

## The Healing Of A Man Born Blind (Part Two)

Growth in Knowledge and Understanding

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Given 22-Jun-13; Sermon #1164

In the ninth chapter of the gospel of John, Jesus disciples wondered whose sin had caused the man's blindness. Jesus said, "He had been born blind so that the power of God could be seen in him." Then once more declaring Himself to be the light of the world, Jesus told the man he could be healed by washing in the pool of Siloam. The man did so and was healed.

This was quite an interesting event in Christ's ministry. It is full of rich biblical principles, some of which we analyzed in part 1; and as we continue we will see things that relate directly to our own lives and future, very important things.

The disciples and the Pharisees as well believed that suffering results only from personal sin. Some Rabbi's falsely taught that a baby could sin in their mother's womb, but Jesus made it clear that suffering does not always result from sin.

When word began to spread concerning this healing, the formally blind man told his skeptical friends that the man they called Jesus had healed him. When the friends brought the man to the Pharisees, they said that Jesus could not be from God since He had healed on the sabbath; and they decided that the man had not really been blind at all, even though he had been there in that town for his entire life, not being able to see.

When word began to spread concerning this healing, the formerly blind man told his skeptical friends that it was Jesus who had healed him. I will quote some Old Testament scriptures that show that God is concerned for the physically and spiritually blind. This is important as a foundation. He is doing a work that involves them. In fact, the physically blind have been important to God's teaching and our understanding of what it means to be spiritually blind.

I will run through four scriptures very quickly so that you get a sense of this. Healing is a work of the God of the Old Testament as we see in Exodus 4:10-12.

**Exodus 4:10-12** Then Moses said to the Lord, "O my Lord, I am not eloquent, neither before nor since You have spoken to Your servant. But I am slow of speech and slow of tongue." So the Lord said to him, "Who has made man's mouth? Or who makes the mute, the deaf, the seeing, or the blind? Have not I, the Lord? "Now therefore, go and I will be with your mouth

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and teach you what you shall say.”

Psalms 146:8 tells us that the Lord opens the eyes of the blind. As prophesied in Isaiah 35:4-5, we find that healing is to be continued in the work of our Savior.

**Isaiah 35:4-5** Say to those who are fearful-hearted, “Be strong, do not fear, Behold, your God will come with vengeance, with the recompense of God. He will come and save you.” Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped.

Isaiah 42:6-7 prophesies that the Messiah would come as a light to open blind eyes.

**Isaiah 42:6-7** I, the Lord, have called you in righteousness, and will hold Your hand; I will keep You and give You as a covenant to the people, as a light to the Gentiles, to open blind eyes, to bring out prisoners from the prison, those who sit in darkness from the prison.

Although these verses include the healing of physical blindness, they are primarily talking about the healing of spiritual blindness—the inability to see and understand God's truth. We see there that it was even prophesied that Christ would be the one to come and do that, both physically and spiritually.

The healing of a man born blind is another testimony of the Deity of Christ, and of the fact that Christ is the Messiah; but in spite of this great testimony of who Christ is, most of the people missed the message of this miracle when it was performed.

As if this was not enough, the religious leaders persecuted the man who was healed of his blindness and still they denounced the healer, Jesus Christ, by calling Him a sinner. There was a greater blindness present in their lives than in the man Jesus Christ healed because he was only physically blind.

On the previous day to healing of the man born blind is an illustration in John 8:12 of the significant affirmation of Jesus Christ as the light of the world shining on the lives and attitudes of the Jews, thus exposing their sins. Jesus Christ was being rejected by His own people, while in Chapter 9, He begins to call out a new people.

In this sixth miracle recorded by John, Jesus is the light of divine salvation that

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overcame the darkness of man's moral and physical blindness. Thus as the light reveals the truth and has the power to enlighten people, He gave a blind man sight.

**John 9:5-12** “As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.” When He had said these things, He spat on the ground and made clay with the saliva, and He anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay. And He said to him, “Go, wash in the pool of Siloam” which is translated Sent, So he went and washed and came back seeing. Therefore the neighbors and those who previously had seen that he was blind said, “Is not this he who sat and begged?” Some said, “This is he,” others said, “He is like him,” He said, “I am he” Therefore they said to him, “How were your eyes opened?” He answered and said, “A Man called Jesus made clay and anointed my eyes and said to me, ‘Go to the pool of Siloam and wash.’ So I went and washed, and I received sight.” Then they said, to him “Where is He?” He said, “I do not know.”

The miracles recorded in John's gospel had been chosen with a view to the spiritual lessons that they can teach, all seven of them. There are only seven of them that John records: the changing of the water into wine, the healing of the nobleman's son, the curing of the impotent man at the pool of Bethesda , the feeding of the five thousand, Christ walking of the water, the restoring of sight of the man who was born blind, which we are talking about today, and the raising of Lazarus. These were the seven miracles that John records and he had a purpose in doing that.

Many more could have been included but these were chosen and John says so explicitly in order that those who read about them might be led to faith in Jesus Christ as a Messiah and Son of God as being the reason why he recorded those seven.

