

Text: John 9:13-41

Title: "Believe because we are all born blind"

Time: 2/2/2025 am

Place: NBBC

Introduction: We have English Bibles with us at church today due in no small part to the labors of William Tyndale. Tyndale was born in 1494, and he died in 1536. At 21 years of age, Tyndale graduated from Oxford having mastered eight languages. *Foxe's Book of Martyrs* described William Tyndale's mind as "addicted" to the Scriptures. Four years after his graduation, a woman and six men were publicly burned at the stake in England for teaching children the Lord's Prayer and the Ten Commandments in English. Tyndale's love for Scripture was dangerous in his day.

In 1521, Tyndale began working as a tutor in the household of Sir John Walsh, who would often have Roman Catholic clergy over for dinner. At one of these dinners, a priest was losing a theological argument with Tyndale, and so he blurted out in frustration, "We are better to be without God's laws than the Pope's." Tyndale's response was direct. He told the priest: "I defy the Pope and all his laws. If God spare my life ere many years, I will cause the boy that drives the plow to know more of the Scriptures than you."

Tyndale lived to see that happen as God used him to translate the Scriptures from their original tongues into the English language. Ultimately betrayed by a spy, Tyndale was incarcerated for 500 days and eventually strangled and then burned at the stake. The charges against him were as follows: he had maintained that faith alone justifies; he had maintained that to believe in the forgiveness of sins and to embrace the mercy offered in the Gospel, was enough for salvation; he had denied the existence of purgatory; and he

had denied that men should pray to Mary or the saints. Just before being executed for this faith, Tyndale's last words were a prayer: "Lord, open the King of England's eyes."

The king of England, of course, would have disagreed that his eyes needed opening. Unlike the man born blind in our passage, he would have assumed that he could see perfectly well. The Pharisees of this passage are very much like the Roman Catholic clerics and English king of Tyndale's day. They too thought that there was nothing wrong with their eyes, but Jesus knew differently. He knew that their eyes needed to be opened (vv. 39-41).

So as we seek to understand with open eyes what is the purpose of the Apostle John in writing this account, we remember that he tells us in John 20:31, "But these are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through His name." Very simply, John tells us here that we must believe because we all need our eyes opened. We must believe because we all are born spiritually blind.

From John's account we shall see what the prideful Pharisees could see, what the fearful parents of the man born blind could see, what the trusting blind man could see, and what Jesus could see in His omniscient wisdom.

I. What the prideful Pharisees could see (vv. 13-18a, 24-34).

Illustration: You may remember the account of the fall of Jericho in Joshua 6-7. Archeologists have confirmed in many wonderful ways the miraculous Biblical account of Israel's victory over Jericho. They have confirmed that the walls fell down, that one section did not fall down (where Rahab had been promised survival), that the city was

burned with fire, and that valuables like stores of grain were left to burn with the city.

That last detail happened because God had put everything in Jericho under a ban. However, Joshua would come to learn through their tragic loss at Ai, that the ban had been violated. Achan was the culprit, and as lots were cast and Achan was finally exposed, Joshua said to him, "My son, give, I pray thee, glory to the Lord God of Israel, and make confession unto him; and tell me now what thou hast done; hide it not from me" (Josh. 7:19).

Application: In our passage, the prideful Pharisees see themselves in the roll of Joshua and the blind man in the role of Achan. They quote Joshua to the blind man in v. 24. They believed they were the disciples of Moses, like Joshua, and that this blind man and his Healer were sinners born in sin, like Achan. To them, Jesus had healed on the sabbath and so broke the law of Moses. That a man born blind could actually now see was beside their point, an irrelevant detail that had no bearing on this situation, nor on their lives. Egregious was the miscalculation of their pride.

It would be an equally horrific miscalculation for you and I this morning to read John's account of Jesus's healing of a man born blind and walk away with the opinion that what we have just read is an irrelevant Bible passage that has no bearing on our lives. If we can read John's account of this miracle and still not believe that He is the Christ, the Son of God, we see no better than these prideful Pharisees.

II. What the fearful parents could see (vv. 18-23).

Illustration: Our nation is mourning the tragic midair crash at the airport in Washington, D.C. this past week. The

investigation continues, but I did come across a theory about what happened that seemed to make a lot of sense. An airline pilot who had obtained the FAA audio and video of the air traffic control screen walked his viewers through the exchange between air traffic control and the pilots of the airplane and helicopter involved in the crash.

The audio explains that air traffic control asked the pilots of the helicopter if they could see the oncoming plane. The helicopter pilots said they could see the plane and requested “sight separation authorization,” which meant that they would be responsible to use their eyesight to avoid the plane. Air traffic control granted the authorization. It is the belief of the pilot who produced the video that the helicopter pilots had their eyes on the wrong plane, however, and so failed to see the plane into which they crashed.

