

The Healing Of A Man Born Blind (Part Three)

Trusting Your Well-being To Christ

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How many people are blind or visually impaired in the United States? Approximately 11.4 million Americans according to the World Health Organization. How many people will become blind in each year? An estimated forty seven thousand people. That is one person every eleven minutes! That is quite a few people who are losing sight that had it, who will miss that more than anything else in their life—that is, for those who are in the world. These are the statistics for the physically blind in this nation and there are many times more that are spiritually blind, who are unwilling to face up to the truth.

In John 9, Jesus' disciples wondered whose sin had caused the man's blindness. Jesus said that 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 is quite an interesting event in Christ's ministry, and it is full of rich biblical principles, some of which we analyzed in parts one and two.

As we continue we will see things that directly relate to what we know and what we do not know, and why it is important to accept that there are things we just do not know. Also what is the most vital question we must ask ourselves and that Christ asked the man born blind?

The Pharisees believed the suffering was the result of personal sin but Jesus made it clear that suffering does not always result from sin. Sometimes a person is blind so that God may be glorified by the healing of the blind person.

When the word began to spread concerning this healing, the man born blind told his skeptical friends that the man they called Jesus had healed him and when the friends brought the man before the Pharisees they said that Jesus could not be from God since He had healed on the Sabbath. Then they decided that the man had not really been blind at all. A convenient lie they came up with.

After all the questioning, the Jews still did not believe that he had been born blind and had received his sight until they sent for the man's parents. What did each of the parties know at this point? Notice how many times the word 'know' is used in the passage we are going to read here in John 9.

John 9:18-33 But the Jews did not believe concerning him, that he had been blind and received his sight, until they called the parents of him who had received his sight. And they asked them, saying, "Is this your son, who you say was born blind? How then does he now see?" His parents answered them and said, "We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind; but by what means he now sees we do not know, or who opened his eyes we do not know, he is of age; ask him. He will speak for himself." His parents said these things because they feared the Jews, for the Jews had agreed already that if anyone confessed that He was Christ, he would be put out of the synagogue. Therefore his parents said, "He is of age ask him." So they again called the man who was blind, and said to him, "Give God the glory! We know that this Man is a sinner." He answered and said "Whether He is a sinner or not I do not know. One thing I know: that though I was blind, now I see." Then they said to him again, "What did He do to you? How did He open your eyes?" He answered them, "I told you already, and you did not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you also want to become His disciples?" Then they reviled him and said, "You are His disciple, but we are Moses' disciples. We know that God spoke to Moses; as for this fellow, we do not know where He is from." The man answered and said to them, "Why, this is a marvelous thing, that you do not know where He is from, and yet He has opened my eyes. "Now we know that God does not hear sinners, but if anyone is a worshiper of God and does His will, He hears him. Since the world began it has been unheard of that anyone opened the eyes of one who was born blind. If this Man were not from God, He could do nothing."

Eleven times the word 'know' is used in this story. That is a lot of times, so the word know is obviously very important to the message that God is giving us here in this miracle that He performed. We see here that there were many claims to what was supposedly known, but not all of what they thought they knew was actually true. We live in an age that places great value on knowledge and since Christians have also always valued knowledge it might seem logical that Christianity would flourish today, but in reality this is not the case. With all the knowledge that we have, there are less people that are interested in obeying God than maybe there ever has been.

People do not value any knowledge; they value knowledge that benefits them personally, regardless whether it is true or not. This is the kind of knowledge that the Pharisees had, right or wrong, they sought knowledge that supported their traditions. You will find this to be true in all the religions of the world except for true Christianity which is based on truth, not just on knowledge or tradition. True Christians seek true

The Healing of a Man Born Blind (Part Three) by Martin G. Collins (<http://www.cgg.org>)

knowledge, and we seek the truth. I will quote a few scriptures that show some of what we know.

II Timothy 1:12 For this reason I also suffer these things. Nevertheless I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day.

Job 19:25 For I know that my Redeemer lives, and He shall stand at last on the earth.

I John 3:14 We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love his brother abides in death.

Romans 8:28 And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.

I John 3:2 Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is

Such claims of knowledge generally does not mean much to our worldly contemporaries, and Christians often find themselves asking, "Do we indeed know what we claim to know? What do we know? Do we know it for certain? And how is that we know it?" If we know and understand these things we have been healed of spiritual blindness.

The basis of this part of the sermon is the report of the interrogations of the parents of the man born blind, and the man himself by the leaders of Judaism, as recorded in John 9. The theme is suggested by the interesting fact that each of the parties is to have claimed both to know something and not to know something. Obviously since it was repeated over and over again it has some significance.

Since the claims and the reasons for the claims differ, the contrast giving means for examining the various types of knowledge particularly spiritual knowledge as exemplified by the statements of the man born blind. The parties in the debate are the

The Healing of a Man Born Blind (Part Three) by Martin G. Collins (<http://www.cgg.org>)

parents of the man, the Pharisees, and the man himself. We need to look at the claims of each one briefly.

