

## **Grace Gives Sight**

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John 9

**What has four letters, occasionally has twelve letters, always has six letters but never has five letters.**

At first glance the above sentence might look like a riddle and sound like a riddle. Perhaps you are staring at it now trying to figure out what is the answer. It's one of those things in life that you might stare at in confusion for a while. Yet, once the key to understanding is revealed to you, suddenly you can see. It seems so obvious and so easy.

In John chapter nine Jesus opens the eyes of a man who was blind from birth. However, Jesus tells us himself that the physical miracle is only there as a demonstration of the greater spiritual truth.

**John 9:39 And Jesus said, "For judgment I have come into this world, that those who do not see may see, and that those who see may be made blind."**

All our lives we are blind. We are staring at the "riddle" of life, but we don't get it. Those who think that they do get it, like the Pharisees, are the most blind. Jesus tells the Pharisees in verse 41.

**John 9:41 "If you were blind, you would have no sin; but now you say, 'We see.' Therefore your sin remains"**

The Pharisees and many others think they already understand and so they are even more blind. Those who realize they are lost and confused and blind, Jesus has come to give them sight. He explains to us a truth that we would never ever realize on our own, and when He does all of a sudden everything make sense.

The key to understanding the seeming riddle above is to notice that there is a period at the end not a question mark. It is not a question. It is not a riddle. It is a simple statement of fact. The word "what" has four letters. The word "occasionally" has twelve letters.

The key to understanding Jesus is the grace of God that we hear about in John 3:16.

**John 3:16 God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son**

Some of you might be able to figure out that "riddle" on your own, but none of us would ever understand God on our own.

As the prophet Isaiah reminds us **"Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, Nor have entered into the heart of man The things which God has prepared for those who love Him."** 1 Corinthians 2:9

It is only when Jesus reveals the truth of His grace that our eyes are truly open to see. We pray that God would open our eyes this morning to see the truth of His grace.

**John 9:1-7** Now as *Jesus* passed by, He saw a man who was blind from birth. <sup>2</sup> And His disciples asked Him, saying, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" <sup>3</sup> Jesus answered, "Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but that the works of God should be revealed in him. <sup>4</sup> "I must work the works of Him who sent Me while it is day; *the* night is coming when no one can work. <sup>5</sup> "As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world." <sup>6</sup> When He had said these things, He spat on the ground and made clay with the saliva; and He anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay. <sup>7</sup> And He said to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam " (which is translated, Sent). So he went and washed, and came back seeing.

Fairness, equality, justice, these words sound noble and good and true. These words sound like the answer, but these are words that often hide and obscure the truth of who God is and what he has done for us.

It was a desire for justice and fairness that led the Pharisees and the disciples to assume that the man was blind because of sin. After all, that would be fair and just. He sinned. God is punishing him. That is logical.

Logically speaking the suffering of this world leads to only two possibilities. God is punishing those people for some sin or God does not exist and everything that happens in life is just chance. Those two possibilities are fair and just but they are the result of a legalistic mindset, a human mindset.

The truth that we heard two weeks ago, when Jesus was talking to Nicodemus, reveals something completely different. God so loved a sinful world that he sent his Son to die in our place.

When we stop looking with a legalistic mindset, what is good and fair and right, and instead look with a grace mindset we realize what Jesus teaches in our text. The world is not fair. It is not fair that Jesus died, and we get to go to heaven. It was not fair that this man was born blind. God does not do what is fair but instead he does what is according to His grace.

The grace of God in this case was that this man should suffer so that everyone including this man might have an opportunity to see the glory of God through Jesus Christ.

Legalistic thinking means if something bad happens God is punishing you, if something good happens God is pleased with you. This is fair and just and seems good to us, but it ends in death since that is what we all deserve. To demand fairness of God is shortsighted. It is blindness.

Grace thinking means that sometimes God asks us of us that we are born blind, that we get sick, that we have cancer, that we suffer, that we are persecuted and even that we die. This is not fair, but its end is life through Christ Jesus who died for our sins.

Learn to see everything through the grace of Jesus Christ and not through the rationalistic and legalistic mindset of men and you will see.

**John 9:13-17** <sup>13</sup> They brought him who formerly was blind to the Pharisees. <sup>14</sup> Now it was a Sabbath when Jesus made the clay and opened his eyes. <sup>15</sup> Then the Pharisees also asked him again how he had received his sight. He said to them, "He put clay on my eyes, and I washed, and I see." <sup>16</sup> Therefore some of the Pharisees said, "This Man is not from God, because He does not keep the

**Sabbath." Others said, "How can a man who is a sinner do such signs?" And there was a division among them. <sup>17</sup> They said to the blind man again, "What do you say about Him because He opened your eyes?" He said, "He is a prophet."**

Notice how quickly the Pharisees reject the miracle that is right before their eyes. They tell the man born blind that what he is claiming is impossible. The legalistic mindset when it is confronted by the works and words of God rejects them as impossible.

The grace mindset when it is confronted by the works and words of God marvels in wonder at the miraculous things that God has done. That is the difference between the Pharisees and the man born blind.

