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Series: The Gospel of John
Message: The Most Important Question

Transcribed Message
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John 9:18-41

I don't know how many of you have followed the story of Scott Adams. Remember Scott Adams was the creator of the cartoon Dilbert and Bonnie used to buy me the little 365-day calendar. I would tear one off each day and Dilbert always had something funny for that day. Well, it was just this last May that Scott Adams announced that he had cancer, that it had spread throughout all his body. The doctors said that he did not have a very good outlook. He died on January the 13th. A week or two before he died, he said something I have never heard anyone else say in that kind of circumstance. He said I want to become a Christian before I die. I plan to. He basically said I'm going to become a Christian before I die.

This is what he went on to chronicle. "Many of my Christian friends have asked me to find Jesus before I go. I'm not a believer but I have to admit the risk-reward calculation for doing so looks attractive. So here I go. I accept Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior, and I look forward to spending an eternity with him." Now if that's all Scott had said I think we would have very good reason to be positive and hopeful. However, he went on to say: "The part about me not being a believer should be quickly resolved if I wake up in heaven. I won't need any more convincing than that and I hope I'm still qualified for entry. I don't know." I don't know the condition of Scott's heart. We certainly can pray that the Holy Spirit gave him understanding to this glorious gospel that we've been looking at.

But this much I am sure of, this much I know, and we see it again in John 9 this morning and it's our big idea for the morning, the answer to the question who is Jesus determines our eternal destiny. Our need is to understand that Jesus is God, that he is very God of very God, that he is Lord, that he is our Savior, and that he died for our sins.

So, we wrap up chapter 9. You might remember, you might not, but two weeks ago we came to an ending in our studying the gospel of John and I said to you at that time, you're going to have to come back next week to find out what happens. Well, it turns out you had to come back a couple of weeks after that. Let's remind ourselves what's going on in this ninth chapter as we wrap it up. We can say again this ninth chapter is like a parable that's being worked out right in front of us. That whole eighth chapter about the Feast of Lights and the Feast of Tabernacle is almost like John said let me let me show you in real life what it looks like when Jesus says, I'm the light of the world. And so, we have this incredible story.

The second thing we see is that it is in the context of the Sabbath and if you are at all familiar with the Gospels and you're at all familiar with the life of Jesus and his interactions with the people of his day and time, the religious leaders primarily, then you know this is a big deal and you know thirdly flowing out of that the chapter nine is then going to be a chapter about controversy. It is in fact a chapter about questions. I count 16 of them before we get done and it's a chapter about what do you know and I think there's 11 or 12 of those. So that kind of sets again the context. The hopelessness of the stubbornly blind.

We begin, for those of you that haven't been with us, we just go back and remind ourselves of this unexpected miracle that John records for us in this ninth chapter and it is of course all about this man who John tells us repeatedly was born and he was born blind from birth. And then we have of course coming into his life this wonderful picture of the seeking Savior. How God in his providence determined beforehand that he would walk by this man on this day on this time and he would perform this miracle of healing in this man's life, that he would give him his sight. This life-changing miracle would happen to this man that is not just physical but spiritual as well and he did it on the Sabbath.

That brings us then to this expected controversy which flows then from 18 all the way to the end of the chapter because again if you know the response of the religious leaders to Jesus doing anything on the Sabbath it was always a response of controversy. So, in the remaining verses of this chapter, beginning at verse 18 which we've already looked at a little bit, we have five encounters. We have five encounters and five conversations that are going to flow out of this. We've looked at the one

between the man and his neighbor in verses 8 through 12, and that was the one that we described a little bit like Abbott and Costello's who's on first. His neighbors are looking at him and saying he sure looks like the guy that was born blind but I don't think it's really him because this man can see. And all the while they're having this conversation, he's saying it's me! It's me! It really is! I can see!

