

# Who Turned On the Light? Part 2

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[ 0 : 00 ] That's one of my top three favorite hymns. It's my heart to see that, to live that.

When I was, Promise Keepers was really popular years ago, and 20,000 pastors were in Atlanta, Georgia, and we were hearing 20,000 pastors sing that hymn. We were falling over ourselves. That's when Bubba gave me the biggest hug of my life. I wonder where Bubba is right now, but he said his name was Bubba, and he was Bubba. Praise God for his mercy and grace.

Father, as we come now to your word, we would pray, be thou our vision, be thou our sight. Grant us eyes to see Jesus.

For seeing him is what makes the difference in our lives. What makes the chaos understandable, what gives us strength to do what is right, even when our emotions want us to do what is wrong.

[ 1 : 09 ] Oh God, it is vision of you that keeps marriages together. It is vision of you that heals homes and heals relationships. It is vision of you that helps us go through suffering and pain of all kinds.

It is seeing you. So Lord, help us. We need to see you. Forgive us, Lord, for not seeking that vision. Forgive us for looking everywhere else and giving everything else our attention, listening to the world and his horrible advice, rather than going to your word and beholding Christ and all of his glory that we might see with true eyes, with new eyes, with real eyes, with eyes that perceive reality the way you do.

Give us those eyes, Lord. Father, we need to see Jesus. We need to see ourselves. Help us to repent and walk in faith, trusting alone, alone in Christ.

So Father, be with us now as we look to hear your word. May you speak to us. May you open our eyes. May you glorify your son and use your unworthy servant to that end, to no other end, other than that Jesus might be glorified and your people might be edified.

And Lord, if you don't mind, make the devil horrified. In Jesus' name we ask. Amen. John chapter 9, verses 1 through 12.

[ 2 : 46 ] As he passed by, he saw a man blind from birth. His disciples asked, some rabbi who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind. Jesus answered, it was not that this man sinned or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him.

We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day. Night is coming when no one can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.

Having said these things, he spit on the ground, made mud with the saliva. Then he anointed the man's eyes with the mud and said to him, go wash in the pool of salam, which means scent.

So he went and washed and came back seeing. The neighbors and those who had seen him before as a beggar were saying, is this not the man who used to sit and beg?

Some said, it's him, it is he. Others said, nah. No, but he does look like him. He kept saying, I am the man.

[ 3 : 55 ] So they said to him, then how were your eyes opened? He answered, the man called Jesus made mud, anointed my eyes, and said to me, go to Siloam and wash. So I went and washed and received my sight.

They said to him, where is he? Where is he? Where is he? I don't know. That is the reading of the word of the Lord. Please be seated.

Hope you can feel that. I just, I try to enter in, you know, you read the Bible like you, like you there. I'm serious. It's called existential. Read the Bible as if you exist in the text.

It'll help you appreciate the humanity of the book as well as the divinity, divinity of it coming down.

Thank you, praise team. Can you imagine that if you were blind from birth, and I'm stretching here for many, for all of us, most of us, but if you were blind from birth, you have never seen, and they

performed an amazing eye surgery, maybe at Will's Eye in Philly or John Hopkins or somewhere, amazing eye surgery to restore your sight.

The first questions they would probably ask you after they took off the bandages would be, what do you see? can you see anything?

[ 5 : 23 ] And as your eyes begin to focus, and, you know, for the first time, you know, you're using them in a way they were meant to be used, and, you know, you're looking around the room, and you're, you're beginning to describe things, and I can see you now with great joy, you begin to describe everything you saw.

Probably be hard to stop you from describing things you saw. I mean, you've never seen a wall. You're in a hospital, don't forget. You look out the window, you've never seen a tree. You've never seen the light at all.

And you will start talking about what you see, and then you've never seen your parents. You've never seen your siblings. If you're married, you've never seen your spouse, and for the first time, you are with your, not just with, not with your hands touching, but with your eyes seeing.

Again, I say, we couldn't stop you from talking. Remember from last time, as we opened up this passage, we are asking this simple question, can you see?

That question is important because having your eyes open spiritually is not merely a one-time experience. It is a lifelong adventure of seeing with Jesus where our vision gets progressively better.