The Pharisees in our text claim, "**We know** what the Sabbath is. **We know** this man doesn't keep it. **We know** he cannot be from God."

How often haven't we heard the same thing in our lives.

"We know that people don't rise from the dead, therefore Jesus could not have risen from the dead."

"We know that it's impossible for all the animals of the world to fit in an ark, therefore the genesis flood cannot be true."

"We know that these rocks are millions of years old therefore a young earth creation cannot be true."

A very liberal theology professor was teaching bible history at a seminary. One day he went for a walk through the garden and saw a young student reading his bible with wide eyes and a look of excitement on his face.

"What are you so excited about?" the Professor asked.

"Well I was just reading how God opened the Red Sea for the Israelites so they could walk through on dry ground."

"Actually," the professor said, "the place they crossed was just a few inches of water. There was no miracle."

The professor continued to walk around the garden while the dejected students went back to reading God's word. When the professor came around again he found the student even more excited than before.

"What is it this time?" he asked the student.

"Sir," He responded, "I was just reading how God drowned the whole Egyptian army in a couple inches of water."

The legalistic mindset is so certain that it knows that it cannot see the miracles of God right in front of its face.

But it is not just the pharisees and atheists who say such things. We also get into this mindset of allowing our experiences to cause us to doubt the wonders that God has promised. Have you ever said or thought something like the following:

I know that my spouse is never going to change.

I know that things aren't going to get better in my life.

I know I can't handle this.

Phrases like these reveal a mind that is focused on my experience and not trusting in the power and promises of God.

We forget that Abraham had a son when he was 100, that Daniel spent the night in the lion's den without being eaten, that Elisha faced down the whole Syrian army, that Jonathan single handedly defeated an entire philistine army, that Peter and Paul healed a lame man.

The grace mindset does not worry about what I "know to be true" by virtue of my earthly experiences but rather it takes God at His word and at His promises and rejoices in what God says He has done and will do for us.

**John 9:24-34** <sup>24</sup> So they again called the man who was blind, and said to him, "Give God the glory! We know that this Man is a sinner." <sup>25</sup> He answered and said, "Whether He is a sinner *or not* I do not know. One thing I know: that though I was blind, now I see." <sup>26</sup> Then they said to him again, "What did He do to you? How did He open your eyes?" <sup>27</sup> He answered them, "I told you already, and you did not listen. Why do you want to hear *it* again? Do you also want to become His disciples?" <sup>28</sup> Then they reviled him and said, "You are His disciple, but we are Moses' disciples. <sup>29</sup> "We know that God spoke to Moses; *as for this fellow*, we do not know where He is from." <sup>30</sup> The man answered and said to them, "Why, this is a marvelous thing, that you do not know where He is from; yet He has opened my eyes! <sup>31</sup> "Now we know that God does not hear sinners; but if anyone is a worshiper of God and does His will, He hears him. <sup>32</sup> "Since the world began it has been unheard of that anyone opened the eyes of one who was born blind. <sup>33</sup> "If this Man were not from God, He could do nothing." <sup>34</sup> They answered and said to him, "You were completely born in sins, and are you teaching us?" And they cast him out.

Notice how the Pharisees first construct a framework of laws and then when something doesn't fit in that framework they zealously seek excuses. They weren't asking about Jesus to understand. They are asking to find some excuse to label Jesus a sinner.

The legalistic/human mindset seeks to delineate every aspect of God's law, confident that it can find all the answers and because it seeks to enumerate every aspect of the law it lives in fear of any and every mistake.

The grace mindset lives in God's grace, it loves God's law, but it does not fear God's law. The grace mindset knows that I am forgiven.

The Pharisees even though they think they are experts of the law, do not really understand the law at all. They see the law as a massive list. They think they can make a rule for every situation.

Because of our sinful nature we like the Pharisees simply cannot see God's law the way we ought too. There are some things that are definitely wrong, there are some things that are definitely right, but there are also a lot of situations which to us are unclear, grey, cloudy.

This is not a failure of God's law or of God's word. God's law is not relative. It is absolute. There is right and there is wrong. The problem is not God's word or God's law but our view of it. We are blinded by our sinful nature. It's like attempting to drive in the winter without scrapping your windshield. Consequently we sometimes fall into the trap of attempting to make lists. These lists go on forever because every situation is slightly different. In so doing we often obscure rather than reveal God's truth. The truth of God is the love of God.

We live by Grace. This does not mean we deny the law, but rather that we accept our sinful nature. We do our best but acknowledge at the end of the day that we have failed. We do not worry because we know that Jesus died for our sins. We do not deny the law but neither do we fear it.

We are like children learning to color. We try to stay in the lines, but if we go out we know our God love us anyway. God's grace in Christ Jesus is not dependent on how well we stay inside the lines.

When we fall into the human/ logical / legalistic view of things we are blind. We think we are seeing clearly but we are not. When we see by grace our eyes are open to the truth. The truth of Jesus is the grace of God which gave Himself for us. See the love of God in Christ Jesus and marvel at his wonders.