The second conversation that we've already looked at was the man and the Pharisees and that was just round one, right? That was verses 13 to 17. That's where we stopped and we pick up this morning with this third encounter, this third conversation, and it is this man's parents and the Pharisees in verses 18 through 23 that we just read. Here is in this conversation the overriding principle of these verses and it is that the fear of man is a very powerful fear. The fear of man is a very powerful fear. That's what comes to the forefront in this group of verses.

The fear of man is a very powerful fear. I know that everybody in this room that is of age has experienced this probably numerous times in our lives. The fear of man. The fear of what people are going to think about us. The fear of what they might say about us. The fear of how they might view us. We either say something that we don't necessarily believe, or we don't say something that we do believe. There's all kinds of things that flow out of this, this powerful fear of people.

As we come to these verses this man's parents don't really shine that brightly. That is kind of being nice. If you just pull different commentaries off the shelf I found it interesting some people just give the parents a pass and don't say a whole lot. Others just hammer them on the other side. I don't know but I think we'll end up maybe somewhere a little bit in between. But in my estimation as you read this story, they don't really put themselves in a great light.

So let's look at what do they know? What do they know? That's what the Pharisees first want to know in verses 18 through 20. The Jews did not believe that he had been blind and had received his sight. They called the parents of the man who had received his sight and asked them: Is this your son who you say was born blind? how then does he now see? Verse 20. His parents answered, we know that this is our son and that he was born blind. So there's two things they know. We know this is our son, and yes, we can testify to the fact that he was born blind. The Pharisees are at this point

where they can't deny that this man now sees. There's a guy standing in front of them and he sees. He has physical eyesight. So now what they're wanting to do is to perhaps discredit the fact that he was in fact born blind. If you're going to move out of a hard heart of unbelief, you're going to grab for anything you can, aren't you? And so this is what they do.

The parents are like no, no, this is our son, and yes, he was born blind. And that's the extent to which they are willing to acknowledge anything, and that's really the extent of their courage. We'll see more about what that looks like, but verse 21 tells us what they don't know. But how he now sees we do not know, nor do we know who opened his eyes. Ask him. He is of age. He will speak for himself.

Can we just say that I think they knew. I think they knew. I think as we go through this account I think they knew what happened to their son. I think they knew who did this to their son. They say, however, that they do not know how he sees and they do not know who made him see. To me it's kind of like this. Son, do you see that bus coming towards us? Yeah, yeah, I do, dad. Well, I'm getting ready to throw you under it. I'm getting ready because of what unfolds here. Imagine this. Just think beyond the text that John gives to us because I think he's inviting us to look behind the curtain just a little bit.

Think for a moment about the fact that you have this son and he was born blind. From birth he's been unable to see. We've rehearsed this a couple of Sundays already – just the burden that that would be. It's an incredible thing, especially in that day and time with the limitations that they would have had just in terms of living life, but this was their struggle. This was their struggle every day of this man's life. Add to that the theology of the day that said he's blind because you as a parent have done something wrong and God is not happy with you. You have lived every day of your life not only with the challenge of a son born blind, but you have lived every day of your life under the burden that your neighbors and those around you view you as one whom God has not put his favor upon. And so, you have you've carried that burden for potentially decades.

Now your son sees. What in the world are you doing? If your son, blind from birth, and the burden that you have carried with that, and the theology of the day, what are you now doing in light of the fact that he sees? You're celebrating, right? You're dancing in the streets. You're saying to your son, tell us again how this happened! How

is it that you now see? Would you just go over it again for us? We want to hear it again. This is an incredible story. I have to believe that given what we're told in just a little bit, these parents know this story. They know what has happened to their son. They are not celebrating however, are they? They are living still under the constraint of the fear of man and they're unwilling to step out in love and loyalty to their son. They put themselves under the oppressive rule of the Pharisees.

John tells us why I think this is. I think this is John telling us what's going on in the heart of the parents. Verse 22. His parents said these things. Said what things? That they don't know how any of this happened. They said these things because not I don't think because they didn't know, but because they feared the Jews for the Jews had already agreed that if anyone should confess Jesus to be Christ, he was to be put out of the synagogue. Therefore, his parents said he is of age, ask him. We're not going to put ourselves in a position to go against the religious authority of the day. They basically said if you want God's blessing on your life, it comes through us. It comes through us. If you want God's blessing you're going to have to be in alignment with us. And they yield to that. They go with that.

