**Sight vs. Insight**

**John 9:1-41 (ESV)**

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Today, we’re going to not be in Romans, but in John chapter 9. I chose the passage because it’s fresh in my mind and heart. We’re studying this gospel in the Senior High Sunday School class. I’m eager to have our students see that the treasure that they uncover from God’s Word in class holds the same value to the entire church. And it also happens to be one of my favorite chapters in the whole Bible. It’s a serious warning against a deadly spiritual sickness, but it’s also one of those times that God uses humor to make us open our mouths with laughter so that He can get us to drink the medicine. We’ll read verses 1-5 and then the rest as we carry through the message.

***1*** *As he passed by, he saw a man blind from birth.* ***2*** *And his disciples asked him, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?”* ***3*** *Jesus answered, “It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him.* ***4*** *We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming, when no one can work.* ***5*** *As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.”*

Have you ever looked at something differently after trying to explain it to a child? A few years ago, my wife was helping a preschool class, trying to explain how plants grew with the help of sunlight. One of the kids asked a natural question. “What is the sun?” Well, she said it’s a star. “Yeah,” a boy says, “like the moon.” Not exactly. “Well what is the moon, then?” All the other kids just as curious now, demanded an answer. “Yeah! What actually is the moon?” Well the moon is kind of like…well, it’s a rock. At that, they sat back, heads slightly tilted. “Huh!” The explanation leaves them somewhat satisfied, except one girl who blurts out, “That’s really weird! A rock just floating up in the sky?”

We get so used to the way things are that sometimes we fail to notice what we’re looking at until we see it through fresh eyes. Rarely do we consider what a wonder we have in the moon. Most of us go days, weeks, even months without giving it even a glance. But a few weeks ago, that wasn’t the case. An extraordinary event inspired thousands in our nation to stop everything to witness the beauty of one of nature’s rarest displays—a total eclipse. For about ninety seconds, day turns to night. Animals begin to scurry. Temperatures drop tens of degrees. The sun disappears behind a black shadowed moon. Suddenly a stunning diamond ring corona unveils a 360 degree full-horizon sunset. It’s a marvel to behold! But for us to be able to see that event at all, something special had to happen.

The sun is about 93,000,000 miles away. And it’s almost exactly 400 times further than the moon is away from the earth. The diameter of the sun happens to be 864,000 miles, which is again, almost exactly 400 times larger than the moon’s diameter. This means that the moon is not only the perfect shape to cover the sun, it is also the exact magnitude and size as the sun is in distance from the earth. It is 400 times smaller and 400 times closer. It’s the perfect formula for a total eclipse. For every other planet, whether they have no moons or dozens of moons, that’s not even a possibility. This perfect ratio is random. It’s scientifically unnecessary. And yet somehow, it just so happens that one of the best places to see an eclipse, the only place, is also the only known habitable and inhabited planet. The odds are astronomical. Christians look at this event and through it, see an act of God. But thousands of others watched the exact same phenomenon and they merely dismiss it as chance. How? How can two people look at exactly the same miracle and leave with opposite conclusions?

Jerusalem teeters on the verge of riot. This man named Jesus and His ragtag followers threaten the social order and they risk the wrath of Rome. The unrest is real. There’s rumors of healings, feedings of thousands. It’s the kind of miraculous power that would be appealing if the message wasn’t so radically offensive. In the middle of a feast, Jesus confronts the national leaders and proclaims Himself to be Yahweh, God of the universe. That’s a controversy! He barely escapes being stoned to death. He’s dividing the nation. Some follow Him, while others turn away. Even among His own disciples, some follow, but there is one who still refuses. That very same man, Jesus, the very same miracles, and the responses are completely opposite.

We’re here sitting in church. Millions elsewhere could care less. They witnessed the same eclipse. They have access, many, to the same Bible and the message. Some respond; others don’t. Even in our own midst, some of us here love Jesus and our hearts are uplifted; others are just desperate for this service to be over. How does that happen? Why do some believe in God while others do not? There is a difference between sight and insight. Without a miracle, spiritual vision is impossible. Faith is a supernatural gift. It’s a divine work of the Creator. Here’s the truth of today’s passage: Seeing God requires an act of God. There’s no mistake that Scripture opens in Genesis 1 with an image of light.

**Genesis 1:1** In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.

And in verse 3 God says

**Genesis 1:3** And God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light.

And John opens his gospel with the same imagery.

