

# 9/26/2021 - John 9:1-41 - "A Testimony Clear as Mud"

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[ 0 : 00 ] There's two different phrases that exist that one of them, one of the two could probably be observed as we've just watched the Olympics and people breaking world records, people swimming faster than I could probably drive a boat. And they are just talented individuals. And when you're breaking world records and doing things that your mind is just blown at the reality that this is somebody doing this. There's a phrase that goes along with that and it's, I can't believe it.

We see these things that almost are unbelievable. And we say in our unbelief, I can't believe it. My son taught himself to ride a bike for the first time. I go outside and I'm seeing him on a two wheeler and he has fought me tooth and nail of not getting on that bike and he wouldn't let me teach him. And sure enough, he figured out how to do it all on his own. I can't believe it. And all the other plethora of things that would seem that they are unbelievable, we respond and I can't believe it. Tongues out and all. Now, another similar phrase is like that, but only on the other spectrum, which may reflect a different disposition of belief. And that goes, I won't believe it.

And this is the position of a skeptic or a cynic. To be skeptical or cynical, I won't believe it. That regardless of the wonder or investigative efforts of looking into a situation, figuring out if it's true, there's nothing that can convince you otherwise. And it's within these two frameworks that we're going to be entering the text today and seeing something develop. And we're going to meet several characters, so many characters within this single narrative in this unit in John 9. And all having this whirlwind of, I can't believe it or I won't believe it. And now this is a long narrative.

[ 2 : 27 ] I understand that. 41 verses. Last week's message was just kind of priming the engine last week with 30 verses. I didn't let you know that the next week we'd be studying 41. So welcome. And so one thing that will be helpful in a long section of passage like this, if you're new with us, just keep your Bibles open. The Bible is central to what we do. And keep your finger on the text as we're going through.

And have a notebook. Notes are really good to reflect upon throughout the week of what we study here in our gathering. And so while it's long, the narrative is actually pretty simple. It's structured in a manner with sort of like three different movements and a couple sub-movements within the second. And what we see is, in the beginning, the setting is laid. You see the event that takes place.

It lays the groundwork of the setting, and then it moves into the response of that event. And that's where we get into this tension raising, this climax within the narrative. And then at the end, the tail of the passage, we'll see the resolution of all of it. The meaning. We'll find the meaning in that part as well. And so we'll be focusing through those sections. And I forgot to put it up on the screen of how it's broken up. But I will try to be very clear for any note-takers of how to follow along and understand how John is taking us through this account in John 9. But in short, this passage displays what we're going to do with the text. And we'll see the text. And we'll see the text. And we'll see that we'll see the text. And we'll see the text. And we'll see the text. And we'll see the text.

Any logical response would be that he is from God. But we find something unravel in the text. It has to do with skepticism. It has to do with cynicism. It has to do with unbelief. And we'll find that unbelief is an issue of the heart where pride rests. And especially in the face of something so blatantly obvious. It's something that takes place here in this passage that is a declaration that God is doing something new in the creation. And we're going to keep that in mind as John keeps the tension going. As I mentioned two weeks ago, we get into a new section in John 8 of just this radical confrontation. You kind of sense it. And I want to capitalize upon that. I don't want to diminish it.

[ 5 : 29 ] But this tension all revolves around who Jesus is and why he came. And that the world is challenged by that. We had several challenges two weeks ago. We had more challenges in the world last week. And we're going to continue that today. Not with like a specific dialogue between the Pharisees and Jesus or the Jewish false believers in Jesus as we saw last week. But today we're going to see the community of Jewish skeptics putting Jesus on trial who act as the plaintiff in a case to put belief on trial.

And so this involves multiple interrogations. And what we'll see develop in this passage by the end of our time today is we will see how the events that transpire in our own lives have the power of clarifying the mission and the purpose of Jesus Christ and challenging, clarifying and challenging a sinful and unbelieving world. But before we get into the text and preaching the message, let's pray. Let's pray. And let's pray along with Puritan Robert Hawker. Please join me.