[ 6 : 54 ] or not. We begin to see things now from God's perspective.

That's what spiritual vision is, seeing things from God's perspective. And see, spiritual seeing changes our living. It changes our priorities.

It even changes how we suffer. But again, the question remains the same. Can you see? Maybe I should add another.

Is your vision growing? These are yes or no questions, but they are deep questions. Can you see? Is your vision growing? This man's blindness is real in our text.

It also shows us how all of us are by nature spiritually blind. We are unable to see the majesty and glory of Jesus. But when we do, we begin to see then even our suffering is being worked out that God might get glory in us and that we even might be more like Jesus.

[ 8 : 08 ] Only God can open our eyes to see these realities. And he's willing. He is also willing. Remember, as we dive back into the text, first thing I want you to notice in verses five through seven is that when Jesus heals your sight, you begin to obey him even when you don't have all the facts.

Because when the spiritually blind receive their sight, Jesus is the most important reality, most important truth in their lives. Now, Jesus, how can Jesus do this?

How is it possible? He can heal like this because as he said, while I am in the world, I am the light of the world. Now, he has said this before, don't you remember?

Back in chapter eight, verse 12, again, Jesus spoke to them saying, I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.

He said this at the end of that Jewish celebration we were studying called the Feast of Booths, which had a spectacular lighting ceremony. And Jesus, as the lamps were being lit and the place was awash with all kinds of firelight, Jesus stands up and says, that's nothing.

[ 9 : 41 ] I am the light of the world. I am. He claimed that he was the true light that guarded Israel in the wilderness and has come to enlighten all who will trust in him.

Now, our text begins by, as you read back in chapter eight, at the end there, you'll realize that Jesus is still in Jerusalem. He's walking away from the temple.

They tried to kill him and it wasn't time, so Jesus slips out and now he's walking through Jerusalem heading out of town. As he walks by, he sees this man and he decides to prove what he has said in chapter eight.

He decides to prove that he is the light of the world. So he comes to this man, he proves, once again, that he is the I am of the burning bush with Moses, the divine one who is able to create sight even when there was none at all.

This is, I think this is the only I am saying that he repeats, which points to its significance, I think. He proves his ability to enlighten humanity, which again speaks to our human condition.

[ 11 : 11 ] Without Jesus, we cannot see, have never seen, and will never see the glory of God, the light of the world until a miracle happens in us.

once you truly see Jesus and the light is truly turned on, you can never really go back. And if you try to go back, the light will haunt you. So if anyone's trying to go back, pretending that you can't see. Remember I told you last week about that exercise that we did in college and we were, we put those goggles on that blacked out the light, and I told you, remember I said that when, it was a horrifying experience, and I, when I, and I snatched off the goggles at one point and, but here's the thing about that experiment.

I was someone who could see pretending I couldn't. Spiritually, we do the same thing.

Sometimes we, we who can see Jesus, who have eyes to see, sometimes we pretend and act like we can't. We try to do things our way and tell God, you know, I know what you said, but this is what I prefer.

[ 12 : 31 ] Are you that person? Are you in a place right now where you're pretending that you can't see? He will haunt you because he loves you.

Just, no charge for this. Just saying this on the way to my point. No charge for that. Jesus, I'm saying that when he opens your eyes, you'll begin to obey him even when you don't have all the facts.

Listen, Jesus heals this man in a very unorthodox manner. However, in the ancient world, some believed that saliva had healing properties. That's not biblical, but that's what they believed.

Jesus mixes saliva in the dirt to make a mud salve. God, this scene makes us think of Genesis, doesn't it? The Son of God created humanity from the dirt, now he uses dirt to heal a man.

He who said, let there be light, now says, let there be sight. I wonder, I have to wonder, come on, I'm trying to enter into the text, come with me.

[ 13 : 34 ] I wonder if the man knew what Jesus was doing or even how he was doing it. Come on, he's blind, remember?

I don't think the Lord said to him, hold, okay, give me a second, I'm going to spit in the dirt, I'm going to make some mud out of the spit and then I'm going to put it on your eyes. I don't think he told him all that.