And that brings us to the fourth encounter. The fourth encounter is the man and the Pharisees and it's round two in verses 24 to 34. It begins with an interesting verse in verse 24 which puts before us a religious oath of sorts. So, for the 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. That sounds kind of strange, doesn't it, that they would call this man back. The first thing they would say to him is give glory to God. This is not what we would characterize as a praise the Lord. This is not a PTL moment. They're not calling this man to give glory to God in the way that we might think as you read this.

This is the Pharisees quoting from Joshua chapter 7 and verse 19. Remember when Joshua confronts Achan. When they went into Jericho, Achan is the guy who did directly what God had said to not do. He's the guy, remember, who gathered up the gold and the garments and took them out of Jericho and hid them in his tent. The whole of the nation fell under the discipline of God. When it was revealed that it was him and his family, that's when Joshua steps into that moment and says give glory to God. And so it was really Joshua challenging this man in that way. It's like they're saying to this man

who has been healed from this blindness, tell us the truth. Tell us the truth. How did this happen? Your parents threw you under the bus. Now we want you to throw Jesus under the bus. We want to get to the bottom of this. The irony is they are now pressuring a blind man about how he sees, all the while trying to deny the reality of it.

Notice again in their referencing this how they talk about Jesus. How do they refer to Jesus? They call him "this man". They can't call him by name. All through this story, it's this man. They can't call him by name. They know who he is. They know his name. They know he's called Jesus. Jesus is the equivalent of the Old Testament name of Joshua, which simply means God saves, God delivers. They can't acknowledge the fact that Jesus is in fact Joshua, that he is God's man. He is God's deliverer. So, "this man".

They are saying he's a sinner. This is the syllogism of the religious leaders. This is what they're putting forward about Jesus. Jesus healed on the Sabbath, point one. Point two, only sinners break the Sabbath. Only sinners break the Sabbath. Jesus is a sinner. That's their syllogism. That's what they're putting forward. Jesus healed on the Sabbath. Only sinners heal on the Sabbath. Therefore, Jesus is a sinner.

So, now we get into this revealing exchange and this back-and-forth between this man and the religious leaders. It starts in verse 25 with his testimony and look what he says. He answered, whether he is a sinner I do not know. One thing I do know that though I was blind now I see. This 25th verse is the hinge verse of this whole passage. Everything hangs on this verse. This is this man's testimony now, isn't it?

The boldness of this man ought to encourage us. I'm going to say it more than once, but we are going to want to meet this guy when we get to heaven. We're going to go talk to him about all this that happened to just get more insight into the amazing work of God in his life in this encounter that he had with Jesus. But this is this back-and-forth and this man's boldness just stands out.

He's been blind all his life. we don't know if it's 20, 30, or 40 years. We don't know how long that was but he says about Jesus: Sinner? I have no idea. I just met this man just briefly. I haven't even seen him. He could have said that. but he says I have no idea if he's a sinner, but here's what I do know. This man has forever changed my life. This man has forever changed my life. That's what I know.

Every year I go over and teach senior Bible for a week at Southwest Covenant and I talk about the amazing Word of God. One of the lectures is just how we know this book is trustworthy. What could we put forward by way of evidences that this is a trustworthy word from God? So, we list out a whole bunch of things and the last one on the list is changed lives. Changed lives. This book has changed the lives of millions and millions and millions of people, and hopefully that's your testimony this morning. Hopefully that is the testimony that continues on. We're going into 2026, looking forward to be an even more changed people than we were in 2025. But that's what this man says. He says I don't know anything about this man's credentials. I don't know anything about what your claims are, but I know this. He changed my life.