**John 20:30-31** And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.

In John's mind these miracles are particularly significant; they are significant precisely because they teach spiritual truths, and this becomes more and more obvious as you precede through the miracles.

The first miracle preached Jesus at the wedding making wine. This reveals Him as one

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who has power over the material world, enjoys life and actually brings joy, and gives it.

In later miracles, however, we see Him as the one who is able to restore lost health, provide for all human needs, and even save people when people do not desire saving. In these later miracles we learn of our terribly lost condition of God's unmerited election of sinners to salvation and of the irresistible nature of Christ's grace.

In the sixth miracle, in John 9—the miracle of restoring of sight to the man who had been born blind—this is no less true than of the other miracles. Therefore, we are able to turn to the story not only for the story itself which is a good one, a very good one, but also for what it has to teach about the nature of our salvation.

To do this we look first at the blind man, second Jesus, third at the means used by Jesus in the miracle and fourth, at His command. A conclusion is that we are to be saved from our spiritual blindness in the same manner as this man born blind was healed by Jesus.

First, we begin with the blind man; it is a pivotal place to begin. There is not much we can say in favor of him at the moment in which Jesus found him. Later he becomes quite tenacious in hanging on to what he knows about Jesus, and this was the praise worthy thing about Him.

At the beginning of the story he is only a blind beggar, condemned by his condition to a life of hopeless deprivation and suffering. He could not see Jesus, of course, but Jesus could see him. And he could not see Jesus when Jesus stood directly in front of him, looking down on him, as he sat begging.

He may have sensed that someone was there, but he did not know who was there or what his presence meant. It is likely that the blind man did not appreciate sight because he had been blind from birth and hardly had an idea of what it really meant to be able to see. He could not see the beauty of God's creation.

Had he lived with good sight for thirty or forty years, then lost it at the result of an accident or some such thing, you might expect him to have been moaning his loss, complaining about it. But he knew none of the world as we receive it through our vision, and therefore could not fully value vision. He knew that he was missing something but how could he value having never seen it? He could value things that he heard and smelled and the other senses, but not that he has seen.

Also notice that we are not told that he prayed for sight. He was a beggar; it is a

beggar's task to beg, but he did not beg for sight, at least it is not recorded.

In his mind, his condition was hopeless so why pray for something that cannot happen. The blind man certainly did not expect to be healed by Jesus; it was totally out of the blue in his life, so to speak. He did not plan it, he sat at the gate of the temple because thousands of people passed through that gate, and he could ask for alms. Yet whether he had planned it or not this is where Jesus passed by and this is where Jesus found him. Jesus can find us anywhere, and we probably all have stories of the different ways that God has called us.

Before our calling, we were like the blind man and initially we could not see spiritual truth until God opened our eyes to see the truth. We heard the gospel preached, and we have been reading the Bible, but we could not understand what was said and we could not really see Jesus for who He was.

Furthermore we did not even properly value what was missing, since we did not understand spiritual truths before we were called, we hardly had a sense of what we are and therefore we could not value them ourselves; and then as a consequence of this we did not pray to understand about them; we did not pray to understand about Jesus or His truths or even what our purpose was.

What could have been said for us in that condition? There is hardly a good thing that could be said. We were lost and blind and our condition was hopeless apart from Jesus Christ. Yet like the state of the man who had been born blind, we were in a place and a situation where Jesus was likely to go. We did not plan it that way, but nevertheless we were there. Jesus Christ said, "I am the light of the world," and it was with our darkness that He dealt. That not only goes for first generation Christians, but second and third and so on. There is some time in our life where all of the sudden it seems to have clicked. Jesus had turned the light on.

The second thing I want to look at is the man Jesus. When we were in the World Wide Church of God, we seemed to avoid talking about the man Jesus and were always talking about the spiritual Jesus, but there is something to be said about the man Jesus as well.

I call Him the man Jesus because this is what the man who had been born blind called Him. You will see why He called Him that and then something different later. What did the neighbors of the man ask after he had been healed by Jesus? Once again, we will read John 9:10.

**John 9:10** Therefore they said to him, “How were your eyes opened?”

They were not sure that the healed man was the right man because although they thought he was the man who was born blind, he seemed different. They were unable to account for the miracle. “How were your eyes opened?” they asked, and then what did he reply?

**John 9:11** He answered and said, “A man called Jesus made clay and anointed my eyes and said to me, go to the pool of Siloam and wash.” So I went and washed, and received sight.

Of course, Jesus is more than a man. The fact that He healed the man born blind is proof of that, and there are many other proofs as well. Jesus is the Son of God; and yet at that time, He was also a man. And what a man He was! He was, and in a sense is, a man's man.