We don't have every detail here that happened, okay? John's not trying to do that. So I'm speculating, okay? Just go with me. I'm wondering, though, I wonder if God many times is doing a work of healing in us and we can't see it either.

I'm just wondering. He didn't know what was going on. He sends the man to the pool of Siloam to wash off the mud.

That's the very same pool in chapter 7 where the Jews drew the water for the water ceremony of the Feast of Booze. Remember, Jesus talks about living water and that he's living water that satisfies our thirsty souls.

[ 14 : 46 ] That's where they got the water, the very place that he's sending this guy. I suppose John tells us the translation of the word Siloam as sent because this man was being sent to the pool by the one who had been sent by God to heal him.

I think John's playing with us in a good way. It could also be a reference as a warning of judgment to Israel that we see in the Old Testament.

In Isaiah 8, 5, the Lord, God is speaking, the Lord spoke to me again because this people has refused the waters of Shiloah.

That's the translation of Siloam. That flow gently and rejoice over Rezbaz and the son of Ramaliah. Therefore, behold, the Lord is bringing up against them the waters of the river mighty and many, the king of Assyria in all his glory.

The Assyrians, when they come in like the flood, they destroy everything. God is warning that just like the Israelites under Isaiah rejected the word of the Lord and suffered greatly because of it, even now, he's speaking again through this man to the people of his day and to all that if we reject the sight that he gives, we too will pass under the judgment of God.

[ 16 : 22 ] but not this blind man. He receives the one God has sent and obeys him.

I mentioned obedience briefly last time, but notice this, he obeys him. Is he being saved by his works? His work of washing?

Is that what's happening? Is it salvation by works? Because if he hadn't obeyed him, he wouldn't have seen because he wasn't healed when he put the mud on him.

He had to go. If he had said, I ain't going, he'd still be blind. But is this salvation by works? No, not at all.

Of course not. What's happening is this man is demonstrating his faith in Jesus because we know he knows his Jesus. Jesus. He says so later in the passage when we get there.

[ 17 : 23 ] But we know, he knows who it is that's talking to him. I heard a young preacher at my daughter Bethany's church who was here last Sunday and this week for my birthday. So, you know, when she comes to town, I just, anyway, my girls.

But in her church in Brooklyn, a young preacher got up and preached on this passage a few months ago and he made the point that I never thought about. He made the point that it could not have been easy for this blind man to make his way to the pool.

Now, of course, I'm going, I'm going a little bit, I think the blind man knew the city because he lived there all his life and if you know any, if you watch blind people, they get to know their surroundings quite well.

And I've seen so many walk in the streets in various cities around this country with canes or dogs and they're getting around pretty well because they know the city. They've learned it over time. But he, so, but he had to make his way to the pool. I don't know exactly where he was. It seems to me that he must have been somewhere near the temple because when Jesus comes out of the temple, he's walking and comes upon him and also he sends him to the pool and the pool is also near the temple.

[ 18 : 37 ] So he has to be in the general geographic area of the temple. So he's not going to have to go very far. However, it's inconvenient to go there.

He may have had to ask somebody for a little bit of help to make sure he was going in the right direction to get to the pool. I don't know. But it was definitely inconvenient.

But because he trusts in the word of Jesus, he is going. He trusts in the word of Jesus. See, obedience should flow from true faith.

Believing is seeing. You got me? Faith. Believing is seeing. James makes it clear that faith without works is dead.

Here's a man who has true faith. just merely in the word of Jesus. Now, Jesus did touch him, so he's dealing with that too. At this point, he's got to be wondering, this must be the process.

[ 19 : 46 ] I don't know if Jesus told him, I'm going to put money on your face and you're going to be healed if you go wash. In the text, it just says he did it. Now, I know he didn't just walk up and accosted the man.

Come here, give me. He had to tell him, hey, I'm Jesus, the preacher from Nazareth, maybe. You know who I am? He heard of Jesus.

He's in the city of Jerusalem. He heard that name. He heard about him almost likely. So, this whole touching his face and putting stuff on his face, he's like, this is a little weird, I understand, but Jesus said, do it.

Jesus didn't give him all the facts. Did he even promise the man sight? I don't know.

He just put dirt on his face and said, go wash it off. Maybe he didn't even know what Jesus put on his face. He didn't see it, remember? Now, he would have felt it and maybe it felt gritty.

