

# **“DO YOU BELIEVE IN THE SON OF MAN?”**

John 9:8-41

Key Verse: 9:35

**“Jesus heard that they had thrown him out, and when he found him, he said, ‘Do you believe in the Son of Man?’”**

In general, we can say that there is a material world and a spiritual world. If we are blind, we cannot see the material world. Likewise, if our spiritual eyes are blind, we cannot see the spiritual world. Some have compared this spiritual blindness to living in virtual reality rather than the real world. And we have all heard of the negative consequences that come from that. So opening our spiritual eyes is very important. But the words “spiritual eyes” may sound strange to some people. They may think, “Why do I need ‘spiritual eyes’?” Yet to see things as they really are, even people—who are body and spirit, we need spiritual eyes. For example, some surgeons I know have outstanding powers of observation, and great ability to synthesize data, and to make right decisions. But they fail to see spiritual things: the presence of God, the power of sin and the work of evil spirits. As a result, they cannot treat the whole person. They can do amazing things to heal the body, but are totally powerless to heal the soul. Opening our spiritual eyes is essential and has a tremendous effect on our practical lives. The spiritually blind see only the things of this world. They cling to perishing things as a matter of life and death. Their lifestyle is generally hedonistic. On the other hand, those who see the spiritual world live in a different dimension. Their value system and lifestyle are based on eternal truths. They gain an eternal inheritance, far greater than worldly wealth or power. In today’s passage we can learn how Jesus helped one man open his spiritual eyes to see Jesus as the Messiah and to worship him. Let’s pray to open our spiritual eyes to see Jesus and to worship him from our hearts.

**First, “one thing I do know” (8-34).** After being healed, the former blind man was confronted by pressure and persecution which were like strong winds. He interacted with various people: his neighbors, his parents, and some religious leaders. But no one supported him. Rather, everyone revealed their selfishness and fear, and distorted the truth. As he faced all this resistance, the man grew stronger and stronger in the grace and truth of Jesus. Let’s see how to grow strong in the grace and truth of Jesus.

**First of all, the man told the factual truth about what Jesus had done for him (8-12).** After his eyes were opened by Jesus, the former blind man went home seeing. His neighbors and those who had formerly seen him begging asked, **“Isn’t this the same man who used to sit and beg?”** (8) Some claimed that he

## “DO YOU BELIEVE IN THE SON OF MAN?”

was. Others said, “No, he only looks like him” (9). But he himself insisted, “**I am the man**” (10). However, they did not believe him. Upon seeing this great miracle they should have praised God, believed in Jesus and celebrated with thanksgiving. But they debated among themselves. In the past, when the man was a blind beggar, they might have pitied him and given some money, thinking, “At least I am a little better than him.” But when he was healed and became handsome, they were not so happy. Romans 12:15 says, “**Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn.**” For some reason it is easier for us to mourn with others than to rejoice with them. This may be due to our sinful nature. As our messenger team studied together, Tim McEathron explained to us about a “crab mentality.” If one crab attempts to escape from a bucket of live crabs, the others will pull it back down rather than allowing it to get free. Sometimes, the crabs wait until the crab has almost escaped before yanking it back into the pot. This describes people who pull others down, denigrating them rather than letting them get ahead or pursue their dreams. They think, “If I can’t escape, neither can you.” As Christians we need to learn how to rejoice with those who rejoice. Then we can see much more work of God through those around us.

When the neighbors discouraged the man, it would have been easy for him to remain quiet about what Jesus had done. In that collective society, without the help and support of neighbors, it was hard to survive. To get along with them, he could have acted like the paralytic Jesus healed in chapter 5. That man acted as if he had no relationship with Jesus after receiving the blessing. But this man insisted, “**I am the man.**” He did not hide himself, but clearly revealed his identity as the one who had received Jesus’ grace of healing. Then they asked, “How then were your eyes opened?” (10) He replied, “**The man they call Jesus made some mud and put it on my eyes. He told me to go to Siloam and wash. So I went and washed, and then I could see**” (11). They asked him, “Where is this man?” “**I don’t know,**” he said (12). He did not know everything, but the facts he knew, he said plainly. It might have been embarrassing to tell how Jesus touched his eyes with mud and saliva. But he told the facts, without adding or omitting anything. His testimony of Jesus started with a firm, accurate grasp of the facts. Like his, our testimonies of Jesus should be based on facts, not only opinions.