The first people who were interrogated were the parents of the man whom Jesus healed. The questioning was an obvious attempt by the Pharisees to discredit the man's testimony, because if they could have gotten the parents to say that the man was not their son, or that he was not blind, then they could have branded the healing a fraud and could have attacked Jesus more easily.

John 9:19 And they asked them, saying, "Is this your son, who you say was born blind? How then does he now see?"

The overtones of the question were that the parents were to stop lying and come clean. So immediately they were on the defensive.

John 9:20-21 His parents answered them and said, "We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind, but by what means he now sees we do not know, or who opened his eyes we do not know. He is of age, ask him. He will speak for himself.

Notice that the parents affirm two things. (1) that the man was indeed their son, and (2) that he was born blind. This was part of what they knew and they were not afraid to affirm this. On the other hand, there were two things they denied knowing. (1) how he came to see, and (2) who did the miracle.

This latter part was not entirely truthful as is evident even from their testimony, because if they did not know how he was healed, then they would have known that someone, that is, the 'who,' was involved. That they spoke of a person shows that they had at least heard the story and knew of Christ's role in it.

Why did they not acknowledge what they knew of Christ's role in the healing? John gives the answer when he said, "they feared the Jews." The parents knew that the leaders had already agreed to excommunicate anyone who confessed that Jesus was the Messiah.

In our terms we would say that the parents simply did not want to get involved. They knew but they did not want to know and they were afraid to acknowledge what had been revealed to them. This is an accurate picture of many people today. The truths of

The Healing of a Man Born Blind (Part Three) by Martin G. Collins (<http://www.cgg.org>)

Christianity have been proclaimed to them, perhaps by their parents or their friends or through their church. Intellectually they know and even believe such things, but they do not come out and say so for fear of what man can do.

In our nation today it is getting worse and worse as the persecution builds. What will you do in such a case?

Were the parents of the blind man true followers of Jesus? We just do not know, it does not tell us. If not we could hope that they become followers later but we do not know from the story. Unlike many today they were afraid to acknowledge Christ for fear of the consequences, and they had preferences but were short on convictions.

The second group is composed of the Pharisees who were conducting the interrogation. They also say we know and they also say we do not know. Since they had been unable to extract damaging testimony from the parents of the man born blind, they again called the man and began to interrogate more thoroughly. He apparently had not been present during the questioning of his parents, because when he came back, the leaders attempted to finesse a damaging admission out of him by pretending that they had learned the true story during his absence.

That is what we see on the detective stories today where they separate the people that maybe committed crimes or who are witnesses to see what each has to say, and sometimes especially nowadays, the detective will lie to the person making them think that the other person has turned them in. The Pharisees were of the same mind.

John 9:24 So they again called the man who was blind, and said to him, "Give God the glory! We know that this man is a sinner."

There was an exchange of comments and then they amplified their position in verse 29.

John 9:29 We know that God spoke to Moses; as for this fellow, we do not know where He is from.

Here is another situation in which a group of people will claim to know something and also not to know something. They claim to know, (1) that Jesus was a sinner, and (2) that God had spoken through Moses. They claim not to know Christ's origins. Interestingly enough, however, what they claimed and what they denied were contradictory. Obviously they were lying. For one thing claiming not to know Christ's

The Healing of a Man Born Blind (Part Three) by Martin G. Collins (<http://www.cgg.org>)

origins they contradicted with what they had reported to have said earlier.

John 7:27 However, we know where this Man is from; but when the Christ comes, no one knows where He is from.

They did know where this Man Jesus was from. They admitted it there, and now they are lying to the blind man.

What can describe these men? Unlike the parents who can be said to have known the truth but were unwilling to admit it, these men, the Pharisees, can be said to have thought that they knew the truth but actually to have been ignorant of it. They wanted to know, they wanted to be known as those who knew, but where Jesus was concerned they actually knew nothing or very little at the most.

Sadly this too describes many people today. Particularly pseudo scholars and leaders who claim to know all about Christ and Christianity, but have never really come to know Christ personally.

The third party in the story is the man born blind. What is his testimony? He readily acknowledged that there was much that he did not know. Humility comes in here. In verse 25, he answered and said, "Whether he is a sinner or not I do not know," but then he added, "One thing I know: that though I was blind, now I see."

He could not tell his interrogators everything about Jesus, in fact he was unable to debate the matter of His person, but one thing he did know was that Jesus had changed him, and because he knew it and really knew it, no one was going to shake him from his position.

In this the man born blind becomes a type of those who are genuine Christians. They do not know everything, the finite cannot exhaust knowledge of the infinite. What they do know they know truly and hold it as a conviction. They know it because they have believed, obeyed, and accepted Jesus personally as their Lord and Savior.

We have summarized the position of the parents, the Pharisees, and the man who had been healed of his blindness. What is it that makes the testimony, the witness of the healed man, different? What is his approach to knowledge that we should be emulating ourselves?

