



“Optical Illusions”

John 9:35-41

Theme: The “clear” view of self-righteousness is nothing but a mirage.

Introduction: Few things are more deceptive than an optical illusion. What looks obvious to the eye can actually be false. A straight stick appears bent in water. A road in the desert looks like it's shimmering with water that isn't there. The eye insists, “This is real,” while truth quietly contradicts it.

That is precisely the spiritual condition Jesus exposes in John 9 - **[Read Text]**

Last week, in the previous section, we saw that Jesus Christ delivers us from the spiritual blindness that keeps us in the darkness of unbelief. He powerfully heals the man born blind, enabling his to see for the first time in his life. In our passage today, we see two very different “sights.” One man who had been physically blind is now given true sight—both physically and spiritually. Others, who pride themselves on their clarity, insight, and religious accuracy, are revealed to be completely blind. The great irony—and the sobering warning—is this: *those most confident in what they see are the ones most deceived.* Jesus challenges the illusion of self-righteousness.

The Pharisees believed they saw clearly. They had the Law, the traditions, the theological system. They were confident in their standing before God. But their “clear view” was nothing more than a mirage—convincing, persuasive, and deadly.

Jesus makes this clear: *“For judgment I came into this world, so that those who do not see may see, and that those who see may become blind.”* (John 9:39) This is not just a story about a healed man; it is a divine revelation of the human heart. Without grace and faith, what we believe to be spiritual clarity is actually deep blindness. Scripture consistently affirms this reality:

*“There is none righteous, not even one;
There is none who understands,
There is none who seeks for God.”* (Romans 3:10–11)

And yet, in our natural state, we presume the opposite—we presume we see. That is the illusion. **The danger of self-righteousness is not that it seems sinful—it's that it seems righteous.** It convinces a person that they are fine when they are condemned. It assures them that they see when they are blind. It offers confidence without true repentance. That is why Jesus emphasizes this point so strongly. Because the greatest barrier to salvation is not ignorance—it is false assurance.

In this closing section of John 9, Jesus draws a sharp distinction between those who see and those who do not. The three main observations in this text are clear:

- I. **Vision Is Remedied by Grace – vv. 35-38**
- II. **Vision Is Regulated by Faith – v. 39**
- III. **Vision Is Rejected through Unbelief – vv. 40-41**

What we will see is unmistakable:

The only people who truly see are those who realize they are blind—and turn to Christ for sight. **A clear view of self-righteousness is nothing but a mirage.**

Everything else is an optical illusion. Let's look at this in our text ...

I. Vision Is Remedied by Grace – 9:35-38

A. The Savior's Instigation of Grace – v. 35

1. The blind man who fell into the maelstrom of the Pharisees' hostility toward Jesus is finally officially ostracized by the "religious establishment" for what they see as his conversion to faith that Jesus was truly from God – cp. [v. 34](#).
2. This persecution was brought to Jesus' attention, and Jesus immediately shows His passion – to seek out and save sinners from the guilt and power of their sin – *“Jesus heard that they had put him out, and finding him, ...”*
3. It is incomparably better to be “cast out” for faithfulness to Christ, or to “come out” because of others' unfaithfulness to Christ, than to remain “in” and to be “spued out” by Christ!¹
4. When Jesus found this man, *“He said, ‘Do you believe in the Son of Man?’”*
5. Again, Jesus' favorite self-reference was to use the Messianic title *“Son of Man”*² – approximately 70% of the time – cp. [Daniel 7:13-14](#).
6. This is the only issue that truly matters in all the considerations of a sinner's conversion:
 - a) *In the OT, it was faith in the promised Messiah – the One who would come from God to deliver them – they looked forward to receiving the promise – [Genesis 3:15; Hebrews 11:39-40](#).*
 - b) *In our era, the question is whether we believe in the One whom God has sent – the Lord Jesus – [Hebrews 12:1-2](#).*
7. Thus, Jesus directly addresses the issue and asks all of us, just as He asks this man, *“Is your reliance for eternal redemption in the provision of God in the Messiah?”*

B. The Sinner's Response to Grace – vv. 36-38

1. Keep in mind that this man had never actually seen Jesus – he left Him to wash in the pool of Siloam, and there's no record that he ever interacted with Jesus before this moment – cf. [v. 9:12](#).
2. When Jesus asked him if he believed in Him, he responded, *“Who is He, Lord, that I may believe in Him?”*
 - a) *Basically, the blind man here declares his complete acceptance of the One who healed him as the Promised One – the Messiah.*

¹ Paraphrased from Pink. P. 504.

