

Gospel John Chapter 9 -- John Karmelich

1. Chapter 9 of the Gospel of John is all about vision and blindness
 - a) It revolves around a miracle of a man born blind who was then able to see
 - b) And it revolves around people so blind by their arrogance they can't see the truth
 - c) Have you ever used (or heard) the expression:
 - i) I can see what you are talking about
 - ii) Or simply "I can see that" in response to a question.
 - iii) This is the concept Jesus is trying to teach us about being born again.
 - iv) This is the Holy Spirit teaching people about new-life in Jesus Christ.
 - d) This is what happened to a man born-blind in the story
 - i) The real triumph of the man-who-was-formerly-blind
 - a) was not just that he was given physical vision
 - b) But that he was given *spiritual vision*
 - c) The man who was blind...
 - (1) was given physical sight is still going to (physically) die one day.
 - (2) What good is the physical sight in the long run?
 - (a) Just because you can *physically* see
 - (b) doesn't mean you can *spiritually* see
 - d) But the *spiritual* sight he is given will cause him to live forever.
 - e) As Jesus said in the last chapter"
 - (1) I tell you the truth, if anyone keeps my word,
 - (2) he will never see death." (John 8:51 NIV))- 2. Let's start into Chapter 9, Verse 1: As he went along, he saw a man blind from birth. ² His disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?"
 - a) There was a common belief in the Jewish way of thinking
 - b) If someone was born blind, it must be some sort of punishment from God
 - i) Therefore, it is either the baby's fault or the parents fault
 - a) If it's the parent's fault,
 - (1) the parents were punished by giving them a blind son
 - ii) Many believed that God punishes parents through their children.
 - a) This might be based on 2 Samuel 12:15, when God struck and killed the son of David born from the affair with Bathsheba.
 - b) There is also Numbers 14:18(b) and other scripture references that says:
 - c) "Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation." (NIV)
 - (1) This verse simply means that if your parents have sins.
 - (2) It could have *repercussions* on their children and grandchildren
 - (a) Much of human suffering come from the parental sins
 - (b) It also means God will continue to deal with, convict and judge generation after generation.
 - (3) This particular verse does not mean God punishes children for their parents sins
 - (a) That's the godfather who does that, not Father God ☺
 - d) Ezekiel 18:17-18 states that God does not hold children *accountable* for the sins of their parents, although they often suffer because of it.

- iii) The disciples wondered if the man-himself was born in sin.
 - a) There were some rabbis who taught that one could sin in the womb!
 - b) This is based on some interpretations of Jacob & Esau fighting in the womb over who will be the first-born.
 - (1) Not a good interpretations in my mind!
 - c) The real question that the disciples were asking is one that we all ask sometimes...
 - i) Why does God permit so much suffering in the world?
 - ii) Jesus doesn't directly answer the question, but gives a more important answer.
- 3. Verse 3: "Neither this man nor his parents sinned," said Jesus, "but this happened so that the work of God might be displayed in his life.
 - a) Jesus states in Verse 3 that suffering isn't always directly traceable to human sin.
 - b) It is often used as an opportunity for God to work.
 - c) "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the LORD. (Isa 55:8 NIV)
 - i) Sometimes God uses human suffering for a higher and greater glory.
 - ii) There was a girl from Colobime High School tragedy who confessed her belief in God right before she was killed.
 - iii) Her testimony has lead thousands of high school kids to make commitments to Jesus Christ
 - d) Chuck Swindoll had a great comment about trying to understand God's purpose for allowing human suffering.
 - i) Chuck said that when we get to heaven, the only words we are going to get out of our mouths is the word "Oh"
 - a) Hey God, what about this terrible thing...
 - (1) "Oh, that's why you allowed it to happen.
 - b) Hey God, what about that tragedy..."Oh"...
 - c) Hey God, why did you allow..."Oh"
 - d) Hey God, "Oh..."
- 4. Back to the text, Verse 4: As long as it is day, we must do the work of him who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work. ⁵ While I am in the world, I am the light of the world."
 - a) The question of the moment is not who caused the misery.
 - b) There are times to sit around and ponder great philosophical questions
 - c) And there are times when we need to get busy and help those in needs
 - i) Jesus is saying while he was he on earth, He was here to minister not to debate.
- 5. Verse 6: Having said this, he spit on the ground, made some mud with the saliva, and put it on the man's eyes. ⁷ "Go," he told him, "wash in the Pool of Siloam" (this word means Sent). So the man went and washed, and came home seeing.
 - a) I liked what a writer named Jon Curson calls this passage: "Here's mud in your eye!"
 - b) I want you to think about this from the perspective of the blind man.
 - i) He was never asked, nor told by Jesus that his sight was going to be restored
 - ii) He had no idea who Jesus was at this point in His life.
 - iii) He had no idea Jesus spit in the ground
 - iv) All he knew was that he felt dirt (clay) in his eyes.
 - a) Ever got dirt in your eye?
 - b) What is the first thing you want to do?
 - (1) Run for water and go rinse it out!
 - v) When Jesus told him to go rinse in the Pool of Siloam, he obeyed
 - a) Hey, If I had dirt in my eye,
 - (1) I would obey someone telling me to rinse too!
 - b) There is a Puritan's commentary that says the man "blindly obeyed Jesus". That's good words for us to live by!