**John 1:1-2** In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God.

And in verse 4,

**John 1:4-5** In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

This chapter is an unprecedented act of God. It’s a unique phenomenon to display His might. It unfolds in three scenes. It’s an act of God first symbolized in verses 1-7. And then it’s scrutinized in verses 8-34. And finally, it’s solidified in verses 35-41. An act of God! It’s exactly what we need to see Him. We need to be changed; transformed. We need our eyes to be opened. We need supernatural insight, the kind of vision that empowers us to live differently. Here’s what that looks like. Here are three ways that insight transforms you and empowers you to live differently.

First, perseverance. Insight empowers you to

**I. Hold On With Hope: The Scandalous Miracle (9:1-7)**

When you’re fighting a chronic illness with no end in sight. When your spouse is diagnosed with cancer. You discover your child’s needs will change your life forever. When you’re let go and you can’t find a new job. When your family relationships sever and they seem beyond recovery. When you enter this world as a child born blind. Insight into God’s surprising ways can give you hope to hold on.

The story opens with the act of God symbolized through a scandalous miracle. Jesus heals a blind man in a section that we’ll entitle “Clear as Mud.” Jesus and His disciples walked right into this perfect opportunity to prove that God’s ways are surprising. It’s the insight into the nature of God’s ways that can help us in difficult times to persevere. When you face difficult trials, here are four truths that you can hold onto with hope.

Truth #1: God’s ways are messy. (v. 1-2)

***1*** *As he passed by, he saw a man blind from birth.*

This man was born blind. It’s a life that’s not nice and clean. It’s a mess of sorrow and brokenness. Through no fault of his own, this man’s life is a mess physically, financially and socially. This man has suffered physical blindness from birth. He’s unable to join his friends in games and do things on his own. He’s desperately dependent upon mercy. And if you take a peek at verse 8, he suffered financial poverty. Everyone knows him as a beggar. This is not surprising without the modern awareness and opportunities we enjoy. His options are limited. He’s stuck! But perhaps most damaging, he has suffered a social condemnation. It’s a condemnation, a stigma epitomized by the disciples.

***2*** *And his disciples asked him, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?”*

Whose fault is this? They want to know. They make a wrong assumption based on a false premise that Jesus will address in the next verse. They assume that every case of suffering must have a specific sin as the cause. Just like Job’s so-called friends, they assume someone’s guilty. Maybe mom went and worshiped at a pagan temple while she was pregnant. Or, maybe somehow he sinned while inside the womb. In self-righteous ignorance they attempt to assign blame. The situation is tragic and heartbreaking. Can you imagine living in that mess? All his life, being treated as a sinner, as an outcast, an exile, held down. “Get out of here you wretch! Don’t dirty us with your mess. The blindness is your problem, your fault.” Feeling worthless and any hope of pity destroyed.

Here’s the truth that can give us hope. This isn’t a mistake. God’s surprising ways are messy. It doesn’t mean that they’re His fault, that God is the one who caused the sin. We’re the rebels that committed cosmic treason. But messes in our lives does not mean that God is absent. Very frequently, they mean the opposite. They mean that He is present and that He’s ready to go to work. You see, life is hard, but there’s a point. And this truth is scandalous. But it continues.

Truth #2: God’s ways are meaningful (v. 3-5)

He always has a plan. Jesus answers the disciples with two words of correction. First, He corrects their thinking on the meaning of this blindness. The meaning itself, the purpose or the point of this condition is glory.

***3*** *Jesus answered, “It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him.*

This is to show God’s greatness. He clarifies that there’s not always a direct link between suffering and specific sin. It may be true occasionally, maybe like in John 5, but it’s not true universally. And even if it is, rarely is the full mystery of justice revealed to us. And when Jesus is confronted with these types of questions, like when the tower of Siloam fell on a group of people, He redirects attention toward the future. And He warns us of our sin in general. His focus is not backwards, but forwards. He doesn’t address where the blindness came from, only where it’s leading to. He points not to cause, but purpose. And the purpose is the display of God’s glory, which may or may not include healing. Ultimately, no one is fully healed in this world. But it does mean that the glory of God works in amazing ways that easily outweigh the cost of every year of blindness. Now that’s a scandalous thought! But He continues. He corrects their thinking on the meaning’s implication. If the purpose was for glory, the manner in which it’s carried out must be one of urgency. The meaning here is emphasized.