First we notice that he, unlike the others, began with his limitations and knowledge. That

The Healing of a Man Born Blind (Part Three) by Martin G. Collins (<http://www.cgg.org>)

is he began humbly. Each of the parties in this report said both we know and that we do not know, but both the parents and the Pharisees said, we know first and only after that acknowledged that there was something they did not know.

The parents said, in verse 20 and 21, “We know he is our son and we know he was born blind. But how he sees we do not know.” The Pharisees said, in verse 24 and 29, “We know that this Man is a sinner, we know that God spoke to Moses, as for this fellow we do not know where He is from.” Both of these groups were most interested in what they did know. As a result they were either cowardly or else knew nothing.

The man born blind began with admission of his ignorance but went on to affirm what he did know as the result of God's revelation, and he gave God the credit. Here is a great biblical principle: No one can know God by means of the human reasoning of the mind, or by any other human instrument. God expresses this wonderful principle when He asks in Job 11:7,

Job 11:7 “Can you search out the deep things of God? Can you find out the limits of the Almighty?”

The answer to these rhetorical questions that our converted minds must give is “No, we cannot.” Referring to a similar concept, Paul tells us in I Corinthians 2:14,

I Corinthians 2:14 But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.

There is the key in this whole thing—there has to be spiritual revelation in order to really, truly know the truth. When we are called we begin with our ignorance, just as we begin with our sin. We acknowledge both our inability to understand spiritual things and our shortcomings in applying God's way of life to our own life. Therefore, we must acknowledge that unless God chooses to reveal Himself, which He has done in His Word and in Jesus Christ, we can know nothing of any true spiritual value.

Second, we notice from what we are told of the blind man, that starting from his own lack of knowledge then having truth revealed to him, he was thereby prepared to recognize the absence of knowledge in others. In this case he recognized the great ignorance of the so-called educated ones, the leaders of the people. These are the very people who in our society today have the most respect and are the most listened to.

His is the most humorous part of the controversy, if there is a humorous part. The Pharisees had come to him with great claims, we know, we know, they repeated. They had spoken disparagingly of Jesus, but as for this fellow, we do not know where He comes from. They acted unaware, when in reality obviously they knew about Jesus and they exposed themselves as being hypocritical, devious, and spiritually ignorant. This was a fatal admission before their very shrewd witness; the man born blind immediately took advantage of it.

Here in verse 30, "The man answered them, "Why this is a marvelous thing, that you do not know where He is from; yet He has opened my eyes." They claimed not to know even the most basic things about Jesus. And the man who had been healed immediately realized this, because he had recognized his own limitations and therefore he could start to see the actual blindness in those questioning him.

Who are those who are the most likely to be taken in by worldly authority? We answer, the foolish, but who are the foolish? The answer that I question is not necessarily those who are uneducated, and most certainly not those who are aware of their own lack of knowledge who have humility. The answer is, those who are overly sure of what they think they know, and thus you will find professors being swept into foolish theories by other professors, and ministers being led into nonsense concerning Christ by doctors of theology.

I Corinthians 10:12 Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.

We are all in danger of that because pride is ever with us in our human nature.

Third, we notice that having eliminated a false self-confidence as well as an unjustified confidence in the Pharisees, the man born blind was left with what he truly did know. Those who before were respected leaders of the church, the Pharisees were now shown to have been liars, and not knowing very much if anything spiritually.

John 9:25 He answered and said, "Whether He is a sinner or not I do not know. One thing I know: that though I was blind, now I see."

He also saw the flaws in the Pharisees. Notice he had eliminated the fringe areas, nevertheless he would get to these later. In fact he would become quite sure of some of them later, but he was not quite sure at this point.

Here in the midst of the debate, he made his stand on the certainties, for him the certainty was that he had been healed by Jesus and that is what he was standing on, that truth. What the man born blind truly knew, even though it was small, became the basis on which he went on to learn more. His starting point was only this, that Jesus had healed him, but he went on to develop that point so that he came to know that Jesus was no mere man but was God, in the process of the development of what God was revealing to him.

The Pharisees argued that Jesus was a sinner and the blind man had declared himself unable to argue with that suggestion at the beginning. He only knew that Jesus Christ had healed him, and as he thought about it, however, he found that he could say more. Also he knew that God does not hear flagrant sinners because sin separates them from God, so in addition he declared that God does hear those who do His will. God was revealing things to him, he was gaining understanding because he initially obeyed and done what Christ said, by going to the pool of Siloam.

In addition he declared that God does hear those who do His will—that is those who are in a right relationship with Him. This is a declaration of the fact that God has revealed His will and that salvation is possible, which makes all of this very important for each one of us.

The man argued that since God had heard Jesus in the matter of his healing, Jesus must be doing God's will in a special way and must therefore be of God. This the way he began to understand. In other words, Jesus becomes the Savior of man because of who He is and of His origins. And so it is for all Christians as we grow in knowledge. We do not know exhaustively but we do know truly because we know on the basis of God's written and inspired revelation what it says here in II Peter 3.