[ 20 : 49 ] You know, when you get dirt on you, if you ever get out there and get dirty, you can feel dirt on your skin. Maybe he smelled it, dirt has an odor, a smell to it. Maybe those senses kicked in and he began to realize, did he just put dirt on me?

I'm trying to deal with this man without going too far off track, guys. I don't want to go in crazy places. If our Lord didn't tell him all the details, then he was obeying Jesus without having all the facts he may have wanted.

That, I'm positive of. he didn't have all the facts. Maybe he was like us. Nah, because if like us, we would have been like, if I go through the trouble of going to the pool to wash this crap off, will I be able to see or not?

Is it worth my time? I mean, here I am, I'm begging out here, I got a schedule to keep. I got a routine.

You do understand they had a routine, right? Same like today. If you see homeless people begging, I never forget, it happened in downtown Philly years ago. That's when I realized that these folk, they got a plan.

[ 22 : 08 ] I'm not saying it's wrong, I'm not saying they know what they're doing. I was driving through Philly downtown, heading toward the highway to go across the Ben Franklin Bridge back to New Jersey where we lived. bridge. And as I'm on the ramp, there's a light there.

And you can make a right and go into the city or make a left and go to the bridge. So I'm at this light and two homeless guys walk by my car. And they're mumbling and grumbling. And they said, that guy, he don't know what he's doing.

He don't know how to work the ramp. I said, work the ramp? Well, it was another homeless guy. He had, I guess it was his turn. And he was down there asking people for donations and they were saying he didn't know how to do it.

Meaning, there is a way of doing it and he didn't get it. So yeah, this man, he had a plan. He, he went, he probably was begging right next to the temple, which makes good sense because that's where people were always going by and they were making charitable donations in the temple. So if he's going to get some dough, that's the place to be. And now Jesus wants to leave his place of business and go find some pool to wash his face, which was clean a minute ago until Jesus put dirt on it.

[ 23 : 30 ] I can imagine if he's like us, he might have been a little put out, but not him, us. Maybe he, we, we would have said, Lord, why can't I just wash it off right here?

Why I gotta go way over there to the pool to wash? Why can't I just wash this stuff off right here? It's inconvenient. It's out of my way. It takes time. I might have to ask for help.

Why can't I just stay here and just give me some, give me a bottle of water and let me wash it off? why are you doing it this way, Jesus?

Isn't there, I heard about you. You just speak the word and people get healed. I heard about you.

Why are you doing it, why are you doing me this way?

I didn't even ask you for anything. You came to me and now you want me to do something that I don't really feel like I don't have time to do.

[ 24 : 40 ] I'm talking about us now. This happened before, right? You know this happened before, right? It's very similar.

In the Old Testament under the prophet Elijah, Elisha, by the way. 2 Kings 5, Elisha, a general of a foreign army was a leper.

He was Israel's enemy. And he was told to go see Elisha the prophet if he wanted to maybe get cleansed from leprosy. Here's what happens.

Elijah sent a messenger to him saying, go and wash in the Jordan seven times and your flesh shall be restored and you shall be clean. But Naaman was angry and went away saying, behold, I thought he would surely come out to me and stand and call upon the name of the Lord his God and wave his hand over the place and cure the leper.

Are not Abana and Farpa, the rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? Could I not wash in them and be clean?

[ 25 : 48 ] So he turned and went away in a rage. Now later he did get turned back and he did it. I've been to the Jordan River. It is muddy. It's not the prettiest of rivers.

So he didn't want to go dip in that dirty muddy river. Chinese pastor Yang Zibo in the book Faith in the Wilderness which I commend to you by Chinese pastors.

Amazing. He says this, why wouldn't he wash himself in the river? Because he wanted to save himself in his own way. Elisha said that Naaman's ways would not work and Naaman was humiliated.

Maybe that's why you're reluctant to obey God right now. Is God saying something to you and you're saying I don't want to die? You're him and hawing. How many details do you need God to give you before you are willing to follow him?

The cynicism of our culture has seeped into the church so that we are certainly skeptical of leadership but we sometimes end up being skeptical of God's word too.

