

That Little Bit of Religion in All of Us

I. Casting Down Religion

If you have any sacred idols in your life, religious idols, we're going to kick them over, especially in the area of healing. God showed me some areas of my own life where I've been religious in the area of healing, and God doesn't want us to be religious. Religious people look at something, scrutinize it, rationalize it, and reason it, but God just wants us to accept it.

John 9:1-7:

And as Jesus passed by, he saw a man which was blind from his birth.

And his disciples asked him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind?

Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him.

I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work.

As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.

When he had thus spoken, he spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and he anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay,

And said unto him, Go, wash in the pool of Siloam, which is by interpretation, Sent. He went his way therefore, and washed, and came seeing.

You've heard this story before and the big argument that has always existed about this passage of Scripture. What did it mean when they asked, "Was this man born blind because of his own sin, or by his parents' sin?"

When Jesus said, "Neither one, but that the glory of God should be made manifest, that the works of God should be made manifest," theologians conclude, "God made him blind when he was born so Jesus could heal

him. God originally caused this man to be blind in anticipation of a day when Jesus would heal him. Many people are born in sickness for the glory of God."

That's not what Jesus was saying. God is not the author of sickness and disease; God is the author of healing. The glory God was going to get from this was that this man, who had been attacked by Satan, who had been born in this condition, was going to be set free by the power of God.

Look again at verse 1, "And as Jesus passed by, he saw a man which was blind from his birth." There's no mention of the disciples. There's no mention of the controversy. There's no mention of the questions in verse 3. In verse 1, we simply have the man and Jesus. Jesus saw a need and was ready to meet the need and heal the man. By the end of the chapter, it's just Jesus and the man again, but in between we have all types of religious questions and all types of scrutiny. First, the disciples begin in verse 2 by asking, "Who sinned, this man, or his parents, that he was born in this condition?"

Put yourself in the disciples' position. They'd been traveling with Jesus for a number of months, perhaps a year or two, and people are beginning to recognize them. Because they were traveling with Jesus, people probably saw them as being important. I can imagine the disciples walking down the street and people approaching them asking, "Aren't you Peter, one of the twelve disciples?"

"Yes."

"Could I have your autograph?"

John probably had many people asking for his autograph. People were asking him, "Would you come and speak at our luncheon? Would you come and speak to our group of people? Our church is having a meeting this night. Would you come and speak?" With all of this attention they're receiving, I can imagine beginning to think, "Wow! I'm really somebody important." They have begun to scrutinize this man's need and get theological with each other.

Can you imagine this man sitting there? He can't see anything. He didn't even know Jesus was looking at him. The Bible just said, "Jesus walked by and saw him." But the first thing he hears are the disciples asking Jesus "Did this man sin or his parents?" The blind man now knows Jesus

must be very close. In fact, the disciples discuss the situation with this man sitting in front of them.

Finally, Jesus said, "Neither one. That's not even the issue."

The whole purpose of this man being here right now is for God to get the glory. God knew there were sick people around. God didn't make the guy sick, but God knew it was going to happen, and He knew this man would be sitting there. When they saw the sick man, the disciples knew Jesus would heal him, but before He healed him, they had a discussion about his "spiritual condition." They wanted to discuss the man's condition from their own theological perspective.

II. Doubt and Questioning By Those Around You

John 9:8-12:

The neighbours therefore, and they which before had seen him that he was blind, said, Is not this he that sat and begged?

Some said, This is he: others said, He is like him: but he said, I am he.

Therefore said they unto him, How were thine eyes opened?

He answered and said, A man that is called Jesus made clay, and anointed mine eyes, and said unto me, Go to the pool of Siloam, and wash: and I went and washed, and I received sight.

Then said they unto him, Where is he? He said, I know not.

The *neighbors* are all his friends, those who live next door or down the street, and had known him for years. Some of them might have been there since this man was a child. Some of these women might have been there as midwives and saw him born blind. They'd known him all of his life, and as often happens, familiarity breeds contempt.