II Peter 3:17-18 You therefore, beloved, since you know these things beforehand, beware lest you also fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked. But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and forever. Amen.

Spiritual knowledge is based upon the commands of God, the intervention of God in history, and the personal revelation of God by the Holy Spirit to the human mind. The last resort of the unconverted is simply to refuse to listen. Please turn to John 9, where a conversation with a man born blind (but had been healed by Jesus) and the Pharisees

The Healing of a Man Born Blind (Part Three) by Martin G. Collins (<http://www.cgg.org>)

concludes. The man born blind had seen the true purpose of the Pharisees' questioning and they were trying to trap Jesus. He had begun to rebuke them for their unbelief and naturally they were offended.

John 9:34 They answered and said, to him, "You were completely born in sins, and are you teaching us?" And they cast him out.

This teaches us that being defeated by the man's arguments, the Pharisees tried disfellowshipping him rather than acknowledge Christ's claims, and this is something that often happens. Sometimes it is official as in this case, at other times it is more disguised. In many instances a person does the same thing by changing the subject whenever spiritual matters are brought up.

There are many different ways of closing one's mind to God's truth, and it is one of these that are often used by religious leaders that we find in this story. The man born blind was excommunicated. We also find this repeated many times in church history.

To understand this fully we need to understand that excommunication was only the last of four attempts by the Pharisees to avoid the supernatural support that the miracle of the healing of the man born blind gave to Christ's claims. The Pharisees did not refuse to listen at first. First they began by trying to discredit the miracles or as we would have said, to uncover the true story behind the healing and so do away with the miracle.

Second, when that failed they tried to separate the miracle from Jesus, that is, they did not deny that the healing had taken place but they deny that Jesus was the cause. They accepted the miracle and they could hardly deny it but they deny that Jesus, whom they hated, was the one responsible.

John 9:24 "Give God the glory, we know that this Man is a sinner."

Third, the Pharisees retreated into law, "We know that God spoke to Moses" is what they said, or as we could equally say, into tradition. They could not discredit the miracle, they could not separate the miracle from Jesus, so they said in effect, we do not know how this happened or what part Jesus may have played in it, but we do know that God has spoken to us through Moses and this is all we need to know, so do not bother us, we are alright with our traditions. That is a key—they felt alright, they felt righteous, they felt justified in the way the way they were living according to their traditions.

The Healing of a Man Born Blind (Part Three) by Martin G. Collins (<http://www.cgg.org>)

It is sad but true that traditions have closed many minds to God's truths, and the man born blind also challenged this attempt to escape Christ's miracle, because he pointed out rightly that even the principles of the law encourage belief in Jesus.

It was only the fourth and last when these attempts had proved inadequate that they threw out the man born blind. The Pharisees simply closed their eyes and ears and had the man removed from their assembly.

This brings us to the excommunication itself, and to the fact that it often is the inevitable result of a strong witness. Fail to acknowledge Christ, go along with the world and its values, compromise the standards of Christian conduct and the world will welcome you with open arms.

But acknowledge Christ boldly and live by God's standard of righteousness, and you will soon find yourself unwelcome in the world's associations and activities. If you profess to be a Christian, it is not good to be spoken well of by the world.

Luke 6:26 Woe to you when all men speak well of you, for so did their fathers to the false prophets.

All will not believe and yet we are to bear a faithful witness so that by the grace of God we might interest some to change to God's way of life, or enable or help God in calling someone.

Notice the results of the Pharisees action upon the man born blind. In the first place it was a great honor for this man. He might not have felt it and was probably a dejected man when Christ later found him and revealed Himself to him, nevertheless it was an honor to him to be ejected from the company of those who would not accept Christ.

Notice what the excommunication did. The Word of God tells us that the Pharisees cast the man out, and this was true, but to what did they cast him out? They cast him into the care of Jesus Christ, and if there had been no one waiting, the man would have been in precarious state. It would have been terrible to have been alone without family, friends, spiritual counselors or the benefits of the synagogue or congregation, and many today in God's church experience this. But they do have Jesus Christ and God the Father caring for them in a very detailed and very careful and concerned way. All of us do, but especially those who are alone, who would desire to fellowship with God's people. To cast into the care of Jesus Christ, what could be better than that?

The Healing of a Man Born Blind (Part Three) by Martin G. Collins (<http://www.cgg.org>)

Psalm 27:10 When my father and my mother forsake me, then the Lord will take care of me.

We all have that comforting thought to rely on. It is always there to receive us when the world casts us out.