J.B. Philips, author of one of the modern paraphrases of the Bible, sensed this keenly in his translation work and has written of it. I think you will find it very interesting and a helpful description:

This man Jesus so briefly described rang true, sometimes alarmingly true. I began to see now why the religious establishments in those days wanted to get rid of Him at all cost. He was sudden death to pride, pomposity, and pretense. This man could be moved with compassion, we heard about that earlier and could be very gentle, but I could find no trace of the gentle Jesus meek and mild. He was quite terrifyingly tough, not in a bull dog drumming James Bond sort of way, but by the sheer strength of a unified and utterly dedicated personality. He once at least walked unscathed through a murderous crowd. I have known a few, very few men who could do that. But then I find that this sheer strength was still His after hours of unspeakable agony in the garden of Gethsemane. Those who were sent to arrest Him fell back to the ground. Jesus was a man of such stature and quality that He could remain in command of the situation even when the odds were heavily against Him.

This is the kind of man we meet in John 9, and thus it is no surprise to find that after his healing, the blind man had thoughts only for Jesus. To this man, Jesus had become the

most important person in existence.

He did not know much about Him, he only knew that He was the man called Jesus. He had not seen Him because Jesus had sent him away to the pool of Siloam where the healing took place. Still Jesus was closer to him than his neighbors or his family or any of the Jewish leaders.

His talk was all about Jesus; he told how Jesus had made the clay, how Jesus had anointed his eyes, how Jesus had sent him to wash in the pool of Siloam, and how as the result of what Jesus had done was his seeing. Indeed, in one sense the miracle was not complete until he had been found by Jesus the second time and had come to worship Him as Lord and Savior.

It is this way for the person who has found and called by God and who then responds. He may not know much about Him at first but for him, Jesus Christ is the only Lord and Savior. In Aubrey Mandolin's book, "Man of steel and velvet," chapter one, the ideal man is said to be summarized in the holy scripture's description of Jesus Christ. He is described as the epitome of a man of steel and velvet.

I want to read that to you from the book, "The Man of Steel and Velvet" which I highly recommend to every young man to read. In fact, every man in this room should read it, because it gives a fine balance to being a man of steel and velvet. I have quoted from the book before in sermons many years ago.

Only such men have achieved a balance of steel and velvet, stands securely on an unshakeable pedestal. At the apex of this relatively small group of individuals stands Jesus Christ, who is the epitome of all that was good and strong. In no area was He lacking; a study of His life reveals an intriguing demonstration of the steel and velvet. Never did He lose sight of His responsibility to complete the works He was sent to do. He maintained His devotion to it until the end when He said, "It is finished" "He was a leader of men, women, and children, true to His convictions until His death. He had the moral courage to introduce His ideals and standards which were in conflict with the popular teachings of His day. He dedicated His life to the service and salvation of others, lifting people to higher planes of thought and living. He was a builder of society and He was a masculine man possessing courage, determination, fearlessness, decisive judgment, and aggressiveness. He was skilled and masterful in a difficult situation, never afraid to face the hardness of His enemies. Some artist over the centuries had pictured Him as thin and effeminate, weak, and shy. Just the opposite is

the case. He had a strong body, sufficient to drive the money changers from the temple and adequate to perform strenuous masculine tasks. His character was a spotless build on the highest of moral principles and standards of perfection. He was eager and enthusiastic about life, promising, 'I am come that ye may have life and that ye may have it more abundantly.' Yet with all His strength and courage there was about Him a gentleness that drew to Him women and children. Women wept at His feet and children surrounded Him. With all this He has humility though He was worshiped as perfect He denied His goodness by saying, 'There is none good but the Father' Yet with this humility there was a self dignity about Him which commanded respect. As He stood before the judgment of the high courts, He bore His false accusations valiantly and faced the scoffing multitudes with superb dignity.

The third thing I want to look at is the humble means that Jesus used to perform the miracle. There are lessons to be learned from the story, and they tell us that Jesus spit on the ground, made clay from the dust and saliva, and anointed the sightless eyes of a blind man.

Does the method seem offensive? Does it seem inadequate or even foolish to the mind? Does it seem harmful? In one sense, it probably does to the carnal mind because the gospel to which God gives spiritual light and sight is all these things to the unconverted.

There is evidently offense because when we speak of it, there are those who turn away as though it was coarse, old fashioned, or beneath their dignity. To these people, the gospel of the Kingdom of God and salvation through faith in Christ (who died for our sins giving His blood as propitiation of God's just wrath), this seems hopelessly old and irrelevant. It is offensive to most minds in the world today. But offensive or not, it is by these means that God saves lost and sinful human beings. Clay, yes, but it is clay made by Jesus; saliva, yes, but it is saliva from Jesus very mouth.

In the same way, it is by the gospel declared in the words of scripture which came from the mouth of Christ that God calls people to repentance, and it is also by preaching that it comes as well.

**I Corinthian 1:21-23** For since in the wisdom of God, the world through wisdom did not know God, it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe. For Jews request a sign, and

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Greeks seek after wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness.

That is exactly what it was and that is exactly the way His miracles appeared. It was to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness.

There are others we must admit to whom the gospel was not so offensive as it is inadequate, inadequate to answer their questions, calm their minds, to take away their anxiety in their minds.

They point to the deep personal and social needs of people and turn from the gospel trying to meet the needs through psychiatry, politics, social action programs, and other devices. They will not find the answer to people's problems in those devices. The gospel of the coming Kingdom of God and salvation through faith in Jesus Christ believed and acted upon has been and will be the only course of action that works.

