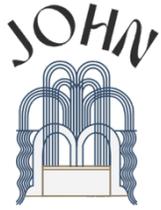


An Exposition of the  
**GOSPEL OF JOHN**



## “The Gospel Made Plain”

*John 9:13-34*

**Theme: Jesus Christ delivers us from the spiritual blindness that keeps us in the darkness of unbelief.**

**Introduction:** Clarity is one of the marks of truth. When something is true, it can ultimately be stated plainly. The more essential the truth, the more simply it can often be expressed.

The gospel of Jesus Christ is no exception. Though theologians have written volumes explaining its doctrines—justification, substitution, redemption, reconciliation—the gospel itself is remarkably simple. At its core, the gospel is the message of what Christ Jesus has accomplished for sinners. **Jesus Christ delivers us from the spiritual blindness that keeps us in the darkness of unbelief**

The apostle Paul summarized it plainly: **1 Corinthians 15:3–4 (NASB95)** *“For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures.”* The gospel is not primarily about what a sinner achieves for God, but what Christ has accomplished for the sinner.

Yet one of the striking realities in Scripture is that while the gospel is simple enough for a child to understand, it is often fiercely resisted by those who pride themselves on religious knowledge. The heart that refuses to humble itself before God will often complicate what God has made plain. That is exactly what we see in **John 9**. Jesus has just performed an unmistakable miracle. A man who had been blind from birth now sees. It is a work that unmistakably demonstrates the power of Christ and the mercy of God. But instead of rejoicing, the religious leaders begin to interrogate. They question the miracle - They question the man - They question his parents - And ultimately, they reject the testimony altogether.

Why? Scripture is very clear that while unbelievers are spiritually blind, that blindness is not morally neutral. It is willful, culpable, and rooted in a heart steeped in sin. Men are not merely victims of blindness – they love the darkness and refuse the light. These Jews were confronted with undeniable evidence yet deliberately rejected Christ.

This formerly blind man cannot explain theology in sophisticated terms. He has no rabbinical training. He cannot argue technical points of the Law. However, he has something the Pharisees do not: a transformed life, evidenced by his ability to see and by a clear testimony of what Christ has done for him.

His testimony is simple and devastating: **John 9:25 (NASB95)** *“One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see.”*

In that statement, the gospel becomes unmistakably clear. The gospel is the story of a sinner who was once blind—spiritually blind—and whom Christ has given sight. The religious leaders cannot refute the miracle, so they attempt to discredit the messenger. Yet their resistance only highlights the clarity and power of the gospel.

As we walk through **John 9:13–34**, we see three realities about the gospel that emerge from this confrontation between a transformed sinner and hardened religious leaders.

- I. **The Perplexity over the Gospel**—how the natural mind struggles with what God has made plain.

II. **The Power of the Gospel**—how undeniable the work of Christ is in a transformed life.

III. **The Point of the Gospel**—that God hears and saves sinners through the work of His Son.

John shows us here that the gospel is not complicated. It is gloriously simple.

A sinner was blind, Christ intervened, Now he sees. And that is the story of every true believer in Jesus Christ.

## I. **The Perplexity over the Gospel – 9:13-23**

### A. **The Focus on External Causes Callousness – vv. 13-16**

1. In the previous verses, Jesus clarifies for the disciples that there is a tremendous opportunity to bring glory to God through tragedy, trials, and sickness.
2. After the man was healed, the religious Jews didn't know what to do with the experience, so *“they brought to the Pharisees the man who was formerly blind.”*
3. John introduces us to what would be the major issue with the religious establishment – *“Now it was a Sabbath on the day when Jesus made the clay and opened his eyes.”*
4. Discovering the miracle, the Pharisees immediately begin to attempt to filter it through the grid of their religious system – *“Then the Pharisees also were asking him again how he received his sight.”*
5. The formerly blind man's answer proved to be a “curve ball” to those completely consumed with defining a righteous deed based on conformity to a faulty standard of human self-righteousness – *“And he said to them, ‘He applied clay to my eyes, and I washed, and I see’.”*
6. Their snap judgment (to which they clung throughout this dialogue) was that, regardless of the virtue of his ministry to the blind man, Jesus could not be of God because He had broken their sabbatical laws – *“Therefore some of the Pharisees were saying, ‘This man is not from God, because He does not keep the Sabbath’.”*
  - a) *Obviously, Jesus had not violated any of the Sabbath Laws given by God in the Law of Moses.*
  - b) *However, the Rabbis had compounded the Sabbath Laws with their own traditions, which Jesus repeatedly challenged by violating them – disciples picked heads of grain to eat; healing the man with a withered hand; healing the lame man at Pool of Bethesda.*
  - c) *As the Lord of the Sabbath, Jesus desired to demonstrate the oppressive burdens that were being placed upon people by extrabiblical regulations.*
7. Some of the more spiritually sensitive Pharisees (perhaps led by

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Nicodemus) disagreed with this snap judgment – *“But others were saying, ‘How can a man who is a sinner perform such signs?’ And there was a division among them.”*

8. Because of these people’s belief that the only way to gain God’s favor was through strict adherence to a legalistic code of conduct they devised, Jesus’ demonstration of God’s initiative and love was a complete puzzle to them.