"Who is this kid? We've known him for years." This was similar to what happened to Jesus when He returned to His hometown. The people said, "Isn't this the carpenter's kid?" They'd known Him for years. "How can anybody we know be this popular?"

Jesus *did* heal the man, and people began to talk. "Well, I can't think of anything he's ever done that would warrant this healing," and they're all looking at each other. In fact, they're probably thinking, *I've been a better person than he has. How come I can't get healed? How come this kid gets healed?*

In the next verse of Scripture, we move to the Pharisees.

John 9:13:

They brought to the Pharisees him that aforesaid was blind.

Now they're going to bring him to church and see what the church thinks about this. Here's the guy that's been healed. He's been healed. That's all he cares about. Everybody's making a big deal out of this, and they're all wanting to know why he's been healed, what are the circumstances around it, how did *you* merit being healed?

John 9:14-18:

And it was the sabbath day when Jesus made the clay, and opened his eyes.

Then again the Pharisees also asked him how he had received his sight. He said unto them, He put clay upon mine eyes, and I washed, and do see.

Therefore said some of the Pharisees, This man is not of God, because he keepeth not the sabbath day. Others said, How can a man that is a sinner do such miracles? And there was a division among them.

They say unto the blind man again, What sayest thou of him, that he hath opened thine eyes? He said, He is a prophet.

But the Jews did not believe concerning him, that he had been blind, and received his sight, until they called the parents of him that had received his sight.

We see an ever widening circle. "We don't really believe you used to be blind. Now, these friends say you were blind, all these neighbors say you were blind. We don't quite believe you're blind. Let's get your parents in here and see what they say."

John 9:19:

And they asked them, saying, Is this your son, who ye say was born blind? how then doth he now see?

Notice a little innuendo there, "Is this your so-called blind son?"

John 9:20-23:

His parents answered them and said, We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind:

But by what means he now seeth, we know not; or who hath opened his eyes, we know not: he is of age; ask him: he shall speak for himself.

These words spake his parents, because they feared the Jews: for the Jews had agreed already, that if any man did confess that he was Christ, he should be put out of the synagogue.

Therefore said his parents, He is of age; ask him.

These people didn't want to be kicked out of church. Tradition was very important to them. "We've been in this church for years. Our parents were in this church. Our grandparents were in this church, and we don't want to lose our position in this church, so don't ask us. Ask him. He's the one who was blind. He can speak for himself. Ask him."

John 9:24-25:

Then again called they the man that was blind, and said unto him, Give God the praise: we know that this man is a sinner.

He answered and said, Whether he be a sinner or no, I know not: one thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see.

Amidst all this confusion going on around him, he says, "Look! The guy's not here. I don't know where He went. All I know is, once I was blind, now I can see."

John 9:26-30:

Then said they to him again, What did he do to thee? how opened he thine eyes?

He answered them, I have told you already, and ye did not hear: wherefore would ye hear it again? will ye also be his disciples?

Then they reviled him, and said, Thou art his disciple; but we are Moses' disciples.

We know that God spake unto Moses: as for this fellow, we know not from whence he is.

The man answered and said unto them, Why herein is a marvellous thing, that ye know not from whence he is, and [yet] he hath opened mine eyes.

In other words, "Aren't you guys all in the same business? I don't know much about this religion business. I haven't come to church too often since I'm blind, but my parents have attended here for years. The sign outside says, "Synagogue." This man said He was sent from God. You say you're sent from God. This man opened my eyes and you tell me you don't believe him?"

John 9:31-32:

Now we know that God heareth not sinners: but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth his will, him he heareth.

Since the world began was it not heard that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind.

In other words, "We know that God doesn't hear sinners, but God hears this guy. This guy just asked God and God opened my eyes, and you tell me this guy's a sinner? Don't you have the same verses of Scripture? Have you guys ever opened up a blind eye? I've heard of you guys for years. I've been by this church quite often. None of you have ever come out and touched my eyes and opened them up. Why are you getting so upset?" I want to meet this guy when I get to heaven. Oh, the logic of a blind man!