Additionally, to some the gospel appears worse than inadequate; it appears harmful just as the anointing of the blind man's eyes with clay and saliva in it. It was supposed to have hindered rather than aided his sight.

To such people the news of salvation through the grace of God seems actually to encourage sin, because as they said in Paul's day, "Let us sin that grace may abound." Is this true? Does the gospel encourage sin? Not at all, except in the minds of those who are looking for excuses to sin.

**Romans 6:1-6** What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it? Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin.

**Romans 6:12** Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts.

We must be careful that we do not draw back at the simplicity of what is preached to us from the word of God but rather go on to accept whatever Christ offers and do as He tells us to do.

This brings us to the fourth thing I want to look at; that is the command, what is it?

**John 9:7** And He said to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" [which is translated sent] so he went and washed and came back seeing.

It was simple, and it contained only seven words. It was personal; it was directed to the blind man and to him alone. It involved the test of obedience because it involved a response to Jesus Christ. In the same way the gospel that comes to us is simple.

We are not overwhelmed with the gospel when it comes to us and our understanding; we understand it very clearly at the level that God has opened our eyes. It seem simple, yet we thirst for wanting to know more about it.

The command to go and wash further encouraged the man who could not see the compassionate look in the eyes of Jesus, but through the applied plaster and now the commanding word, the blind man ears heard. He knew the voice was the one to help him. This command to go and wash was still a further test of the man's faith to confirm and strengthen it.

To many people it probably would have seemed useless for a man who had been born blind to do such a simple thing as this in order to obtain his sight. But having obeyed he was healed. Blessings still come by way of obedience; we tend to want blessings, but then do we want to put forth the effort to obey as well? As human beings we have a hard time with that.

The blind man without delay or reluctance obeyed the divine command and went and washed and saw. This was quite a commendable display of the promptness of his obedience. I am sure it was not easy to get to the pool of Siloam because he was blind, and he had to tap his way or however he had to get around at that time.

When Paul and Silas were miraculously freed from prison, the Philippian jailer asked, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" And what was their answer?

**Acts 16:31** So they said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household."

We know in God's church that believing is a dead belief—it is a dead faith—if it is without works. Those works must include obedience. “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved.” It is personal; you must believe above all. It is a test of obedience because the question is, “Will you believe? Will you trust Jesus Christ and His Father?”

Healing resulted immediately, and the wonder the healed man must have felt is expressed in that one simple phrase: he washed and came back seeing. You could tell that there was a stunned effect that it had. He was in shock in a way. All he could do was to express it with simple words. Jesus gave him a simple command, and he expressed it back in simple terms.

In one sense, the man born blind obeyed Christ blindly. As a result of his obedience, he immediately received physical sight and entered upon a pathway by which he eventually received true spiritual sight as well.

So, when a person is unable to understand and believe, the fact that the Son of God became human so his salvation could be made possible, the person's spiritual blindness begins to be removed.

In recalling this story, John may have seen a type of the waters at baptism and the waters of Siloam. Notice how the apostle Peter describes being saved through water.

**I Peter 3:20-21** In the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is eight souls, were saved through water. There is also an anti-type which now saves us, namely baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), through the resurrection of Jesus Christ,

An anti-type is simply something that is represented by a symbol. It is something that is foreshadowed by or identified with an earlier symbol. The anti-type of water is baptism.

Now we will look at the way the Pharisees question the blind man.

**John 9:13-17** They brought him who formerly was blind to the Pharisees, Now it was a Sabbath when Jesus made the clay and opened his eyes. Then the Pharisees also asked him again how he had received his sight, He

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said to them, "He put clay on my eyes, and I washed, and I see." Therefore some of the Pharisees said, "This man is not from God, because He does not keep the Sabbath," Others said, "How can a man who is a sinner do such signs?" And there was a division among them. They said to the blind man again, "What do you say about Him because He opened your eyes?" He said, "He is a prophet."

So he has changed now from saying that He was a man to declaring Him as a prophet. In both the first and second question, the word again in verses 15 and 17 is found which says the man healed of blindness was subjected to repeated interrogation. This reflects cruelty.

It is the habit of persecutors and bloody tyrants to repeatedly interrogate their enemies over and over again. As we will see later, this man was interrogated again in verse 26; and he will tell them, in verse 27, "I have told you already," which shows some of the exasperation the man experienced by the continuous interrogation. This cruel repeated harassing of the healed man is not only seen in the word 'again' and in these questions, it is also seen in the repeated use of the imperfect tense in the text regarding this miracle. At least five times the imperfect tense of the verb shows up in reactions of the people and the Pharisees. I will give you three of these times.

First, when the scriptures say the people were confused about his identity, and he said, "I am he." In verse 9, the word 'said' is in the imperfect tense meaning he had to tell the people again and again that he was the man healed; they could not bring themselves to believe it.

Second, When the people said, "How were your eyes opened?" in verse 10, the word 'said,' in this verse (as in verse 9) is also in the imperfect tense. Meaning, the people said to the man over and over "How were your eyes opened?"