**B. The Fallacies of Experience Causes Confusion – vv. 17-18**

1. Their devotion to their own standards is so staunch that they continued to badger the man who was healed to give them some inconsistency or point of condemnation of Jesus.
2. They reapproached the blind man and *“said to the blind man again, ‘What do you say about Him, since He opened your eyes?’”*
3. The blind man is called upon repeatedly to give an account of what happened, his impressions of who Jesus is, how He did what He did, etc...
4. The more the man is called upon to recount what happened to Him, the higher his impression of Jesus grew – now he asserts that *“He is a prophet.”*
5. *“The man’s eyes are opening wider: he is beginning to see still more clearly, while the eyes of his judges are becoming clouded over with blinding, theological mist.”*<sup>1</sup>
6. The formerly blind man knew the following:
  - a) *He had been genuinely cured of congenital blindness.*
  - b) *He knew it was Jesus who had healed him.*
  - c) *He knew that it was the power and love of God alone that could do such a thing.*
  - d) *This demonstrates that Jesus was indeed “a man from God.”*
7. The Pharisees’ devotion to legalism and their consequential rejection of Jesus led them to even deny the reality of what happened to the man – *“The Jews then did not believe it of him that he had been blind and had received sight, until they called the parents of the very one who had received his sight.”*
8. They appealed to every possibility in the effort to discredit what was

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<sup>1</sup> D.A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991], p. 368.

clearly demonstrated – that Jesus was indeed sent by God and empowered by God to work such marvels and signs as the healing of the blind man.

9. This was not supposed to happen – not according to their system – consequently, they were greatly confused.

### **C. The Fear of Exclusion Causes Calculation – vv. 19-23**

1. In pressing the parents of the man, the Pharisees demonstrate their prejudice – if they confessed Jesus as Messiah, they would be punished.
2. By means of the pressure of the threat of excommunication, they attempted to persuade the parents to dismiss Christ as some kind of fraud.
3. Not being able to secure from the man what they wanted, they began pressuring the parents – *“... and questioning them, saying, ‘Is this your son, who you say was born blind? Then how does he now see?’”*
4. However, *“his parents answered them and said, ‘We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind’.”*
5. They refused to play into the hands of the Pharisees, but they also cowered in fear because of the potential consequences – *“but how he now sees, we do not know; or who opened his eyes, we do not know. Ask him; he is of age, he will speak for himself.”*
6. Some people are pressured by peers to avoid a straightforward confession of Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God, through the threat of consequences if they did “come out” for Christ Jesus – *“His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jews; for the Jews had already agreed that if anyone confessed Him to be Christ, he was to be put out of the synagogue.”*
7. *“put out”* [ἀποσυνάγωγος] – “unsynagogued” - expelled under a ban or excommunicated – essentially cutting one off from the religious and social life of Israel – cp. [\*John 12:42-43\*](#).
8. So, they avoided the exclusion by dodging – *“For this reason, his parents said, ‘he is of age; ask him.’”*

## **II. The Power of the Gospel – 9:24-30**

### **A. It Has the Power to Convert – vv. 24-25**

1. Regardless of the diligent way in which the spiritually confused and hard-hearted Pharisees worked to discredit Jesus and reject His legitimacy, the great beauty of this text is the impact of the mercy of God on the sinner who was healed.

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2. As we have seen, the more this man was forced to face what God had done for him, the greater his confidence in and appreciation for Jesus became.
3. Apparently, the Pharisees had isolated the man from his parents when they testified; they brought him back in and challenged him to NOT give this Jesus any credibility – *“So a second time they called the man who had been blind, and said to him, ‘Give glory to God;’ we know that this man is a sinner.”*
4. They were urging the man to stop attributing his healing to Jesus because doing so gave Jesus glory that rightfully belongs to God.
5. The man who was healed dismissed their assertion – based on their faulty assumptions and faithlessness – and declared that he grants it no credibility – *“He then answered, ‘Whether He is a sinner, I do not know’”*
6. In other words, he says that Jesus is not *“a sinner”* just because you claim He is – that, as far as the formerly blind man is concerned, Jesus is the One who made him whole – *“... One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see.”*
7. These are words that every born-again person can apply to themselves – there are many things that a young believer might not know; there are many points in theology and prophecy of which he has no light or knowledge.
8. However, *“one thing”* he does know – he knows that the eyes of his understanding have been opened – and that Jesus is the refuge that provides deliverance from the problem of sin and death.

