

## **John Part 29 - Sermon Manuscript - John 9:1-5 - Light of the World**

It's been a few weeks but we're finally back in the gospel of John. If you're just joining us, we've been going through John since last September and as always, you can watch any of our previous sermons on [reftonchurch.org](http://reftonchurch.org), or our Refton Church Youtube Channel.

**If you have your bibles, go ahead and turn to John chapter 9.**

### **[Advance slide - Pastor Scott on Screen]**

So, whenever we read the bible, it's good to remember that you're reading words that a real person from history wrote. They wrote with purpose. They wrote to specific people for specific reasons. And in this case, John wrote to Jewish Christians that were experiencing persecution and expulsion from their religious communities.

Imagine growing up going to your local Jewish synagogue - think of a synagogue like a church. You grew up around these people. Many of them were your own family. You lived, worked and worshiped together all your life.

When you needed spiritual advice and encouragement, your church family was there. When you needed help, your church family was there. When you were going through a difficult time in life, they were there.

And as a Jew, you and your church family were eagerly waiting for the promised Messiah to come and take back the promised land that God gave to your ancestors.

Then one day you hear about a man named Jesus. You find out that He is actually claiming to be this Messiah! But He didn't come to overthrow the government. He came to save His people from their sins.

And that's when everything clicks for you... You're convinced that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God that saves you from your sins when you put your faith in Him.

And, I mean... this news is REALLY exciting! This isn't like you've just discovered the next best TV show. This is LIFE CHANGING news! God has literally come down in the flesh... He walks among us!

Again, imagine you're that 1st century Jewish person. You've just placed your faith in Jesus and you're all amped up about it! You can't help but run to the synagogue the next day to tell everyone about Jesus! And that's exactly what you do...

But not long after you open your mouth, the synagogue leaders ridicule you for following Jesus. Maybe some people wanted to know more about Jesus, but the religious leaders weren't having it. In fact, **they mandated that anyone who acknowledged this Jesus guy as the Messiah would be kicked out of the synagogue** (John 9:22).

And that's exactly what happened to you. You were tossed out into the street by the very people you loved... the very people you thought were your church family. You're shunned!

Now what? What do you do? Who do you turn to? Maybe doubts about Jesus start setting in? You might wonder: *How do I know for sure that Jesus really is the Messiah? How do I know for sure that He's saved me from my sins?*

You're probably feeling very alone. In fact, the word is getting around about how you've been kicked out of the synagogue. And the more people know about it, the more shame is brought down on you.

You might even start thinking about rejecting Jesus because the loss you've just experienced seems too much to bear.

But then you hear about a small gathering of Jesus followers. You decide to attend, and as you enter, someone starts to read John's gospel letter. And as you sit there and listen, you're hearing all about the signs and miracles that Jesus performed. And as the letter comes to a close, you hear these words from John:

**John 20:30-31 - Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.**

John wrote his gospel so that anyone who reads it would know for sure that Jesus really is the promised Messiah, the Son of God... the one who forgives our sins and grants us eternal life with Him when we put our faith in Him.

So, John's gospel is just as relevant for us today as it was for 1st century Jewish Christians.

If you've been following along these past several months - or if you've ever read John - then you might remember that in the first 8 chapters that we've covered, Jesus performed some major signs as proof that He's God in the flesh.

**His miracles were more than just miracles.** The healings, the feeding of the thousands, the changing water into wine... all of these miracles were actually *signs* that revealed who Jesus really is: God!

The problem was that many people only saw the miracles - they didn't see past the miracles to the signs. Many "believed" in Him, but they believed for the wrong reasons.

John doesn't want us to mistake Jesus as just this miracle worker who can make our lives better. John wants us to know that Jesus is in fact God - all things were made through Him - and in Jesus is light and life for everyone that chooses to believe in Him.

**John equates Jesus to the light that shines in a dark world, and he says right out of the gate in chapter 1: the darkness has not overcome the light.**

That light is revealed through each sign Jesus performs. And so, today we're starting John chapter 9, and we're going to read about the 6th sign that John lists.

Remember, John could have written a lot more, but these signs were specifically chosen and written down so that we would know without a shadow of doubt that Jesus is our Lord and Savior.

**John 9:1-5 - As he went along, he saw a man blind from birth. 2 His disciples asked him, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?” 3 “Neither this man nor his parents sinned,” said Jesus, “but this happened so that the works of God might be displayed in him. 4 As long as it is day, we must do the works of him who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work. 5 While I am in the world, I am the light of the world.”**

Okay, so at this point Jesus is in Jerusalem with His disciples, and they ask Him an interesting question about the blind man. They assumed that because the man was born blind, either he sinned in the womb or his parents sinned - either way, they're assuming that his blindness is due to someone's sin!