***4*** *We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming, when no one can work.* ***5*** *As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.”*

Jesus claims to be the Sent One, the Chosen Messiah from God on special mission. It’s an event that is rapidly approaching. The clock is ticking. Time is short. Night is coming, a time when Jesus will depart. And He knows the separation will be traumatic. So while He’s here, they must be about the business of His earthly work with urgency. God’s ways are messy, yes, but they are always meaningful. Life is hard, but there is a point. And how the meaning comes to be, is completely unpredictable.

Truth #3: God’s ways are mysterious (v. 6-7)

They can’t be predicted or controlled. Look at verses 6 and 7. Does this seem strange to you? Do you notice some oddities there? Look at the way that Jesus heals through a mysterious method of contamination.

***6*** *Having said these things, he spit on the ground and made mud with the saliva. Then he anointed the man's eyes with the mud*

Bizarre! It’s not easy to know why He’s doing this. We’ll revisit it in a second, but the method’s mystery is undeniable. Look at the mysterious command He gives for cleansing.

***7*** *and said to him, “Go, wash in the pool of Siloam” (which means Sent). So he went and washed and came back seeing.*

This is a pool that was some distance away. This pool was special. It was an important source during the Feast of Tabernacles where water would be drawn in celebration of the freedom that they enjoyed. For him to go there though required a degree of faith, of obedience. He could have just wiped his eyes off without going anywhere. But there was something unique about this man who just spit and made mud and put it on his eyes, and he obeys.

The name “Siloam” is a transliteration of the Hebrew name “Shiloh,” which comes from the word “send.” This term “Shiloh” hints back possibly to Genesis 49:10 where a prophecy is made of the sons of Israel and Judah, and this special Sent One who will come one day to bring peace. And this imagery seems to connect that this pool held the waters of Shiloh. It was special waters sent by God because this water came into the city when they were under siege. The enemies would come and they would have to trust God and believe that He would provide water inside. But there were kings in the ancient times who caved to the foreign powers and failed to trust God. In Isaiah 8:6 God rebukes them for refusing the gently flowing waters of Shiloh.

Now here, Jesus sends the man to wash in this pool, the one that shows God’s sent salvation and that people reject. And here Jesus is, the man claiming to be Living Water, sending this man to this pool, claiming Himself to be sent from God. This mystery, all this goes right over everyone’s head. To them, the oddities of this strange method and command are just a mystery. And sometimes, God’s ways are not only mysterious, they are utterly mystifying.

Truth #4: God’s ways are mystifying. (v. 8-12)

Sometimes they provoke more questions than answers. Life is hard, but there’s a point. And yet, it may come in a strange way that doesn’t make sense. There are some humorous surprises here that leave the witnesses mystified. The first surprise to them is obviously the transformation of this man who is normally blind. Now he sees, and they are baffled. Flabbergasted! He went and he washed and then he came back seeing!

***8*** *The neighbors and those who had seen him before as a beggar were saying, “Is this not the man who used to sit and beg?”* ***9*** *Some said, “It is he.” Others said, “No, but he is like him.” He kept saying, “I am the man.”* ***10*** *So they said to him, “Then how were your eyes opened?”* ***11*** *He answered, “The man called Jesus made mud and anointed my eyes and said to me, ‘Go to Siloam and wash.’ So I went and washed and received my sight.”*

It’s a mystifying transformation of the beggar. But second, in verse 12 is the mystifying modesty of the healer. If the presence of the blind man is hard to believe, what’s more mystifying is the absence of his healer.

***12*** *They said to him, “Where is he?” He said, “I do not know.”*

You don’t heal someone like that and disappear! This is too strange for his neighbors. They’re not going to just carry on with their day with an occurrence this bizarre. They’re going to dig a little deeper. But before we follow them into the next verses, here’s the point for now. God’s ways may be surprising, but they are worth trusting. They are worth trusting, worth waiting for, worth enduring. These are truths that you can hold onto with hope when times are tough. And this insight can empower you to hold on. The Scripture is just one long story proving that we can trust God’s ways. God wasn’t absent in the Garden when the serpent tempted Eve. It was God who permitted Joseph to be sold into slavery to protect his family and use that evil for good. It was God who chose Moses, a man who struggled to speak well and tried to back away. It was God who said

**Exodus 4:11** Then the Lord said to him, “Who has made man's mouth? Who makes him mute, or deaf, or seeing, or blind? Is it not I, the Lord?”