John 9:35-38 Jesus heard that they had cast him out, and when He had found him, He said to him, "Do you believe in the Son of God?" He answered and said, "Who is He, Lord, that I may believe in Him?" And Jesus said to him, "You have both seen Him and it is He who is talking with you." Then he said, "Lord, I believe" And he worshiped Him

What we are seeing is the calling and conversion of the man. The man born blind had been healed by Jesus but as the result of his healing and of his testimony before the Pharisees. The man had been rejected, first by his family and friends and then by his church and nation. The man was undoubtedly dejected, yet this man, who was rejected by everyone else, was not rejected by Jesus, and we read that when He heard that the man had been excommunicated, He sought him out and asked him a question, a profound question. "Do you believe in the Son of God?"

We have read over this so many times and not really taken the time to think it through. Many people today are in a similar condition. They feel cut off from other people and perhaps from God, and it may even be that they have cut themselves off because the knowledge of what they have done burns in their conscience, causing despair because God's forgiveness seems out of their reach. It is out of sight because of their spiritual blindness.

Notice that this was Jesus' purpose in asking the question of the man born blind. Unasked he had been healed by Jesus, unsought he had been found by Jesus, and now by this question he has been helped to make considerable progress in his faith. The man knew something about his benefactor already, he knew that He was a man called Jesus, he had come to see that He is a prophet, and later he began to understand that Jesus was from God because as he said, "If this man were not from God, He could do nothing."

Nevertheless the man born blind still did not know all that Jesus intended for him to know, so Jesus came with a question that was to bring him to the place where he was able to fall down and worship Him. "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" This was the

The Healing of a Man Born Blind (Part Three) by Martin G. Collins (<http://www.cgg.org>)

question by which Jesus sought to benefit the man. It is essentially an important question that can either be asked or answered.

Let me explain why this is an important question. It is important first of all because it concerns salvation and salvation is essentially important. Here is a picture of Jesus coming to a man whom He had helped physically. He had enabled him to see and He had also helped him intellectually but these two areas of life were relatively unimportant compared with the salvation of the man spiritually.

So Jesus asked a question designed to accelerate his faith, help him spiritually, and lead him to place his trust in Jesus Himself regarding salvation—this salvation is repeating itself today. There are many things in your mind that you think are important and that the world judges to be important but none of them are as important as the great matter of salvation and the Bible stresses the importance of this matter when it asks in Mark 8, which we will read.

Mark 8:36 “For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul?”

Second, the question is important because it concerns the only way of salvation. It is not the case that there are many roads, as mainstream Christianity and the world religions try to tell us, claiming that all of which lead to salvation. Many believe this but it is not true. It is not the case that there are many ways by which a man can become right before God, but rather that Jesus Himself is the way.

John 14:6 Jesus said to him, “I am the way, the truth, and the life.”

Now it is because of who Jesus is that He is able to save sinners. He is God the Son, and as a member of the God Family is able to die for an infinite number of sins. He does what no mere man can do; therefore salvation is by Jesus and through Him and in Him, and of God the Father.

Acts 4:12 “Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”

These are things that we know, we know them absolutely and we should be convicted of them absolutely. The apostle Peter in stating this does not mean to say that God is not

The Healing of a Man Born Blind (Part Three) by Martin G. Collins (<http://www.cgg.org>)

capable to save but salvation of the human family is entrusted in the hands of Jesus the Messiah.

Third, the question is important because of the fact that no other experience eliminates the need to answer it. Think of the man born blind and all that he had already gone through. He had already been obedient to Jesus and Jesus had found him by the temple gate and had made clay of the dust and had anointed the blind man's eyes. Christ had said, go wash in the pool of Siloam and this the man did, and we are told that as a result of his obedience he found himself seeing.

Besides, we do not read any hesitation in the man's obedience. What if he had hesitated, what if he had argued that the pool was far away, that nothing was to be gained by washing? Would he have received the physical and spiritual blessing of the healing of his sight? No, he would not, because it required that obedience.

The man born blind obeyed immediately and without objection. Still Christ later came to him with the great essential question, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" And the question needed to be asked even though the man had been unhesitatingly obedient.

The man had passed through considerable experiences as a result of his condition. He had been born blind but as a result of Jesus' intervention in his life, he was able to see! How could he forget the long years of darkness? He had lived in the dark throughout his youth and through much of his manhood but he was not forgotten by Christ and this remembrance was prophesied, it was promised.

Isaiah 42:16 I will bring the blind by a way they did not know, I will lead them in paths they have not known. I will make darkness light before them, and crooked places straight. These things I will do for them, and not forsake them.

So the healing of the man born blind was a partial fulfillment of this prophecy in a way they did not know and Christ was the Light of the world shown once again. Darkness in Scripture is the emblem of ignorance, sin, adversity, and calamity. Here it seems to be the emblem of adverse and opposing events of calamities, persecution, and trials. God would make those events which seem to be an adverse in calamities the means of furthering His cause and prompting the spirit of His truth and the happiness of His people in having the revelation of who He was.

This has been the case with all the persecutions with God's church that have been

The Healing of a Man Born Blind (Part Three) by Martin G. Collins (<http://www.cgg.org>)

called to suffer and endure. Now in the case of the man born blind, Jesus had healed him and the light that he had never known before streamed upon him. Here was a great change, it was a great and enlightening experience, and still he needed to answer Christ's question. "Do you believe in the Son of Man?"