Now, I grew up going to church and I don't remember being taught that our illnesses, or disabilities, or even just bad things that happened in our lives were the direct result of our sin or the sin of our parents.

If the bad things that happen in our lives are God's way of punishing us for our sins, then think about what that might mean for you and your family...

Maybe someone in your family passed from a disease like Muscular Dystrophy? Or maybe someone suffers from mental health challenges? Maybe someone suffered the horrors of abuse?

Imagine explaining to a victim of abuse that what happened to them was the result of either their own sin or a sin from their family. That's not the kind of teaching that brings people closer to Jesus - and besides that, it's not taught anywhere in the Scriptures. For instance...

**Exodus 34:6 - And he passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, “The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness...”**

**Exodus 34:7 - ...maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children and their children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation.**" (see also Exodus 20:5 and Deuteronomy 5:9)

On the surface this looks like sin is passed down from generation to generation. But that's not what this passage teaches. We went over this passage in a series called *Real Christianity* back in early 2021, but basically, this verse is talking about persistent sin that continues from one generation to the next.

It's like if I sin in a certain way, and then my son learns to sin in the same way, and then years later his son learns the same kind of sin from him... It's a continuation of that same sinful behavior from generation to generation.

So, again, it's not saying that my son will be punished by God for a sin that I committed. My sin might affect him somehow...

For example, imagine I became an alcoholic. What if every night I was coming home drunk and angry... that kind of sin would definitely affect my family... but it's still *MY* sin. I'm the one who will be held accountable for my own sin if I don't seek the forgiveness that only Jesus can give.

Ezekiel gives us this exact example in chapter 18. There's a father who commits all kinds of horrible sins - Sins like adultery, stealing, mistreating the poor... And the son witnesses all these things. He knows his dad is a bad guy! So the question is implied: Will the son suffer and die because of his father's sins?

**Ezekiel 18:20 - The one who sins is the one who will die. The child will not share the guilt of the parent, nor will the parent share the guilt of the child. The righteousness of the righteous will be credited to them, and the wickedness of the wicked will be charged against them.**

Again, the punishment goes to the one who committed the crime. It's their own wickedness that brings condemnation.

But as Christians, we understand that all of us have sinned - no one is righteous, not even one - as Paul says in his letter to the Romans. We're all in need of a Savior!

**We have an inability to save ourselves from our own sin.** But thankfully, through God's love and what Jesus did for us on the cross, our sins are completely forgiven when we put our faith in Jesus. That forgiveness is a gift from God that we don't deserve, but He gives it anyway because He loves us!

**We have to understand - from God's perspective, sin is sin.** We might think that stealing a candy bar isn't as bad as murdering someone. But to God, all sin is equally bad, because sin - by its very definition - is anything that goes against our perfectly holy God.

God is perfect. He is completely without sin. He's completely holy. Therefore He cannot tolerate sin (Habakkuk 1:13). He will not let sin go unpunished because He is a just God (Exodus 34:7).

And so, anyone that's unholy - anyone that sins, whether they steal a candy bar, having a sinful thought, or they murder someone - any sin is unholy to God, and no unholy being can stand in the presence of God.

As I said earlier, you and I are not perfect. We've all sinned and fallen short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23). But as Christians, we're being *made holy* through the power of Jesus.

**The writer of Hebrews says, "For by one sacrifice he [Jesus] has made perfect forever those who are being made holy" (Hebrews 10:14). If you're a follower of Jesus, then you fall into that 'being made holy' category.**

And so, let's bring this back to the assumption of the disciples in John chapter 9. They *assumed* that someone's sin caused this man to be blind!

If you've ever read the book of Job, the disciples are acting just like Job's buddies in this case. Job's life was falling apart. He lost everything. And his friends *assumed* that the reason he was suffering was because he sinned against God in some way. But that's *not* what was going on!

**So, this begs the question: If our hardships and disabilities aren't God punishing us for something we've done, then why do we face these things?**

The short answer is that we live in a fallen world. Sin first entered the world in Genesis chapter 3 when Adam and Eve disobeyed God, and humanity has been sinful ever since. The problem is that sin is what separates us from God.

Remember, sin is the opposite of holiness. God is holy - therefore, sin separates us from our perfectly holy God.

Now, I think about people in the Old Testament like Noah, Abraham and Job - all of these guys were described as righteous or finding favor in the sight of God. But none of them were perfect. They still sinned.

But their loyalty to Yahweh God never waivered. They never chose to serve the gods of the people around them - and when I say gods, I mean those real spiritual beings who rebelled against God and sought to be worshiped like Yahweh God.