Scandalous! It was God’s choice to use Israel, this stubborn people who failed and worshiped the golden calf and time and again rejected Him. It was God who allowed them to go into exile. It is God who is glorified, yes, sometimes through healing, but also through non-healing. It was God who refused to remove Saul’s thorn in 2 Corinthians 12:9. He said

**2 Corinthians 12:9** But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.”

Scandalous! These are God’s ways! They’re surprising!

I can still remember the day when I truly wrestled with God over the issue of infertility. The night I found out, Janea and I had a painful but precious time together. We dove into prayer, and the next morning, I went on a walk. I just poured out my heart to God. I went up and down the sidewalk just weeping and telling God, “I trust You. I trust Your plan. I know You’re good. I’m going to hope in You. But I don’t know what Your plan is. Do you want me to be a father? Do you want Janea to be a mother? I am scared of watching her endure this ongoing pain.” My faith was not shaken, but it didn’t mean my heart wasn’t broken and I wasn’t being real and sharing. That was almost six years ago. I don’t know what the future holds. Up to this point, God did not heal that condition. But here’s what I do know. At almost the exact moment when I was praying, a tiny life entered the world across the country. A little girl who, along with her younger brother and sister, who would eventually through adoption, become our children. And in God’s wisdom, He created space in our home because He had these sweet lives for us to steward. And through that task, for us to know and show His glory. It’s a glory that He displays in many different ways.

He can and does glorify Himself through infertile couples devoting themselves fully to Him without children. He can glorify Himself by miraculously granting pregnancy. He can glorify Himself through the blessing of adoption. There’s no formula. The ways God works to show His glory are surprising, and they are scandalous, and here’s what we know. They are always worth trusting!

The ultimate proof is at the very center of Scripture and history. The most messy, the most mysterious, the most mystifying and meaningful way God ever worked was at the cross. He sent His very own Son to suffer wrath and die in our place for our sins. He buried and raised Him to prove that His ways can be trusted. And in view of that, no miracle was ever more scandalous. We can hold on with hope. This insight empowers perseverance. It also empowers confidence.

**II. Stand Firm With Conviction: The Ridiculous Mistrial (9:8-34)**

You might expect the religious leaders of the day to celebrate, but the miracle was such a scandal that the man and healer are going to be put on trial. And so we see this act of God scrutinized in a ridiculous mistrial. When you face serious opposition, it is divine insight that can empower you to stand firm with confidence and conviction.

It was in 1934 that Adolf Hitler established what would be known as the People’s Court. It was a way to enforce so-called justice, designed to operate outside the realm of constitutional law. Many of the hearings were show trials, sometimes lasting less than an hour. There was no defense presented. Arguments were made and with almost no exceptions, they just had predetermined guilty verdicts and there was a kangaroo court mistrial. In the end, the Third Reich, the special and national People’s Court, handed down death sentences according to one source, to over 16,000 people, 12,000 of which were carried out. It’s a gross miscarriage of justice. It’s an authority with an agenda. And that’s what is before us this morning.

After this act of God is symbolized with this scandalous miracle, it’s scrutinized through this ridiculous mistrial in a section we’ll call “Guilty Until Proven Innocent.” Here’s the healed man and he faces a council of skeptics. We’ll hear his leaders, his parents, his own opinion, and then witness his plight. And through this insight into the stubborn blindness of the human heart, we can begin to form some confidence to stand firm in times of trouble because we’re going to face these challenges. There are consequences to rejecting truth. We’re going to face those as we encounter them. There are four challenges that you can prepare to face.

Consequence #1: Confusion: Truth will be questioned (v. 13-17)

There are times when truth, even though it is plain, will be questioned just like in Genesis 3. “Did God really say…” His Word was questioned. And the mistrial begins with a focus on the leader’s confusion.

***13*** *They brought to the Pharisees the man who had formerly been blind.*

In this interrogation we notice that the leaders form two misinterpretations that bring about major confusion. There was confusion over the Word written and over the Word incarnate. First, over the written Word.