- c) There is a wonderful “spiritual” application to these verses. It is almost a parable.
 - i) John simply says “He washed and came back seeing”
 - a) What does “clay” symbolize in Scripture?
 - (1) I would argue it is our humanity
 - (2) Yet, O LORD, you are our Father. We are the clay, you are the potter; we are all the work of your hand. (Isa 64:8 NIV)
 - (3) “Clay is a weak, and breakable substance”
 - (a) That is a description of our human nature
 - (b) How do we “clean up” our human nature?
 - (c) By “washing” in the Word of God
 - b) John gives us a clue of the spiritual application by telling us the name of the Pool of Siloam means “Sent” as in “Sent by God”
 - d) Last thing to point out by this miracle is how different it is from other miracles in style
 - i) When reading all four Gospels, Jesus uses different methods of curing people.
 - a) Some by touch, some by a spoken word, others by “mud in their eye”
 - b) The point is simply to “Do not put God in box”
 - (1) God has many ways of working things out
 - (2) And we should not expect God to act a certain way, simply because that’s the way he acted in the past.
- 6. The next set of verses focuses on people’s *reaction* to the miracle
 - a) Verse 8: His neighbors and those who had formerly seen him begging asked, "Isn't this the same man who used to sit and beg?" ⁹ Some claimed that he was. Others said, "No, he only looks like him." But he himself insisted, "I am the man."
 - i) The neighbors were in a state of shock. Nobody had every heard of somebody being cured of blindness of birth
 - ii) A common reaction to shock is to go into a state of “denial”.
 - a) “It can’t be Him, it only looks like him (Verse 9b)
- 7. Verse 10: "How then were your eyes opened?" they demanded. ¹¹ He replied, "The man they call Jesus made some mud and put it on my eyes. He told me to go to Siloam and wash. So I went and washed, and then I could see." ¹² "Where is this man?" they asked him. "I don't know," he said.
 - a) The key to this section is what the formerly-blind man thought of Jesus.
 - i) At this point Jesus was just “A Man” who performed a miracle.
 - b) Notice the accuracy of the text.
 - i) The “formerly-blind” man did not mention Jesus spitting on the ground and making mud. He was unable to see this part. He only described what he saw. He only knew that Jesus made mud because he felt it on his eyes.
- 8. Verse 13: They brought to the Pharisees the man who had been blind. ¹⁴ Now the day on which Jesus had made the mud and opened the man's eyes was a Sabbath. ¹⁵ Therefore the Pharisees also asked him how he had received his sight. "He put mud on my eyes," the man replied, "and I washed, and now I see."
 - a) The neighbors brought the blind man to the Pharisees because they knew this was a religious issue.
 - i) The neighbors knew it was a miracle, but they didn’t know what it meant.
 - ii) Therefore, they went to the religious “experts”.