John 9:33-38:

If this man were not of God, he could do nothing.

They answered and said unto him, Thou wast altogether born in sins, and dost thou teach us? And they cast him out.

Jesus heard that they had cast him out; and when he had found him, he said unto him, Dost thou believe on the Son of God?

He answered and said, Who is he, Lord, that I might believe on him?

And Jesus said unto him, Thou hast both seen him, and it is he that talketh with thee.

And he said, Lord, I believe. And he worshipped him.

Notice this wonderful story began with Jesus and the blind man. It ends with Jesus and the *healed* blind man. In between is all this religion.

III. Are You Like the Disciples and the Pharisees?

The disciples looked at the man as if he wasn't worthy to be healed. How often do we, through the eyes of religion, look down on other people and before we even pray for them, we question them, "How did this thing come? Did this man sin? Did his parents sin?" The disciples were trying to figure out why the man was blind because again, they don't consider him worthy to be healed.

The neighbors couldn't believe anyone who grew up in their neighborhood could be healed. How could *he* get healed? We know him too well!

The Pharisees didn't believe Jesus could or should heal, because He was not part of their camp, part of their religion. He was not part of the synagogue. He was not a member of their denomination. So how could He possibly heal this blind man?

The parents don't want to lose their position in the church. But Jesus didn't come to question; He came to heal. Jesus answered the questions of the disciples, "This man hasn't sinned nor his parents. I've just come to glorify God. I've come to do the will of God."

We all have that little bit of religion in us because we can put ourselves in the Pharisees' place. We can put ourselves in the parents' place. We can put ourselves in the neighbors' place, and we can often put ourselves in the disciples' place.

I was reading this passage of Scripture just a few weeks ago and God spoke to me and said, "You're just like the disciples."

He began to show me times when people have come for healing, and I haven't said anything, but would have thoughts in my mind like, "Why are *you* here? You don't exercise and your diet is terrible. Besides that, I know you are the biggest gossip in the church!"

We can often become critical of ourselves, but this blind man was not. People sometimes feel unworthy to be healed. They begin to unreasonably question or scrutinize the sins and mistakes they have made and ultimately don't receive from the Lord.

Remember the man who said to Jesus, "If thou wilt, thou can make me clean." This man questioned, "Lord, is it really Your will to heal me?"

Perhaps he was expecting, like many people are, for Jesus to say, "Well, you know what? It's My will to heal a lot of people, but you tick me off. There's just something about you I don't like. That's why I haven't healed you."

We know our life. We know our past. We know what we've done right and what we've done wrong, and so we often feel like, "Well, it's not God's will to heal me." We somehow think that since we got ourselves into this mess, it's up to us to get ourselves out of this mess.

Matthew 9:2:

And, behold, they brought to him a man sick of the palsy, lying on a bed: and Jesus seeing their faith said unto the sick of the palsy; Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee.

This sick man was brought to Jesus, and the first thing we expect Jesus to do is heal him. Instead, He tells the man, "Be of good cheer. Your sins are forgiven."

This man had not been healed for years because he had condemned himself in some old sin. He had probably begged God every day, "Oh, God, forgive me. God, forgive me." But he couldn't figure out that God could forgive such a horrendous sin in his life, and Jesus came to him and said, "Be of good cheer." In fact, the Greek said, "Your sins have already been forgiven. You've been wallowing in something that's been forgiven for years." Suddenly, the overwhelming forgiveness came all over this man. Can you imagine what he felt like to know in one instant he had been holding himself accountable for something God had forgiven years ago? As the man received God's overwhelming forgiveness, Jesus said, "Arise, get up, fold your bed and walk out of here," and the man did. (Matthew 9:6)

How often do we point the finger at ourselves and condemn ourselves? Yet, God doesn't condemn us at all. I do the same thing. I'll get a cold or start sniffing and the first thing I think is, *Let me go pray*. But then I'll think, *Well, wait a minute. How did I do this? I bet it was when I sat under that draft the other day. That window was open. The air conditioner came on. I bet that's how it happened. How could I have been so...I shouldn't have done that.* And I'll talk myself out of going to God. Somehow I feel responsible for my sickness; therefore, I need to get myself healed.