**B. It Has the Power to Confront – vv. 26-30**

1. The rebellious and faithless Pharisees decide to revisit the matter, knowing they can't argue with the man's testimony – *“So they said to him, ‘What did He do to you? How did He open your eyes?’”*
2. In this, they wanted to get back to the issue of how Jesus had broken their Sabbath laws.
3. The man who was healed becomes completely frustrated with the Pharisees' fixation on their own rules and their legalistic view of what true righteousness is.
4. He replies to them, *“I told you already and you did not listen; why do you want to hear it again? You did not want to become His disciples too, do you?”*
5. They are trying to frame the issue as a complex violation of strict religious

- rules, while the man just wants to celebrate what God has done for him.
6. He sarcastically mocks them by asking if they wanted to convert to following Jesus – their obsession with hearing every detail again and again was more than he could tolerate.
  7. In response to him, the *Pharisees* *“reviled him and said, ‘You are His disciple, but we are the disciples of Moses. We know that God has spoken to Moses, but as for this man, we do not know where He is from.’”*
  8. They were orthodox but without a zeal according to knowledge – their *“knowledge was purely intellectual, something which they venerated as a religious tradition handed down by their forebears; but it neither moved their hearts nor affected their lives.”*<sup>2</sup>
  9. Essentially, they show their biased rejection of Jesus by contradicting themselves from earlier when they said that not knowing where the Messiah came from would certify his authenticity – cp. *John 7:27*.
  10. The man immediately picks up on their inconsistency and uses blatant sarcasm to communicate his disgust of their insincerity and duplicity – *“The man answered and said to them, ‘Well, here is an amazing thing, that you do not know where He is from, and yet He opened my eyes.’”*
  11. When an individual understands the simple realities of the Gospel, he can be used of God to meet the basic needs of the lost – the need to accept the Lord Jesus Christ as the Son of God.

### III. The Point of the Gospel – *9:31-34*

#### A. The Accomplishment of Christ – *vv. 31-33*

1. This man, in whose heart God’s Spirit was doing a wonderful work of grace, brings the focus to where it needed to be – Who is Jesus?
2. He begins by calling attention to a general principle of God’s treatment of men and gaining some point of agreement with the Pharisees - *“We know that God does not hear sinners; but if anyone is God-fearing and does His will, He hears him.”*
3. He shifts to another point of agreement and states that the ability to heal blindness unquestionably comes from God – *“Since the beginning of time it has never been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a person born blind.”*
4. He then gives his conclusion that reveals that his awareness of who Jesus truly is has come to bear fruit – *“If this man were not from God, He could do nothing.”*

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<sup>2</sup> Pink, Gospel of John, p. 499.

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5. Notice the clear reference to the accomplishment of Jesus Christ on behalf of the sinner – He, in fact, not only did something, but did what could never otherwise be done – deliver a sinner from the darkness in which he had existed since birth, and more importantly blindness of sin that had shrouded his soul – *[Isaiah 42:6-7](#); [Acts 26:17-18](#)*.

**B. The Accountability of Men – v. 34**

1. However, the Pharisees' hard-heartedness caused them great distress over a clear and natural understanding of what had happened.
2. They immediately react to this man's conclusion with hostility – *“They answered and said to him, ‘You were born entirely in sins, and are you teaching us?’”*
3. To them, it's disgusting for a lowly beggar to presume to teach those who consider themselves worthy. The raw arrogance and pride burst to the surface.
4. Their retaliation for his “arrogance” and blasphemy — essentially calling Jesus the Christ — was to excommunicate him: *“So they put him out.”*
5. Their spiritual blindness is something for which a sinner is personally responsible:
  - a) *Sinners love darkness rather than Light – [John 3:19-20](#).*
  - b) *Sinners deliberately refuse to come to Christ – [John 5:40](#).*
  - c) *Sinners deliberately close their eyes in defiance – [Matthew 13:14-15](#).*
  - d) *Sinners suppress the truth – [Romans 1:18-19](#).*
  - e) *Sinners resist the Holy Spirit – [Acts 7:51](#).*
6. However, when God, through His grace and mercy, opens our eyes to the truth, we can't help but embrace Jesus as the Christ – *[2 Corinthians 4:6](#)*.
7. How do you respond to the truth that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, the Savior of men?

So What?

1. **What elements of my personal testimony most clearly display the transforming power of Christ?**
2. **What areas of my life reveal a tendency to defend my opinions rather than humbly submit to the truth of God's Word?**
3. **In what ways does this passage challenge me to value faithfulness to Christ above the approval of people?**

**Theme: Jesus Christ delivers us from the spiritual blindness that keeps us in the darkness of unbelief.**