Come Holy Spirit with all your sweet and precious favor. Come Lord to convince and comfort us to humble and direct us to chill our affections to the world and to warm them toward the Lord Jesus. Come you holy, gracious, almighty reviver and restorer and glorifier of our God and Savior. Cause the graces you have planted in our soul to go forth in a way of love and desire, faith and expectation. Let us hope in the person and glory of the one our soul loves. Then we will cry out with the church. Let my beloved come into his garden and eat of his pleasant fruits. Amen.

We're going to see this narrative unfold today in several movements. Any note takers, the sermon title is called A Testimony Clear As Mud. And I did a play on words.

[ 8 : 06 ] Hopefully you chuckle at that. A Testimony Clear As Mud. And that's going to be John 9. We see in the first movement of the text, Jesus heals the physically blind.

John records as he passed by, he saw a man blind from birth. And as his disciples asked him, Rabbi, and his disciples asked him, Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?

And Jesus answered, it was not this man, this man's sin. 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. And having said these things, he spit on the ground and made mud with the saliva. Then he anointed the man's eyes with mud and said to him, go wash in the pool of Siloam, which means sent.

So he went and washed and came back seeing. Let's pause there. We see the movement of the event take place here. And we hear the words. Why does this man suffer? And who's responsible for such suffering?

It was this question that led the disciples to inquire about a blind man that they obviously knew within the community. They knew that he suffered from congenital blindness, that he was blind from birth. So Jesus, why is this man suffering? And a passage like this opens up a narrative that introduces us to a historic problem that is linked with the events that occurred in the fall.

[ 10 : 24 ] Suffering entered into the world as a result of Adam's sin. And the fallacy of the Jewish culture back then was to attribute any physical deformalities of our body or condition, if we struggle with a handicap, that it's a result of the sin of possibly our parents or ancestors. And so while it is true that all suffering stems from Adam, it is a half-truth to assume that in any particular experience of suffering is due to the failings of an individual in this life. And sometimes God ordains suffering.

And we see something happen in this passage that should be encouraging to us, that in the complexity of God's providence, the complexity of God's control and intervention in this life, He sometimes sees it fit to allow us to experience seasons of suffering.

Sometimes it is ordained for complex reasons that exceed our limited comprehension. And so we see the purpose of this in verse 3. The blind man suffered his entire life. He was thrown upon the street of one of the many beggars that lined along the streets of the temple as people were coming in begging. Everyone looking to him with the disposition that the disciples had.

Who's responsible for this? This man is outcasted because of sin. His suffering would one day lead to revealing the glory of God.

As the purpose is indicated, because in verse 5, Jesus is the light of the world. And if he's the light of the world, that the world is dark, the world is full of sin apart from Christ, that means that he is the light in the midst of our suffering. And so Jesus stopped in verse 6 and 7. He stopped.

[ 12 : 53 ] He vindicated this man's life of suffering and shame. And the purpose was revealed. He ushered in a miracle that is unreplicable. As it's confirmed in verse 32. He recreated eyes.

Unreplicable. Unique. And obviously, it is odd as to how Jesus did that. We read a passage like this, and it's like, he had all these things. There's a bottle of oil over there. Why mud? Why spit? What's all this about? Now, we could go into some hyper-spiritual explanation of, you know, maybe that represented the ground of which God created Adam and everything like that. Those would all just be speculations in a text like this. But what we do know is that Jesus Christ performed a miracle that was greater than any great sorcerer of the day, even our day, could never replicate. It was unique, as we see in verse 32. And so the event takes place. The ball's moving in motion. This blind man, who has never seen before, sees for the first time. And this created quite a diverse response from the community. In verse 8 through 12, we see, summarized, basically, this, they're struggling to identify this blind man. Is this the blind man? And it's almost comical, because he says, I'm the man. Like, you could imagine the confusion. Everyone's saying, like, you're not the man. [14:37] And he's, I'm the man, you know? Like, you could imagine the frustration and the confusion going around. And some were like, yes. Some were like, no. And you got the blind guy healed up. It's me. It's really me.

