

March 15, 2026

John 9:1-7, 13-17, 24-41

Dr. Stanton Samenow, a behavioral psychologist that specializes in criminal behavior wrote an article about some of the inmates he counsels. Samenow recalls a teenager who said, “Anyone who knocks down an old lady in the street and steals her purse should be hung.” It just so happens that this teenager had broken into a woman’s home, terrorized her, and stolen all her valuables, which according to the teenager, was okay because he didn’t physically hurt her. Samenow tells of a man convicted of brutal sexual assault saying, “Anyone who messes with little kids should be put to death.” What would you call someone who has clearly done something incredibly evil who is convinced that because his crimes weren’t as heinous as another, he must actually be pretty good? The Scriptures would call this, “blind.” And the Scriptures teach that human beings are not only wicked, sinful, selfish, and constantly lusting after anything that could make them feel good, powerful, and fulfilled- but they are also blind to their own sinfulness. We are so sinful that we don’t even know we’re sinful. Here, in John 9, we have a very long, detailed account of Jesus opening the eyes of a blind man. Why does John give so much detail into this account- that’s a bit unusual for Gospel writers to do? Because this episode of Jesus’ life and ministry has so much to teach us about Spiritual Blindness. The point is this: **We Are All Blind. 1. Blind About Suffering. 2. Blind About Sin. 3. Blind Until Jesus Opens Our Eyes.**

1. Blind About Suffering. Jesus and his disciples are at the Temple in Jerusalem, and there is a beggar in the Temple courts who didn’t lose his sight over time or because of an accident- he never had sight to begin with. That was really difficult for Jesus’ disciples, and probably most Jews at that time, to wrestle with. Why? Because it was believed that bad things would happen to people who did bad things, and if something bad happened, clearly God was angry and that person did something wrong. So, what sin was God punishing with this man? The sin of the parents, or perhaps he sinned within the womb? You may think that’s ridiculous, but understand something- a very, very large portion of the human race believes in reincarnation- that we all have had past lives, and our situations in our lives, good or bad, are results of what we did in our lives before this one. Why do people believe that? Because how else can you make sense of a baby born blind, cursed to live a life as a homeless beggar? How else can you make sense of a child born into abject poverty, that dies of starvation or malaria before their fifth birthday? How else can you make sense of something that doesn’t make sense? Whose fault is it? The answer the Jews had, which is pretty much the answer most have deep down, is that they do deserve it. They did something bad, and God, or the gods, are punishing them. It’s brutal, but it’s logical. It’s also something we do all the time.

I’ll rat myself out. Back in October, before we lost the twins, we went about an hour away to get a twin stroller from Facebook marketplace. The family that was selling had experienced a twin miscarriage. And as we were driving away, my immediate question was, “How old was she? Did

she have any health issues?" Why did I do that? Because I was afraid that it would happen to us, and I was trying to rationalize why things like that happen, and put myself at rest. I can't be the only one who's done that. To look at someone who has had something terrible happen to them and think, "Wow. I wonder why that happened? Is there something that I can avoid to make sure that didn't happen to me? Did he sin, or did his parents?" And the answer is, "Stop it. That's not how this works." Firstly, understand what this is: it's fear. I'm afraid that might happen to me, so I'm going to reassure myself it can't happen to me because of this or that. Secondly, it's profoundly self-righteous, "You must be worse than me because you're suffering and I'm not." Thirdly, it doesn't actually work that way in reality. There are profoundly evil people in this world who die peacefully in their sleep at eighty surrounded by wealth and loved ones. That's not how it works. And Jesus makes this point: this didn't happen because he or his parents sinned. God allowed it so that he could reveal his glory, his grace, power, and profound spiritual truth. And instead of trying to analyze why this specific thing happened, Jesus goes and actually does something for him. He spits in the dirt and makes mud and smears the mud on the man's eyes. Ew! Why? Several reasons- firstly, to show that he himself is the one healing- it's not a magic trick. He's also touching him, being close to him. He's, weirdly enough, being intimate with him. And then he demands his faith- "Go and wash." What does this mean? If you are suffering, you need to know that God is not angry with you- even if you're suffering directly because of something you've done- you're not being punished. Jesus Christ was punished in your place on the cross- therefore anything a Christian suffers is not a punishment, but something he asks us to endure as his children, something that often helps us grow and enables us to be a blessing to people who are suffering. And if you see someone suffering, don't be blind. It could have just as easily been you. Don't analyze or make sense of their pain. Help them. Feel their pain with them. Weep with them. Don't be blind.