**Secondly, he held on to one thing he knew about Jesus (13-25).** When the man shared the facts of his testimony, his neighbors’ crab mentality was ineffective. But they did not stop trying to discredit him. They brought him to the Pharisees to be investigated (13). The Pharisees should have praised God who gave sight to a blind man through Jesus. They should have recognized Jesus as the Messiah. But they also had a crab mentality. So they tried to find something wrong

## “DO YOU BELIEVE IN THE SON OF MAN?”

in order to discredit Jesus. They found that the day on which Jesus healed the man was a Sabbath. So they asked how he had received his sight. The man simply told the facts, **“He put mud on my eyes, and I washed, and now I see”** (15). The Pharisees interpreted this as violating the Sabbath law, claiming that mixing mud and saliva was working on the Sabbath. Keeping the Sabbath was very important to the Jews. Those who failed to do so were cut off from their people (Ex 31:13-14). So they made many regulations to enforce keeping it. At the time they made the regulations, their intention was good. But as time passed, they lost the spirit of the Sabbath and became legalistic. Jesus was not confined to their human regulations, for he is Lord of the Sabbath (Mk 2:27). The Sabbath was for man to have fellowship with God and to save people, doing good (Mk 3:4). But some Pharisees tried to use the Sabbath law to condemn Jesus (16a). Others said, **“How can a sinner perform such signs?”** So they were divided (16b). In their helplessness, the Pharisees turned to the former blind man and asked for his opinion (17a). He must have sensed their intention to discredit Jesus. But he said very clearly, **“He is a prophet”** (17b). It means that he came from God. The pressure of the Pharisees was like a strong wind blowing against him. But as he held on to what Jesus had done, his faith grew until he could recognize Jesus as a prophet.

The Pharisees’ strategy to intimidate the man failed. So they changed their attack to focus on his credibility as a witness. They summoned his parents and asked them, **“Is this your son? Is this the one you say was born blind? How is it that now he can see?”** (19) The parents should have stood on the side of truth, telling the facts of what Jesus had done for their son. They acknowledged that he was their son and that he had been born blind. But they avoided admitting what Jesus had done or who he was, saying, **“We don’t know how he can see now or who opened his eyes. Ask him. He is of age”** (20-21). They did this because they were afraid of the Jewish leaders, who would put out of the synagogue anyone who acknowledged Jesus as the Messiah (22-23). Being cast out of the synagogue was a serious matter. Such people were not accepted socially and faced economic hardships. It may be hard to understand this in our individualistic society. Individuals have their own freedom of choice and are responsible for the consequences of their words and deeds. On the other hand, in a collective society the top leader’s decision becomes the law by which all others operate. Individual thoughts and deeds are subservient to the good of the community. In a collective society, being excluded from the community is about the worst thing that can happen to a person. In that situation, telling the truth would be very costly for the parents. We can understand their situation. In order to tell the truth, they needed courage. But they were occupied with fear. Fear made them cowardly. Fear comes

## **“DO YOU BELIEVE IN THE SON OF MAN?”**

from Satan. God does not give us a spirit of fear, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline (2 Ti 1:7).

The Pharisees summoned the man, in a second attempt to oppress him. **“Give glory to God by telling the truth,” they said. “We know this man is a sinner”** (24). To advance their own agenda, they even misused God’s name. They were the educated elite, and the man was uneducated. He could have surrendered to their expert opinion, and agreed with them. But he did not. He was not daunted at all. In fact, he took the initiative to share his testimony with them even though they did not want to hear it. He replied, **“Whether he is a sinner or not, I don’t know. One thing I do know. I was blind but now I see!”** (25) He shared the undeniable evidence of God’s grace upon his life. Holding on to the one thing he knew enabled him to keep his faith despite persecution, doubt and fear. The power of darkness could not quench the light in his heart. It is important to remember even one thing Jesus has done for us. There is at least one thing Jesus has done for each of us. Instead of holding on to bitter things, or negative events, we should remember one thing Jesus has done for us. Then we can grow spiritually.

**Thirdly, he testified that Jesus came from God (26-34).** When the man clearly said, “I was blind, but now I see,” the Pharisees tried to exploit his testimony to have a basis to accuse Jesus. So they asked, **“What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?”** (26) The man realized that the Pharisees were not genuinely seeking facts or truth. So he countered by saying, **“I have told you already and you did not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you want to become his disciples too?”** (27) Then they became emotional and hurled insults at him: **“You are this fellow’s disciple! We are disciples of Moses! We know that God spoke to Moses, but as for this fellow, we don’t even know where he comes from”** (28-29). The man answered, **“Now that is remarkable! You don’t know where he comes from, yet he opened my eyes. We know that God does not listen to sinners. He listens to the godly person who does his will. Nobody has ever heard of opening the eyes of a man born blind. If this man were not from God, he could do nothing”** (30-33). When the man stood on the side of truth, he became wise, spirited, strong and courageous, free, and funny. His face must have been shining like the stars in the dark sky. On the other hand, when the Pharisees tried to suppress the truth they became emotional, foolish, abusive and violent like mafia members. They misused their authority and threw the man out of the synagogue, saying, “You were steeped in sin at birth; how dare you lecture us” (34). There is a saying that the one who becomes angry first has lost the argument. They were totally defeated by the man. We learn from him that holding Jesus’ grace to the end is the way of victory.

