

Thematically chapter 9 is an integral part of chapters 7 through 10, connected with chapter 8 through the claim of Jesus to be the Light of the World (8:12; 9:5) and with chapter 10 through the description of blind leadership. In this chapter the outward sign of a man's physical healing from blindness is overshadowed by the greater work of the Light bringing to him spiritual sight. In the process we observe also others and how they react to the light which Jesus gives, teaching us yet more about spiritual sight.

1. ***Spiritual sight is a work of God, more important than earthly well-being.***

- a. It was commonly believed that sickness was an indication of sin. Since God had promised to Israel in the OT health and material well-being to those who obeyed, either the man or his parents must have been judged by God for their sin.
- b. But their logic was faulty: wrongly applying a general principle to every individual event, failing to see that the righteous did have bad times, failing to recognize greater blessings than temporal well-being, and not taking into account the presence and purpose of Jesus on earth.
- c. Jesus explained that God's purpose in this blindness was to display His glory and work faith in the man. As evidenced by verses 8-41 spiritual sight was the great work of God in the life of this man.

God has greater purposes in mind than our earthly well-being. He builds our faith, opens our eyes, and molds His children to be more like Jesus.

2. ***Even seeing miracles does not guarantee spiritual sight.***

- a. The neighbors of the man clearly did not have saving faith. They would rather doubt their own ability to recognize the man than believe the miracle and what it meant.
- b. The blind man also did not have saving faith, since he simply identified Jesus as "the man called Jesus".

Do not expect or hope for the spectacular to change hearts. God doesn't always work that way. Even after thousands of miracles, how many followers of Jesus were at the cross?

3. ***Human standards and presuppositions can hinder spiritual sight.***

- a. The Pharisees struggled on two counts: (1) Jesus healed on the Sabbath conflicting with their understanding of Sabbath law, and (2) the man having been born blind made him a sinner to them and not worthy of listening to.
- b. Their real problem was that their preconceptions and arrogance hindered belief. Their twisted interpretations and additions to Scripture had become the ultimate standard, beyond evidence to the contrary. Their final concession to his original blindness and hence healing confirmed their own spiritual blindness.

Human standards and presuppositions can also keep people today from gaining spiritual sight. They consider themselves wise, but show themselves to be fools and possessing darkened or blinded minds.

4. ***Fear can hinder or dampen spiritual sight.***

The parents knew that drawing a conclusion about Jesus endangered their inclusion in the important, benevolent synagogue community. Outwardly they would not confess even that Jesus had healed their son.

Some feared but still believed, like Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea (*cf.* John 19:38-39). Today also there are those whose sight is hindered or dampened by various kinds of fear.

5. ***Conflict can be used by God to foster spiritual sight.***

The former blind man's thinking developed from "the man called Jesus", to "He is a prophet", to "He must be from God" only as he was confronted and challenged by the Pharisees.

God can use conflict as a powerful tool to clear our thinking, force convictions, and separate the essential from the non-essential. Unchallenged, our thinking may be sloppy. Conflict may force us to answer such questions as what we are ready to suffer for.

6. ***True spiritual sight will culminate in worship.***

Jesus searched for and found the former blind man after he was cast out, asking him, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" The Son of Man was a Messianic figure from the Old Testament with clear overtones of deity. The Father gave Jesus authority to judge because he is the Son of Man (John 5:27). The Pharisees had judged, but the Son of Man was greater.

When Jesus revealed Himself as the Son of Man, the former blind man believed and worshiped Jesus. Recognition of who Jesus is and what He has done should result in worship. True spiritual sight, what we call "saving faith", culminates in worship.

7. ***Spiritual sight is gained, only when one recognizes the need for the Light of the world.***

Jesus came to give life to those who are spiritual lost and know it ("the blind"). He also came to judge those who believed themselves to be spiritually perceptive but were not ("those who see"). If they rejected the truth of Jesus they would be cast into utter darkness, a permanent blindness. The Pharisees believed they could see, but because they rejected Jesus, they would die in their sins.

We best understand if we have spiritual sight by our response to Jesus. If we fall down and worship Him, then we have "seen" that we were blind and needed to have our eyes opened. If we claim to have sight, yet fail to bow before Jesus, we may be just like the Pharisees who claimed sight but remained blind and guilty of sin.

It is dangerous therefore to base our answer upon our self-perception of whether we have sight or not. We might be self-deceived. Those whose eyes are opened see Jesus and bow before Him.