We're not the only ones with a condemning attitude toward ourselves. The disciples looked down at this man and began to condemn him. (John 9:2) They thought those condemning thoughts toward the blind man just like we do. We often feel that others are unworthy; therefore, they should have to merit their healing also. If this man could somehow get his sins or the sins of his parents straightened out in his life, then perhaps Jesus would heal him. They wanted him to jump through hoops they didn't have to jump through. They wanted this man to have to do things they didn't do. They were looking down on him and trying to reason in their own mind why this man was sick.

Many years ago, a well-known Bible school was being broadcast by satellite all over the United States, into Canada, and down into Central and South America. A revival broke out in one minister's church that lasted for months. Toward the beginning of the revival in this particular church, I went to the meetings to video tape the events. As I was video taping in one of the evening services I was astounded at the works of God. People were getting out of wheelchairs. There were crutches being thrown around everywhere. Artificial limbs were being replaced by the

power of God. Incredible things were happening, and I sat in that service amazed!

A few weeks later, an image of Jesus actually appeared on the wall. It stayed there for a number of days until it finally faded away. Great signs and wonders were occurring. When I returned, I was talking about the meetings to someone who used to work with me in a particular ministry. When I mentioned that I had been to this church, this person looked at me and said, "Why would God use the minister of *that* church? It seems if God was going to use anybody, He'd use the minister we have worked for."

And I thought, *What do you mean? God can pick anyone He wants to.* How often do we look down our nose at the way God ministers through somebody and think we have a better answer for God?

Next time you start to look condescendingly at somebody else, go stand in front of a mirror and ask, "How could God use *me*?" You know your every fault and your failure, and God still uses you; yet we somehow look at someone else and judge them.

Someone once came to me and said, "Pastor, I was talking to a Baptist man the other day and told him how I'd been healed here at Grace. The Baptist man said, 'I was healed in our church last week, too!' He told me his Baptist pastor had been doing a study on James and came to chapter 5, verse 14 that said, 'Is there any sick among you? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them anoint them with oil.' So the pastor decided to try that verse and one Sunday he announced that next Sunday they were going to try this verse and see if it worked. So, he had some oil and he called everybody down that needed healing, and the people responded. This Baptist man told me, 'I came down. I decided if the Bible said it and our pastor was going to try it, I trusted our Baptist pastor. He took that oil, rubbed it on me, and said a simple prayer. And guess what? I was healed!'"

This person asked me, "Pastor, I came back to talk to you. How could God do that at a Baptist church? They don't even speak with tongues!"

How narrow-minded we become. As if healings and other promises from God's Word should only happen at Grace or another church that believes in speaking with tongues. We'd better watch out that we don't become so narrow-minded we end up like many during the Charismatic movement

that couldn't believe God could move through a denominational church. Proud religious thinking said, "Oh, I don't think those Catholics can speak in tongues. After all, they pray to Mary." Well, in ignorance they may pray to Mary, but you know what? What little bit of faith they had, they've trusted in Jesus and now they speak with tongues. Who are we to tell God who He can and cannot minister through? We judge people by our own little narrow view of Christianity. We often end up just like the Pharisees.

IV. It's Not Our Responsibility to "Fix" Ourselves

I'm preaching this sermon because God got all over me—me, who thought there was not a religious bone in my body! I found out I had a *big* religious bone in my body. In trying to lose weight over the years I've read books on nutrition, what I should eat and what I shouldn't eat. And there was a time when people coming to get healed, the first thing I would think as I was reaching out to pray for them is, *I know why you're sick. You don't eat right. I've got this figured out. You come down here with back problems. Look at that stomach hanging out in front. I can tell you why you've got back problems. It's your sins that got you into this position. I know.* Or they'll describe some symptom they have and I'll think, *Aha, not enough vitamin such-and-such.* I can tell them what's wrong. This is their fault. If they would take better care of themselves, they wouldn't have this problem. I imagine Jesus is in heaven saying, "What's your problem, Bob? Who gave you the right to judge people like that?" Jesus came to show forth God's glory by healing the sick.