Third, when the Pharisees asked him how he had received his sight in verse 15, the word 'asked' is in the imperfect tense. Meaning, they asked him again and again how his eyes were opened.

The sense of this whole story is a sense that he was being badgered, over and over again, by the neighbors, by the Pharisees, because no one wanted to believe that this was a miracle from Jesus Christ. They could not bring themselves to believe that someone who healed on the Sabbath could be of God. They were totally blinded far more than the blind man was.

There are two significant things that can be said about the answers to the questions. They were brief and bold. The brevity is seen in the answer that the healed man gave regarding the manner of the healing. In verse 15, the blind man said, "He put clay on my eyes and I washed and I see." This answer is an abbreviated answer compared to what was given to the people.

The briefness implies that the healed man seems to guess by their manner that some charge was being considered against his benefactor, Jesus. So, shrewdly the healed man omits the saliva and the making of the clay, the order of the Savior, and the place where he had been sent to wash.

The boldness is seen in the answer the healed man gave regarding Christ identity, in verse 17. The man said, "He is a prophet." This was a bold answer in the view of the animosity of the Pharisees toward Christ and anyone who spoke well of Him. This comment made the Pharisees even more fearful because a prophet was considered even more authoritative than well-educated Rabbi's. Furthermore, the idea was current that a prophet might on his own alter or relax even the Sabbath law, and then the people were at liberty to obey him.

If they conceded that Jesus was a prophet, then He might break the law of the Sabbath and be guiltless; they could not afford to let that happen. Or if they did not allow Him to be a prophet, they must account for the miracles some other way than by the power of God. If they said it was from Satan or his agents, no good could come of it. They were in an impossible situation in their own minds.

So the wisdom of God taught the poor man to give them such an answer as would put them into a complete dilemma. Remember Jesus Christ did that in the trials that He went through. So they would not be able to detach themselves from such a miracle. They were stuck.

On the surface at least the problem was the old Sabbath problem that had arisen earlier in Christ ministry. I mean no disrespect by saying the old Sabbath problem. It was the one that kept coming up—that the man had been healed would have been bad enough given the fact that he had been healed by Jesus. The Pharisees hated Jesus for His exposure of their sins. But that he was healed on the Sabbath and by means of clay that Jesus had made from His spittle and dust...to the Pharisees this was intolerable. There was no doubt in their minds at all that Jesus had broken the Sabbath, at least as they conceived it. Furthermore, He has done so previously in the case of the man with the withered hand recorded in Mark 3 and in other instances of healing on the Sabbath.

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Notice the historical context the Jews were developing specific regulations to cover any and every possible circumstance to keep them from sinning. Eventually they compiled one thousand five hundred and twenty-one regulations covering Sabbath conduct alone. So no doubt people were breaking them because they could not remember them all, and the Pharisees were right there ready to jump on any one who broke those regulations.

By Jesus time, they had already turned their observance of the law into a legalistic ritual rather than a loving service to God and man. They did this sincerely and in a vain effect to become holy, not understanding that this is not how a man becomes spiritually holy.

**Mark 2:27** The Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath.

The healing by Jesus of the man with the withered hand in Mark 3 reveals a fundamental difference between Jesus and the Pharisees in their application of Sabbath principles. The Pharisees had not entered the Synagogue to worship nor did they ask Jesus the question, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?" out of loving concern. They did not ask because they were concerned; there was no love involved in it. They asked it to trap Him. They were accusing authority in attempting to judge Christ by their regulations.

In the case of the man born blind, the Pharisees accused Jesus of breaking their version of the Sabbath laws. There were at least three ways He broke the Pharisaical Jewish interpretation of the laws of the Sabbath.

First, by making clay He made Himself guilty of working on the Sabbath. The Rabbi's define this as meaning that a man could not carry a handkerchief from an upstairs room to a down stairs room. That was carrying a burden and carrying a burden was work. People sometimes claim that the Church of God is strict with the Sabbath. No, this is strict and overbearing. God is not, neither is His church.

A man could neither light nor extinguish a lamp; he could not cut his fingernails, nor pull a hair out of his beard. Most certainly he could not spit in the dust to make clay because making clay was manual labor.

The second way the Pharisaical version of the law was broken was that Jesus had healed the blind man. According to Rabbinic sayings, it was alright to practice this medicine if life was in danger on the Sabbath, to keep the patient from getting worse, meaning keep him alive. On the other hand it was forbidden to do anything to make him

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get better. A person could not put cold water on a sprain. Since the man born blind was in no danger of dying from his handicap, according to Jewish law, Jesus broke the Sabbath laws when He healed him.

The third way the Pharisaical version of the law was broken was by the actual method of healing. The Jewish law clearly stated that as to fasting spittle (I guess that is spittle on a fasting day), it is not lawful to put it on the eyelids. Since Jesus had done this, He was obviously guilty on this account also. They were groping in the dark for ways to condemn Christ.

Jesus was guilty of breaking the Sabbath laws as the Rabbi's had constructed them, but these were man-made regulations. Jesus who understood God's laws perfectly and simply disregarded these man-made regulations. Furthermore, they were actually harmful because they were means by which those who were fundamentally incapable of keeping God's true law, nevertheless felt reinforced and justified in conviction that they were doing all right as religious people.