- b) I really like the testimony of this man. I washed, and now I see"
 - i) It sounds a lot like the reference from the song "Amazing Grace"
 - a) "I once was blind, but now I see"
 - ii) It is a real simple and direct witness for Jesus.
 - a) No bragging, just the facts.
 - iii) When you become saved. Your life changes. You produce fruit.
 - a) A sign of your faith is when people *see the changes in your life*.
 - b) They know that you are *different* for your beliefs
 - c) There is a great Christian motto that says
 - (1) "If Christianity were illegal,
 - (2) and you were arrested on charges of being a Christian,
 - (3) would there be enough evidence to convict you?
 - d) To paraphrase the wonderful, yet sarcastic tones of Walter Martin:
 - (1) "I want to commend some of you for being wonderful Christian secret agents. You neighbors don't suspect you in the least!"
9. Verse 16: Some of the Pharisees said, "This man is not from God, for he does not keep the Sabbath." But others asked, "How can a sinner do such miraculous signs?" So they were divided.
- a) In this chapter, There is a lot of division over Jesus.
 - i) The neighbors were divided over the miracle that Jesus did.
 - ii) And here are the Pharisee's being divided over the miracle.
 - a) Jesus said "Do you think I came to bring peace on earth? No, I tell you, but division" (Luke 12:51 NIV)
 - b) The Pharisee's interpretation of the Law was very strict
 - i) First Jesus violated the law by spitting on the ground to make mud (clay)
 - a) In their minds, this is "working" on the Sabbath (the day of rest)
 - ii) Second he "cured" someone on the Sabbath
 - a) Their interpretation of the Law is that one can not *heal* on the Sabbath,
 - b) but the Law says you can comfort someone in his or her affliction.
 - c) The application is the danger of "not seeing the forest because of the trees"
 - i) Their focus was on the methodology, not the cure.
 - ii) The danger to us is we can become similar in our "religious" way of doing things, that we try to "put God in a box" and expect Him to do things a certain way, based on our interpretations. (The danger of "legalism")
 - d) Notice also, that the Pharisees, who don't believe in Jesus, never accuse him of being a "con-artist" or a magician.
 - i) The fact that Jesus' enemies do not accuse him of staging fake miracles validates the reality of the miracles themselves!
 - ii) If the Pharisee's suspected *at all* that the miracles were fake, don't you think they would have said something.
 - iii) It is only the modern, critical, "Ph'd's" who deny the miracles of Jesus.
10. Verse 17: Finally they turned again to the blind man, "What have you to say about him? It was your eyes he opened." The man replied, "He is a prophet."
- a) The formerly-blind man is growing in his spiritual beliefs in Jesus.
 - i) Jesus has improved his status from being
 - a) "A man" (Verse 11) to "A Prophet" (Verse 17).
 - b) You have to see the humor in the Pharisee's at this point.
 - i) They are busy debating about Jesus
 - ii) These are the religious "experts"
 - iii) Since they can't resolve the debate,
 - iv) So they turn to the formerly-blind man for the answer!

11. Verse 18: The Jews still did not believe that he had been blind and had received his sight until they sent for the man's parents. ¹⁹ "Is this your son?" they asked. "Is this the one you say was born blind? How is it that now he can see?"
 - a) Some people's hearts can be so hardened about the truth (of Jesus),
 - i) that they refuse to accept the obvious truth that Jesus healed this man.
 - ii) Therefore they had to go interrogate witnesses.
 - iii) This can sometimes be a good thing.
 - a) Many a person has discovered Christ by studying the evidence.
12. Verse 20: "We know he is our son," the parents answered, "and we know he was born blind. ²¹ But how he can see now, or who opened his eyes, we don't know. Ask him. He is of age; he will speak for himself." ²² His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jews, for already the Jews had decided that anyone who acknowledged that Jesus was the Christ would be put out of the synagogue. ²³ That was why his parents said, "He is of age; ask him."
 - a) The parents answered the questions directly.
 - b) They did not reveal any opinions, other than direct answers to the questions.
 - c) The parents had real fear of being "put out of the synagogues". (Verse 22)
 - i) You and I may not truly comprehend this.
 - ii) The closest comparison we have is the Middle-Age, Catholic practice of "ex-communication"
 - iii) To be "put out of the synagogue" meant
 - a) 1. You could never go to synagogue again the rest of your life.
 - b) 2. All your friends (fellow Jews) would turn their back on you if they saw you on the street.
 - c) 3. You could have no business dealings with other Jews.
 - d) 4. People would treat you (literally) as if you were dead.
 - e) To many people it is a fate worse than death.
 - iv) West Point Military Academy practices "ex-communication" to those who severely cheat on tests. In the history of the Academy no person has ever survived this treatment. The cadets all end up resigning.
 - v) Many cults (Jehovah Witnesses) practice this to those who then turn their back on their beliefs.
 - d) You have to understand the real fear the parents were feeling in this interrogation.
 - i) They were willing to cast out their own son to protect their own way-of-life!
 - e) There are many people who, to this day, are cast out of their society in order to become a Christian.
 - i) In many Orthodox Jewish homes, if a child becomes a believer in Jesus, the family holds a funeral for that person. He is ex-communicated.
 - a) For those who have seen "Fiddler on the Roof", the relationship of the father and the youngest daughter is a good example.
 - f) There are probably many people today who will not take a stand for Jesus out of fears of ex-communication, or simply being shunned or ridiculed for their beliefs.
13. Verse 24: A second time they summoned the man who had been blind. "Give glory to God, " they said. "We know this man is a sinner."
 - a) Saying "Give glory to God" is the equivalent of you and I taking the witness stand and saying "Do you swear to tell the truth, the whole truth & nothing but the truth, so help you God?"