[ 27 : 06 ] The problem is you don't see Jesus as worthy of total trust. Because you don't see anybody as worthy of any trust. Any trust.

So Jesus is not worthy of total trust. If that's true, what you've done is you've lowered Jesus to your human standard. When he's so much bigger than the people who've let you down, he's so much bigger.

When was the last time your faith in Jesus led you to do something hard? When was the last time your faith in Jesus led you to make a difficult choice and be inconvenienced because you trust him? Jesus in love makes the hardest choice anyone will ever make when he chose human nature, torture, and the cross to save us. How clearly do you see the rich one choosing to become poor to give you his riches?

How clearly do you see him? It is through that vision and faith with gratitude in him that you can now make the hard choices for his glory and inconvenience yourself.

[ 28 : 17 ] Maybe go against your flesh, your fallen human nature, which is crying out to be satisfied, crying out to do it, do it, yeah, you got it. But maybe God is saying that's not the way.

You may feel it, but that's not the way. I'm just wondering.

Let me wrap this up real quick, last point. The formerly blind man ends up joyfully testifying of Jesus because he can see.

That's true of all of us. When he comes back, it says he came back seeing. So I'm wondering if he went back to the place where he remembers being with Jesus.

And Jesus is not there anymore. He goes back to that place and the people, he's going back to the place where he begs. And the people see him and there's a big discussion going on about him.

[ 29 : 22 ] Is that the guy? Nah, can't be. But he looks like him a little bit. Yeah, that's the guy I told you. That's that guy I'm telling you.

And he goes, it is me. Y'all, y'all, look, I can see. That's what happens. Listen, when this man is healed by Jesus, it's obvious. His neighbors can't believe it.

His old life is so different from his current life. That's true for all of us who come to Christ, who really see Jesus and come to him. Our old life is different from our new life.

And some people will find it hard to believe that you're really all that different. notice the one who has been healed by the sent one is now being sent to bear witness of him.

That's, of course, that's how it works. When I worked in drug and alcohol in this unit, a couple units in Philly, I never forget that we, our psychiatric technicians were usually people who had been on drugs or alcohol before.

[ 30 : 34 ] because recovering addicts can make good counselors. Not always, but many can make good counselors. Saints, recovering sinners are the only ones who can bear witness to Jesus.

Are you a recovering sinner? You're the only one who can bear witness to Jesus. We're the ones who can say with John Newton, amazing grace.

How sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me. I once was lost, but now I'm found, was blind, but now I see.

We're the only ones who can do it. We're the ones that he equips to do it simply by transforming us and giving us eyes to see. And then we see the beauty of his light, the beauty of his grace.

Wretches who've been made children of the living God. Can you look back and see how dark your world was before Jesus? You now know where he delivered you from.

[ 31 : 46 ] Because remember, when you were blind, you didn't know what was going on. It's only when your eyes are open that you now see where you were, the pit you had dug for yourself. And you realize, you realize what he saved you from.

And you thought it was the good life. Or if you grew up in a Christian home, look at the darkness and pain in the world and see what God has spared you from. Are you humbled, amazed, and grateful?

Is grace to you a formerly blind sinner still so amazing? Have you lost the amazement? Let me put it this way.

How amazed are you by the grace of God? Now you can just work that out. How amazed are you? What was your blindness like?

Think, go back. In what ways were you deceived about God and about yourself and about what the good life really was. Go back. Think back. If you're having trouble with being amazed at the grace of God, stop for a minute.

[ 33 : 00 ] Go before the Lord and remember. We are the sent ones. John says it twice in John 17, 18.

Jesus, as you sent me into the world, so have I sent them into the world. In John 20, 21, peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you.

We are the sent ones. We are the, we were the, we were the ones born blind, but can now see. We are, we are the ones now who are called to bear witness to the light of the world who has delivered us from blindness.

When I was a kid, I used, I was always being sent somewhere by my parents. Did you experience, we're always sending you somewhere? Usually the store. I mean, really, the store.

Now we had two corner stores on my block, so I didn't have to go far, but I hated going. One, one day, my mother woke me up on a Saturday morning at the ungodly hour of 9:30. Woman had no sense.