***14*** *Now it was a Sabbath day when Jesus made the mud and opened his eyes.* ***15*** *So the Pharisees again asked him how he had received his sight. And he said to them, “He put mud on my eyes, and I washed, and I see.”*

It was the Sabbath, a day they held sacred not so much to honor God, but themselves. They turned it into a day not to rest and humbly glorify God, but a burdensome day to arrogantly glorify self. They invented countless oral laws to flaunt their own piety, one of which was a rule against kneading dough. Whether it was that or another, it seems somehow that Jesus’ using the mud deliberately violated their code. And so as a result, most of them reach a verdict before the trial begins. But it’s not only their confusion over God’s written Word, but there’s a confusion over the Word incarnate.

***16*** *Some of the Pharisees said, “This man is not from God, for he does not keep the Sabbath.” But others said, “How can a man who is a sinner do such signs?” And there was a division among them.* ***17*** *So they said again to the blind man, “What do you say about him, since he has opened your eyes?” He said, “He is a prophet.”*

So the Pharisees, like the crowd from chapter 8, are divided. One group is convinced that they’re right about the Sabbath and assume that Jesus is a sinner not sent from God. And the other group, amazed at the miracle, want to reconsider. So they force the healed man to take a side. And although he’s no expert, he affirms his healer. And here, Jesus subtly shifts to this man from being the man they call Jesus, to a prophet, one sent from God. It’s almost as if the judges’ eyes are dimming and the man’s eyes are opening. Truth will be questioned and we’ll face confusion, but we can stand firm.

Consequence #2: Cowardice: Truth will be avoided. (v. 18-23)

Now we move from the man’s leaders to his parents.

***18*** *The Jews did not believe that he had been blind and had received his sight, until they called the parents of the man who had received his sight*

They act like they’re being set up and they call the man’s parents to corroborate the claims. And in his parent’s testimony, you can see that they are embarrassed, and it betrays their cowardice. First, you see the result of their cowardice. It’s a form of deferment, of passing the buck.

***19*** *and asked them, “Is this your son, who you say was born blind? How then does he now see?”* ***20*** *His parents answered, “We know that this is our son and that he was born blind.* ***21*** *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.”*

They dodge the question and redirect it back to their son. Why? Verses 22 and 23 give the reason for their cowardice. Fear of man!

***22*** *(His parents said these things 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.)* ***23*** *Therefore his parents said, “He is of age; ask him.”*

They don’t want to get involved. They’re scared of giving testimony even to help their very own son, a helpless victim, because it seems too dangerous. So in cowardice, they avoid the issue and choose to turn a blind eye. They don’t want to risk enduring the fate their son has suffered his entire life without choice. So they’re unwilling to speak on his behalf. This is a window into the tragic treatment he has endured. “He’s legally old enough to give testimony. Put him on the stand.” His own parents know the truth, but they lack boldness to cowardice. But this young man can stand firm and rejoice perhaps with the Psalmist in Psalm 27:10.

**Psalm 27:10** For my father and my mother have forsaken me, but the Lord will take me in.

Consequence #3: Corruption: Truth will be suppressed (v. 24-29)

Now we move from his parents to his opinion and we’ll see the truth suppressed. We’ll see the corruption mature into blasphemy.

***24*** *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.”*

They know this. And by that they don’t mean “sing God’s praise.” They mean it in the way of Joshua 7:19 to the leaders of Achan. It’s something like, “Before God, own up and admit it!” They want him to sign a confession that Jesus is a sinner and maybe give some extra information and seal the case. They refer to Jesus with this kind of derogatory slur. “That guy…this man.” His fate is already decided. Their corruption is full-blown blasphemy. Now, the stubbornness of their pride cannot rattle the stubbornness of truth. So their corruption is exposed. After the blasphemy, the man’s opinion is one of simplicity.

***25*** *He answered, “Whether he is a sinner I do not know. One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see.”*

Sometimes simplicity is the best sign of sincerity. There’s a purity present when we experience God, that we can’t corrupt. But it won’t stop them from trying, perhaps maybe to trip him up in his testimony, to catch him in perjury or discredit his witness.

***26*** *They said to him, “What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?”*

Their corruption is confronted by this man’s simplicity. He’s going to challenge their redundancy. He’s been polite up until now, but he can only take so much. He suddenly realizes that this has all been a sham. His eyes are opening wider, still. They’re not interested in using facts to arrive at the truth. They’re using it to twist it to their own ends. He’s exasperated this corruption. So he decides to enter the game. He takes the chess board and flips it while they’re not looking. He himself takes the role of the interrogator, assigning secret motives.

