

John 5:1-16 & 9:1-41 – A Tale of Two Men – Part 2

In John 5, Jesus healed a man who was lame for 38 years. In John 9, Jesus gave sight to a man born blind. Jesus found both men. They didn't seek out Jesus. In John 5, Jesus had a short discussion with the lame man. In John 9, Jesus did not talk with the blind man before his healing. Instead, he had a discussion with his disciples about why the man was born blind. The disciples believed that the man was born blind because either he committed a great sin or his parents committed a great sin. Jesus said that neither option was true. The blind man and his parents were not without sin, but their sin was not why the man was born blind. He was born blind "that the works of God might be displayed in him." Jesus told the lame man, "Get up, take up your bed, and walk". And at once the man was healed. John did not mention anything between Jesus' command to walk and the man's healing. Jesus did not ever say to the man that his faith had made him well. Jesus did not say to the man that his effort to walk in response to Jesus' command effected his healing. If the man just laid there after Jesus' command, he was still already healed. Even though they were by the Pool of Bethesda, Jesus did not use the pool to heal the lame man. On the other hand, Jesus sent the blind man to the Pool of Siloam to wash. The Pool of Siloam was not known for any healing power. The Pool of Siloam was a fair walk for the blind man. After the blind man went and washed, he received his sight. There is more evidence to say that the blind man needed to walk and wash before he could see. But the healing can't be contributed to the man's actions. He was given sight for the Glory of God and to prove that Jesus is the Light of the World. In part 2, we will look at the men's interaction with the Jewish religious leaders. We will also look at Jesus' second encounters with both men.

Read John 5:10-14.

When the Jewish religious leaders told the man who had been lame that it was not lawful for him to carry his bed roll on the Sabbath, how did the man respond? Why did the man mention "the man who healed me"? Did he try to change the subject to the fact that he had been healed after being lame for 38 years? Or, did he try to shift the blame from himself to "the man who healed me"? Shifting blame goes back to the Garden of Eden. When God confronted Adam with his sin, he put the blame on Eve and also on God because God gave Eve to Adam. Eve blamed the serpent. Did the man who was lame exhibit the same nature as Adam and Eve? In verse 12, notice that the leaders did not ask him who healed him but "who is the man who said to you 'Take up your bed and walk'". They didn't care about the healing, their focus was on the breaking of the Sabbath. What did the man say when the leaders asked him, "who is the man"? What does his response say about the man? I find it hard to believe that this man was a model of faith when he didn't know Jesus' name. Can you truly share the Gospel, in New Testament times, without mentioning the name of Jesus? Matthew Henry and John Calvin believed that this man was a model of faith and obedience. Matthew Henry wrote in his commentary, "He took up his bed and walked, and did not care who blamed him or threatened him for it." John Calvin wrote in his commentary, "The defense is, that he who had been cured replies that he does nothing but by the command of him who had power and authority to command; for, though he did not yet know who Christ was, yet he was convinced that he had been sent by God, because he had received a proof of his divine power, and learns from it that Christ is endued with authority, so that it must be his duty to obey him." Where is the evidence of these claims in the text? After his initial encounter with the religious leaders, where did the man go? Did he seek out Jesus?

Read John 9:8-12.

When his neighbors asked him how he received his sight, what did the former blind man say? Notice that they asked “how”. The man first responded with “who”. Jesus had sent the blind man away to wash in the Pool of Siloam. How did the blind man know Jesus’ name? Did the blind man spend any more time with Jesus than the lame man spent with Jesus?

Read John 9:13-17.