Application: Focusing on the wrong threat can lead to great tragedy when it comes to air traffic control. Doing so is also spiritually dangerous. These parents of the man born blind have their eyes fixed on a dangerous threat – to be cast out of the synagogue and ostracized from their Jewish society (v. 22). Jesus would later warn His disciples, “They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service” (John 16:2). Their healed son was cast out (v. 34).

But in fearing this threat, the parents failed to see the real danger that would cause them ultimately to crash spiritually. It is the threat that Jesus mentions in the very last verse of our passage: “Therefore, your sin remaineth.” These parents were so concerned about the opinions of their fellow synagogue attendees that the fact that Jesus had just healed their son born blind had no meaningful effect on them at all. Perhaps this miracle will have no meaningful effect on us for the same reason – friends that we may lose, persecution

that we may suffer. Jesus warns: "And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, fear Him who can destroy both soul and body in hell" (Matt. 10:28). Unlike his parents, their brave son feared the right threat.

III. What the trusting blind man could see (vv. 35-38).

Illustration: We all deal with the spiritual blindness of our sin darkened world. I went through some stress this past week over our recreational basketball playoff schedule. For some reason, these playoff games were all scheduled in conflict with church services next Sunday morning. When I protested, it was explained to me that most people would not want to have the playoffs that afternoon because the games would interfere with their Super Bowl plans.

Application: That was a disappointing email exchange for me, but as I thought of what the trusting blind man could now see, I remembered how blessed I am to be able to see why it is better to be in church on Sunday, even if it means missing the Super Bowl. There was a time in my life when I could not see that Jesus has promised to be here with us on Sunday morning in a way He has not promised to be with those at their the Super Bowl parties tonight.

The formerly blind man asks Jesus who the Son of God is that he might believe on Him. The One who healed him said, "You have seen Him, and the One speaking to you is He." We sinners must believe on the One who has healed us to see Him. We sinners must believe on the One who is speaking to us.

And so, the trusting blind man could see that he must respond to the Lord who healed him in two ways: (1) profession: "I do believe, Lord"; and (2) worship: "and he worshipped Him." If we need to move our basketball games up

to conflict with church so that we do not miss the Super Bowl, it is because we have been born blind. It is because we do not see what the trusting blindman could see. We do not believe, and we do not see the point of worship.

But if we can see these things, it is because the Lord has found us and has healed us (v. 35). Ron Hamilton wrote a song about the way Jesus finds sinners who need Him:

“Lost in the darkness I stumbled alone,
Far from the sunlight of day.
Then Jesus found me and made me His own;
He drove my darkness away.

“Before I loved Him, He loved me.
Before I found Him, He found me.
Before I sought Him, He sought for me.
Yes, Jesus cares for me.

“Chilled in the shadows,
I wandered in sin,
Far from the warmth of the light.
Then Jesus found me and changed me within,
Kindled His love in the night.

“Before I loved Him, He loved me.
Before I found Him, He found me.
Before I sought Him, He sought for me.
Yes, Jesus cares for me.

“Now in the sunlight I follow His Word
Through every trial and test.
He is my Savior and He is my Lord:
Gladly I give Him my best.

“Before I loved Him, He loved me.
Before I found Him, He found me.
Before I sought Him, He sought for me.
Yes, Jesus cares for me.”

The trusting blind man saw that he had been healed by God’s Son and that he must now in the sunlight follow His Word. Have we ever seen what he saw?

IV. What Jesus could see in omniscient wisdom (vv. 39-41).

Illustration: In 2017 the Harvard Medical School published an article titled, “Brain ‘rewires’ itself to enhance other senses in blind people.” It explained: “The brains of those who are born blind make new connections in the absence of visual information, resulting in enhanced, compensatory abilities such as a heightened sense of hearing, smell and touch, as well as cognitive functions (such as memory and language).”

Application: When it comes to our soul, there is a rewiring that happens when we see that we were born spiritually blind. It is human nature to believe that we were born basically good, with some spiritual insight if not much attraction to religion. But that is the problem the Pharisees have in this passage. They do not know that they were born spiritually blind. Recognition of our own natural spiritual blindness heightens our sense of need for the Savior.

This truth about your heart and mine is what Jesus sees. He sees that we must believe that He is the Christ, the Son of God, and believing have life in His name, because you and I have been born blind. He sees that if we fail to see that we are blind, our sin will remain, in spite of the fact that He came to suffer to take our sin away.

Conclusion: Jesus refers in verse 39 to what He would have to go through to take our sin away. John has already told us that in His first coming, Jesus did not come to condemn (or *judge*—same word as here) the world (John 3:17, “For God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved”).

And yet, here Jesus tells them, “For judgment I came into the world.” This judgment is not His judgment of the world, but His judgment for the world. It is the judgment that was rendered at Calvary on the cross, where He paid the penalty for our sins through His sacrifice.

He did that so that if we can see that we were born spiritually blind this morning, our sins need not remain. We can trust Him to take them away. He also did that so that if we think we have always seen just fine, we could be made blind, whether due to our pride or fear. Which are we?

“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