

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

To See or Not To See John 9:35

This weekend we will be considering the concluding verses of **John 9** and Christ's final interaction with the blind man and a group of certain willful unbelieving Pharisees. As we consider this interaction we will be able to see the continuing stark contrast between those who enjoy spiritual sight and those who do not enjoy spiritual sight. So what events led up to this final interaction?

It all began way back in **John 8** on the last day of the feast of booths when Jesus, after using the illumination ceremony as a backdrop, declared that He was the light of the world in **John 8:12**. That statement ignited a firestorm among the Jews which ultimately culminated with Jesus telling the Jewish leaders in **John 8:58**, **“Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, I AM.”** In making this statement Jesus, in the eyes of these Jewish leaders, had in the clearest possible terms declared Himself to be God.

The response of the Jewish leaders to this declaration, of course, was predictable. The Jewish leaders picked up stones to throw at Him. But before they could throw them, Jesus somehow, according to the last verse of **chapter 8**, managed to sneak out of the temple area.

It was at this point in the story as He was most likely leaving the temple area and walking down a nearby road that He encountered a man who had been born blind begging for alms. Rather than passing him Jesus stopped to look at him, which prompted Christ's disciples to ask, **“Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he should be born blind.”**

Jesus responded by telling the disciples that this man's blindness was not the result of someone's sin but rather in order that the work of God might be displayed in Him. Jesus then made clay and put that clay on the blind man's eyes and told him to go wash in the Pool of Siloam. And, of course, you know what happened next. The blind man, after washing the clay off his eyes in the pool of Siloam, was given physical sight. This, of course, was an extraordinary miracle and dramatically pointed to Jesus as being the Messiah. All of what I just described for you took place in **John 9:1-12**.

The extraordinary nature of this miracle and the hubbub surrounding this miracle finally led to an investigation by a group Pharisees that is detailed for us in **John 9:13-34**.

In this investigation the Pharisees, first of all, talked to the blind man about what had happened to him. After the blind man described in detail how Jesus had healed him, a division broke out among these Pharisees, which led certain Pharisees, who were more positive toward Jesus, to ask the blind man a question. They asked him what he thought about Jesus. The blind man responded that he believed Jesus was a prophet in **John 9:17**.

This led the Pharisees who were willfully unbelieving to take the investigation one step further. They decided to question the parents of this former blind man to see if he, in fact, had been born blind. The parents, of course, confirmed that this was their son and that he, in fact, had been born blind, but they were unwilling to confirm the fact that Jesus had healed him, because **John 9:22** tells us that they were afraid. They were afraid of what? They were afraid that these willfully

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unbelieving Pharisees would put them out of the synagogue or in other words they were afraid that these willfully unbelieving Pharisees would cut them off from the social and religious life of Israel.

This stonewalling by the parents led these willfully unbelieving Pharisees to once again make contact with the former blind man. This second contact with the former blind man led to one of the most dramatic verbal exchanges in the whole of the New Testament, an exchange that culminated with the blind man instructing the Pharisees on why they should view Christ as a righteous man who had been sent from God.

How did these Pharisees respond to this instruction? **John 9:34** tells us, “**They answered and said to him, ‘You were born entirely in sins, and are you teaching us?’ And they put him out.**” The Pharisees responded by putting the former blind man out of the synagogue. In other words, they inflicted upon him the very punishment that his parents had feared might happen to them if they bore witness to Christ.

These are the events that have now led us to Christ’s final interaction with the blind man and these certain willful unbelieving Pharisees in **John 9:35-41**.

This final interaction will allow us to see the stark contrast between those who enjoy spiritual sight and those who do not enjoy spiritual sight. Hopefully, as we consider this stark contrast, we will be personally encouraged by how blessed we are in Christ. My hope, as we begin to examine this stark contrast, is that we might see how truly special we are to God.

So what is this first characteristic of the spiritually sighted that we see in **John 9:35-38**?

Spiritual sight is the product of divine initiative (John 9:35). Anytime someone takes the initiative to meet a need in our lives, it is a wonderful thing. Wouldn’t you agree?

