

Into Thy Word Ministries Bible Study www.intothyword.org

General Idea: The religious leaders, being jealous and upset over this incident of Jesus healing a blind person on the Sabbath, brought the man in for further questioning. They pressured and manipulated him to tell the truth, but he already had and they did not like the truth of his testimony. They said *Jesus is a sinner and you can glorify God by your testimony, so you can't be telling the truth.* The man replied, *all I know is that I was blind and now I can see!* Now, the leaders wanted to know how he was healed. The man said, *I already told you; why do you not want to listen?* Getting frustrated and cynical, he said, *do you want to follow Jesus too?* This further infuriated the religious leaders; they told him off with curses, proclaiming that they only followed Moses. Of course, their character made it obvious that they did not follow God. The man replied to their lack of character and pride, saying, *what you say is strange; my eyes are healed and you do not know anything about Him. You say He is a sinner; but, as you also say, God does not listen to sinners, so how is it that He healed me? God will hear those who worship Him and do His will. I never heard of someone being healed of blindness; if Jesus is not from God, then how did this happen?* The leaders retorted, *you are of sin—born in sin. How dare you lecture us!* And they threw him out of the Synagogue. When Jesus heard about what happened, He asked the man *do you believe in the Son of Man?* The man replied, *who is that? Because I would.* Jesus said, *I am He who is speaking to you.* Yes Lord, the man said; *I believe!* And he worshiped Jesus. Then Jesus said, *I have come to judge the world; I have come to give sight. Those who are prideful and think they can see are the ones who are truly blind.*

Contexts and Background

This passage continues at the last day of Feast of Tabernacles, where Jesus healed a blind man and caused a heated discourse with the religious leaders. The religious leaders brought the man who received his sight back into their court for cross examination a second time. These Pharisees were so entrenched in and blinded by their rules that they forgot the rules were there to protect and to serve. Ironically, it was God and His coming Messiah who were actually in their midst. Even the blind man who had received his sight could not convince them; all they could do was interrogate and condemn. They were blinder than the blind man was when he was blind! This passage would also be a great teachable moment and consolation to John's people who were facing similar circumstances and being excommunicated from their Synagogues (12:42-43; 16:2; Rom. 10:17).

This passage depicts the power and compassion of Christ to those who are faithful. In the midst of God's power, purpose, and love is His call for us to first learn who He is and what He has to say, and then to trust and obey. He has set up instructions for us to live by that are meant to help, guide, mold, shape, and protect us. They also enable us grow, mature, and create community and fruitful living. This is a tough concept for many who want things their way and do not like authority or the progress of faith that is honed by life's irritations and opportunities. But, before we can be illuminated more in faith, we have to escape the darkness of what holds us back—our sins and frustrations, our fears and misguided beliefs. Rules can be used to protect and to serve as well as to glorify God and grow in faith.

Commentary—Word and Phrase Meanings

- *Give glory to God.* This was an oath to give one's loyalty and allegiance to a god or a king or a military commander—in this case, God. This was also a confessional formula used by the early Church to show one's commitment to God and not to the old ways of the Law. Additionally, it was a statement used to proclaim one's truthfulness in his/her testimony (Jer. 7:19).
- *Sinner.* Here, meaning to accuse someone of being born by means of sin and thus unfit to be a Jew or to teach. The Pharisees were cross-examining the man who was blind as if they were in a court of law. This was a standard tactic to get someone to confess just as it is today in our legal systems.