- b) Notice the second part of this verse: "'We know this man is a sinner.'"
 - i) The Pharisee's minds were already convinced the man is guilty.
 - ii) I have met a few people in my life who's hearts are so hardened against Jesus they are beyond hope.
 - a) I have a friend who is part of a Jewish "anti-missionary" group who goes around lecturing Jewish people on how Jesus is not the Messiah
 - b) After long debates, I finally found debating to be "fruitless"
 - c) Now I just pray for Him, and when we get together, *be* a witness as opposed to *trying* to witness. In some cases, this is all you can do.
 - d) Ask the Holy Spirit lead you *when* to witness as well as *how* to witness.
- 14. Verse 25: He replied, "Whether he is a sinner or not, I don't know. One thing I do know. I was blind but now I see!"
 - a) This is my kind of witness.
 - b) He is saying "I don't know a lot about Jesus. I just know I was blind, but now I see."!
 - i) We need to remember sometimes to keep it simple.
 - ii) Our lives and actions are greater witnesses than debating!
- 15. Verse 26: Then they asked him, "What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?"
 - a) Notice the Pharisees were more focused on the "How" than the "Who"
 - b) Since they have already accepted that Jesus is not the Messiah, they were only trying to look for evidence of breaking the Sabbath's law of "No-working".
 - c) Ray Steadman says: If these guys were to receive a beautiful diamond in a plastic box, they would complain about the box being plastic and not velvet!
 - d) Remember the purpose of the Gospel of John is to focus on "Who is Jesus"
 - i) The Pharisee's were busy focusing on the methodology.
- 16. Verse 27: He answered, "I have told you already and you did not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you want to become his disciples, too?"
 - a) You have to admire the formerly-blind man's "hoospa" (spunk)
 - b) I was thinking this week about the occupation of being a "beggar"
 - i) People who make a living as a beggar need to be bold in order to survive.
 - ii) They don't have a lot of worries about shame.
 - iii) Those traits (no shame, spunk) came in handy as He witnessed for Jesus.
 - iv) God uses us "as we are" to witness for Him.
- 17. Verse 28: Then they hurled insults at him and said, "You are this fellow's disciple! We are disciples of Moses! ²⁹ We know that God spoke to Moses, but as for this fellow, we don't even know where he comes from."
 - a) Notice who is blind in this argument.
 - i) The formerly-blind could see
 - ii) Those who could see are "blind" to the truth.
 - b) The Pharisee's admit they don't know where Jesus comes from.
 - c) The formerly blind seizes upon that statement as an opportunity.
- 18. Verse 30: The man answered, "Now that is remarkable! You don't know where he comes from, yet he opened my eyes. ³¹ We know that God does not listen to sinners. He listens to the godly man who does his will. ³² Nobody has ever heard of opening the eyes of a man born blind. ³³ If this man were not from God, he could do nothing."
 - a) The spiritual insight of the formerly-blind man is growing.
 - b) Jesus status has improved from A Man" (Vs. 11) to "Prophet" (Vs. 17) to one who is "from God" (Vs. 33).