Now look at verse 26. Their admittance then comes forward in verse 26. They said to him, what did you do? What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes? Now they've made a subtle shift here. They finally are now stepping forward and they're moving from denial. They admit that he can see. They're not denying that he was born blind. They're making a subtle shift to where now they're acknowledging that at least he can see. They're not going to give ground as to how it happened but they're at least admitting it, which opens the door to what I've simply referred to in verse 27 as some sarcasm.

Some sarcasm. Look at verse 27. He answered them, I have told you already and you would not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you also want to become his disciples? There is no paralyzing fear in this man. This is what is so remarkable – the boldness with which he speaks from his experience, and then just his fearlessness. No sense of intimidation. In fact, he's probably wearied by their relentless questions about whether he was ever blind and whether he can now see and how it all came about. So, he can't hold back. We probably have all experienced this at some time. There's a moment and we just can't hold back, and so he throws out a little sarcasm.

I looked up the word "sarcasm" and it fits perfectly. Sarcasm is a form of verbal irony which is perfect for John's Gospel. It is characterized by the use of words that mean the opposite of what is actually intended, often to express contempt or highlight the absurdity of a situation. Listen to this last part. It is a double-edged social tool that

can strengthen bonds among friends or cause significant emotional damage. So, the point is be careful with your sarcasm because you can strengthen your bonds with a friend, or you can cause significant emotional damage.

What do you think happened here? Do you think this strengthened the bonds of friendship between this man and the Pharisees? I don't think so. I think it damaged. I think it did some emotional damage. It's just a classic statement. Let me understand this. He probably lowered his voice and he said, do you guys have a secret desire to become his disciples too? Not quite. They are incensed. They are incensed. He has exposed their hypocrisy. That is what he's done. He has exposed their hypocrisy.

Look at their disdain in verses 28 and 29. And they reviled him saying, you are his disciple. But we are disciples of Moses. They love Moses, don't they? They love to go back to Moses. We know that God has spoken to Moses, but as for this man... It's the same way of talking about Jesus pejoratively. but as for this man we do not know where he comes from. I would imagine that this encounter for the second time with this man is absolutely, totally out of their experience. These, remember, are the elite religious leaders of their day. To oppose them is to put yourself at great spiritual risk in terms of just the culture and the way they were viewed. They're used to having an interaction like they had with his parents. Yes, sir. No, sir. Whatever you say, sir. Yeah, we agree with you. Whatever you want to hear from us we'll say. And he's the exact opposite of that. Again, we know that they refer to Jesus as "this man".

Now then, get ready because now we have some more sarcasm and a lot more truth. Verse 30. The man answered, why, this is an amazing thing. You do not know where he comes from and yet he opened my eyes. We know that God does not listen to sinners, but if anyone is a worshipper of God and does his will, God listens to him. Never since the world began has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a man born blind. If this man were not from God, he could do nothing. This is nothing short again of amazing. We have to say it again.

We have to acknowledge it again. This man has been blind from birth. He has lived his entire life at the lowest level that society afforded someone in that situation. He obviously never had any opportunity for any kind of formal education. I can't help but wonder as he shares the things that he does here in giving a theological lecture to the

religious leaders of that day, where did he gain this knowledge? Where did he gain this insight? Maybe his parents even in those early years were informing his mind and his conscience, but even he's amazed. He says in verse 30 why this is an amazing thing. Then he basically draws from what the psalmist says in Psalm 66 and verse 18. The psalmist says if I regard iniquity in my heart, if I regard sin in my heart, the Lord will not hear me. To bring it into our New Covenant living, that is simply saying that if I am just living in open rebellion and sin against God, I don't need to be asking God to bring his blessing into my life. I need to be confessing my sin. I need to be acknowledging the sin that I'm not willing to acknowledge. The psalmist said back even under the Old Covenant, if you're living in such a way that you're just disregarding the laws and principles of God, don't expect God to answer prayers for blessing in your life until you deal with the sin.

