

## BLINDED BY THE LIGHT A Sermon on John 9

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**D**o you remember the famous song in 1977 called 'Blinded by the Light'? Manfred Mann's Earth Band recorded this song and it became one of the most famous songs of the 1970s. Incidentally, Bruce Springsteen wrote the song and it is listed as number 82 on the list of the 500 greatest Rock and Roll songs of all time. Do you remember how everyone sang different lyrics when the song came on the radio? No one was for sure what they were singing about! The song is still the subject for many fans who are [still trying to figure out](#) just what the song is about.

Without going into all the detail, one thing from the song you can pick up is that Bruce Springsteen was trying to communicate through the lyrics problems that come from being foolish and the danger of doing what is wrong. One of the lines says: 'Momma always told me not to look into the eye of the sun....but Momma that's where the fun is.' Many others speculate that the song was about a drug-induced spiritual "enlightenment". Well, whatever kind of light was blinding Manfred Mann's Earth Band and "The Boss" in the song, today's study will take us back many years before the 1970s to a day when a blind man was enabled to see and a group of men who had their sight were 'Blinded by the Light'. And this all happened because the Light of the World made himself known to poor sinners like us! Today's study is from John 9. Let's look first at verses 1-5.

And as [Jesus] passed by, he saw a man blind from his birth. <sup>2</sup> And his disciples asked him, saying, Rabbi, who sinned, this man, or his parents, that he should be born blind? <sup>3</sup> Jesus answered, "Neither did this man sin, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him. <sup>4</sup> We must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night comes, when no man can work. <sup>5</sup> When I am in the world, I am the light of the world."

For one man it had been pitch-black darkness all of his life. He had never seen his mother or father. He had never seen his friends, nor those in his community. As a child he would have been provoked and teased by children who he would never see.

Dark, dark, dark...Always night, always shut off from seeing what is around him. He can feel the heat and warmth of the sun, but he had never seen anything around him lit up by the sun.

This man was blind from birth with no means to support himself. He was a constant embarrassment and reminder to the community of their failure to help the hurting and the weak. A poor, blind beggar, a weak, blind vessel who *Jesus uses to reveal a greater darkness, a greater problem of the community—The problem of blindness in the heart.*

For the other men, they had the privilege of light all of their lives under the Law and the Prophets. They had many times learned from their mother and father the truth of the Old Testament and the hope of Messiah they so desperately anticipated! Light, light, great light all of their lives! They had walked with friends to the synagogue and graduated eventually into being the great and respected teachers of their community.

These men were in the light of God's Word literally since their birth. They were supported through the means of being God's teachers of the Word. The community respected them. Yet they were desperately blind both to the beggar and his needs, as well as to the very Light of the World himself. The very One they were taught concerning, the very Messiah Who they taught the people about, was standing right before them and all they could see was a satanic trickster, a fake, a breaker of God's Sabbath Law, and One Who needed to be silenced and put to death. Pitch-black darkness in all of the lives of these men because of sin...Yet Jesus comes to give sight to those who walk in darkness! He is the Light of the World!

In John 9:1-5, when the disciples first get a glimpse of the blind beggar and see him for the first time they ask Jesus a faulty theological question of whether this man or his parent's sinning was the cause of his blindness. Jesus answers (as God answers Job's "friends" in Job 38-42) that his blindness was so that the works of God might be manifest in his life and God would be glorified (John 9:1-5). In other words, Jesus says that the reason why he is blind is so that others might see God's glory in his being made to see. Concerning the theology question asked by the apostles, sin may be the *ultimate reason* for our physical sickness, but we cannot say that just because someone suffers a physical ailment it must be due to their sin. In this case, Jesus says that it is so that God may be glorified. Now, notice how Jesus heals this man in the next few verses:

<sup>6</sup> Having said these things, he spat on the ground and made mud with the saliva. Then he anointed the man's eyes with the mud <sup>7</sup> and said to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" (which means Sent). So he went and washed and came back seeing. <sup>8</sup> 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?" <sup>9</sup> Some said, "It is he." Others said, "No, but he is like him." He kept saying, "I am the man." <sup>10</sup> So they said to him, "Then how were your eyes opened?" <sup>11</sup> 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." <sup>12</sup> They said to him, "Where is he?" He said, "I do not know."

Jesus' signs and miracles in the Gospels are always *SIGN-ificant*—that is, they point away to the reality of the Kingdom of God being present in Jesus Christ. Jesus' *SIGN-ificant* signs were to show the entire world that he was the Messiah, the Great King and that the restoration of all things was beginning in his ministry. In light of these signs and the reality of the Kingdom of God manifesting itself in Jesus, men everywhere were to repent, turn to God and be forgiven by Jesus.

In the restoring of the blind man's sight, Jesus reveals himself as the Creator (vv. 6-12). As God in Genesis 2:7 reached down into the mud and breathed life into Adam who was made in his image, so Jesus reaches down into the mud to restore the sight of this blind beggar made in God's image, who is blind ultimately because of Adam's sin. As Jesus restored the sight lost, you may recall the evil Deceiver and the Master of Illusions from Gen. 3:1-7.

After God had created all things good and made man in his image Satan visited the Garden of Eden, and he tempted Adam and Eve with fruit that would supposedly "open their eyes" and "give them sight". They should have already known that they indeed *had sight*. The only sight that mattered, the only true sight in reality, was the sight God gave in the revelation of His Word to them. All other so-called "sight" would in actuality be "blindness", and thus it would lead to shame. Read the account of this sad incident from Genesis 3:1-7:

Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden'?" <sup>2</sup> And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, <sup>3</sup> but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.'" <sup>4</sup> But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. <sup>5</sup> For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." <sup>6</sup> So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate. <sup>7</sup> Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths.

This kind of diabolical deception not only happened back in Biblical times. The Deceiver and Master of Illusions is alive today and is busy for he knows his time is short. Even today, Satan offers "sight" to those who are spiritually blinded. Think of all the various branches of the New Age Movement and how they all

claim to have "spiritual insight", "sight", or think that God has revealed himself to them in some kind of dream or near-death vision of light.

Think of the drug-induced "light", "sight", "insight", and "creativity" that many well-meaning folk have believed that they possessed (this may be closer to what the 1970s Manfred Mann song is about!). Some "enlightened" and "brilliant" professors have used their great philosophy and logic to deny the existence of Jesus Christ. They think they have been "enlightened" but their "light" is truly hopelessness, anguish, angst and the pain of eternal death masked as something meaningful and educated. Remember, Satan is the master-counterfeiter and he can even counterfeit the light of God- - and yet it is really darkness (2 Corinthians 11:14). This "sight" Satan offers is shameful and leads to death because it prevents others from seeing the truth of Jesus Christ! Never forget what the Apostle Paul says in 2 Corinthians 4:3-6:

<sup>3</sup> And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled only to those who are perishing. <sup>4</sup> 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. <sup>5</sup> For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. <sup>6</sup> 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.

I love John 9:13: "They brought to the Pharisees the man who had formerly been blind." *The man who had formerly been blind*. There is no doubt about the fact that he now has sight...but they cannot see what is truly happening. Instead, in John 9:14-34 they humiliate the poor soul by asking him to testify concerning how he received back his sight. They use their flawed interpretation of the Law to condemn Jesus for giving sight to the man. They say that Jesus cannot be from God because he is healing on the Sabbath, and to heal on the Sabbath is to break the Sabbath in their estimation.

The man formerly blind is now interrogated concerning his knowledge of Jesus, and he has been given the privilege of speaking of the LORD Christ before the crowds even though he doesn't have the rich theological training that the Pharisees had. After a time of interrogation, the Pharisees cast the man out of their presence because he doesn't answer them according to their intimidation, and because he just didn't see the events in the same way the Pharisees saw them. The man formerly blind neither understands all of the theological nuances of the Pharisees' issue with healing on the Sabbath, nor why they are so dead set about calling Jesus a sinner, but at the end of the day he only knows one thing: "I once was blind but now I see" (9:25). This reminds us of an earlier passage in John 3:18ff:

<sup>18</sup> Whoever believes in [Jesus] is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God. <sup>19</sup> And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their deeds were evil. <sup>20</sup> For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. <sup>21</sup> But whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his deeds have been carried out in God."

We don't want to miss the implications of this passage in John 9:13-34. The Pharisees who were teachers of the light, could not see Jesus, the Light of the World and Messiah, because in reality they were blind. The Pharisees judge both Jesus and the blind beggar as both being sinners (9:16, 24,34), yet their sins are keeping them from truly seeing the truth. Think about yourself as a Christian, particularly when you were a new believer! When you became a Christian some in your family, many of your friends, judged you- -they interrogated you in your beliefs! For many of us they still come with their doubting smirks on their face, teasing us that "we have seen the light"! But they cannot see the hope of Jesus that we see!

The reason they cannot see the Jesus that we see is because He has restored our sight, but the light blinds them. Let me illustrate. Imagine yourself on a pitch-dark road at 2AM in the morning. Suddenly, a great tractor-trailer with headlights on bright drives up to where you are on the road. You face the burning bright lights face on. They blind you! Yet if you were to turn around, with your back to the lights, you would be able to see much around you. You would not be blinded, but you would have sight!

Many are like this illustration. When we tell of them of the grace and love of Jesus, the light of our joy and countenance overwhelm their sin-sick, dark lives. They are blinded by the light! They do not understand (as the Pharisees do not understand), that if they truly want to see, they must submit to the Lord Christ, turn from sin, and because of their union with him, they are enabled to see all things so clearly! As Calvin says in his commentary on 1 Corinthians (in the context of discussion the wisdom of God): "It is the blindness of the human mind and heart, which, surrounded by light, sees nothing."

Finally, notice the final words between Jesus and the man how had formerly been blind in John 9:35-41. This is a precious dialogue!

<sup>35</sup> Jesus heard that they had cast him out, and having found him he said, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" <sup>36</sup> He answered, "And who is he, sir, that I may believe in him?" <sup>37</sup> Jesus said to him, "You have seen him, and it is he who is speaking to you." <sup>38</sup> He said,

"Lord, I believe," and he worshiped him. <sup>39</sup> Jesus said, "For judgment I came into this world, that those who do not see may see, and those who see may become blind." <sup>40</sup> Some of the Pharisees near him heard these things, and said to him, "Are we also blind?" <sup>41</sup> Jesus said to them, "If you were blind, you would have no guilt; but now that you say, 'We see,' your guilt remains.

Jesus asked: "Do you believe in the Son of Man?"- The blind beggar says to him: "Lord, I believe". The Pharisees who had lived literally in the light of God's truth all of their lives say: "Are we also blind?", meaning only physically blind, and Jesus directs his criticism to their greater problem: "If you were blind, you would have no guilt; but now that you say, 'We see,' and so your guilt remains.

The man was born both physically, as well as spiritually blind from birth. The Pharisees were born physically with sight, but were spiritually blind from birth. We are all born spiritually blind and need the light to shine in our hearts so that we might see the glorious truth of the gospel and have the "eyes of our hearts" enlightened.

Jesus does a "Satanic-Reversal". He restores true sight that was lost in Eden, and allows those who think they can see to continue still in their blindness. God comes through the gospel of Christ Jesus and comes into the deep and dark corridors and caverns of our cold hearts to warm them and to say to them: "Let there be light" (2 Cor. 4:6) and "Arise, shine for the light has come" (Isaiah 60:1-2).

Do you believe that Jesus is the Son of Man? Can you say that you "once were blind, but now you see"? Are you blind and so receive sight through Christ? Or, can you see and so reject Christ in your blindness. If you can see because of the gospel penetrating your heart, then live as children of light!

As Christ's people, we are the light of the world! We shine in the darkness wherever we have been placed in this world. We are called by God to live as children of the light (Eph. 5:6-16). But how? The Apostle Paul teaches us in Ephesians 5:6-16:

<sup>6</sup> Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. <sup>7</sup> Therefore do not associate with them; <sup>8</sup> for at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light <sup>9</sup> (for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true), <sup>10</sup> and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord. <sup>11</sup> Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them. <sup>12</sup> For it is shameful even to speak of the things that they do in secret. <sup>13</sup> But when anything is exposed by the light, it becomes visible, <sup>14</sup> for

anything that becomes visible is light. Therefore it says, "Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you."<sup>15</sup> Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise,<sup>16</sup> making the best use of the time, because the days are evil.

Now you think about that.