Certain information about my congregation I demand to be kept secret from me. I don't know how much money individual members give in the offering. I don't know when they come in for counseling. I don't know who gets a loan at our credit union. But once in a while I'll walk down the hallway and hear somebody say, "So-and-so's having trouble." Or something will come up and I'll hear about someone not keeping their word, not providing for their family, running around on their wife, or running around on their husband. Then when they come down for prayer, my first thought is, *If you'd provide for your family, you wouldn't be down here. If you weren't so wrapped up in sin, you wouldn't be down here.* And there's that tendency to judge somebody about why they think they can stand in line to be prayed for to receive healing.

I end up being just like the Pharisees or one of those neighbors or the parents of that blind man or like Jesus' disciples. Jesus didn't care about the man's background or how the man got to where he was. He just wanted the man healed.

When the glory of God comes in, that's what changes your life. I've talked to doctors in the congregation who have gone on medical trips and they say, "It's so hard being a doctor because the first thing you want to do is diagnose them. I can tell them why they have this condition."

But on these medical missions' trips, the doctors have to suddenly shift over and get in faith because they have knowledge of the natural reasons people are sick and they know natural ways to get them healed. But they didn't go on the mission field for natural reasons; they went there for the glory of God.

Luke, who was a physician, must have had trouble watching people come up for healing because of his medical knowledge. He probably knew how they were eating and what nutrients were missing in their lives. Jesus never distinguished the people who ate right from those who didn't. Paul never separated people into categories—those who deserved healing and those who didn't, and the healing power of God came down and healed and blessed them all!

V. Don't Reason Yourself Out of the Supernatural

The Bible tells us in 2 Corinthians 10:5, that we are to *cast down imaginations and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God*. The Greek word for *imaginations* is actually the word *reasonings*. We could say, "Casting down *reasonings* and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God."

When it comes to faith, God is only concerned with the person's need. God has the answer, so we need to quit trying to reason everything out. When we reason, we in essence can reason ourselves out of the miracle power of God. Don't reason yourself out of the supernatural. Just accept it.

The disciples, the parents, the Pharisees, and the neighbors were all trying to reason the blind man's healing, but all Jesus wanted to know

when the whole thing was said and done was, "Do you believe? Do you believe?"

"Yes, Sir, I believe."

That's all Jesus was looking for. Simple faith in Jesus Christ and the power of God.

VI. Jesus Healed ALL

Matthew 4:23:

And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people.

How many manner of sickness? *All*. And how many manner of disease? *All*. Every manner of sickness and every manner of disease, He healed among the people.

Matthew 12:15:

But when Jesus knew it, he withdrew himself from thence: and great multitudes followed him, and he healed them all;

He healed them what? *All*

.

In Matthew 4, He healed every manner of sickness and every manner of disease, and in Matthew 12, He healed everyone that followed Him.

These are just two verses in a multitude of verses that say the same thing.

I could give you 10 or 15 verses out of Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, and Acts that all tell us the same thing. Acts 10:38 says, "*How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and power, who went about doing good and healing **all** that were oppressed of the devil.*" He healed them all. It says, "*Great multitudes followed Him.*" Don't you think out of the great multitudes that followed Him there were some that didn't eat right? Don't you think there were some obese people that followed Him in those crowds? Don't you think there were some people that weren't taking the right vitamins? But Jesus didn't say, "I want to heal everyone here today,

except people who are overweight. And those of you who haven't been taking your vitamins, don't expect to be healed because this is your fault."

Don't you think in those ALL that He healed, there were Gentiles? The disciples must have stood there and said, "Pork chops, that's the problem! It's those pork chops they've been eating. Sausage will do it every time. Killer stuff, that's what sausage is."