That's what this man says to these religious leaders. So, this is his syllogism. if Jesus is a sinner, how does he do the works of God? So, his syllogism is this. God does not hear the prayers of sinners. God heard Jesus and he healed me. This man can't be a sinner. He must in fact be from God. So, they put forward their syllogism and he puts forward his.

What do you do when you have abandoned the truth? What do you do when you will not acknowledge the facts that are right in front of you? Well, what you do is you turn to personal attack. Look what they do in verse 34. We have this very cruel response in verse 34. They answered him, you were born in utter sin, and you would teach us? And they cast him out. You were born in sin and in effect we now excommunicate you. You would dare to teach the teachers? Don't do that. You would dare to teach the teachers? That's basically the way they're looking at life. Don't try to teach the teachers. They know the answers. You just listen.

What do they mean when they said you were born in sin? Well, they're not talking about Romans 5. They're not talking about Adam. They're not acknowledging what we all were born into this world separated from God. That's not the principle that they're pointing to. They're pointing to what was said in John 9 in verse 2, when the disciples initially walked by, what'd they say? Jesus, who sinned, this man or his parents? That's

what they're referring to. They're going back to this idea that this man is in the condition that he's in because God doesn't like him. God doesn't like what his parents have done. There's something in their life that has caused this to happen. This is in fact God's judgment. That's what they mean. And then they excommunicate him. They cast him out.

They cast him out. Now, do you see the irony of this? They cast him out. What has this man been his entire life? He's been an outcast. He's been an outcast his entire life. He's never known the blessings that regular, normal people would have experienced in terms of being in the temple, sitting under the teaching of the Pharisees, whatever that looked like in that first century. He didn't experience any of it. It's kind of ironic, isn't it, that they're going to cast out a man who's been an outcast.

But here's the lesson. Here's the lesson for all of us. It's a lesson for us today. If you go along with the world, and you live the way the world wants you to live, and you talk the way the world wants you to talk, and you are in harmony and agreement with the world, the world is going to embrace you. The world is going to love you. The world is going to welcome you. You're going to be one with them. But if you talk about Jesus, and you talk about the gospel, and you talk about sin, and you talk about judgment, you talk about any of the things that this man is himself willing to speak to and of, and that the scriptures bring to our attention from Genesis to Revelation, then not so much. Because the world doesn't want to hear about Jesus. They don't want to hear about the gospel. They don't want to hear about truth. They don't want a worldview that the Bible puts forward. They want, in fact, to remain in blindness.

Now, we close with the fifth conversation, the fifth encounter, and it is Jesus and the man and the Pharisees in verses 35 through 41. And the first thing we see, Jesus is back. Jesus is back, and what do we see? He's still seeking. Look at verse 35. Jesus heard that they had cast him out, and having found him, he said, 'Do you believe in the Son of Man?' He answered, 'And who is he, sir, that I may believe in him?' Jesus said to him, 'You have seen him, 'and it is he who is speaking to you.'" What an amazing, amazing exchange! This man, who has never seen Jesus, but he's heard his voice. You take that little statement, and you tuck it away. When we get to John 10, that's going to make a lot of sense. He's never seen Jesus, but he's heard his voice. Jesus seeks him

out, doesn't he? When Jesus hears that he's been cast out, Jesus finds him. Jesus is the initiator.

Then we have that common self-designation that only Jesus uses to speak of himself, I'm the Son of Man. Now, when we hear the phrase Son of Man, our mind, theologically, wants to go to, oh, he's talking about his humanity. No, he's not talking about his humanity. He's talking, in effect, about his deity. When he uses this phrase, Son of Man, he's taking us to Daniel 7, and in Daniel 7, the reference to the Son of Man is a reference to God's Messiah. It's a reference to the coming one, so that's the way Jesus is referring to himself here.

And then this man's question, who is he, sir? And I love what happens next. It's like Jesus says to him, you're looking at him. You're looking at him. This man has never had anybody say to him anything like that. It's the man that you're looking at right in front of you. He's never heard that before.