² Majority Text has “Son of God”

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- b) *However, he still did not connect Jesus (the One speaking with him) with the One who had healed him.*
3. Hence, *“Jesus said to him, ‘You have both seen Him, and He is the one who is talking with you’.”* – He introduces Himself to the man who didn’t realize who Jesus was.
- a) *This is one of only four times in the Gospels where the Lord Jesus explicitly declared His divine Sonship (all of which are in this Gospel of John).*
- (1) John 5:25
 - (2) John 9:37
 - (3) John 10:36
 - (4) John 11:4
- b) *Nowhere in the other Gospels does He explicitly affirm that He was the Son of God.*
4. His immediate response to this disclosure reflects the culmination of his faith's progress – *“And he said, ‘Lord, I believe.’ And he worshiped Him.”*
5. This man embodies the history of every soul reconciled to God by the grace found in Jesus Christ.
- a) *Introduced to us in wretchedness and helplessness*
 - b) *Sought out by the Lord*
 - c) *Directed to wash in what represents the Word – the waters of Siloam*
 - d) *Given spiritual sight*
 - e) *Severely tested by the enemies of God*
 - f) *Denied the support of parents*
 - g) *Cast out by the self-righteousness*
 - h) *Sought out and Comforted by the Savior*
 - i) *Believed in Jesus as the Christ*
 - j) *Able to worship at the feet of his Savior*
6. It is this process that allows a person to develop good vision – and without it, one remains blinded – ***Acts 13:48***.
7. Our main concern today is whether each of us has asked/answered this question – “Do you believe?” – that is, persuaded by the Holy Spirit using God’s Word that Jesus Christ is the only One able to deliver you from the guilt, power, and penalty of your sins?
8. The immediate impulse upon being born again by grace through faith is the desire to worship – to ascribe to the Lord the greatness of His name.

II. Vision Is Regulated by Faith – 9:39

A. The Impact of Christ's Coming

1. Jesus responds to this man's faith by saying that it is for this very outcome that he came into the world – to make a difference – *“And Jesus said, ‘For judgment I came into this world.’”*
 - a) The word *“judgment”* refers to the outcome or result of discrimination - *John 3:17*
 - b) Jesus is referring to the outcome for every person, depending on how they respond to the Lord.
2. Thus, Jesus is stating that it is this outcome – of being able to discriminate between those who accept Him and those who reject Him - that He *“came into this world.”*
3. While the primary purpose of His coming was to seek and save sinners, the moral impact of His coming was judgment, not judging anyone, but judging everyone.

B. The Inevitability of Discrimination

1. The phrase *“... so that ...”* essentially indicates that it is the product in the hearts of men that God is focusing on.
2. There are only two possible results – results that God involves Himself in accomplishing – the enlightenment *or* the blinding of men.
3. Those who are enlightened are those who recognize their own limitation and need – those who know they are blind and will look to God – *“so that those who do not see may see.”*
4. Then there are those who willfully reject the light that God offers – professing themselves to be sufficient in themselves – *“... and that those who see may become blind.”* - cp. *Proverbs 26:12*.

III. Vision Is Rejected by Unbelief – 9:40-41

A. The Defensiveness of Sinners – v. 40

1. This exchange took place in the presence of some Pharisees, who listened intently.
2. They were insulted by the clear implications – *“Those of the Pharisees who were with Him heard these things and said to Him, ‘We are not blind too, are we?’”*
3. This is the tragedy of their blindness; they don't even know that they cannot see.
4. Spiritually, we realize that our blindness is fading as we become aware of

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the great need for God's work in our lives.

5. The less we feel the compelling pull of God's Spirit drawing us away from ourselves and toward the Lord Jesus Christ to transform us from what we are into what He is, the more blind we become.
6. The more we feel this compelling and urgent need to become more like Christ, the more we understand.
7. Additionally, the more we respond to the light we receive, the more light we are given; conversely, the less we respond to the light God provides, the darker our understanding becomes – cp. ***Romans 1:21-22***.

B. The Diagnosis by the Savior – v. 41

1. In his response, Jesus shows what kind of person is forgiven – the one who recognizes their miserable state and earnestly longs for God's deliverance – ***“If you were blind, you would have no sin;”***
2. “have no sin” – describes the status of a person before God when, through faith, they are forgiven because of their faith in Jesus Christ.
3. However, since you are content with yourself and filled with self-sufficiency, your guilt remains intact – ***“but since you say, ‘We see,’ your sin remains.”***
4. There is no one so blind as those who refuse to see – ***Romans 1:18***.

So What?

1. **Where am I still functionally relying on my own understanding instead of fully submitting to Christ's revelation of Himself?**
2. **What does it look like to actively walk by faith rather than by sight in my current circumstances?**
3. **What attitudes or patterns in my life indicate a growing resistance to correction, conviction, or biblical authority?**

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