Over the course of my life there have been people who have taken the initiative to care for me. People who did not wait for me to ask for help but simply, out of the goodness of their heart, reached out to me, because that is what they believed God would wanted them to do.

Were these acts of kindness appreciated? Absolutely! Are these people special to me? Absolutely! How could they not be special to me? They were more concerned about serving me than they were in being served. And I love them for that. This response, I believe, is very natural for those who feel that they have been loved.

Hopefully, this is how you feel this evening/morning toward Christ, knowing that apart from Him taking the initiative, through His death, burial and resurrection, to open the door to heaven, and apart from Him taking the initiative at some point in your life through His Word to give you spiritual sight, you would still be walking in darkness separated from God in this life and in the life to come.

You might ask, “Dale, are you saying that if we are here this evening/morning and we are enjoying spiritual sight that Christ has, in some personal way through His word, taken the initiative to reach out to us at some specific point in time during the course of our lives?” Yes!

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If you are here this weekend and enjoy spiritual sight, you can be confident that Christ, at some point in time, took the initiative to reach out to you.

We will see an example of this divine initiative in the passage that we will begin to study this weekend.

Let me read for you the very first part of **John 9:35**. **“Jesus heard that they had put him out.”** Now, let me ask you a question.

In light of the fact that this former blind man had been put out of the synagogue, how would he have been feeling at this particular time?

How did he feel? He probably had mixed feelings. He probably felt good about speaking up and proclaiming what he believed to be the truth. But he also, most likely, felt badly that he had been put out of the synagogue.

So, how will Jesus respond to this situation? Let us continue to read the verse. **“Jesus heard that they had put him out; and finding him.”**

How did He respond? He certainly did not respond with indifference. He responded to this situation by searching for the former blind man. Was He successful in His search? Absolutely! The verse tells us that He found him.

This is divine initiative. John 9:35 does not say that after the former blind man was put out of the synagogue that he found Jesus, rather it says that *Jesus* found him. And what did Jesus do when He found him? Jesus asked him a question.

Let us continue to read the verse. **“Jesus heard that they had put him out; and finding him, He said, ‘Do you believe in the Son of Man?’”** I know that if you have a KJV Bible with you this weekend that it reads “Son of God,” but the better reading is clearly “Son of Man,” which is how it is translated both in the NAS and NIV Bibles. So, let us once again consider the question that Jesus asked this former blind man. What did He ask him? He asked, **“Do you believe in the Son of Man?”**

What is the significance of this question? When Jesus asked the question, “Do you believe in the Son of Man?” He is not saying do you believe that He exists, but rather do you put your *trust* in Him.

Now, let me ask you a question. How would the former blind man have understood Christ’s reference to the Son of Man? What was his understanding of that title?

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The blind man most likely would have understood the reference to the Son of Man as a reference to the *Messiah* based on Daniel 7:13-14. Let me read that passage for you. **“I kept looking in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven one like a Son of Man was coming, and He came up to the Ancient of Days and was presented before Him. (14) And 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.”**

When Christ initiated contact with this former blind man in **John 9:1-7** the first time, He had initiated that contact for the purpose of giving him physical sight. But here in **John 9:35**, we see Jesus initiating contact with this former blind man for a second time in order to give him spiritual sight. He is initiating contact with him for the second time so that this former blind man might see Him more clearly. Not simply as a prophet sent from God, but rather as “the Son of man,” or in other words, as the Jewish Messiah.

Does this story sound similar to another story that we considered earlier in this Gospel? It should. In **John 5** Jesus initiated contact with a man who had been paralyzed for 38 years and He healed him of that paralysis. And later, Jesus again initiated contact with that same man after certain Jews had confronted the man who had been healed for carrying his bed on the Sabbath. Why did Jesus initiate this second contact? He initiated this second contact not to give him a physical check-up, but rather to give him spiritual sight. The story in **John 5** is very similar to the story in **John 9**.

Spiritual sight is the product of divine initiative. This is what we saw earlier in **John 5**, and this is what we see here in **John 9:35**. When Jesus found this former blind man and asked him, **“Do you believe in the Son of Man”** He was preparing to give him spiritual sight.