They thought they were doing all the right things, so they felt that they did not need a savior. They also convinced themselves that they did not need God's grace; if they were doing all right, they did not need a savior, they did not need Jesus, because within their system they could do almost anything they wished so long as they did not violate the Jew's Sabbath laws.

Thus, they were ready to kill Jesus for breaking the Sabbath when that, in itself, was breaking one of the Ten Commandments. You can see the hypocrisy. But they were not prepared to let Him heal on it.

Later they would be ready to have Him crucified. It was this burdensome religious system that confronted the poor beggar when he was ultimately brought before the Pharisees by those whose neighbors of his witnessed the miracle. Obviously, they were neighbors and not friends to turn Him in like that.

We can see it now...the leaders elegant in their robes and secure in their positions and the beggar inelegant and insecure except in Jesus. And we can sense the tension, the man was healed. He had been blind for the whole of his life, and now he was healed. You might expect the leaders to have rejoiced with him, but they did not. Instead, we see them dredging around in the dark recesses of their minds to discover what they could do about this undesirable event.

Can they discredit the miracle and thereby brand the carpenter of Nazareth a fraud? Or

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better yet, can they maneuver the testimony of the blind man to trap Him? As a blind man and as a beggar, this man was no interest to the Pharisees except for how they could take advantage of him.

They would have stepped on him as they made their impressive prayers on the street corners, but now as a healed man, he was interesting in a negative sort of way. Maybe he could become their tool to trap Jesus.

God's instruction in regarding the Sabbath has few specifics, but He gives us general principles which we are to apply properly. In order to do this, we have to understand its purpose.

Right from the beginning of His ministry Jesus provides us with instruction on how to live His way of life using these principles. The Sabbath is so significant that Jesus' ministry formerly began on a Sabbath and ended on a preparation day, just before another Sabbath.

**Luke 4:16-19** So He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up, and as His custom was He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up to read. And He was handed to book of the prophet Isaiah. And when He has opened the book, He found the place where it was written. "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor. He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed to preach the acceptable year of the Lord."

By quoting Isaiah 61:1-2 in his inaugural sermon, as recorded in Luke 4:18-19, Jesus spells out His work as setting people free from captivity. He specifically mentions revealing His truth to the poor, that is the weak—those without strength and power: the brokenhearted, the captives the blind, and the oppressed. The acceptable year of the Lord is not when God is acceptable, but when God and His sovereign mercy makes us acceptable to Him. It is a time when He chooses to deliver people from oppression.

More specifically it refers to two Old Testament establishments either the seventh-year land Sabbath or the Jubilee year. Israelites considered these years liberators of the oppressed. That is exactly what Jesus was doing when He healed the blind man on the Sabbath. During the seventh-year land Sabbath and the Jubilee year, the land lay unsown and any food it produced on its own went to the poor, outcast, and animals.

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Slaves were free to eat and debt settled and forgiven. During Jubilee years, debtors received back their land lost due to mismanagement. Luke records that Jesus related the physical application of this Old Testament principle to its spiritual application in His new testament work.

**Luke 4:21** And He began to say to them, "Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing."

He made a direct connection with the Sabbath—that it was there to free the oppressed. It was a Sabbath. Jesus is revealing that His redemptive working includes the liberating purpose of the weekly and annual Sabbaths. Remember in Mark 2:27, Jesus says the Sabbath was made for man.

God made it to prepare us to come out of the spiritual slavery that we are in and in a greater way to help us in staying out of slavery. Each Sabbath reminds us that God is our liberator. By keeping it, we show we are free and want to remain free. So if you want to go back into the slavery of sin and the world stop keeping the Sabbath, and you will show God and everyone else that is exactly what you are doing.

In His relations with Israel, God uses the Sabbath to provide liberty. Israel left Egypt on the Sabbath and crossed the Red Sea into the wilderness one week later, on a Sabbath. God gave His Ten Commandments, led Israel across the Jordan into the promise land, and broke down the walls of Jericho on the Sabbath.

God requires His people to keep the Sabbath to sustain their liberty. When Israel rejected the Sabbath, they lost their freedom and went into captivity, and we see this same thing happening today as God is rejected in full.

What is the most talked about issue in the news today? It is about whether we should give up our liberties to have safety from terrorists. This is discussed every day in the news. The real issue is that of sin, but people would ignore that and stay away from that subject. People in this nation do not see themselves as the sinners they truly are. Sabbath breaking and idolatry come to mind, sexual immorality is another one. You could make a list as long as the day is and longer.

God's Sabbath memorial is our spiritual Independence Day; it is meant to be a joyous memorial. This nation's Independence Day is coming up in less than two weeks. It used to be a day of celebration for our freedom from tyranny, but it has become a day of tears because it is a reminder of how this once great nation which at least acknowledged God

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has cast off all restraint.

So God's Sabbath memorial is our spiritual independence day; it is meant to be a joyous memorial; it is so important to God's purpose that He has it recur every week, not merely once a year. It serves as a constant renewal of our spiritual heritage from Him and of our original release from sin.

