

Gospel of John Chapter 9 - John Karmelich

Let me open with a question I'm sure most of us ponder at times: "Am I really saved"? None of us get a big seal on our forehead saying we're in! My favorite response, "Do you love other believers"? I ask as this chapter in effect is a good model of what most of us go through in the salvation process. Here in Chapter 9, the focus is on a man whom Jesus performed a miracle. A man born blind then instantly had eyesight. It doesn't mean unless we have a phenomenal miracle we aren't saved. All I'm saying is most of the aspects that we get when we're saved and grow in faith are modeled in this story. Obviously, I'll explain that better in this lesson. What's interesting is Jesus is, in effect, is a secondary character to the guy who got saved. This ties back to my theological question of, "How can we know for sure that we're going to heaven"?

The miracle itself is something that doesn't occur elsewhere in the Bible. It is about a man who is born blind and Jesus said the reason for it was so that God could work through him. That means He's picked beforehand to be saved, just as we're all picked beforehand to be saved! Jesus spits in dirt to make mud and rubs it in his eyes. Then He tells the man to go wash. To me, that's a model of obedience when we are called by God (salvation). Anyway once the blind man sees, then the "fun begins," as the religious leaders ask him how he could see. The formerly blind man knew His name was Jesus. He probably did hear it before the mud was rubbed on his eyes. At first, this man called Jesus just a man. Later he calls Him as a prophet. We also read that the Jewish leaders threatened to excommunicate anyone who said Jesus is Lord. That threat meant none of your family or friends can ever speak to you again! The point is, the man who was formerly blind had to deal with Jewish religious leaders. He responded positively as he's grateful for what Jesus did. Jesus came to him again and that lead to him calling Jesus Lord! I stated all of that as I want you to consider: We were born "blind to the truth" about who Jesus is. After that are chosen to serve Him, but we don't realize that yet! Then, as we start to draw close to Him, we learn more about who He is, and He becomes Lord of our lives. The point is this chapter's a wonderful model of what He does for each of us as believers. OK time for more details:

The last chapter ends with the religious leaders threatening to stone Jesus for claiming He was Jehovah and effectively stated it as such. Most likely, this story takes place as He and His disciples left, but are still on the temple grounds. (It was a large area). As they were walking or running away from the men trying to kill them, one disciple spotted a blind man begging. A classical Jewish debate is over a person born blind, how do they explain it? Was it due to sin? Obviously, that's not true. If you don't know, the suicide rate is very low for those who are handicapped. Jesus avoided the debate and said in effect, this particular man was born blind so God could work through Him. It's an example of how God chooses us (from His perspective)! Then Jesus made clay by mixing his spit with dirt. (Some Bible commentators point out that just as we're made from dust (Genesis 2:7), dirt was mixed with God working to create a set of eyes for this man). I don't know if that's significant, but it's fun to mention!

Obviously if one has dirt in one's eyes, one has to wash it out. Even the blind beggar knew the territory where he was and went to the specific spot Jesus told him to wash. It shows obedience, just as we obey when God calls us! Bottom line is when he washed, he could see for the first time in his life. When one reads of the miracles in the New Testament, usually a person is cured and "that's that." In this case, we will see how people around him react to this. (I must admit I think of the Monty Python Movie "Life of Brian," as an ex-leper cured by Jesus still begs because he doesn't know what to do next)! Anyway, we read of people around the beggar wondering how this happened and is it really the same guy? (Just like when we are saved, we're changed people and word just spreads)!

Since the locals couldn't explain this, the blind man was led to the religious leaders. They debated over the topic of whether Jesus was a good man and accused him of being a Sabbath Breaker for healing the man on that day! It's amazing how people can be so focused on changed people, they can't handle how it happened or look to Jesus for an answer! Since they couldn't resolve the debate, the religious leaders asked him (the formerly blind guy) who he thought Jesus was, and he said Jesus was a prophet! It's like when we first learn about Jesus, we go from a miracle worker, to someone sent by God, to realizing He is God (coming up in the story).

The debate continued. The religious leaders decided to ask his parents if he was blind. The parents are naturally afraid of being kicked out of Jewish society (which they'd be if they said Jesus cured him), so the answer they gave was, "Yes he was born blind, he can see now, and now he's old enough to answer by himself, so go find out"! So why was this included? A sign of a believer is people notice the change in personality, and word of Jesus can spread even if the person is not there!

I want to mention one thing the formerly blind man said. He said that God doesn't hear sinners praying. That does not mean it's true, it just means he made that statement. Yes, God hears such prayers. As an example, God heard the prayers of the Israelites when they were slaves in Egypt. Who would be saved if God doesn't hear sinner's prayers? The reason he stated that is the religious leaders claimed he was a sinner, so he countered with "God doesn't listen to sinners" just to show that Jesus was from God as the proof that his recovery was what God restoring his eyesight.

All of this led to another confrontation of the religious leaders and the formerly blind man. Notice that John never gives his name, which is another clue it's a model of salvation! The religious leaders state that they don't know if Jesus is from God, so what do "you say"? I admit, he has got guts! He just says, "All I know is I was blind and now I see"! After more debate, the religious leaders ex-communicate the guy who was formerly blind for daring to question their authority. Then Jesus shows up on the scene to give the formerly blind man another lesson on who Jesus really is! It's when we let go of our notions of "religion" that Jesus often draws close to us to develop a deeper relationship with Him.

Back to the story: In short, Jesus tells him that He is the Messiah. At that point the man worships Him and accepts Him as such. As for the religious leaders standing there, Jesus wasn't through with them. It turned into a short debate about who is really blind and who really sees! We don't read Jesus say, "Kill the nonbelievers here on the spot." He's still trying to win them over with a subtle lesson about who He is and what it takes to really see!

This leads us back to us. Obviously, most of us believe we're saved and know this story well. What do we get out of this story? Jesus calls us to be witnesses for Him. Who gets saved is His business! We're just to spread the word about Him. This man gets saved in "stages," just as most of us grow in our faith in stages. A good lesson here is too often Christians try to hit a "home run" about leading someone to a saving faith "when a single will do," leading people closer to the truth about Him. Sometimes it is best to just share a story like this and ask, "Why did Jesus call the religious leaders blind"? At the least, this reminds us that hearts are blind to the truth of the Gospel and only God knows who will get it and who won't. Since we don't know who gets saved, we each make efforts to do things to draw people closer to Jesus. If you get that, you get the purpose of this lesson.

If you liked this little study, I wrote a more detailed account about twenty years ago! To read the other one, click on one of the two links on this page. Thanks again for reading this. John