Notice that there was no mention of Jesus’ name in 9:13-34 except for John’s note in verse 22 that if anyone confessed that Jesus was the Christ, they would be put out of the synagogue. But it is apparent that the “he” of these verses is Jesus. The Jewish religious leaders never asked who healed the blind man. It seems apparent that the word had already spread that Jesus gave sight to the man born blind. John’s note in verse 22 makes it clear that the center of attention was Jesus. The fact that Jesus gave sight to the man born blind was why the religious leaders were going out of their minds. The healing was good for Jesus’ reputation but bad for the religious leaders who opposed Jesus. Remember that they had just tried to stone Jesus and now he had given sight to a man born blind, something that was unheard of. It wasn’t a good look for them. What did the religious leaders think about Jesus? When they asked the former blind man what he thought about Jesus, what did he say?

Read John 9:18-23.

The religious leaders were desperate and decided that the “blind man” was never really blind. They talked to his parents. What did the parents confirm? Why did the parents go out of their way to say that they did not know WHO opened their son’s eyes?

Read John 9:24-34.

What did the religious leaders want the former blind man to do? What did they say about Jesus? How did the former blind man respond when they told him that they knew that Jesus was a sinner? What do verses 28-29 say about the former blind man’s desire to follow Jesus? In verse 24, the religious leaders said “**we know** that this man is a sinner”. In verse 31, I believe the man responded to their accusation in verse 24 by saying “**we know** that God does not listen to sinners”. The former blind man was basically saying that he did know that Jesus was not a sinner because Jesus would not have been able to give him sight if Jesus was a sinner. What did the former blind man say about Jesus by implication? What did the religious leaders say about the former blind man? Their views on illness were the same as the disciples at the beginning of the chapter. My question to the religious leaders would be, if the man was born blind because of utter sin, what did it say about the man now that he had received his sight? In their eyes, wouldn’t it make him a really good person? Obviously they didn’t think so. What did they do to the former blind man?

Read John 5:14-15.

Where did Jesus find the former lame man? Notice that Jesus found him and not the other way around. What did Jesus say to the former lame man? What did Jesus mean? What would be worse than being lame for 38 years? Do you think Jesus' statement was a reflection on why the man had been lame for 38 years? Is illness sometimes the result of specific sin? What did the former lame man find out about Jesus?

Read John 9:35-41.

Jesus heard what had happened to the former blind man and Jesus found him. We are not told where Jesus found him. What did Jesus ask the former blind man? Why do you think Jesus used the phrase "Son of Man"? How did the man respond to Jesus' question? What did Jesus reveal to the man? How did the man respond to Jesus' reveal? What did Jesus mean by his statement in verse 39? What camp did the former blind man fall into? What camp did the Pharisees fall into? How were the Pharisees blind? How did the former blind man exhibit "sight" even before he received his physical sight?

Read John 5:15-16.

What did the former lame man do after his encounter with Jesus in the temple? Why did he seek out the Jewish religious leaders? Did he want to make sure that Jesus got credit for the healing? Remember that the leaders did not ask him anything about his healing. For all they knew he may have been cured of a cold. Do you think that he sought them out so that the religious leaders would focus on Jesus' command to "break the Sabbath" instead of focusing on his "breaking the Sabbath"? We are not told what his motives were. All we can see is the results of his actions. What resulted when the former lame man told the leaders that Jesus healed him? That is, he told the leaders that Jesus was the one who told him to "break the Sabbath". Was the former lame man so naive that he thought the religious leaders would congratulate Jesus on performing the lame man's healing and forget about the Sabbath offense?

John Calvin wrote in his commentary, "Nothing was farther from his intention than to make Christ an object of their hatred, and nothing was farther from his expectation than that they would rage so furiously against Christ. His intention, therefore, was pious; for he wished to render to his Physician the honor which was justly due to him." How was Calvin able to divine the man's intentions? Where in the text does it tell us that the man's motives were pure as the wind driven snow?

Do you believe with Matthew Henry and John Calvin that the man who had been lame for 38 years was a model of faith, obedience and purity? Or do you believe that this man was more comfortable with the religious leaders than he was with Jesus? He sought out the religious leaders. He never sought out Jesus. He walked away from Jesus twice.