Then look at verse 38, his believing. He said, Lord, I believe, and he worshiped him. This is just amazing again, right? It's amazing again. This simple, straightforward statement of faith on the part of this man. It is in the aorist tense, which is just John saying there was a point in time, this moment, in this man's spiritual journey, there was a moment of time when he believed. Yes, there is for all of us this spiritual journey that we can look and see the hand of God at work in our life, but there has to be a point, my friend, and whether you remember the date and time and all that, there has to have been a point in time when you believed that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you might have life in his name. That's what John testifies to here.

Now, just look at this man. This man has gone in his own spiritual journey on this progression from this man called Jesus to prophet. I perceive he's a prophet. His previous reference to sir, which is just kind of a generic way of referencing somebody in authority, and now he's Lord. What is the confirmation in this man's life that he has in fact embraced and believed that this is the Son of Man promised in Daniel 7? That he is the Messiah, the God-man Jesus. He worshiped him. Worshiped him. It's the only time in the Gospel of John this ever happens. It's the word for to fall on your face. It's a word to prostrate yourself before. That's the idea of worship, isn't it? You just fall before the

one who is worthy. And what does Jesus do? He receives his worship. He receives his worship because he is in fact worthy of worship.

Now, just think about the contrast. Think about the contrast. He's just been cast out. We didn't even get into the explanation of what that would mean, but in that culture, in that time, to be cast out of the synagogue is to be, again, relegated to a life of disgrace, right? You have no upward social mobility. You have no economic future. You don't obviously have any religious opportunities. So, it's across the board. It's not just somebody saying you can't go to church anymore. You've got a job and you've got a house and you've got a car and you've got a life and they're all separate. That wasn't true in that culture. You were cast out and excommunicated. That was it. You were an outcast.

Just picture what John does here. He's just been told by the religious leaders of his day, we're done with you and so is God. And what's the next picture we see of this man? He is worshiping Jesus in his own personal worship service. He's one-on-one with Jesus, the Son of God.

Now, more irony and we close. Verses 39 to 41. Jesus said, for judgment I came into this world that those who do not see may see and those who see may become blind. Some of the Pharisees near him heard these things and said to him, are we also blind? Jesus said to them, if you were blind, you would have no guilt. But now that you say we see, your guilt remains. This is just a picture of what light does. This can be a little bit confusing as you look at this. all this is saying is this. If you are blind and you admit it, you can see, okay? If you're blind and you admit it, you can see. If you're blind and you won't admit it, you don't see. You're in judgment. That's what Jesus is simply saying here. The guilt, in fact, remains.

To see or not to see, that's the most important question. To see or not to see who Jesus is. To see Jesus as the Son of God, to see Jesus as Lord, to see Jesus as Savior. That's God's means of deliverance. Jesus, God saves, God delivers. I trust that's your story this morning. If it's not, if there's never been a time in your life that you can point to and say, I believe that Jesus is who God says He is, my Son. I sent Him to this world for God so loved the world, you, that He gave His only Son, that if you would believe in Him, you would have your sins forgiven and you would have eternal life.

If you've never done that, please don't leave this morning without doing it. Make certain that you know the answer to the question, who is Jesus and where would I go if I were to die today? Because you can say with absolute confidence that Jesus is the Son of God, He is your Savior, and He has promised you eternal life.

Now, what do we take away? As followers of Christ, how thankful, how thankful we can be that we have a loving, pursuing, seeking Savior. And what do we do? The only appropriate response is that we would worship. So, let's do that.

Let's pray together. Gracious Father, we thank you for the word that brings life, that brings hope, that brings healing. Lord, we thank you for this amazing story, how it is that we have this seeking Savior who pursues us, who comes after us, who loves us, who opens our eyes to see the glory and the wonder of this gospel. Father, I pray again in these closing moments as we sing this song and as we finish out our morning that your Holy Spirit would compel, would draw, would open the heart and mind of someone this morning who has not yet put their trust in Jesus alone as their Savior. Lord, we pray that you would do that miraculous work in Jesus' name, amen.