***27*** *He answered them, “I have told you already, and you would not listen. Why do you want to hear it again?*

And he leans in with sarcasm and whispers

***27****…Do you also want to become his disciples?”*

It’s a taunt. He’s teasing! His parents are terrified at this serious official proceeding. His newfound sight gives him an uncommon boldness and his quick wit strikes a nerve. Apparently, this young guy has quite a personality. He has a biting sense of humor. He doesn’t know the rules. And it’s a fact of which I’m sure Jesus was aware when He chose him to be healed. It’s almost as if by divine smile, Jesus walked right into the Pharisees’ trophy room and unleashes a hyped-up baby baboon. “Deal with this one, guys!” The corruption matures. It’s exposed and confronted and the final phase is only too predictable. It’s going to be offended. The mocked redundancy brings about a sudden fury. Like young boys when they’ve been asked if they like a girl, they overreact. And so they realize that this newfound vision offers insight into their evil intent, and it doesn’t feel good.

***28*** *And they reviled him, saying, “You are his disciple, but we are disciples of Moses.* ***29*** *We know that God has spoken to Moses, but as for this man, we do not know where he comes from.”*

They hurled insults and sided themselves with the highest human authority that they can summon—Moses. But if they were actually to understand what Moses wrote, they would think differently. Jesus said back in John 5:45

**John 5:45-46** Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father. There is one who accuses you: Moses, on whom you have set your hope. For if you believed Moses, you would believe me; for he wrote of me.

**John 5:39-40** You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me, yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life.

They failed to understand John 1:17.

**John 1:17** For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

It is no surprise that they claim they don’t know where this man was sent from. Confusion to cowardice to corruption and now the final

Consequence #4: Compromise: Truth will be rejected (v. 30-34)

This man finds their willful ignorance remarkable. He can’t believe their unbelief. So he says, “Let’s get real here.” He’s going to take their compromise and uncover it with boldness. They just get done claiming to be Moses’ disciples, saying they don’t know where Jesus comes from.

***30*** *The man answered, “Why, this is an amazing thing! You do not know where he comes from, and yet he opened my eyes.*

You can almost hear the scribe in the corner stop writing as the sharpened point of his quill snaps. All eyes are aghast and jaws drop! “What did he just say? Is he talking back? You don’t do that!” This is what you call sticking them in the eye. “How amazing!” he says. “I can’t believe I received sight in time to witness this. You’re supposed to represent God and you can’t see Him in broad daylight.” Their unbelief has him in disbelief. It’s like he’s wanted to join this party his whole life and all of a sudden he arrives and discovers there’s no cake. “This is your job! What are you guys doing here all the time?! I thought I was missing something.” It’s almost a kindness of God to reveal that his lifelong rejection from this club was actually a blessing.

Compromise is uncovered through boldness, and it’s challenged through reasoning. He continues in verses 31-33. It’s like he’s the witness and he pulls the whiteboard up to the stand and he takes the Counsel back to law school to regrade their legal homework. In verse 31 he gives them a reality check and then he gives them a theology lecture.

***31*** *We know that God does not listen to sinners, but if anyone is a worshiper of God and does his will, God listens to him.*

And then in verse 32, he gives them a history refresher.

***32*** *Never since the world began has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a man born blind.*

And then he gives them a logic lesson.

***33*** *If this man were not from God, he could do nothing.”*

This is a miracle! This is an act of God! Their reaction is to respond with insult. That’s all they can do; just smear him. Their compromise is epitomized with scorn.

***34*** *They answered him, “You were born in utter sin, and would you teach us?” And they cast him out.*

An untrained beggar arguing with them and making them look like a fool?! Their pride is stung. They’re disgusted with his insolence, so they resort to spiritual abuse. They label him and silence him. “We can’t hear you. You get out of here. You teach us?” And we sigh, “If only he could.” The iceberg lays ahead and they destroy the only warning radio because they don’t like the message.

It’s almost like Balaam ignoring God’s warning, traveling to go for the wealth and curse God’s people. Along the way, his donkey is trying to help him and turn aside because there’s an angel about to kill him. He sees better than the prophet. Balaam gets angry at his donkey and then God mercifully opens his eyes so that he doesn’t die, but not without publicly embarrassing him a bit.

It’s tragic here. The very Feast of Tabernacles intended to proclaim hope and freedom, and they are unable to see its very fulfilment. “You were born in utter sin!” And they hold it over his head. Even after he can see, they’re still keeping him down. As we move from the man’s leaders, to his parents, to his opinion, we see his plight. He suffers the fate his parents feared. He is cast out! Now this opposition is to be expected because

**John 3:19-21** And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed. But whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his works have been carried out in God.