Experiences do not save anyone, only Jesus saves, and consequently we need to examine our relationship with Him. Jesus knows that changes have taken place in our lives, and just as He knew that changes had taken place in the man born blind, He is also ready and willing to help in the changes that are happening in us.

Also notice that the man had suffered for the cause of Jesus. He gave his testimony about Christ and then had been thrown out of the synagogue. He was a dejected man when Christ found him again and still Jesus asked that question, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?"

If a person comes across the Word of God and if in the process he does not face this question, he must eventually face it at a later time, but he will face it, because the question is inescapable and the very nature of the question makes it inescapable. His answer must be a yes or a no. A maybe is no, a delayed answer is a no, even to fail to answer entirely is a no. So if a person has heard it he *must* answer, in addition however, it is also true that he must answer it in the day of God's judgment even if he has tried to avoid it in his life. This will be the basis of God's judgment.

Initially the man born blind did not know whether he did or not because he did not know who the Son of Man was.

John 9:36-38 He answered and said, "Who is He, Lord, that I may believe in Him?" And Jesus said to him, "You have both seen Him and it is He who is talking with you." Then he said, "Lord, I believe" And he worshiped Him.

I am sure you have all heard a joke in the good news/bad news category, but would the apostle John have understood a joke of that sort? He probably would have. Would John had seen those characteristics in parts of his gospel if someone had pointed them out? Yes, I am sure he would have.

A good news/bad news joke is one like that involving a captain in a slave galley during the time of the apostle John. The captain comes to the slave one morning and asks them to put down their oars and then he says, "Gentlemen I have some news for you, some of it is good, and some of it is bad. I am going to give you the good new first.

The Healing of a Man Born Blind (Part Three) by Martin G. Collins (<http://www.cgg.org>)

Tomorrow we are going to dock at Caesarea and you will all be getting shore leave. There will be plenty of parties and you can all do anything you want. Now the bad new, today the admiral wants to go water skiing.”

Parts of John's gospel has those characteristics. Thus we find a statement of the best news that anyone who believes in Jesus Christ will be saved followed by the worst news, any who do not believe will not only be condemned but are condemned already. The difference lies in the fact that the good news/bad news of John's gospel is not funny. This comparison is seen in John 3:16.

John 3:16-18 For God so loved he world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. He who believes in Him is not condemned, but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

It is important to answer that question. The contrast appears in John 12, as well, in the words of Jesus in verse 46.

John 12:46, 48 “I have come as a light into the world, that whoever believes in Me should not abide in darkness. He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day.”

The same is found in John 9:35, in the verses we just looked at we have discovered a great question used by Jesus to assist our growth in faith, and growth of the faith of the man born blind. The question is, “Do you believe in the Son of Man?”

There is another way of wording this faith question which I think really brings it out vividly. I looked it up in the Greek and in the original meaning and it is the same as saying, “Do you trust your spiritual well being to Jesus Christ?” That is what that question means.

We will look at the dark side of the matter as Jesus declared.

John 9:39-41 And Jesus said, “For judgment I have come into this world, that those who do not see may see, and that those who see may be made

The Healing of a Man Born Blind (Part Three) by Martin G. Collins (<http://www.cgg.org>)

blind.” Then some of the Pharisees who were with Him heard these words, and said to Him, “Are we blind also?” Jesus said to them, “If you were blind, you would have no sin, but now you say, ‘We see.’ Therefore your sin remains.”

The way in which the statement is put should instantly show us the nature of the present judgment about which Christ is speaking. It should also help us understand why there is no real contradiction between this verse and others in which Jesus says that He is not come to judge.

John 12:47 “And if anyone hears My words and does not believe, I do not judge him, for I did not come to judge the world but to save the world.”

The world picks this apart and says it is a contradiction, but that verse obviously is speaking of the immediate object of His coming—to die for our sins. In this text He is speaking of the indirect moral effect on everybody of His presence in this world according to which some believe in Him and others reject Him.

We are held to understand the nature of this effect by the illustration regarding the sun’s light that I used in Part One of this short sermon series. The purpose of the sun is to warm things and make plants grow. Coupled with the effect of the warm spring rain, the sun will make seeds germinate and will bring plants to flower and trees to foliage. At the same time however the light will also drive away the creatures of darkness so that bugs and crawling things will slither away into dark places if the light of the sun suddenly shines on them.

These were precisely the effects that Jesus Christ had on His worldly contemporaries. He is the Light of the world and as He said in John 8:12 and also John 9:5. As the Light of the world He caused the faith to sprout and that which was alive spiritually, to grow. As He enlightened this man that was born blind and revealed Himself to him, he began to spiritually grow.