2. **Blind About Sin.** The Pharisees, the local party of religious teachers, take it upon themselves to investigate what happened to the blind man. Why? Firstly, because this is a powerful, unique miracle, and whoever did it is clearly very powerful. But there's a problem. It was done on a Sabbath- the holy day of rest. Now, the Old Testament is very clear: working on the Sabbath- plowing fields, buying and trading, gathering wood, those kinds of things are forbidden on the Sabbath. But the Pharisees added a lot of extra regulations in order to "protect" the Sabbath from being broken. And one of those things was mixing and spreading anything- even mud on a blind man's eyes. This isn't the first time Jesus has been criticized for miraculously healing people on the Sabbath. But this isn't against the Old Testament Law. It simply is against the traditions of the Pharisees. But they didn't see a difference. Therefore, he was a sinner. And he shouldn't have been able to do a miracle like this- because God does not do miracles through open and blatantly immoral people. And you can see the Pharisees go back and forth with each other- "He couldn't have done this, he's a sinner! But no sinner can do something like *this*!" After grilling the man's parents, which is the section we skipped, they bring the man in again and the man. "How were you healed?" "I already told you." "But this man is a sinner." "I don't know about any of that, all I know is I was blind, but now I see." And then the Pharisees start getting nasty with the man,

and lecture him about how *they* are students of Moses, they don't know where Jesus gets his teaching from. And the man says something incredibly insightful, "The real miracle here isn't that my eyes were opened, but that you are so blind that you can't see what's in front of you. You say no sinner can open the eyes of the blind. Here I am, a blind man who can see, healed by this Jesus, who you insist couldn't have healed me because he's a sinner! How can you not see it?"

Because they're blind. And specifically, they are blind about their own sin. Ultimately, what *is* sin? It's disobedience to God's Law- and there's a lot of ways to do that. One of the ways to do that is what we saw last week with the woman that committed adultery: "I know what God's Law says, but I need this, I deserve this, I know better. God says this, but I say that. I know more than him." That's clear disobedience. But there's another way to disobey God's Law, and we see this with the Pharisees: "I know what God's Law says, but it's not enough. I need to add to it. What I say is just as valid and authoritative as what God says. What I say, God says! I know as much as him!" Well, God has come down and has shown unmistakable proof that this wasn't the case, and they refused to admit it! They can't see how they are sinning and rebelling against God himself! It's blindness- willful blindness about sin. Think about the people at the beginning. Those prisoners- what were they blind to? They knew there was good and evil, justice and injustice. But they were blind to their *own* evil and could only see the evil out there- and shoved mud in their eyes by comparing themselves to people comparatively worse than them! The Pharisees were doing the same thing- "We are the religious teachers! We are the experts in the Bible. You're a beggar! We can't be sinning!" We see the same thing today. When Christians are so upset about the lust of our culture, but not as concerned with the lust of their own hearts, the violence in the Middle East, but not the violent hatred and bitterness in their own hearts, the greed of the billionaires but not their own greed, that is also blindness. So what does Jesus do?

3. Blind Until Jesus Opens Our Eyes. Finally, we see the final episode of this saga. The blind man has lost everything. His parents have practically disowned him, the religious leaders have expelled him, and Jesus approaches him and asks him, "Do you believe in the Son of God? Do you worship the God of the Old Testament, the God of your people, the one who healed your eyes? Do you worship him?" And his answer isn't "yes!" It's, "I want to. But I can't see him. I'm blind. Who is he? I want to know him. I want to see him, but I can't!" That's the first step. Jesus reveals himself, and this man, the blind man, has his eyes opened as he sees his Savior and he worships at his feet, and Jesus says one of the most profound things we see in the New Testament- Jesus has come for judgement. But wait! In chapter three, Jesus said he didn't come to judge the world, but to save the world! True! Jesus Christ, true God, came into this world not to punish sin, but to be punished for sin so that every sinner who trusts in him will be forgiven of everything. Is anyone here able to save yourself? Good for you! Go do that. If anyone only needs some advice, some guidance to lead a god-pleasing life? Is there anyone here who is pretty good, only a few issues that just need to be resolved? Open your eyes! You're blind! It's not your broken life or selfishness that damns you, it's your pride that says, "well at least I haven't done *that*! It's not your blindness that damns you, it's your insistence that you can see, even when you

can't. The first step of being forgiven is admitting you have sins to forgive, admitting you need to be saved!

Is anyone here blind, unable to see or understand God's mercy? Good for you, you can see. Is anyone here living a sinful life, desperately in need of forgiveness? That's exactly what you'll get! Is anyone here so broken, so wretched, so blind, so morally corrupt, so selfish, so greedy, so lustful that there's *nothing* you could ever do to save yourself? Good- you don't have to. Jesus already has.

There was a great poem written by Lucy Shaw, meant to be from the viewpoint of Mary, Jesus' mother, while he was in her womb. She says it well. Jesus came to suffer for me and you. He came to be blinded by darkness, so that we could see the light. And the only way we can see how evil we truly are, but also see just how much our savior loves us, and how forgiven and free we truly are, is to see the Son of God crucified and punished, all for us.

*Blind in my womb to know my darkness ended,
Brought to this birth for me to be reborn,
And for Him to see me mended,
I must see Him torn!*

Amen.