The rejection here is through confusion, cowardice, corruption and compromise. The point is that the human heart hates truth. Once man sinned in the Garden, our hearts fell into darkness. We looked at that fruit using sight and not insight, ignoring the consequence, and now we’re born victim to a nature of willful blindness and self-deceit. Spiritual vision is obscured. Human hearts hate God’s truth! Romans 1 says that we suppress it like a beach ball, pushing it under water like the king who received the written Word of God and he hated the message. He ripped it up and threw it in the fire. The Jews hated the truth of Stephen’s words so much that they rushed at him with their fingers in their ears yelling and stoning him to death, the chief witness being Saul. He was a man who sought to silence the church and kill them. On the way to do that, the light of Christ shone and blinded him until he was healed and scales fell from his eyes. To see God requires an act of God. Seeing with spiritual eyes requires a miracle. And that’s why Jesus says

**John 6:44** No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day.

Outside of God’s grace, men will be God’s enemies. And the most tragic example of man’s heart of confusion, cowardice, corruption and compromise ever shown, was at the cross. No mistrial was ever more ridiculous. But through Jesus, we have been delivered from the domain of darkness and transferred to the kingdom that is His. The human heart hates truth, and so by God’s grace we need confidence to stand firm with conviction.

Now after suffering the very fate his parents feared, the man is unjustly cast out. And yet, through this tragic verdict of this ridiculous mistrial, it’s going to bring about this man’s comfort and his oppressor’s judgment through an ominous reversal. Insight empowers perseverance to hold on with hope. It empowers confidence to stand firm with conviction. And it empowers a dependence that drives us to bow down with awe.

**III. Bow Down In Awe: The Ominous Reversal (9:35-41)**

Bow down in awe when we face a God of miracles. That feeling of fear and wonder and a power greater than yourself. Dependent awe!

We always had friends coming over to our house when we were younger and hanging out. My little brother, for whatever reason, made this friend who always crossed the line. He pushed my parents’ buttons. They were just kids, five or six, but he superglued construction paper to the carpet. He took scissors and cut the rope bridge on our playground. And then he found a red Sharpie and he drew an eight foot mural on my bedroom wall. And one time, after a day of destructive behavior, he and my brother were watching cartoons. My dad walked in the room and said, “It’s time to go home.” And the boy was determined to stay. He looked at my dad and said, “No!” Well, the rest of us were in shock! And my dad’s face is unchanged, but the temperature in the room is starting to rise. “It’s time to go!” He says, “No! You get out!” Well the Beakley children had never seen our father in this situation before because we had known better. We never crossed that line. Even my little brother was overcome with an awesome fear and began to scoot away. And even though my dad concealed his emotion, that kid was home before the end of the commercial break. He experienced a sudden and sobering reversal. By the very act of asserting his own authority, he lost it. That day, his lack of awe and arrogant independence was his undoing.

This act of God which has been symbolized through a scandalous miracle, and scrutinized in a ridiculous mistrial, is finally solidified in an ominous reversal in a section we’ll call “Blind Faith.” The healed man receives Jesus in tender worship, while the Pharisees reject Him and face a terrifying warning. There are two different responses. One is humble belief; the other is arrogant unbelief. It is insight into these responses that will evoke awe and compel us to bow down.

Response #1: Humble Belief: The presence of spiritual insight requires divine help (v. 35-38)

We see his humble readiness to the point of zeal in verse 35.

***35*** *Jesus heard that they had cast him out, and having found him he said, “Do you believe in the Son of Man?”* ***36*** *He answered, “And who is he, sir, that I may believe in him?”*

He has shown true, active faith. He has stepped out from beneath the shadow of abusive leaders and he’s ready for the light. Jesus says, “Do you believe in the Son of Man?” That is, do you place your trust in Him? The man asks, “Who is He?” He knows what the Son of Man is.

**John 5:27** And he has given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of Man.

But the man asks, “Who is he?” And so Jesus answers.

***37*** *Jesus said to him, “You have seen him, and it is he who is speaking to you.”*

What a moment! In verse 38 this man’s attitude of humble readiness matures into a humble reverence of worship.