- *I was blind but now I see!* “Who is Jesus and what did He do?” and “How do we need Him?” are the essential questions this once blind man sought. He then bowed to Christ’s Lordship and saw the pretenders and pious fraud religious leaders for what they really were.
- *How did he.* An example of righteous boldness. This man, with perhaps a limited education, took on the prime leaders (who held his rights and fate) head on.
- *Did not listen.* Here is a contrast between the bad shepherds, who were called to lead their people, throw out a good person who knew truth. Here comes the Good Shepherd, who loves and cares for His people, taking the man in.
- *Insults.* Here, the Pharisees were just giving out insults and threats and did not investigate the matter as their law described—classic hypocrites.
- *Disciples of Moses.* Meaning they were loyal Jews who, from their skewed perspective, were defending the faith from attack. This refers to what group, what school of thought you belonged to, like a follower of the philosophy of Plato for the Greek and Philo or a specific sect like the Sadducees (John 5:45).
- *Comes from.* Also a statement of where one’s alliance or sect is based. Jesus was new to the scene and they did not know who disciplined Him; they assumed He came from a sect they did not know about. This was also a way to show contempt.
- *God does not listen to sinners.* A Scriptural precept that God will not hear the prayers of wicked people or those who have bad intentions in their hearts. The former blind man based his argument on this: Jesus must be righteous, for how could He heal him if He were a sinner, and that only God could do such an impossible miracle of healing a blind man. The Pharisees could not rebut this and could only hurl insults, the mark of weak minds and callous hearts (Psalm 34:15; 66:18; 109:7; 145:19; Prov. 15:8, 29; 21:27; 28:9; John 3:2).
- *Godly man who does his will.* This was the classic description of *piety*: a godly person who sought after and trusted God and committed to lead a life of holiness and character, the opposite of what these Pharisees claimed to be doing (Deut. 6:1-9; Mark 12: 29-31).
- *Born blind.* This is not someone who needed glasses and got some ointment and got better. This indicated that there either were no eyeballs in the sockets or that the eyeballs were hopelessly disfigured. This made the miracle unprecedented. Such events were often staged, but what Jesus did could not be duplicated by pagan priests who did a “bait and switch” show (have a stand-in who looked like the man or have twins who could see take the place of the blind person). This man was known to the town and Jesus could not possibly do a “bait and switch” or use a twin brother, for this would have been quickly exposed.
- *Sin at birth.* An accusation that the person was birthed out of wedlock, and thus had no legal rights to property or genealogy or right to participate in the Jewish faith, life, or Temple. This was a very serious charge and would have been investigated thoroughly because it would have greatly affected the entire family and clan.
- *Lecture us!* The proper approach of a true Rabbi was to be humble and teachable as it is with any true leader to the followers of our Lord. A real leader would never be persistently prideful; if he were, then he was not of God. If we sincerely seek and ask the questions and have the willingness to obey, we will see Truth too. If we remain in our stubborn irrationalities, dishonesty, and pride, we will remain in our blindness.
- *Threw/cast him out.* This man was rashly and spitefully excommunicated because they concluded he was a sinner. The text does not say, but I believe Jesus must have also been excommunicated at this

point or perhaps prior. Consequently, the man was expelled from his place of worship and community. He would no longer have any social interaction with anyone who was a fellow Jew and would also be cut off from family, friends, work, and inheritance rights. This would be devastating, but Jesus intervened and gave him both a challenge and a comfort (John 9:22).

- *Do you believe?* The educated and informed Pharisees who knew the Scriptures and whose job it was to prepare for the Messiah, forsook their call and opportunity, yet this man took it joyfully with commitment, faith, and obedience!
- *Son of Man.* See [John 1:35-51](#) study.
- *Believe in.* This man's faith moved from being curious and excited that he was healed to the realization of the Lordship of Christ and the One True God in whom he could put his faith. This man needed more information for His salvation, to understand who Jesus was. Just as we grow in the Lord, we need more information to add to the practice of our faith.
- *Worshipped.* This man gave Jesus the reverence due only to God, another proof of the Divinity of Jesus. Real worship allows us to grow beyond our "why me's" into what Christ wants of us!
- *Judgment.* Here, it means that as Christ walked the earth, He was setting up the Kingdom of God and our ability to have redemption, giving us a choice to come to Christ or not; for those who would oppose Him, judgment awaited. This is the first coming of Christ; the second coming is when the final judgment takes place (Matt. 12:30; 24; Luke 11:23; John 3:17; 12:47; Eph. 2:4).
- *Blind will see and those who see will become blind.* He said this because the Pharisees were the ones who were blind and could not see the Truth in front of them whereas the blind man could. The actions of these religious leaders gave evidence of their blindness and lack of character. Yet, the Pharisees were shocked that someone would accuse them of being so! This is a metaphor for those who are in leadership who are prideful, and/or who think they have the right insight or know it all and are serving God, but are really spiritually blind and opponents of God who can't see real, effectual Truth. We have to be humble to realize our need for a Savior because we do not deserve Him and we are too prideful to realize our need. Those who are humble can see Truth and will be used by God. Real faith comes from seeing the reality of Christ and that He is Lord, not our ideas or presumptions, but rather His true principles and work (Isa. 42:16-19; Jer. 5:21).
- *Guilty of sin/have no guilt.* If one had no knowledge of sin or of God and His Law, then it could be argued that he/she would not be guilty of not accepting God. This was a Jewish mystic statement; the Bible says otherwise (Rom. 1:18-3:20).