And then them testing him. How can you see then? And he recalls word for word what transpired when Jesus touched him. Word for word. And they say, where is he?

One thing that is certainly clear by such a handicap that we see in a text like this, and such a miracle, and the responses resulting from then, is that we learn that human, as human beings, our judgment is severely flawed. Severely flawed. Think about it. Here's a man who spent his entire life in darkness, completely blind, never saw the light of day. And we don't even know his name. We just know about his condition. And we also know that we see the flawed judgment of the world, both by his disciples and the community concerning his suffering.

But what has taken place? There is one man who can see, and many who appear blind. The complete narrative is turned upon its head. And this man who can see is testifying what is true in this passage.

So how does this narrative, as it opens up, how does this clarify Christ's mission and purpose, and how does this challenge the world? It clarifies that Jesus came to restore an inauguration of a new time, a new period within redemptive history, where he is restoring that which the fall has broken.

[16:46] God never wastes a season of suffering in this life. And Jesus Christ brings a new perspective upon suffering. It makes us ask in our own lives of suffering, do we see the silver lining of what God may be doing after the suffering? That maybe your suffering may be used as an encouragement to someone else who has experienced something similar.

They call this being a wounded healer for someone else. And we see that this challenges the reality that the world is not broken and in sin. We see simply that our judgment is flawed from a superficial level. It's like seeing somebody roll in with a Cadillac. You would probably be like, oh, well, he probably has a lot of money. Or somebody who rolls in and bust it up, I don't know, we'll just pick on my car, a little Ford Fusion that has a check engine light on that I just got.

I mean, wow, that guy must be struggling. Yes. No, I'm just kidding. Correct you are. But our judgment is often flawed at a superficial level where something miraculous has to occur in our lives that goes beyond what we see in the physical realm, which digs deeper into the spiritual realm and spiritual insight in what God is truly doing. It challenges the reality that the world is not broken and in sin. And so let's see how the responses occur. We read today, but we're going to identify this as a second movement of the three. And this is the bulk of where John highlights the moving components going on in this text. And we're going to see the testimony on trial, unbelief versus belief. And let me just lay it out. We're going to see four different interrogations occur in this passage. We're going to see the interrogation of the Pharisees, interrogation of the blind man's, the former blind man's parents. And we're going to see the interrogation of the former blind man. And we're going to see the crafty former blind man interrogation. And that interrogation put the skeptics upon the stand. It's just an incredible shift in the narrative. I was just loving studying this this week. So let's look at these interrogations unfold and see what exactly this means in clarifying the mission and the purpose of

Christ and how it challenges the unbelieving world. So we see in verse 13, they brought to the Pharisees the man who had formerly been blind. And now it was a Sabbath day when Jesus made the mud and opened his eyes. So the Pharisees again asked him how he received his sight. And he said to them, he put mud on my eyes and I washed and I see. There's an important time frame and a certain event that took place of this whole narrative. This happened on the Sabbath day. The fact

that Jesus even spit was considered a work on the Sabbath. Not to mention, you know, making mud out of the spit and also anointing oil and healing. I mean, there were so many violations according to legalism that Jesus went against and was not observing. And so the group of Pharisees who are interrogated here, we see that there's two groups. We have the cynical group and the skeptical group. We have the guys who are cynics who say, I won't believe it. Look in verse 16, some of the Pharisees said, this man is not from God for he does not keep the Sabbath. His work was disproving because it didn't fit within the mold of the Pharisees. He was not from God. He's a liar. He's a liar. Essentially, I won't believe it. And then we see the skeptics on the other hand. But others said, how can a man who is a sinner do such signs? I can't believe it. Right? The skeptics would say, how could somebody who is a liar, who is in sin, do such a miracle that's never been done before? And so what we learn about unbelief is that the Pharisees were stuck to legalism, which unmasked their unbelief.

So on the stand next, here come the parents. On the stand are the parents in verse 18. The Jews did not believe that he had been born blind and had received his sight until they called the parents of the man who had received his sight and asked them, is this your son who you say was born blind? How then does he now see? The parents in verse 20 and 21 identify that it is their son? But as to what happened, they kind of avoid the situation entirely because of the consequence if they actually spoke the truth of the testimony.

[ 22 : 31 ] And so what we learn is that the parents fear and deflecting exposed and unmasked their unbelief. And so upon the stand next, the group of skeptics and cynics put the former blind man on there in verse 24. So for the second time, they called the man who had been born blind and said to him, give glory to God. We know that this man is a sinner. And he answered, whether he is a sinner, I do not know. One thing I know, that I, though I was blind, now I see. And they said to him, what did he do to you? How did he open up your eyes? Isn't it fascinating how truth naturally indicts falsehood? That truth, when rested upon and is unwavering and is rooted deeply within our conscience of what is true, it will naturally have a tendency of calling out falsehood, just as light naturally shines in the darkness. And so it's funny because the turntables have turned at this point in the passage. It's a significant shift because now the accusers become the accused and have naturally placed themselves on the stand by their insistent questioning. And the first push from now the, it's like the guy on the stand has become the attorney questioning. And he turns the entire trial on its head. And in the funny wit that you can sense in this, in verse 27, the former blind man answered them. I have told you already, and you would not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you also want to become his disciples? In such little awestruck and wonder of why do you want, why are you so curious about this? And it's almost laughable from verse 28 and 29 at the point of their insistent questioning and testing from the skeptics. Because they're able to throw out the accusations, but all of a sudden when accusations are thrown to them and that they're personally challenged, they're unable to receive such a challenge because falsehood is being confronted. Unbelief is being confronted.

And their response was nothing but to revile the healed man because their educational accreditation comes from Moses. This man is quite off his rocker as he claims to be a disciple of Jesus. They don't even know where Jesus is from. And we see the second push in verse 30 where this entire trial is still turned on its head. The man answered, why this is an amazing thing. You do not know where he comes from and yet he opened my eyes. We know that God does not listen to sinners, but if anyone is a worshiper of God and does his will, God listens to him. And look at this. Verse 32, 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. These skeptics spent a great deal of their time attempting to mask their unbelief in skepticism, in denial, in indictment of falsehood, and what their actions proved to be as they're facing the truth of God divine is that their case crumbled completely. And so while truth, as we said, truth naturally indicts falsehood, in other words, truth defends itself. We advocate for the truth and it defends itself. And truth calls falsehood out just as the light shines naturally in the darkness.

Well, now we understand that truth, when it's accused of falsehood, will also remain true regardless of any challenge that it's received. Darkness cannot consume light. Only light can consume darkness.

What's the verdict? As this once former blind man squares up with the Pharisees, they answered him.

You want to see some tension, look with me in verse 34. They answered him, you were born in utter sin, and will you teach us? And they cast him out.

[ 28 : 01 ] We tend to think that this work of God in the physical aspect of the event that took place is being focused solely upon the healing. But what it exposes is something deeper. What this event has been exposing is a condition not of our physical well-being, but of the condition of our hearts. And that being rooted in unbelief and in darkness. I won't believe it.

Can you sense the roller coaster? I think you can. Many of your eyes are communicating today like, this has been like a roller coaster of challenges, of narratives, of questioning.

Can you imagine the roller coaster that this former blind man was put on because he was staying rooted upon the truth of the matter? And maybe within our own lives, we can sense to a certain level of friction that we have when we bear a testimony of truth to an unbelieving and skeptical world.

If you don't sense that friction, you probably should. Because the world does not receive a message like this. It makes me think of schools, universities, elementary schools, and everything. Just an indoctrination of unbiblical worldviews and ideas that are being placed upon children. They don't even know it.