***38*** *He said, “Lord, I believe,” and he worshiped him.*

Jesus has progressed in this man’s eyes from a mere man, to a prophet, to sir, to Lord. It’s the first hint of a confession Thomas will make very soon. When this guy looks at Jesus, he sees the Son of Man who is Himself the very Light of the world. This is the work of God! This is what Jesus was talking about. It’s not mere physical sight, but spiritual insight.

**John 6:29** Jesus answered them, “This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent.”

Physical healing is temporary. Even being miraculously resuscitated back to life is not the ultimate miracle. Jesus is going to prove that in chapter 11 when He raises Lazarus. Healing is not the goal. It’s only the means to help him accomplish the far greater mission. It’s not just life enhanced. It’s life eternal.

**John 20:31** but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

The act of God is the miracle of faith. The man was given natural eyes to open his spiritual eyes. The entire act of God, the miracle, was not so much the healing of sight, but the granting of insight. This is Jesus’ mission. And to show just how amazing this act of God was, we see the ominous reversal come full circle. Look at the complete blindness of the Pharisees disbelief. Here’s the terrifying warning!

Response #2: Prideful Disbelief: The absence of spiritual insight usually goes unnoticed. (v. 39-41)

***39*** *Jesus said, “For judgment I came into this world, that those who do not see may see, and those who see may become blind.”*

To those who realize that they’re helplessly blind, He’ll grant insight. And for those who deny their dependence on God, their blindness will be reinforced. This exchange between Jesus and the healed man was in a public place and the Pharisees overhear. They enter into this conversation with some conditions that just make us shudder. We look at their arrogant insistence. In verse 40, they challenge His statement.

***40*** *Some of the Pharisees near him heard these things, and said to him, “Are we also blind?”*

They’re not humbled and sobered. They get defensive. They are insistent that they can see. And so we shudder at their arrogant indifference to Jesus’ warning as they fall into condemnation.

***41*** *Jesus said to them, “If you were blind, you would have no guilt; but now that you say, ‘We see,’ your guilt remains.*

There are no words more scary! On the one hand, it is finished. On the other, your guilt remains. If you were blind, aware of your need and cried out, you wouldn’t be guilty of unbelief.

**Matthew 5:3** Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

If you were blind, you’d be asking for the miracle of sight. But instead, you’re covering your eyes. It’s what we call “willful blindness.” To them, Jesus is just “that guy, a sinner.” And by claiming to see, they reject the true Light the very moment He shines the brightest. Their guilt remains.

When philosopher Bertrand Russell was asked what he would tell God if He saw Him after death at judgment, he said, “Not enough evidence.” But this passage proves that no amount of evidence matters when your eyes are closed. The closer God comes to revealing Himself, the more clear our true identity becomes. Here’s the point: Our responses to God reveal our identity! What we do shows who we are. The closer God gets, the more resolved His enemies become. In John 11, just two chapters later, when Jesus unveils His full power and identity as God who can raise someone from the dead with Lazarus, it seals the Jews’ hatred for Him and their demand to kill Him, to take the resurrection itself and put Him to death. Nowhere is there a sharper contrast between humble belief and arrogant disbelief than at the cross. There is no reversal more ominous. It’s a cross that reveals who we are. And here’s how Paul puts it in 2 Corinthians 4. Just soak in this.

**2 Corinthians 4:3-6** And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

**2 Corinthians 4:16-18** So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.

Sight vs. Insight!

Amazing grace how sweet the sound

That saved a wretch like me.

I once was lost but now am found

Was blind, but now I see.

On February 26, 2015, a photo surfaced on the internet. Within a week, it was mentioned in over 10,000,000 comments. The page mentioned 11,000 tweets a minute, getting 14,000 views a second. The photo is a picture of a dress. The lighting creates a sort of optical illusion resulting in some people seeing the dress as white and gold while others see it as black and blue. And there was such disagreement over its color that in the first 24 hours alone, it was the subject of almost 4.5 million tweets.

Sight is a very complex ability. We still don’t fully understand it. Two people can look at the exact same thing and see something completely different. Seeing is not always believing. Our physical eyes are too easily fooled. How much more so the vision of faith. We depend not merely on sight, but insight. It’s a gift granted solely from heaven. And to truly see God requires an act of God. To have our eyes opened we need a miracle to see Jesus for who He really is. When you open your eyes and you look at Jesus, tell me, what do you see? Nothing? Or do you see everything?

**John 1:14** And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory…