

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

To Believe or Not To Believe John 9:36-38

We read a great deal about Muslim terrorists who in the name of Allah are willing to blow themselves up. So, what are you willing to do in the name of Christ? I would hope that you might respond, “I am not only willing to die for Christ, I am willing to live for Christ, not just once in a while or when it is convenient, but all the time.”

If this is your desire, you are not alone. I believe that the blind man who was healed by Christ in **John 9** would share this very same desire, which we will see this as we consider **John 9:35-38**. In this section of verses, we are continuing to consider various characteristics of spiritual sight.

So, what was the first characteristic of spiritual sight that we considered last week? Spiritual sight is the product of divine initiative (John 9:35). Let me read for you **John 9:35**. **“Jesus heard that they had put him out; and finding him, He said, 'Do you believe in the Son of Man?'"** This former blind man had been put out of the synagogue because, in his continuing support of Christ, he dared to instruct the Pharisees. But even though he may have been cut off from the social and religious life of the nation of Israel, he had not been cut off from Christ's concern. Jesus therefore found him and spiritually challenged him with the question **“Do you believe in the Son of Man,”** or in other words, **“Do you believe in the Messiah.”** We will now go on to consider other characteristics of spiritual sight that we find in **John 9:35-38**.

My hope for this message as we consider these remaining characteristics is that though there may be a number of different things associated in this passage with spiritual sight, with bringing us spiritual sight, it is the finale that is most important of all, and that is when we lay our lives down before Christ in humble submission to do His will whether in life or death.

So what is the second characteristic of spiritual sight that we find in **John 9:35-38**?

Spiritual sight comes to those who are prepared to believe in Him (John 9:36). Let us now read **John 9:36** and listen to the blind man's response to Christ's question about whether or not he believed in the Son of Man. **“He answered and said, 'And who is He, Lord, that I may believe in Him?'"** Notice that the former blind man addresses Jesus as “lord.” What is the significance of this?

When the blind man addresses Jesus and asks Him to identify the Messiah, he addresses Him as “lord,” which would be equivalent to our word “sir.” This respectful address, of course, would be expected since he has already acknowledged before the Pharisees that he believed that Jesus was a prophet.

Now let me ask you a question. Since this former blind man had such a high view of Jesus, do you believe that this former blind man was prepared to believe in whomever Jesus would indicate to him was the Messiah? Absolutely! I would even describe him as eager to believe.

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

How did he respond when Christ asked him, “Do you believe in the Son of Man?” He responded, **“Who is He, Lord, that I may believe in Him?”** This response reeks of eagerness. So, let us for a moment consider the following question.

What had the Lord used to bring this former blind man to this point? First of all, this former blind man had been given enough instruction over the course of his life that he understood perfectly what Christ meant when he was asked if he believed in the “Son of Man.” He knew Jesus was asking him if he believed in the Messiah. It wasn't as if he had to have this expression explained to him.

This was similar to what I personally experienced in my own life. In other words, I had certain fundamentals in place before I ever exercised faith that were very helpful. I grew up in a country and within a family that embraced the concept of a triune God. I grew up in a country and within a family that viewed Christ as the Son of God. My exposure to and willingness to intellectually embrace these concepts were essential in preparing me to eventually exercise saving faith. If I had grown up in a country like Japan that believes that there are many gods or in a Muslim country that believes in a single god but not the triune God, these would have been obstacles that I would have to overcome before any gospel presentation would have made any sense to me at all.

This blind man, because he had been well prepared, did not have these kinds of obstacles when Jesus asked him, **“Do you believe in the Son of Man?”**

How else had the blind man been prepared to believe? When Christ miraculously healed this former blind man, he began to look to Christ as the source of divine truth. How do we know this? We know this because he told the Pharisees that he believed that Jesus was a prophet sent from God. Before a person is prepared to believe, they need to come to the place in their lives where they have correctly identified the source of divine truth. This blind man had done that.

Reflecting back on my own life, I believe I know when the Lord accomplished that very same thing in me. It was not accomplished in the same dramatic way as it was accomplished in the life of this former blind man, but the Lord nonetheless accomplished it. How? The Lord accomplished it through something so insignificant that it might even seem to you a little humorous.

When I was very young my parents bought a family Bible, and it was through the purchase of this family Bible that I discovered for myself personally the source of divine truth. How did this happen?