That if you can have the children of today, you can have the culture and society of tomorrow. And it happens at many universities that go against the grain of what it means to be a Christian. It is so difficult to be a Christian in school. It really is. The workplace, if you are employed anywhere, you'll often get the freedom of religion much, much of the time.

[ 30 : 20 ] But most of that freedom is going to be rested within your minds. You'll have freedom of religion in your head. And if you speak out upon that freedom, you can kiss your promotions goodbye.

You can kiss possibly your career goodbye. But if the truth of the gospel is absolutely true, wouldn't it be worth the ridicule and the persecution to get upon our own roller coasters in this life, regardless of the cost? I mean, Western Christianity is very comfy. I think we could probably all agree.

I mean, look at the chairs we get. Some people are standing in knee-deep in water just to be gathered as a church. It's comfy in Western Christianity. And our freedoms in this country, as wonderful and as thankful as I am for them, they make us downright spoiled. It's easy to be a Christian in this country. But we see that if you tune into the news and things that are going on with legislation and the direction that it seems like the society of this world is going, we see that this is changing.

And I believe that this is providentially led by God refining his church here in the West from true belief to unbelief. And maybe you would consider yourself a Christian, but maybe, I don't know, skeptical in your faith and say, I'm a Christian. I believe that Jesus and everything. But some of these things are just, you know, difficult to comprehend. You need to be warned that insistent skepticism, according to this passage, without forward progress toward faith is a form of unbelief. Skepticism is unbelief in disguise. And this is exactly what we see in this passage. And so how do we clarify? How is the mission of Christ clarified? How is the world challenged by this?

[ 32 : 35 ] It's clarifying that Jesus unmasks skepticism, masquerading as belief. And it challenges faith is the only form of belief, regardless if you're a good person. Faith alone is the form of belief.

faith alone is the only form of belief. And so as the narrative unravels and comes to a close, we see the third movements in verse 35. The roller coaster's over. The man who was formerly born blind gets off the ride, more so thrown off the ride, probably at the highest hill. He's casted out.

Verse 35 picks up with Jesus. Jesus heard that they had cast him out. And having found him, they said, do you believe in the son of man? And he answered, and who is it? Who is he, sir, that I may believe in him?

And Jesus said to him. And he said, Lord, I believe. And he worshiped him.

Jesus Christ, who has the power of recreating sight to the blind, also has the power to recreate the heart to believe. And this is how the story ends. Jesus said, for judgment I came into this world, that those who do not see may see, and those who see may become blind. Jesus is making it clear that he came into this world to divide. He came into this world to unmask the masquerade party of people saying that they're followers of Jesus Christ, that they are in the family of God. And this is an unpopular truth. This isn't something that will be received kindly to a universal leaning world, that all are going to heaven. Just be a good person. For judgment I came into this world, that those who do not see may see, and those who see may become blind. And some of the

[ 35 : 16 ] Pharisees near him heard these things and said to him, are we also blind? Jesus said to them, if you were blind, you would have no guilt. But now that you say, we see, your guilt remains. And something happens in this passage as it ends, and Jesus supernaturally inquires about the condition of their hearts.

What's in the heart of these Pharisees who think that they have it all together? There's guilt. There's unbelief. There's sin. And there's shame. Within the Pharisees' heart are the very same accusations that they casted towards a blind man who was on the street begging his entire life, up until Jesus entered the scene. And sometimes the condition of our hearts is as clear as mud, that we often can't see our hearts clearly for what lies within. But Jesus knows the hearts. And not only has he restored the sight of a physically impaired blind man, he is physically and spiritually restoring our hearts, giving us not a heart of stone, but replacing it with a heart of flesh.

And this is the declaration that this miracle insinuates. Jesus unmaskes the cynical question for what it really is. The Pharisees think they have it all together. And for those who think that they have it all together, they are actually the ones that are incapable of having faith in God.

