables?

¶12 Hear then the parable of the farmer: the seed is the Word of God. When anyone hears the Word of the kingdom, and does not understand it, Satan comes and snatches away the Word from their heart, so that they may not believe and be saved. This is the one on whom seed was sown on the footpath.

¶13 And the one on whom seed was sown on the rocky places, this is the man who hears the Word, and immediately receives it with joy; yet he has no firm root in himself, he believes for a while but is only temporary, and when temptation, affliction or persecution arises because of the Word, immediately he falls away.

¶14 And the one on whom seed was sown among the thorns; this is the man who has heard the Word, and the worries of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches, pleasures of this life, and the desires for other things enter in and choke the Word, and it becomes unfruitful and brings no fruit to maturity.

¶15 And the seed in the good soil, this is the one who has heard the Word and accepts it in an honest and good heart, understands it, and holds it fast, and indeed bears fruit with perseverance—thirty, sixty, and a hundredfold.”

Notice ¶11. “Do you not understand **this** parable? How will you understand **all** the parables?” This parable is all about understanding God, and the role that our heart plays in knowing God better. It is the key to spiritual vision. Our passage has two key words—“heart” and “understand”. We must study these concepts if we are to grow in spiritual vision. Mark the following references to “heart”: ¶9 (2x), ¶12, and ¶15, and “understand”: ¶8, ¶9 (2x), ¶11 (2x), ¶12, and ¶15.

In the Bible, your heart is the control center of your life (Matt. 5:8; Rom. 2:14-15; Acts 8:22-23; Ps. 139:23-24; Prov. 4:23). The unregenerate human heart is wicked in God's sight and is held captive by sin. But God can wash and purify our hearts. Once we are washed by God and become his children, then we must pay attention to the daily condition of our hearts, for it controls all our actions (Prov. 4:23).

Our second key word is “understand”, and it holds some surprises for us as well. Knowledge of God and wisdom are moral and relational, **not** intellectual. Knowledge begins with reverence for the Lord, but fools hate wisdom and self-control (Prov. 1:7). The obstacle to knowledge of God is being a “fool” who “hates wisdom and self-control”. Knowledge of persons always is based on relationship, trustworthiness, and responsiveness.

Think about it: to whom would you divulge your deepest thoughts, dreams, and fears: to a friend who has proven his trustworthiness, or to a stranger? God is the same way; faithfulness in what he already has revealed of himself is the key to receiving more knowledge and intimacy with God (see Isaiah 1:2-3).

Because knowledge/understanding is a moral/relational issue, rather than one of IQ or educational level, it is clear that a right heart—the seat of volition—is critical to the gaining of knowledge of God. Knowledge of God is a gift he gives to those who ask for it and who respond honestly to what has already been revealed. God **wants** to reveal himself to all—but some people resist him. Let's look back at our parable:

- "...the **heart** of this people has become dull..." (¶9)
- "...**they** have closed their eyes..." (¶9)
- "...[they would] understand with their heart..." (¶9)  
Understanding is **not** an issue of IQ, but of heart-responsiveness.
- Jesus **invited all** to receive forgiveness! (¶7)
- "Great multitudes" gathered to hear Jesus teach (¶1), **but**...
- ...**only a few cared enough to stay** with Jesus **and pursue** understanding. (¶8)  
**Don't miss this! Anyone could have included himself among "Jesus' followers"!**
- God is **always** the initiator (¶2)...
- ...and wants **everyone** to respond (¶7), **but** ...
- He requires responsiveness—or else he will not continue giving revelation of himself. (¶8-9)  
(See: John 7:17; 8:31, 32; 14:21)
- But **if** we are responsive, then we can know God abundantly—**more will always be given if** we're responsive to what he's **already** shown us. (¶8) (Also see: John 14:21)

In Matthew 11:20-30 Jesus teaches us that submission to him is the key to spiritual sight. He began by addressing the cities which had rejected him, even though He did many miracles there (v. 20-24). He then taught that **if** we are to know him, God **must** reveal himself. We cannot come to a true knowledge of God on **our own** terms (v. 25-27). It **never** will happen (v. 23a).

Jesus **desires** that all would know God, but he limits revelation of himself and of the Father to those who are responsive (v. 27). Jesus **offers** spiritual sight, true knowledge of God, to **any and all** who will:

1. **Come to** Jesus (v. 28a)
2. **Submit to** Jesus (v. 29a)
3. **Learn from** Jesus (v. 29b)

Back to the Parable of the Soils: Jesus promised that **if** we focus on keeping our heart responsive to him, we **will** be blessed with spiritual vision and hearing (¶10), and we **will** reap an abundant crop of understanding and knowledge of God—"thirty, sixty, and a hundredfold" (¶15)!