The Sabbath is not just a day that we feel ho hum about and just come to services. We are not worshiping God properly if we are not enthusiastically and joyously appreciating what He has done for us on this day and what it represents, how sovereign He is. This is a very formal service; it is very serious.

A periodic reminder of our heritage helps to instill admiration for the ideas that support our way of life and inspire us to hold dear and strengthen those principles. It reorients us in any area where we may have turned aside.

Regarding the man born blind, we also need to recognize that the liberating healing Jesus performed was not done to a man whose life was in immediate danger, but to one who was chronically ill. Sadly, we, too, are chronically ill spiritually in some areas. God gives us the Sabbath day to help free us from the chronic problems of human nature. Jesus does not appear to have gone out of His way to find people to heal on the Sabbath, but these were incidental occurrences, as He went along His way. By incidental, I do not mean unplanned.

If a sick person came to His attention, He healed him. Jesus did not heal haphazardly. He was always conscience of lessons He wanted to teach. As we see in the seven miracles that John records for that purpose.

Someone unconcerned for the physical and spiritual salvation of others on the Sabbath is automatically involved to some degree in destructive efforts and attitudes. Why is that?

Because he is failing to do good when he has opportunity, and that is sin.

**Proverbs 3:27-28** Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due, When it is in the power of your hand to do so. Do not say to your neighbor, "Go and come back, and tomorrow I will give it," When you have it with you.

**James 4:17** Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to

him it is sin.

God is preparing us to assist in the salvation of others, so it is our duty to be aware and act accordingly.

The Pharisees began to ask the man who was born blind some questions. The first was how he had received sight; apparently they had already heard the story in the first part of John 9.

**John 9:15** Then the Pharisees also asked him again how he had received his sight, [this was a formal hearing, perhaps a cross examination]

It appears that the Pharisees were wondering: would a blind man say something contradictory and thus discredit himself for Jesus? Would he say something that could be used against Jesus? They kept asking and the blind man kept repeating the same answer over and over again. You can almost see the man's eyes narrowing as he replies to the questions somewhat warily now and quite tersely.

**John 9:15** He said to them, "He put clay on my eyes, and I washed and I see."

Very succinct, very short, very direct. This sharp answer was very interesting because the fact that the man who has been born blind replied in such a succinct language shows that his testimony of Jesus Christ is sharpening. He is starting to think this whole thing through and no doubt he has help from Jesus Christ and God the Father.

Notice that this version of his testimony is shorter than the version in verse 11, both are shorter than the story he had told earlier in the day. He probably gave an elaborate story, all excited, gave details, and things like that. Shortly after the healing, the man might have told about it with a lot of interest, but irrelevant in details.

Here, when opposed to the Pharisees, the man does not ramble but instead tells the story pointedly. There is a lot the Pharisees could question and much of that might even be uncertain, but this much at least was clear: Jesus had put clay on his eyes, he had washed, and he had come away seeing.

We can learn something from this. This is what opposition or persecution should do to a

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Christian's witness. It should sharpen it up. When we are relaxing among friends no one really minds very much if we tell our story with a lot of details, and it may even be quite interesting by doing that. That is alright in those circumstances, where we are sitting around, but when there is opposition or persecution, then something quite different is called for. Our words must count; we must be basic.

I will give you an example of this using a standard court room. Erwin R. Kramer, a lawsuit and depute attorney wrote, "Ten tips for testimony, preparing for the witness stand." Here is his expert advice:

"First, be truthful, this common sense advise remains the very best recommendation for any witness taking the stand. When testifying do not try to argue your point, dodge questions to avoid problem areas or place any type of spin on your version of the facts.

Second, listen carefully, wait until the entire question is asked. Many witnesses are so anxious to cooperate and to provide quick answers that they do not wait until the entire question is asked.

Three, answer only the question that was asked. If you are listening carefully to the question, you must consider the scope of the question and not go beyond the issue at hand. Do not volunteer facts that were not asked for particularly on cross examinations.

Four, take your time. Think before answering each question. There are no points for fast answers. Witnesses who take their time to think about their answers are perceived as being conscientious and concerned about telling the truth.

Five, no guessing. Witnesses are not human computers. Many of us have difficulty remembering what we had for dinner last night to say nothing of events which may have occurred months or even years earlier. If you do not know or remember a particular fact, do not give your best guess as to the answer. In the hands of a skilled advocate on the other side, guess work can provide just the tool needed to destroy witnesses' credibility and leave him limping off the witness stand.

Six, no pretending to understanding the question. Ask for clarification if you do not understand a question. Never attempt to answer a question that you do not really understand, particularly in the anxious and adversarial atmosphere of the court room. Certain questions may not make sense or may get lost in the commotion of objections. Do not try to make sense out of the question yourself. If you do not understand a question ask that it kindly be repeated or rephrased.

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Seven, Cooperate but do not placate. You should be cooperative in answering questions and should not show antagonism on the stand. It is not your job to please your questioner, unless of course the lawyer examining you is your own.