[ 34 : 08 ] I said, boy, get up and go to the store. I'm, I'm, I'm, I'm, I'm the rat that I was, I was incensed. My sister was up and dressed.

My dad was up and dressed. She was up and dressed. And I said to her, all of you are up and dressed. Why are you sending me? And she looked at me, my mom always had an answer. She said, boy, that's why I had you. That's why God in grace sent his son to save you, that he might now send you.

Do you, do you see yourself as a sent one? Do you understand? I know I said this before, so forgive me for being redundant, but you don't live where you live by accident.

The job you have, the school you're in, that's not an accident. You've been sent. And if you don't see yourself as a sent one, you will miss every opportunity God has given you to glorify him in that place.

[ 35 : 18 ] The marriage you are in. Like it or not, you've been sent. You think anything happens by chance and luck?

No, no, no, child of God, you've been sent. And you're not alone in that sending. The sent one is with you.

I love this testimony. I'll finish this up. I love this testimony. He just simply, the man Jesus, verse 11, made mud, anointed my eyes, said to me, go to Salon and wash.

So I went and washed and received my sight. Jesus did it. He didn't say, you know, I persevered. I knew if I persevered long enough by the temple, I knew if I did that, something good would happen in my life. He didn't point to anything he did.

[ 36 : 27 ] Jesus told me what to do. I did it. here I am. Jesus did it. Jesus did it. That's our story.

Why do you see? Jesus did it. What does that mean? I see everything from God's perspective now. It's different from where I look, where I saw it before.

It's different and it's more beautiful and I want to tell you about it. Let me tell you about a man who will open your eyes. Let me tell you about a man who will help you see what you don't see.

Let me tell you about a man who will forgive you for all the stuff you've done and set you free. It's not that hard. But if you don't see the glory, if you don't see him, if your vision is getting cloudy because you've been telling God no too often and you've been letting fear and other things keep you from doing what God is calling you to do, loving the world and the things in the world, Mike, we were talking about that this morning.

The love of the world will keep you from responding to Jesus the way you need to. What do you love most? What's your priority? Do you see?

[ 37 : 52 ] Can you see? Can you see Jesus? Well, that's the question. That's the question.

This blind man felt himself to be insignificant. He was nobody. Destined to a life of nothing. Dying in poverty.

He knew it. He knew it. But now he knows he has been seen by God and by him transformed so that he can see now too.

He knows it. Our sister, Dr. Alyssa Whitebrook, in her book, Redeeming Vision, which I do commend to you, especially if you love art, she's speaking of Hagar, the pregnant concubine slave of Abraham and Sarah, who, remember, she ran away from the harsh treatment of Sarah Abraham his wife.

But when she ran away, she met an angel who came to her. Help her. Alone in the desert, about to die, Hagar says, in this place, have I actually seen the one who sees me?

[ 39 : 02 ] My sister writes, Alyssa writes, this is the vision that renews. God sees Hagar, pregnant and depleted. He moves towards her in love, addressing her unspoken fear for her unborn child, promising her a future that must have seemed almost unimaginable, to her as an enslaved woman.

Hagar is transformed. She's changed so thoroughly that she literally turns around and heads back to Abram and Sarah, the place where she was being tortured. What causes this radical alteration? God seeing her changes everything. She's not a speck of dust to be ignored or an object to be fixed. The God of the universe gazes upon her with deep love or what meek calls creative attention. He sees, listen, God sees what does not exist and offers this vision to Hagar. Renewed by this knowledge that she's regarded and cared for, Hagar steps into obedience, confident that her longings will be fulfilled.

This is what changed a man that was born blind. This is what changes you. You are seen by the God, you are seen by the God who sees, and now he's giving you the ability to see.

[ 40 : 14 ] You'll never be the same. Walk with Jesus. Walk in the light. Walk in the light. Father, bless your word to your people's hearts.

May we be transformed more and more day by day as we see the world the way you see it, as we walk in the light with Jesus, your son. Please, Lord, continue that work of transforming grace and deliver us from the evil that the world throws at us each and every day.

Deliver us from desire and the things of this world, this world system. May we look at what you offer and may we be drawn to all your treasures and the greatest of which is Jesus.

In his name we pray. Amen. Amen.