When my parents bought this Bible, it was prominently displayed in our living room. And I was fascinated with it. It was very large with gilded edges and the words “Holy Bible” emblazoned across the top of the cover with a very large picture of Christ just beneath those words. This prominently displayed book very subtly communicated to me as a young boy that the Bible, this “Holy Bible,” was a source of divine truth. A sacred book that needed to be respected for what it had to say above all other books. My parents may not have read this Bible or made sure that I understood the significance of what was contained in this Bible, but they certainly displayed it prominently, and God used it to impact my life and my view of where truth could be found.

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

So, how had God prepared this blind man to believe? He gave him the information that provided the necessary foundation for belief. He also brought him to the place where he had correctly identified the source of divine truth.

How else had the blind man been prepared to exercise saving faith? When the blind man was put out of the synagogue, it accentuated his sense of spiritual need. This was a horrible thing to happen to this man. He had been cut off from the social and religious life of the nation of Israel. It was as if his heart had been ripped out. But having his sense of spiritual need heightened by having been put out of the synagogue was not necessarily a bad thing. In fact, it turned out to be a very good thing.

Having a sense of spiritual need is critical if people are going to exercise saving faith. Why would I say this? I would say this because though having certain basic fundamental truths in place is important and though knowing the source of divine truth is important, we will invariably not take the necessary leap of faith into arms of Jesus unless we have come to the place where we personally feel we need to do so. Certainly, I believe, this was true on the part of this former blind man. And I believe that this is true on the part of anyone who ultimately embraces Christ as their Lord and Savior.

Jesus certainly produced this sense of need in me. He did not do this through a moment of crisis, as he may have done with this former blind man, but He did do this.

How? In my case, he used my conscience. As a young man I continually found myself doing the things I shouldn't and not doing the things I should. Because of this, I had this incredible sense of spiritual need. I was fully aware that I was a sinner, and I found myself totally helpless in changing who I was. Perhaps, if I were an older man, the Lord would have had to put me in the midst of a crisis to create in me a sense of need, but as a young man this was totally unnecessary since my conscience all by itself had created in me a sense of spiritual need.

So, what have we seen so far? What are the characteristics of spiritual sight? Not only is spiritual sight the product of divine initiative, not only does it involve preparation, but there is also something else.

Spiritual sight requires that the person who is prepared to believe is actually given the opportunity to believe (John 9:37). Let us now read **John 9:37**. “**Jesus said to him, 'You have both seen Him, and He is the one who is talking with you.'**” Jesus, in this response, clearly identifies Himself as the Son of Man, or in other words, as the Jewish Messiah. And in identifying Himself as the Messiah, He gave to this former blind man a wonderful gift. What was that gift?

When Jesus identified Himself in the way that He did, He gave the former blind man the opportunity to believe in Him as the Messiah.

Jesus had taken the initiative in finding this very well-prepared blind man after he had been put out of the synagogue, and Jesus was now giving this same blind man the opportunity to believe in Him as the Messiah. There are a lot of well-prepared people in this world today that need to be given this very same opportunity. Certainly this was true of me. So, how was I given an opportunity to believe?

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

I was invited to participate in a church volleyball tournament by some friends from school. Was I a Christian? No! Had I been prepared by Christ to become a Christian? Yes! But at the point of this invitation I only knew a little bit about Jesus, but I did not personally know Him. But this was about to change. Things were quickly going to come to a head.

After the tournament, all the young people were brought together in a room, and the youth pastor of the church stood up in front of the group and gave us the opportunity to believe in the claims of Christ.

He told us that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of the living God, who came into this world to die for our sins according to the Scriptures, that He was buried and rose again the third day according to the Scriptures, and that through His death, burial, and resurrection He had opened a door to heaven through which any person could enter by faith. He then gave us this challenge. He challenged those who wanted to be set free from their sins and the consequences of those sins to step through that door by faith. That youth pastor was providing me the opportunity through his challenge to personally respond to the claims of Christ. This was a necessary thing for me. In fact, it is a necessary thing for every person that God has prepared to believe. They must be given the opportunity to respond to His claims.

But just being given the opportunity still is not enough; we must still respond to that opportunity.

This leads to a fourth characteristic of spiritual sight. Not only is spiritual sight the product of divine initiative, not only does spiritual sight come to those who are prepared to believe, not only does spiritual sight come to those who are given the opportunity, but spiritual sight only comes to those who, when given the opportunity to believe, actually do so (John 9:38). Let me read for you the first part of **John 9:38**. “**And he said, 'Lord, I believe.'**”

Should we be surprised at this response? No! How could we be surprised at this response? He had been prepared to believe in Him. He was spiritually ripe and ready to be plucked, and as soon as He was given the opportunity to believe in Jesus as the Messiah, He believed. His spiritual eyes were opened. And he declared, “Lord, I believe.” Notice that he once again addresses Jesus as “lord.” But this time it would have been used differently.