Eight, keep your emotions in check. If your emotions revolve around the aggravation of the trial process keep those to yourself. Do not fight, show anger, or impatience with the process. It can be frustrating.

Nine, be consistence when testifying. Be consistent with your earlier statements in the case, deposition, and testimony in earlier proceedings. Those who give testimonies at odds with their earlier statements leave themselves vulnerable to attack and may be perceived as lying even when they simply do not remember relatively minor details.

Ten, try to relax in the witness stand. This is the hardest one of all. This is advise is easier said than done. Witnesses who appear relaxed and conversational do much better than those who get frazzled easily. While this is not always easy to accomplish, witnesses who review the facts of a case very carefully and who practice the testimony with their own attorney's usually find the process much less intimidating. These witnesses are then able to look the judge and jury in the eye and convincingly tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth."

Most of this advice can be applied to being a good witness of God's truth. Who knows! some of us may end up on a witness stand to give witness about God's people, God's Church, or our beliefs. God tells us in scripture that He will give us the answers that we need at such a time. It helps to realize to keep it simple.

Then with respect to the story with the man born blind and providing a good witness, what is the important thing? It is: what has Jesus done, and equally important, what happens when you obey Him?

If you were giving such a witness, then your words will be effective. In one sense, God permits opposition and persecution to help us develop the ability, in part at least, to be able to give a succinct witness, a Christian testimony of the hope that is in us.

**I Peter 3:15-17** But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear. Having a good conscience, that when they defame you as evildoers, those who revile your good conduct in Christ may be ashamed. For it is better if it is the will of God, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil.

The man born blind gave his testimony and the first thing we notice is that it had been effective. The rulers had begun by questioning him and now they turned to each other, some at least apparently accepting the reality of the miracle, finally.

Some of the Pharisees said, "This man is not from God because He does not keep the Sabbath day." Others replied that He must be of God because it would be impossible for a man who is not of God to do such a miracle. They were clearly divided, so they questioned the blind man again. What do you say about Him because He opened your eyes?

**John 9:17** They said to the blind man again, "What do you say about Him because He opened your eyes?" He said, "He is a prophet."

Now here is the second thing we notice. The second reason why God often permits opposition to a new Christian testimony. As a result of the conflict, the man had grown in faith and he had grown in his perception of Jesus. He was quite a man, but still as a beggar knew no more than this. By the time we come to this point in the story, the man had come to see that calling Jesus a mere man was not enough, so from then on he called him a prophet, one who speaks and acts for God.

Later in verse 27, he advances to the thought that Jesus is one who is worthy to be a teacher and to have disciples. Then in verse 33, to the perception that He is from God. Finally, in verse 39, he believes in Him as the Son of God to whom worship should be given. You can see the process that Jesus Christ had brought him through with the help of the opposition and persecution that he was going through.

By contrast, in verse 16, the Pharisees start from the view that Jesus is not from God. In verse 18, they question the miracle. In verse 24, they called Jesus a sinner. In verse 29, they acknowledge their ignorance, and at last verse 41, the Pharisees are pronounced both blind and sinful by Jesus.

Opposition lead the blind man into new understanding, and this should be the effect of opposition on us all. If we are faithful in giving our testimony, if a believer is faithful according to the spiritual life that he has, more is given to him, as Jesus said in Luke 8:18

**Luke 8:18** "Therefore take heed how you hear. For whoever has, to him more will be given. And whoever does not have, even what he seems to

have will be taken from him.”

In other words, if you would grow in your knowledge of Jesus Christ and tell others what you know already and are not afraid of opposition. We have come to the end of my expounding of these verses and a few words should be said by way of summary and conclusion. There are three main points and one conclusion.

First, if you are a genuine believer in Jesus Christ, conflict will come. You will not always have conflict but sooner or later in one form or another you will be opposed for the sake of God's truth and Jesus Christ, so do not be surprised when it happens. Remember what the apostle Paul said, in II Timothy 3:12,

**II Timothy 3:12** Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.

**Philippians 1:29** For to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake.

Second, even though conflict will come, you can know that God will not abandon you in the conflict any more than He abandoned the man who had been born blind. When he was challenged concerning his opinion of Jesus, the man suddenly answered, “He is a prophet.” He may not have been able to say that a moment before, but he did in that instance. In his hour of need, divine grace did not fail him but rather enabled him to be a good witness.

Third, when faced with such a situation, you can know that God has His purposes in them. You should be encouraged by that knowledge. There may be many purposes, but among them are at least those two that we have seen in the case of the blind man. Opposition will, first, sharpen your testimony; second, lead you into a deeper understanding of God's purpose and way of life.

Finally, we may conclude that we no less than the man born blind should be humbly bold in our testimony. If a blind man who hardly met Jesus Christ and knew little about Him was humbly bold, why should we not be? We who have God's holy spirit and have been in God's church for many years.

Next time we will pick up the story where the Pharisees questioned the parents of the man born blind. After all the questioning, the Jews still did not believe that he had been

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born blind, had received his sight, until they sent for the man's parents. "Is this your son?" they asked, "Is this the one you say was born blind? How is it that now he can see?"