

Text: John 9:1-12

Title: "Believe because He healed a man born blind"

Time: 1/12/2025 am

Place: NBBC

Introduction: This past week I read an article published by the Vision Center about a new technology called bionic eyes. The article said about the blindness that afflicts some 7 million Americans: "Fortunately, one technology is changing all that and making vision restoration a reality – bionic eye implants." I am sure that this technology must be wonderfully life-changing for those suffering from blindness.

As I read the article, however, it became clear that this technology still has some severe limitations. Perhaps the first limitation that would have made it unusable for the man in our passage is that candidates for the technology must have a previous history of functional vision. The article also explained that extensive damage to the optic nerve, visual cortex, or human retina renders bionic eyes useless. The man in our passage had no such history. He undoubtedly had this extensive damage. He was born blind (v. 1). His eyes had never worked.

Tests of bionic eyes have yielded a 90% success rate, but this success is defined quite differently from natural eyesight. Bionic eyes do not restore normal vision, but they enable patients to see light signals and indistinct shapes. This limited restored sight is merely black and white, not in color.

Obtaining a pair of bionic eyes is both expensive and risky. The eyes and the accompanying surgical procedures cost well over \$100,000. The eyes can interfere with the availability of other medical procedures like obtaining an MRI, and infection is always a concern with surgery. If an installed

bionic eye system fails to work, removal is painful and equally expensive.

Only one American company produces bionic eyes, Sight Medical Products in California. Two other European companies have also developed competing versions of this product. I am sure that scores of scientists and engineers have spent years in research and millions of dollars in development to offer their bionic eyes to the blind. Undoubtedly, every person associated with this difficult project would like to know the answer to the question asked in verse 10 of our passage, "How then were your eyes opened?" Imagine if Sight Medical Products knew the answer to that question.

The man born blind knew the answer. He explained that a man named Jesus made some clay with His spittle, rubbed it on to his blind eyes, told him to rise up from his begging and go wash in the pool of Siloam, and for the first time ever this man could see with 20/20 vision in full living color.

Why does the Apostle John tell us about this sixth miracle in his Gospel? One simple reason – "That we might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and believing have life in His name." It is a pretty amazing thing to develop a bionic eye, but it is far more amazing to fix the natural eyes of a man born blind with some spittle and clay. It is more amazing still to create the eye in the first place.

You may remember that John has already told us regarding Jesus, "All things were made by Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made" (1:3). That includes our eyes, with their amazing technology. The retina in our eye contains two kinds of photoreceptor cells that receive light in a form that allows our optic nerve and our brain to see. Rod cells help us see black and white, and cone cells help us see color. The human eye has 92 million rod cells and 6 million

cone cells in its retina. And most of us have two of them. So, whatever statistical likelihood you come up with for the natural eye to develop by chance through random mutations, you must not forget to multiply that unlikelihood by two.

John's Gospel tells us that Jesus made our eyes; that He fixed this blind man's eyes; and for these reasons that we must believe that He is the Christ, the Son of God, and believing have life in His name. Do you believe? Notice with me four things we learn about this man's blindness from John's account of his healing.

I. The man's blindness was not judgment for his sin (1-3).

Illustration: We remember Fanny Crosby as one of the great heroines of the Christian faith. She grew up in a godly home. A godly grandmother helped her memorize Scripture, so that by the time she was 15 years old she had memorized the Pentateuch, many of the Psalms, the Book of Proverbs, the Song of Solomon, and the Gospels.

She taught for many years at the New York Institute for the Blind. As an advocate for the blind, she was the first woman in American history ever to speak in the Senate Chambers of the US Congress. She addressed a joint session of Congress in the 1840s and was a personal friend of the future two-term President of the United States, Grover Cleveland, who worked at her school in the 1850's. Fanny was a great comfort to Grover after the death of his father when Grover was a teenager, and Grover would eventually transcribe many of Fanny's poems for her.

Fanny and her husband lived in a small apartment on Manhattan's Lower East Side. Her home was near one of the town's worst slums, just a few blocks away from Bowery, a notorious red-light district. She supported the Water Street

Mission, America's first rescue mission, often visiting there to counsel with those who needed help.

Fanny and her husband were blessed with a little baby girl, who sadly died in infancy. She understood the depth of pain of a mother's loss of a child.

Fanny was blind, as was her husband. Her parents believed she was the victim of malpractice when six-weeks old. When Fanny was 8 years old, she wrote a poem about her condition, that she called her life's motto:

“Oh what a happy soul I am,
Although I cannot see;
I am resolved that in this world
Contented I will be.
How many blessings I enjoy,
That other people don't;
To weep and sigh because I'm blind,
I cannot, and I won't.”

Application: Had Fanny lived in the first century, and had she been known to Jesus's disciples, they may have asked about her what they asked the Lord about this man born blind - “Who sinned?” They wanted to understand the connection between this man's suffering and his sin. They affirmed the Biblical doctrine that God created the world without sin, suffering, and death, and that it was Adam's sin that introduced suffering and death into our world. They undoubtedly had been raised under the Jewish belief that babies in the womb can sin, and that the sin of parents was responsible for the birth defects of their offspring (v. 34).

In the face of all of that, Jesus explains that there is no connection at all between this man's sin, nor that of his parents, and his birth in blindness. In fact, the opposite is true. This

man's blindness, his years of suffering, his impoverished begging, and his world of constant darkness had been orchestrated by God for a specific purpose – that the works of God might be manifested in Him (v. 3).