A perfect example is the growth of the man born blind here, as I mentioned. On the other hand He also repelled the religious leaders who, as creatures of darkness, hated Him and wanted to extinguish His light. In Jesus’ concluding remarks in the story of the man born blind, He says this in terms of blindness and sight, to some like a man born blind He was the restorer of spiritual sight, to others like to those who thought they could see, He caused even greater darkness, as in the Pharisees.

The Healing of a Man Born Blind (Part Three) by Martin G. Collins (<http://www.cgg.org>)

Likewise if this was true of the moral effect of His life, which it is, it is truer of the effects of His death by crucifixion because it is at the cross that the division concerning Christ is most apparent. That is the division between the world and God's church.

Jesus Christ as a teacher is not usually all that offensive. People will agree with what He says, even the Muslims call Him a prophet. Many people do not have trouble accepting Jesus as a mere teacher. But Jesus crucified, that is another matter all together, because a Jesus crucified speaks of man's inability to save himself.

It speaks of the supremacy of Jesus by which He alone is able to make atonement for sins. It speaks of the truth that there is only one way to salvation, and that there is future judgment against sin for any who reject Him. Because of these truths, Christ crucified is indeed a stumbling block to the Jews and foolishness to the Greeks, as the apostle Paul pointed out in I Corinthians 1:23.

Our relationship with Christ is not inconsequential. The story of the man born blind is told so that you and I might be like the man born blind, and having received our spiritual sight, believe in Jesus Christ and glorify the Father in our lives. We must agree to entrust our spiritual well-being to Jesus Christ and that is the answer to the essential question, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?"

What about those who are spiritually blind? Although metaphorically blind, this may describe mere ignorance, it usually carries the overtones of an unwillingness to face up to the truth. In the case of those who do not believe in Christ, spiritually blindness is the work of Satan. The quickest way to be under the works of Satan is to get into a bad attitude about something.

II Corinthians 4:4 Whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them.

As such, it requires a miracle in order to become aware of the true significance of Jesus Christ. Similarly believers who revert to their pre-Christian ways are described as blind and not preconceiving the contradiction expressed in their behavior. For example, hate is blinding.

I John 2:11 But he who hates his brother is in darkness and walks in darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes.

Very serious to “love less” our brother, which the word hate means.

Blindness describes the fact that they were unaware of the gravity of their condition. A well known condition of this is the appalling Laodicean attitude which we are very familiar with.

Revelation 3:17 “Because you say, I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing [that is what the Pharisees thought the whole time they were going through this], and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked.”

John 9:39-41 also gives an indication of what is wrong with those who will not believe in Christ. That is, it reveals their corrupt characteristics. One bad characteristic is that they have no sense of need, as we just saw in the description of the Laodiceans. They had no sense of need. They are alright by their own standards and since they do alright by their own standards, they imagine that they will do alright by God's standards. But they are fatally wrong.

This is a fatal attitude of many second and third generation Christians. They grow up in the church and it becomes a habitual way of life, but they have no sense of needing Christ. This is the point of the question that the religious leaders asked Jesus. He had just stated one purpose of His coming into the world was to cause those who see to be become blind, and He did not mean by this those who rejected Him could actually see spiritually, but rather that they thought they could see though actually blind, and therefore would not come to Jesus.

This offended them more so they asked, obviously understanding the question while asking sarcastically “Are we blind too?” The point of the question was to highlight how ridiculous the teaching of Jesus was, in their opinion.

How can He even suggest that they might be blind, they might be thinking. If they did, His opinion could hardly be taken seriously. Pharisees blind. How hilarious can it get? That is the attitude that they had, yet they *were* spiritually blind and they showed it no more strongly than in their total absence of a sense of need, they had no need of a Savior.

The second bad characteristic of these scoffers, was that they considered the teachings

The Healing of a Man Born Blind (Part Three) by Martin G. Collins (<http://www.cgg.org>)

of Jesus as foolish. They had dismissed them as foolishness before back in John 8:48, where they said,

John 8:48 Then the Jews answered and said to Him, “Do we not say rightly that You are a Samaritan and have a demon?”

John 10:20 And many of them said, “He has a demon and is mad. Why do you listen to Him?”

But they considered Christ’s teachings to be foolish because they allowed Satan to influence them to be willfully blind to the truth. They did not want Jesus to be thought of as a prophet or one who had greater authority than they did.

The third bad characteristic is, these men were guilty of their sin of rejecting Jesus, the Son of God. There is an interesting twist to the conversation, when the Pharisees asked this sarcastically, “Are we blind too?” They undoubtedly expected Jesus to answer that they sure were, what else could they expect from the one whom they had opposed so forcefully. But Jesus does not say this as directly as they would have expected. It is true that in a spiritual sense they were blind. This miracle of the man born blind is told to make this point, among many others of course.

Nevertheless, Jesus does not actually say this in His reply. He turns it, and instead of saying, yes you are blind, He says that if they actually were blind they would be guiltless; that is, they would have an excuse. But they were not totally blind and they knew the scriptures and therefore were guilty for what they did understand of the letter of the law and the application.