## **“DO YOU BELIEVE IN THE SON OF MAN?”**

**Second, Jesus reveals himself to the man (35-41).** News about the man being cast out of the synagogue spread throughout Jerusalem like wildfire, by word of mouth. In this way, his testimony about Jesus spread. Yet the man must have been lonely and discouraged. He must have worried about his future, wondering how he would survive. He could no longer beg for a living. He had never studied or learned a trade. As an outcast, he could expect no help from others. At that moment, he was very vulnerable. When Jesus heard that they had thrown him out, he went and found the man (35a). Helping vulnerable people is not easy at all. How did Jesus help him? Jesus could have tried to give him money, borrowing from Matthew's friends. Or he could have recommended a job, asking a favor from the royal official whose son he had healed. Or Jesus could have said many kind encouraging words, praising him for what he had done. Instead, Jesus asked, **“Do you believe in the Son of Man?”** It was to plant in him faith in the Messiah. Why is this so important? It is because those who have faith in the Messiah can overcome any kinds of hardships or difficulties; they can overcome the world. 1 John 5:5 says, **“Who is it that overcomes the world? Only the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God.”** The author of Hebrews listed the heroes of faith who overcame the world. They were ordinary people with many kinds of weaknesses. But when they had faith in God the world was not worthy of them. They were truly victors, and more than conquerors. When we have some problem, the best way to solve it is to have faith in Jesus. The best way to help others is to encourage them to have faith in Jesus.

How did the man answer Jesus' question? **“Who is he sir? Tell me so that I may believe in him”** (36). In spite of his hardship, the man was not bitter or ungrateful. Nor did he doubt the love of Jesus. Rather, he fully trusted Jesus. Then Jesus revealed himself as the Messiah: **“You have now seen him; in fact, he is the one speaking with you”** (37). Jesus entrusted himself to this man as the Messiah. Jesus did not do this for everyone who believed in him (2:24), but only for those who fully committed to him, such as his disciples and the Samaritan woman. Jesus trusts those who trust in him. God is faithful and he is looking for faithful people. 2 Chronicles 16:9 says, **“For the eyes of the Lord range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him.”** God wants us to be faithful to him and he blesses abundantly those whom he finds faithful.

When Jesus revealed himself as Messiah, the man's spiritual eyes fully opened to see Jesus as he truly is. So he confessed, **“Lord, I believe,” and he worshiped him** (38). With a great sense of awe, he saw God in Jesus and gave his

## **“DO YOU BELIEVE IN THE SON OF MAN?”**

all to Jesus. Then he received eternal life, which Jesus really wanted to give (Jn 20:31). When he had eternal life he had everything. When he believed in Jesus he was changed from a poor, blind beggar to a heavenly prince. When he believed in Jesus heavenly sunlight shone in his heart.

When Jesus saw the former blind man worshiping him, he was very joyful. However, when he saw the Pharisees he grieved because of their unbelief. So he said, **“For judgment I have come into this world, so that the blind will see and those who see will become blind”** (39). Jesus becomes the greatest blessing to those who believe in him. On the other hand Jesus becomes a stumbling block to those who reject him (1 Pe 2:6,8). Jesus did not come to condemn, but to save (Jn 3:17). However, those who reject Jesus bring judgment on themselves. Some Pharisees who were with him heard his words and asked, **“What? Are we blind too?”** Jesus said, **“If you were blind, you would not be guilty of sin; but now that you claim you can see, your guilt remains.”** They thought they had knowledge about God and spiritual insight which was superior to that of ordinary people. But actually, they revealed their ignorance that was due to their spiritual pride. The former blind man was far superior to them in terms of spirituality. Those who humble themselves and admit they are blind can receive sight from Jesus. But those who claim to see and reject Jesus remain in their guilt.

We are living in a world that is increasingly hostile to Christ. It is not easy to remember what Jesus has done for us and testify to it. But when we do so, Jesus helps us open our spiritual eyes to see him as the Messiah and have eternal life. Let's remember what Jesus has done for us and testify to it. When Jesus asks each of us, **“Do you believe in the Son of Man?”** let's answer, **“Lord, I believe,”** and worship him.