People like Noah, Abraham and Job not only remained faithfully loyal to Yahweh God, but the New Testament tells us that their sins were eventually covered by Jesus on the cross (Hebrews 9:15)! And in that way, it's because of their faith in God that they were considered righteous... as Genesis 15:6 says about Abraham...

**Genesis 15:6 - Abram believed the LORD, and he credited it to him as righteousness.**

So again, if we're going through something difficult in our lives, we shouldn't automatically think that God is punishing us because of something we must have done.

The disciples in John 9 thought that the blind man or his parents *must* have sinned, but look at the response Jesus gives...

**John 9:3 - "Neither this man *nor* his parents sinned..."**

This has huge implications for how we view the world! Think about it...

- Was Covid-19 God's way of punishing the world for sin? No.
- In 2011 a tsunami hit Japan and killed about 20,000 people. Was that God's way of punishing them for sin? No.
- Is God using diseases like cancer to punish people for their sin? No.

All of these are the result of a broken and fallen world that we live in. And these examples might seem obvious, but if we're honest, we can all sometimes fall into the trap of thinking that the bad things in our life are God's way of punishing us.

**But that's just not true.** Bad things happen in this world because, again, this world is broken.

**But we're not left hopeless!** If we can look past the miracles and look to the signs that reveal Jesus as our Savior, then when we put our faith in Him, He forgives our sins! And as we continue our life in Jesus, He's continually making us holy as we learn to be more like Him.

Okay, so then maybe God allowed for the man to be blind all his life so that Jesus could heal him? Well, that's actually not what Jesus was getting at either...

**John 9:3 - "Neither this man nor his parents sinned ... but this happened so that the works of God might be displayed in him."**

This isn't saying that God purposely made this man blind for this exact moment - As if the whole purpose for his blindness was so that Jesus would come along and heal him.

We might think that at first, but that's only because of the way it's translated into English. The scholars I've read said that this is an unfortunate translation because it gives us the wrong impression.

It's not that the works of God "*might*" be displayed - as if we're uncertain. It's that the works of God *WILL* be revealed. **The emphasis is on the fact that God the Father sent Jesus to do the works of healing in order to show His glory.**

So, this guy had been blind all his life. But he's not blind because God dealt him a bad hand of cards... He's just blind. And you know, you and I might assume blindness was rare... it seems rare today, at least to me it does. But in the ancient world, blindness was very common because there really wasn't any way of treating eye diseases.

So, again, Jesus isn't saying that this man was specially chosen by God to be blind so that years later He could heal him. Jesus is saying that the works of God WILL be displayed through this man's blindness. The works of God being done through Jesus and His disciples is what's being emphasized.

And Jesus continues by saying...

**John 9:4-5 - As long as it is day** [in other words, as long as Jesus is in the world], **we** [Jesus and His disciples] **must do the works of him who sent me. Night is coming** [when Jesus is crucified], **when no one can work** [implying the time Jesus is crucified]. **5 While I am in the world, I am the light of the world."**

In other words, Jesus is saying in these two verses that as long as He is in the world, He and His disciples must continue to do the works of God so that people living in darkness might come to believe in Him.

And we know that after Jesus died and rose again, He commissioned all of His disciples to bring His gospel message to the world. This is why Jesus said in **Matthew 5:14 that "You are the light of the world."** The light of Jesus is inside all of His followers - including those of us today who put our faith in Him!

As Christians, we are the light of the world! We're to let His light shine through us so that people might see and come to know Jesus as their God and Savior of their sins.

**[Jeremy] I can't help but think of my friend Jeremy - you can see him on the left in the chair. He passed away several years ago from Muscular Dystrophy. But I remember his heart for Jesus. I remember how he chose to live his life telling others about Jesus, even while his body was failing.**

He was one of my youth leaders during my first ministry experience as a youth pastor. He had been serving that church as a youth leader for years - and he just connected so well with the kids. And I'm reminded of Him because he allowed Jesus to use him, even with the disease that was shutting his body down.

His disease wasn't the result of any particular sin. Jeremy knew he was a sinner - again all of us are sinners. But Jeremy also knew the forgiveness of Jesus. He experienced God's mercy and love, and He lived it out so that others would see Jesus.

That's what all Christians are called to do. Maybe we're going through some hard times right now? The temptation might be to internalize it and not allow God to work through our weaknesses.

But I would encourage all of us to start by praying. Ask God to strengthen you and use you for His glory. And remember that we're all part of this Refton Church family - we're in this together. We're called to build each other up in our faith. We're called to love one another - as we heard about last week. We're called to pray for one another.

Because that's what family does. I hope no one here and no one watching from home feels alone. We're all on this faith journey together.

So, let's ask God to use us - no matter our situations - so that He is glorified as others are being connected to Him.

**Let's Pray**