Because the spiritual eyes of the former blind man were opened when he believed, his use of the term “lord” in John 9:38 would have been much more meaningful than it was in John 9:36. This man had been transformed, and His view of Christ had been dramatically altered. He was not using the term to show respect but reverence!

This should be an encouragement to us to keep sharing the gospel when we are given the opportunity to do so. Someone might ask, “Should we be sharing the gospel even with people we do not know very well?” Of course! If we are given the opportunity, we need to step through that door and take advantage of it. Why? We can never know when God is bringing across our path someone He has personally prepared to believe.

This was the case for me the night I participated in that church volleyball tournament and was later given the opportunity by the youth pastor to respond to the claims of Christ. I had never met this youth pastor. But I had been well prepared to hear the Lord's voice speaking to me that night

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

through that youth pastor as he taught us from God's Word. I am eternally grateful to him for the opportunity that He afforded me to believe in Christ.

How did I respond to that opportunity? As soon He invited those who were in the room to step through the door that Christ opened by faith, I made the choice to step through that door, and I my eyes were spiritually opened.

Spiritual sight is the product of divine initiative. Spiritual sight comes to those who are prepared to believe. Spiritual sight requires that the person who has been prepared to believe is actually given the opportunity to do so, and when the opportunity presents itself that he actually does it. And last of all, spiritual sight results in the worship of Christ (John 9:38).

Let us now read **John 9:38**. “**And he said, 'Lord, I believe.' And he worshiped Him.**” Obviously, believing Jesus to be the Messiah changed this former blind man's response to Christ. He was no longer treating Jesus simply respectfully as he had done earlier, but now it would appear that he was treating Him reverently.

So, what exactly is going on here when it says that this former blind man worshiped Him? The word “worship” (PROSKYNEO) means to prostrate oneself before. This former blind man, apparently now possessing spiritual sight and seeing Jesus not merely as a prophet but now as the Messiah, laid himself down on the ground before Christ. Wow! Obviously a significant change had taken place.

But we need to be careful not to take this action on the part of the blind man further than we should. In other words, we should not think that this act of worship, or in other words this act of obeisance or prostrating himself before Christ, means that this former blind man understood Jesus to be God.

Why would I say this? First of all, there are times when people are described as worshiping or prostrating themselves before a certain man and it does not mean that they doing this because they believe that the person is God.

Certainly this was the case in **Acts 10**. In **Acts 10:5**, God told Cornelius to send men to Joppa in order to bring the man Simon Peter back to him. And when this finally took place and Simon Peter entered the home of Cornelius, what does **Acts 10:25** tell us that Cornelius did? Let me read this passage for you. “**And when it came about that Peter entered, Cornelius met him, and fell at his feet and [What?] worshiped him.**” This word for “worship” in **Acts 10** is the very same word for “worship” in **John 9:38**. Did Cornelius believe that Simon Peter was God? No! The Lord had told Cornelius that Simon Peter was a man. But even so, **Acts 10:25** tells us that Cornelius was worshiping Peter. His worshiping of Peter in **Acts 10:25** had nothing to do with him believing that Peter was God. And this is how we should understand the worship that is being described in **John 9:38**, since this blind man at this point in his life did not have enough information to come to that conviction.

So, why did the blind man prostrate himself before Christ? Why did the blind man give obeisance to Christ if it wasn't because he recognized Jesus as God? I believe that when the blind man prostrated himself before Christ, he was acknowledging Christ's right as Israel's Messiah to rule over his life. He was acknowledging Christ's right to rule over him entirely, both in life and in death.

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

CONCLUSION

When I heard that message from that youth pastor over 40 years ago, I believed that message, and my spiritual eyes were opened. And then you know what I did? I worshiped Him, not by physically prostrating myself before Him but by spiritually prostrating myself before Him, not simply as the Messiah of the nation of Israel, but more importantly as the only begotten Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me. Or in other words, I committed myself to doing whatever Christ would have me to do, whether that meant living for Him or dying for Him. Is that commitment still in place? Absolutely! It is still in place.

May we, by God's grace, continue to prostrate of ourselves before the only begotten Son of God, not only willing to die for Him but also to live for Him.