- c) A quick theological question.... Does God listen to sinners?
 - i) Many scholars debate this question.
 - ii) I would argue yes. God is always listening. How can God ever forgive someone of his or her sins if He is not listening? God desires that ALL men turn their heart to follow Jesus. (1 Timothy 2:3-4). God will direct the lives of those who are in the process of turning to Him.
 - iii) (Prov. 8:17 NIV) I love those who love me, and those who seek me find me.
 - iv) Another argument is Genesis 21:17, when God listens to the cries of Hagar (Abraham's wife/Sarah's hand-maiden) after God told Abraham to cast her out of their lives.)
- 19. Verse 34: To this they replied, "You were steeped in sin at birth; how dare you lecture us!" And they threw him out.
 - a) "steeped in sin at birth" means that they accused him of having sin from birth and that's why God punished him with blindness.
 - b) Essentially, they were taking a cheap shot at him. The same way they took a cheap shot at Jesus in Chapter 8 by saying "We were not born of fornication"
 - i) When somebody runs out of arguments, they often resort to cheap insults.
 - ii) Also notice that being a follower of Jesus often results in the same sort of treatment that Jesus himself received.
 - iii) "The apostles left the Sanhedrin, rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name." (Acts 5:41 NIV)
- 20. Verse 35: Jesus heard that they had thrown him out, and when he found him, he said, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?"
 - a) I find it fascinating that Jesus sought him out *after* He was thrown out of Judaism.
 - b) Some people need to be cast out of our religious assumptions before we can *truly* become a Christian.
 - i) The most famous example is Martin Luther, who is the founder of the Reformation (Protestant) movement.
 - ii) His intention was never to leave the Catholic church,
 - a) it was just to fix some of its doctrines.
 - b) It was his being ex-communicated from the Catholic Church that allowed him to start the whole Reformation movement.
- 21. Verse 36: "Who is he, sir?" the man asked. "Tell me so that I may believe in him." ³⁷ Jesus said, "You have now seen him; in fact, he is the one speaking with you." Then the man said, "Lord, I believe," and he worshiped him.
 - a) This man had progressed in his Christian beliefs, and now Jesus was ready for the closing "sell". Jesus asked him in Verse 35: Do you believe in the Son of Man?
 - i) This is asking "Do you believe in the concept of the Messiah?"
 - b) Jesus response is Verse 37: You have now seen him; in fact, he is the one speaking with you
 - i) I am fascinated that Jesus often speaks of himself in the 3rd Person.
 - a) Some people argue that Jesus spoke this way to get people to notice His speech more, and contemplate His words.
 - b) I like to think that Jesus spoke this way because Jesus is repeating the words that the Father is telling Him to say.
 - (1) "I do nothing on my own but speak just what the Father has taught me." (John 8:28b, NIV)
 - (2) Therefore, he talks in the 3rd person, as if God the father is uttering the words about Jesus.
 - (a) (As if the father is using Jesus' voice.)
 - c) Again, it's just a theory, but interesting to think about.

- c) Last point. The formerly blind man has made the final progression in Verse 38.
 - i) He has now progressed from “Man” to “Prophet” to “From God” to “Lord”.
 - ii) Notice he worshipped Him as God
 - iii) To those who claim that Jesus never said he was God:
 - a) Notice that Jesus never stopped the man from worshipping Him.
 - b) One of the 10 commandments (Exodus 20:5) is that you should Worship God and no one else.
 - (1) A Good Jew would never violate this Law.
 - (2) Therefore, He saw Jesus as being equal with God.
 - (3) We’ll see the same argument about “Doubting Thomas”
 - (a) in John Chapter 20.(Vs. 28-29)
22. Verse 39: Jesus said, "For judgment I have come into this world, so that the blind will see and those who see will become blind."
- a) Verse 39 makes me a little nervous.
 - b) It says those who see *will become blind*. The King James says *will be made* blind!
 - i) There is punishment to those who continually reject God
 - ii) Jesus says “But whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will never be forgiven; he is guilty of an eternal sin.” (Mark 3:29 NIV)
 - iii) This refers to those who continually (as in life-long) reject God and the Gospel
 - a) There is a point where God gives them over to their belief and they *become* blind.
23. Verse 40: Some Pharisees who were with him heard him say this and asked, "What? Are we blind too?"⁴¹ Jesus said, "If you were blind, you would not be guilty of sin; but now that you claim you can see, your guilt remains.
- a) The Pharisees understood Jesus’ argument. Because they understood, they can not plead innocence at the Great Throne Judgement (Revelation 20:12)
 - b) Their sin (singular) was rejecting the free gift God gave as provision for sin.
 - i) Not for failure to keep the law.
 - c) Verse 41 says: Jesus said, "If you were blind, you would not be guilty of sin"
 - i) This refutes their argument that one can be condemned by being “born of sin”
 - ii) The Bible *implies* that there is some age of accountability to God.
 - a) This means that if a baby dies, they are admitted to heaven because they are not old enough to understand what Jesus did for them and be offered a choice to accept the Gospel.
 - b) Going back to the story of David and Bathsheba in 2 Samuel 12, David prayed and fasted for God to not take his son’s life. After the baby was dead, David ended his fast and worshipped God. Most scholars take the view that David believed that his son was now in heaven.
 - c) Not all scholars agree on this issue. All I am saying here is that are some scriptures that *imply* an age of accountability, including this verse.
24. To summarize, as you read over Chapter 9:
- a) How do you & I compare to the blind man?
 - i) Does our witness for Christ say “we once were blind, and now we see?”
 - ii) Do we live in fear of what people think of us, like the blind man’s parents?
 - iii) Do people see a change in our lives?
 - iv) Is Jesus Lord, or some lower status?
25. Let’s Pray: Heavenly Father, we thank you for the wonderful insights you have taught us in these verses. We thank you for giving us *spiritual* sight. So that we may see the Truth. Help us father to grow in our Love the Lord. To make Jesus Lord over our whole lives. Guide us in our walk. We ask this in Jesus’ name, Amen.