And that should wake us up in a very comfy Christian culture. Why? Because having faith in God is preceded only by having guilt over our sin. Christ came to shine a light in our darkness. So how does this third movement clarify Christ's mission and purpose and challenge the world? This clarifies that Jesus is the true judge of belief and unbelief. And this also challenges the world because belief in Jesus comes at a greater cost than unbelief. Let me repeat that. This challenges the world, the dark world, the sinful world, the condition of the world, being apart from Jesus Christ. Because we see a man getting casted out because he believed in Christ. Unbelief in Jesus comes at a greater cost than belief. And this challenges the world to accept that because it is true.

[ 38 : 18 ] As we sort of wrap up our time, I just want to take a moment to think that isn't it intriguing to think that the disciples who once inquired, why does this man suffer? And who's responsible for such suffering?

would be the same questions that they would inquire of Jesus Christ hanging upon a cross with his flesh torn apart. Why does Jesus suffer? Because of the sins of the world that stem back to Adam. And who's responsible? Me. Me. Romans 5.18 says it clearly. As one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men. Verse 19. For as by the one man's disobedience, the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience, the many will be made righteous.

We can either stand in the light of Jesus Christ's judgments and testimony, or we can just remain in darkness, in the same darkness of which we came.

A passage like John 9 makes one thing certain, hold on to what is true, regardless of the suffering that's entailed, regardless of the opposition that's entailed, regardless of the consequence that's entailed.

[ 40 : 15 ] Wake up, church. Hold on to what is true, regardless of your suffering, the opposition, or the consequence. We hold on to what is true in suffering, because we know that Jesus Christ came to restore that which is broken from the fall. We hold on to what is true in opposition, because we know that truth will stand unscathed in the face of challenge.

We hold on to what is true, regardless of the cost, because our lives are not our own. We were bought with a price. How are the events transpiring in your life clarifying the mission and purpose of Jesus Christ? And how are the events in your life that are transpiring challenging a sinful and unbelieving world? It is not going to get you a popularity contest. It's not going to get you a promotion, but what it will do is it'll lay ahead for you a treasure in heaven. Your reward is due in heaven someday. You can be rejected by man, and you can be received by Christ. And the gospel says that there is no other way that we ought to live other than to die to this world and to live for him.

Don't be left in this world if you're not in Christ. Don't be left in this world. This is everything you see, everyone, myself included. I'm going to be somewhere in the ground someday. We will all be in the ground someday. This is a wake-up call to examine our hearts based upon what Jesus is declaring in a passage like John 9. Don't spend your life saying, I won't believe. How much clearer can Jesus Christ's testimony get? This is an inauguration of a unique sign and wonder to declare that he is God?

Why would you waste your life being skeptical in, I can't believe it? Why would you waste your life in cynicism saying, I won't believe it? We have to remember that even if you are a skeptic over the

events of Jesus Christ, it is a mask of unbelief that you are living in. Jesus Christ is calling people to follow him, to die completely, to surrender every part of themselves. And all those questions, it's good to ask those questions. We're continual students of his word and of theology. We are all theologians as Christians, and we are responsible for growing in this. But don't mistake in that growing process for skepticism. It is truly an unfathomable work of Christ to suffer and die on account of my sin. That when I look upon the cross and I see the flesh of Christ ripped and torn, I see the blood spilled, complete full atonement for my sin. That's an unfathomable reality to an unbelieving world. But it's never unbelievable because the word of God makes it true, because the word of God is true.

And so maybe you're distant from Jesus Christ. And maybe you've been living a life kind of like a skeptic, not all in with the message and the gospel. Might Jesus be asking you in this moment, do you believe in the Son of Man? And may he also be saying, you have seen him today, church, in John 9.

[ 44 : 35 ] through his word. And it is he who is speaking to you today through his word. May you say, along with the former blind man, Lord, I believe and worship him. Come. Let's pray.

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