Devotional Thoughts and Applications

The interrogators, (the Pharisees) were experts in the Law and held the power to improve or ruin a person's life out of spite just to make a point. This event may have even convened in a court of law and not in the streets as did previous encounters with Christ and His followers. Many of John's readers and parishioners were in courts being kicked out of the synagogue, and facing what this man and his parents as well as Jesus faced. It must have been of a great comfort to realize that they were not in it alone, that the God of the universe was also there in their midst. Also, this was a call to remain faithful and obedient in times of stress and uncertainty, no matter what.

What we do with what we are given will either glorify God and display His work in us or make us bitter and dysfunctional. To display God's work is an attitude of our heart, taking a setback and using it as an opportunity to learn and grow. To see trials not as personal attacks, but rather opportunities to be refined is to grow and to be better. This is the essence and fragrance God desires from us. We can trust God, because He is good and will take our failings and pain and mold them for His glory and our benefit, whether he heals us or not (Rom. 8).

The Essential Inductive Questions (for more Inductive questions see Inductive Bible Study):

1. What does this passage say?
2. What does this passage mean?
3. What is God telling me?
4. How am I encouraged and strengthened?
5. Is there sin in my life for which confession and repentance is needed?
6. How can I be changed, so I can learn and grow?
7. What is in the way of these precepts affecting me? What is in the way of my listening to God?
8. How does this apply to me? What will I do about it?
9. What can I model and teach?
10. What does God want me to share with someone?

Additional Questions:

1. What can be learned from one's predicament and how it can benefit and give God glory?
2. What we do with what we are given will either glorify God and display His work in us, or we will become bitter and dysfunctional. How so in you?
3. Why do you suppose that the religious leaders were being resentful and upset over this incident of Jesus healing a blind person?
4. What event in your life have you replied with *I was blind and now I can see*? What was blinding you? How does Christ help you see? What do you think might be blinding you now?
5. How does one become better at worshipping God and doing His will?
6. How and why do some people choose to remain in stubborn irrationalities, dishonesty, and pride? What can be done to help such a person sincerely seek, ask the questions, and have the willingness to obey?
7. Why do you think that a real leader will never be continually prideful? What would pride say of such a leader? Why are so many Christian leaders prideful and think it is OK?
8. Next time you are at your church's service, how can you better engage in real worship and allow yourself to grow beyond your blind spots into what Christ wants of you?
9. What do you need to do to escape the darkness of what holds you back—your sins or frustrations or fears or misguided beliefs?
10. Can you look back over your life and see what Christ has brought you through? Can you see the steps of faith you took to overcome your barriers as you encountered Jesus and went from unbelief to faith to worship to service?
11. How can you fulfill what God sent you to do in the journey of your life and relationships, no matter what situation you are in or the past that you have?
12. What is real faith to you? What can you do to help your faith become more alive? How do your ideas or presumptions get in the way of His Way? What do you need to do to surrender to His True principles and Work?