

## The Blind Man Whose Eyes were Opened Twice

### John 9

Unsung Heroes and Heroines of the Faith

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Sunday, January 4, 2004

If a friend were to ask, "Why are you a Christian?" what would you say? Would you mumble something about this being a Christian nation, so of course you are a Christian, and aren't most people? Or would you pin it on your parents? They insisted that you go to church, and you just got in the habit. If you're not sure what you would say, take a good look at this man who was seeing people and palm trees for the first time in his life, thanks to Jesus. Under cross-examination by hostile authorities he develops a clear and convincing faith in Jesus Christ. And it happened in four stages.

First, through CONFESSION: "I am the man." What man? The blind man. The needy man. The man who could not help himself, could not heal himself, could not spring himself from the dark prison of blindness. "I am the man who was stumbling through life because I couldn't see where I was going." This is always the first stage on the way to a clear and convincing faith, this confession that we can't see where we're going. And that is something that most of us resolutely refuse to do! It's so embarrassing to confess that we're lost, even if only on our way to a friend's house for a party. Where is the man in this congregation who willingly stops at a service station to get directions? If you'll raise your arm, there are several dozen wives in this room who would like to shake your hand because their husbands absolutely refuse to stop and ask. And I'm one of them. To me, stopping to ask directions is a sign of weakness and stupidity, so I keep on driving, when, of course, driving without directions is the true sign of weakness and stupidity.

Life, with its contours and complexities, its mysteries and dilemmas, demands that we stop and ask directions, for if we do not, we will spend our lives wandering through all the wrong neighborhoods. We will dip in and out of strange religions, play around with odd philosophies, or pretend that we know where we are going, all the while getting more and more lost. Life's urgent questions are these: "Who am I?" "Why am I here?" "Where am I going?" "How can I make my life count for something?" But you won't find answers until you first confess that you don't know the answers. You won't arrive at the right destination unless you stop and ask for directions.

Now here's the surprise: the minute you confess you're lost, help is on the way. It's as if you stopped on your way to that party to read a street sign, when suddenly a AAA representative tapped on your window and said, "I know the way; follow me." That's what Jesus Christ does. I call it INTERVENTION, and it's the second stage on the way to a clear and convincing faith. It's not as though this blind man found an answer to his need, so much as the answer found this blind man. JESUS saw the man; he didn't see Jesus, because he was blind. JESUS spat on the ground. JESUS made mud from the spittle. JESUS applied the mud to the man's eyes. JESUS said to the man, "Go, wash in pool of Siloam." JESUS intervened without even being asked by the blind man.

And Jesus is just as ready to intervene here and now as he was there and then. You see, the Bible is not the story of our search for God. The Bible, from start to finish, is the record of God's search for us. In the opening chapters of Genesis God walks in the garden, looking for his disobedient children, Adam and Eve. That's metaphorical language, to be sure, but it points nevertheless to a God who comes to us even when we, like Adam and Eve, are running away from God. A few chapters later God intervened again, by drawing Abraham away from his ancestral home in order to give birth to a new people in a new land. Abraham wasn't out looking for God; God went looking for Abraham. And God's most notable intervention took place in a cow barn in Bethlehem. In the birth of Jesus, God intervened personally in our long and seemingly hopeless battle with death and hell. That's who anointed the blind man's eyes, the God who came in Jesus.

And that's who is nudging you right now, offering to heal you of your own particular blindness. And if that's the case, pay attention to the third stage on the way to a clear and convincing faith: CLARIFICATION. Ironically, it was the interrogation by the bystanders and the authorities that gave this man clarity about the identity of Jesus. The bystanders first asked him, "How were your eyes opened?" He responded, "A man called Jesus" did it. Note that: "A man" did it. Then the authorities took over and asked, "What do you say about" this man? He replied, "He is a prophet." You can see the wheels turning in his mind, can't you? "Yes," he thinks, "Jesus is a man, but to do what he did for me he must be more than a man; he must be a prophet." And when the authorities try to convince him that Jesus is a nobody, he fires back, "Never since the world began has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a man born blind. If this man were not from God, he could do nothing." Little by little his spiritual eyes are opening. Bit by bit he is seeing more and more in Jesus: first "a man," then "a prophet," and now one "from God."

Finally, Jesus asks, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" The title "Son of Man" first appears in the seventh chapter of Daniel, several hundred years before Jesus. There, God gives the Son of Man "dominion and glory and kingship, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him." (Daniel 7:14) Daniel's Son of Man is more than a man. The Son of Man is a full partner with God in God's "dominion, glory, and kingship." And when Jesus identifies himself as the Son of Man, the once-but-no-longer-blind man confesses, "Lord, I believe." Now he sees with perfect clarity. Now, his eyes have been opened a second time. "You are more than a man, more than a prophet, more even than one who comes from God. You are the Son of Man Daniel promised would come. God has chosen you, Jesus, to rule over nations, all people, and all things."

So, finally, there is ADORATION: "He worshiped him." Worship? But surely only God is worthy of our worship. Yes, and that's just the point. When this man's eyes are fully opened, he sees the face of God in the face of Jesus, and he can do no other than bend his knee in adoration.

Bill Yakely didn't need God. He was happily married with two small children. He had a thriving veterinary practice in Spokane, Washington. He had a lovely home on the side of Five Mile Hill. One day, however, he had a dog on his operating table, and in the

middle of surgery, at a critical point in the surgery, he went blind mentally. His eyes were open, but he couldn't see what to do next. In that terrifying moment he uttered a one-word prayer to a God he didn't know: "Help!" Suddenly his inner eyes opened, he saw what he had to do, and the surgery was successful. A few days later Bill and his wife Karen asked Carol and me to visit in their home because he wanted to be introduced to the God who had heard his prayer and cured his inner blindness. Today Bill is a Presbyterian elder who works not only with animals but with teenage addicts and alcoholics, introducing them to the Savior. He has a clear and convincing faith, because God heard him when he prayed, and opened his eyes twice: first, to see his patient, and then, to see his Savior.

God has heard you, even when you didn't know you were praying. God has helped you, even when you weren't aware God was in the neighborhood. God has been reaching out to you all your life. Isn't it time you were properly introduced?