In the context of this miracle they are guilty of breaking the spirit of the law and of improperly applying God's laws, statutes, principles, and precepts, turning them into their traditions which were greatly oppressive. The spiritually blind cannot righteously apply the intent of God's law of love because they are self-centered and lacking in spiritual understanding. The Jewish leaders had enough knowledge to be responsible. If they had acted on the knowledge they did have, they would have welcomed the Son of God. They claimed to have sight but acted like the blind and therefore their sin is not forgiven and remains with them until they repent.

These then are some of the bad characteristics of those who are offended by Jesus, and they are unaware of their need and they consider the teachings of Christ as

The Healing of a Man Born Blind (Part Three) by Martin G. Collins (<http://www.cgg.org>)

foolishness and rejected Him. They were guilty before the great God. How different this is compared with the good characteristics of those who accept Christ as the Son of God, and their Savior.

First of all they respond to God's call, and admit their need. They cannot see but, like the blind man, they know that they cannot see. They know that their case is hopeless unless the God of miracles helps them.

Second, those who respond to the call have all fellowshiped with Jesus Christ and have found His teachings comforting, enlightening, and just. There may be a lot that they do not understand but what they do understand makes sense and gives hope, therefore they want to learn more.

Third, those who respond to the call are obeying and submitting to the authority of the Father and His Son. Jesus Christ has anointed their eyes and they have gone on to the source of living waters and light with which they have washed the clay away and then have returned seeing.

Fourth, as a result of these things they have found themselves growing in the grace and knowledge of Christ and have found themselves worshipping the Father and the Son. None of this has been due to themselves or to their spiritual ability, they have none. Credit goes solely to the grace of God who sought them out and healed them unasked.

The Pharisees were guilty of sin because they knew God's law but insisted on breaking the intent of love for others. They could not see themselves for what they really were and were willfully blind to who the Son of God is and blind to their own shortsightedness. Hopefully we are not blind but are adding to our faith, virtue, knowledge, self control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love (as it lists in previous verses of II Peter 1).

II Peter 1:8-11 For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For he who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your calling and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble; for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Examples of the danger of being blind to the real self from recent secular history. One of

The Healing of a Man Born Blind (Part Three) by Martin G. Collins (<http://www.cgg.org>)

the great ironies of history is that Alfred Nobel who established the Nobel Peace Prize, made his fortune with what at the time was the coolest invention in human history, dynamite. It is seventeen times more powerful than gunpowder, it revolutionized warfare. We are so used to mass killing that we have forgotten what war was like with only black powder, cannon, and bullets. A terrible thing to be sure but nothing like what it would become.

Now a single bomb, instead of killing two or three, could kill hundreds, shells and bombs could blow up an entire building, bridges, and factories. With the invention of the airplane, bombs can level entire city blocks and burn cities to the ground, murdering thousands. We tend to focus on the terror of nuclear weapons but the fact is dynamite and its derivatives have killed and maimed millions more than the atomic bomb ever did.

Alfred Nobel, had a patent on modern warfare. At the height of his success he had hundreds of factories all over Europe, making dynamite. These factories had to be built on large campuses because, no matter how carefully they handled their materials, once in a while it went off, killing hundreds. He built his factories in impoverished areas which would provide an endless source of desperate dependable workers.

Many thousands have been devastated by some of the chemicals used in the manufacturing of dynamite, chemicals that affected the brain. Nobel might have gone down in history as a thoroughly evil man had not a curious thing happened. In 1888, his brother died and the newspapers of Europe mistakenly reported his brother death as his own.

The merchant of death is dead, the newspaper said. Reading his own obituary shocked Nobel deeply, and made him realize how history would see him. His reaction was to establish the Nobel Prize including the Peace Prize, as a way to redirect what would have certainly been the dreadful judgment of the history of his life.

Let me make this personal for you. "How do you see yourself?" Although called by God, do you see through dark glasses? Are you like the Pharisees who knew God's law but were blind to its intent? What would your obituary say? We must face and accept what we do not know and we have to know that we do not know everything. Nobody has all the answers except for God. It is interesting to notice that those who think they have all the answers, often talk excessively exposing themselves for how much they do not know.

Here is some of God's wisdom on the subject. A very simple Proverb that has stuck with me since I was early teens.

The Healing of a Man Born Blind (Part Three) by Martin G. Collins (<http://www.cgg.org>)

Proverbs 17:28 Even a fool is counted wise when he holds his peace; when he shuts his lips, he is considered perceptive.

That applies to gossiping and everything else in our lives. The trouble with human relationships is that often, the better we know another human being, the more we know his weaknesses and failings. Sadly the pride of the Pharisees blinded them. In contrast, one of the positive characteristics we see in the man born blind is humility and that is what we always need more of.

We see an even greater contrast in that the more we know Jesus Christ, the greater the wonder becomes. It is a wonderful thing that the more we know God the Father and Jesus Christ, the greater they become in our sight and that would be true not only in time but for all eternity.