The idea that spiritual sight is the product of divine initiative is not only illustrated by what Christ did but also by what He *taught* (Luke 19:10). Let me read for you the response of Jesus to Zaccheus’ expression of faith in **Luke 19:10**. **“For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.”** Why did Jesus think that seeking out the lost was necessary? Why couldn’t the lost seek out Christ? The lost cannot seek out Christ, because they are spiritually blind.

Can’t they do something about their spiritual blindness? Or in other words, can’t they save themselves? Absolutely not!

Just as the water at the wedding feast at Cana did not have the power to transform itself into wine, and just like the five loaves and two fishes did not have the power to multiply themselves to feed the multitude, the lost do not have the power within themselves to make their blind eyes see. This means that the lost, apart divine initiative, will never be spiritually sighted. And this means that the lost, apart from divine initiative, will never find Christ.

The Apostle *Paul* also taught that spiritual sight was the product of divine initiative (Ephesians 2:1-7).

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Let me read for you **Ephesians 2:1-7**, “**And you (those who were once spiritually lost and spiritually blind) were dead in your trespasses and sins, (2) in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. (3) Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest.**” Of course if this description were the end of the story for these Ephesian believers it would have been quite tragic but it was not the end.

Let us continue to read **Ephesians 2:4-7**. “**But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, (5) even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), (6) and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places, in Christ Jesus, (7) in order that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.**”

Hallelujah! Thank you Jesus! If you are here this weekend and enjoying spiritual sight, it is has nothing to do with who you are or what you have done, it is all about divine initiative. At some point in your life, Jesus approached you as He did the lame man in **John 5**. He approached you just as He approached the blind man in **John 9**.

Now let us go back to **John 9:35**. When Jesus asked this former blind man if he believed in the Son of Man, was he, at that point in time, a disciple of Christ in the fullest sense? Did he fully, as of that moment, understand who Jesus truly was? And what is the answer to that question?

The answer would have to be no! At the moment when the former blind man was asked by Jesus if he believed in the Son of Man, he did not yet know that Jesus was, in fact, that very person. He would in a matter of moments, but when Jesus asked the question, He did not know that Jesus was, in fact, the Son of Man, the Messiah of Israel.

CONCLUSION

Hopefully, this does not describe you. But if it does, you should know that it does not have to remain that way. Christ is reaching out to you! He is not one to sit back passively when people are in need of Him, just as He did not sit back passively in the case of this former blind man.

He is speaking to you. But someone might ask, but what is He is saying. I can tell you exactly what He is saying. Let me read for you **Matthew 11:28-30**. “**Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. (29) Take my yoke upon you, and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart; and you shall find rest for your souls. (30) For My yoke is easy, and My load is light.**”

Christ is not indifferent to the lost of this world. He is not indifferent to those who are spiritually blind. He is reaching out to them just as He was reaching out to this former blind man here in **John 9:35**.

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So the question that I would like to ask you this weekend is this: Is Christ now reaching out to you as He was reaching out to this former blind man here in **John 9:35**? If He is, don't turn away.

If you don't turn away, if you are prepared to respond to Him and His desire to give you the gift of spiritual sight, I promise you that you will never regret it! When we gain spiritual sight, we will be able for the very first time to understand the words of Paul to the Philippians when he said, **“For me to live is Christ and to die is gain.”**

This is what caused Jim Elliot to respond as He responded. “He is no fool who gives up what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose.”

But now, let me ask you this question. If we, in fact, receive this gift of spiritual sight and are able to see things that we were unable to see before, could it be possible that we might at some future time go blind once again and somehow in that blindness be separated from Christ? What is the answer to that question? Absolutely not!

Let me read for you **Romans 8:35-38**. **“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? (36) Just as it is written, ‘For Thy sake we are being put to death all day long; we were considered as sheep to be slaughtered.’ (37) But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us. (38) For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, (39) nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”**

If Christ took the initiative to bring us sight, certainly He will continue to take the initiative to preserve our sight in order that we would not become *separated* from Him (Romans 8:35-38).