Jesus healed *all* from Decapolis beyond Jordan. These were Gentile areas people came from, and they weren't raised around Jewish law. They just ate whatever, whether the Jewish law said it was fine or not. They raised pigs, ate pigs, and ate other things that were probably unclean according to the Jewish law. Although there was a tendency for these twelve that followed Jesus to look down their nose at other people and complain, they must have been overwhelmed by the mercy of God when everybody was healed. He healed them all. Without question, without digging into their background, and without scrutinizing, He healed them all.

Jesus simply said, "I came to do the works of My Father. I came to glorify Him."

We feel like we need to help. I have nothing against doctors. I think doctors are great. Thank God for them, but there are limitations to natural science and to doctors. Even doctors will admit to you they can't heal; it's God that heals. They can only assist. God is the One who heals. It's built right into nature, which came from God. They can assist nature to heal, but even behind nature is God Himself.

I've had people say, "Pastor, I don't want to get prayed for yet. I want to go to the doctor and find out specifically what's wrong with me so I can really target my faith on that specific area." That may be noble, but I can't find that anywhere in the Bible. Jesus often asked a person, "What is it that you want Me to do?"

They would respond, "Receive my sight."

But I haven't found anybody yet that said, "It's the retina. It became detached right here where the optic nerve goes around it." They just said, "Lord, I don't know what's wrong. I'm blind." Jesus knew the specifics. I've often found that when you begin to delve and meditate on the doctor's report, it brings fear rather than faith.

There is nothing wrong with doctor's report, but I think sometimes God becomes hurt when we go to men before we go to Him. I think He should be our *first* resort, not our last resort.

Jesus didn't ask for specifics. He just asked them, "What do you want to do?"

Some said, "Lord, that I might receive my hearing. Lord, that I might receive my sight. Lord, that I might gain strength. Lord, that I might walk." He never asked for the specifics.

In fact, although Luke reported in great detail about the woman with the issue of blood, she didn't present the facts to Jesus. He didn't ask for them. The Bible just simply said she had spent all that she had and instead of getting better, she grew worse. When she heard of Jesus, she came and touched the hem of his garment and virtue flowed out of Him and came into her. (Luke 8:43-44)

Am I teaching irresponsibility? Am I saying, "Eat any way you want to, disregard your body, and then just expect God to heal it all the time?" No! But I would say this, "Quit looking back on your past and condemning yourself. Jesus doesn't. Ask Him for healing, accept His healing, but be wiser after you're healed. Let the glory of God speak to you first. Let the power of God speak to you first. That's why God's presence is here."

A woman caught in adultery was brought to Jesus by the Pharisees. They caught her in the act, and the law demanded she be stoned. Jesus just said, "Whoever here is without sin, let them cast the first stone." And of course, one-by-one they began to walk out, until the only two left were Jesus and the woman.

Jesus asked, "Woman, where are your accusers?"

She replied, "There are none, Lord. They're all gone." He said, "Neither do I condemn thee, but go and sin no more." (John 8:2-11)

There must be accountability, but Jesus didn't tell her, "Go get your life cleaned up. Do a lot of repenting. Go back to every man you've ever committed adultery with and ask them to forgive you. Then come to me and perhaps I'll forgive you."

Why do we want to hold ourselves responsible for our sickness? Why do we think we can heal ourselves?

Psalm 103:3:

*Who forgiveth **all** thine iniquities; who healeth **all** thy diseases.*

Do you realize that every sin you've ever committed was your fault? Satan can't *force* you to sin. He can tempt you, and your flesh can try to override your spirit, but you're the one who sinned. We'll be the first to say, "Lord, forgive me," and God will. He'll forgive you of sins you knew you were committing. Why is it any less with healing? The man's background had nothing to do with him being healed or not being healed. Jesus came forth with the mercy, the grace, the power, and the glory of God!

Put away all your scrutinizing, looking at yourself, and condemning yourself. God wants to show forth His glory in you. Allow Him to do it today!