In other words, this man was asked by God to go through all that he went through, in part, so that you and I could see and believe in the works of God. If we fail to believe, all of that suffering that he went through will have been wasted on us. It is God's purpose that it cause us to believe. The man's blindness was not judgment for his sin, it was preparation for a work of God that could deliver us from judgment for our sin.

II. The man's blindness was a conduit for great light (4-5).

Illustration: Fiber optics is another wonderful modern technology. A fiber optic cable can transmit light from one end of the cable to the other. Because it is flexible, it can direct light from point a to point b, causing it to arrive from the source at any desired destination.

Application: Jesus mentions the transmission of light in verse 5. In 8:12 Jesus announced during the Feast of Tabernacles, with its four mighty candelabras shining to the nations, that He is the light of the world. Here in verse 5, we learn not so much what He is, but what He does as the light of the world [with no definite article, we can translate, *I am light to the world*]. Like a fiber optic cable, He transmits light from God to the world as long as He is in the world (v. 5).

You may have noticed from our reading of the passage from the ESV this morning that verse 4 reads. "We must work" rather than "I must work" in the best manuscripts preferred by modern translations. So when it comes to the transmission of God's light in a dark world, this is not only some-

thing that Jesus did while He was in the world, it is also something that we as His disciples must do while we are in the world. Our night is coming. We have today. Now is the time to do the works of the Father who sent His Son. Commissioned by Jesus to spread His gospel light in our dark world, we are called by Him “the light of the world” too.

How did the blind man do that? He did that by knowing that he was blind and by allowing Jesus to help him. That is how we spread Jesus’s light in this world as a fiber optic conduit too. We know our need and trust Him for help.

III. The man’s blindness was cured with clay and obedience (6-7).

Illustration: My son Brandon was born in the same year two of his cousins were born, Titus and Nathan. All three are godly fathers in their own right now, but when they were little Titus developed a reputation at our family gatherings for being a source of mischief. My dad, our family’s patriarch, used to call Titus the dean of destruction.

Some of the things Titus almost destroyed was his cousin’s eyes. The three were about three years old and playing peacefully together in a sandbox, when Titus decided to grab a handful of sand and throw it into the eyes of his unsuspecting cousins. Thankfully, there was no permanent damage, just temporary pain, but it was a great example of what not to do when you want to help someone see better.

Application: Well, Jesus decides here to cure this man’s eyes with some wet clay or mud. He uses his saliva and some dirt to make a paste that he applies to the eyes of the blindman. John Calvin remembered the water thrown on the altar of Elijah before he called miraculous fire down from heaven on

it, to show how truly miraculous this miracle was. That may be part of what Jesus was doing here.

I think it is more likely that Jesus wanted to do something that would require the man to wash in the pool Siloam. John explains that He would have wanted the man to do this because the word Siloam means *Sent* (v. 7). In other words, this pool was a symbol of the Sent One from God, the Christ, the Son of God, on whom we must believe to have our spiritual blindness cured. This was the same pool from which the water was drawn for the water pouring ceremony of the Feast of Tabernacles, during which Jesus cried out that all must believe on Him to have the living water of eternal life (John 7:37-38).

This man was cured because He believed Jesus enough to obey Him and go to the pool and wash. It was not the pool that healed him, but the Sent One, Jesus. Yet had he not enough faith to obediently go to the pool, the man would not have been cured. Do we have faith enough to go to the pool the Lord tells us to go to? Do we have true saving faith?

IV. The man's blindness had been noticed by others (8-12).

Application: Those who had known the blind man when he was still blind had asked him how his eyes were opened. He knew the answer and told them – Jesus did a miracle. The blind man did not know much, but he did know enough to help these neighbors believe on Him too. Are we willing to share with others, those who have seen a change in our lives because they knew us before the change, that it is Jesus who has done this miracle to us?

Conclusion: The man's neighbors also asked him another important question at the end of our passage, "Where is He?" Unfortunately, the formerly blind man did not know

the answer to this question. As we conclude our time together, I want to ask whether you know the answer to that question. Do you know where Jesus is? He has promised the local church that, where two or three are gathered in His name, He is there in their midst (Matt. 18:20). Do you know that by faith? His Spirit indwells with new life every born-again child of God. Is He there in your heart?

Do we know that He was in the beginning with the Father, that He became flesh and dwelt among us, that He died on the cross for the sins of mankind, that He arose from the grave on Sunday morning, and that He sits at the right hand of the Father awaiting the day His enemies shall be made the footstool for His feet? Do we know where He is because we have believed that He is the Christ, the Son of God, and believing we have life in His name?

“A man came—I think it was actually in Philadelphia—on one occasion to the great George Whitefield and asked if he might print his sermons. Whitefield gave this reply; he said, ‘Well, I have no inherent objection, if you like, but you will never be able to put on the printed page the lightning and the thunder.’ That is the distinction—the sermon, and the ‘lightning and the thunder.’ To Whitefield this was of very great importance, and it should be of very great importance to all preachers, as I hope to show. You can put the sermon into print, but not the lightning and the thunder. That comes into the act of preaching and cannot be conveyed by cold print. Indeed it almost baffles the descriptive powers of the best reporters.”

—David Martin Lloyd-Jones,

Preachers and Preaching