

“The Wonders of Salvation”

August 17, 2014

Text: John 9:35-38

This week the world was shocked to learn of the suicide of actor Robin Williams, who hanged himself w/ a belt, from a door frame in his bedroom.

His death was blamed on depression and substance abuse.

He seems to have used drugs/alcohol/meditation/counseling to ward off the emotional effects of a declining acting career, 2 divorces, lurking financial woes resulting from his divorces, and some health problems.

He was a victim of a sinful world system, that creates problems, & then offers solutions to deal w/ them that are self-destructive.

Depression can strike Xns as well as non-Xns, & one of those believers who suffered sever depression was Charles Spurgeon, my favorite preacher of all time.

But instead of looking to a fallen/faulty world for relief from his depression, he looked to the Lord.

In 1882 he wrote=>

“My happiest moments are when I am worshiping God, really adoring the Lord Jesus Christ, and having fellowship with the ever-blessed Spirit. In that worship I forget the cares of the Church and everything else. And, to me, it is the nearest approach to what it will be in heaven, where, day without night, they offer perpetual adoration unto Him that sits upon the Throne, and unto the Lamb.”

Spurgeon suffered terrible bouts of depression, but he had a means of dealing with them that was self-edifying not self-destructive.

For him, meditation was healing his own mind by focusing on his Lord, w/ worshipful thoughts about all His goodness.

That is a solution available to any/every Xn—and only to Xns.

It can be of no avail to non-Xns, who don't believe in Jesus X, don't know Him, & don't have any relationship w/ Him.

But how does one become a Xn? That's the subject of today's text, & it is illustrated by the man who was born blind, we have been studying in John 9.

If anyone ever had reason to feel depressed, it would have been this man, but Jesus had just healed him from his lifelong blindness.

X had mixed His own saliva w/ dirt, smeared it on the man's eyes, & sent him to the Pool of Siloam to wash it off.

When he did so, he was instantly healed from his blindness, and able to see for the first time.

Now Jesus will heal the man's spiritual blindness as well, and lead him to faith in Himself, that will save his soul.

As we consider the account of Jesus' second encounter with the man born blind, we learn seven principles about the process by which anyone becomes a true, born-again X:

This text will also enable us to contemplate the wonders of our own salvation, as we do so.

Principle #1—God Prepares the Heart

In Matt 13, Jesus told a parable about 4 kinds of soils, each of which represented a certain spiritual condition of the heart, in which the seed of the gospel had been planted.

- 1) Hard soil hearts, which sin/this-world have so hardened, the gospel can't penetrate them, before Satan snatches it away, like birds snatch seed off a hard-pack roadside.
- 2) Rocky soil—representing hearts that receive the gospel w/ joy, but only superficially, so that it never takes deep root.
- 3) Thorny soil—hearts that are so preoccupied w/ the cares of this world & the deceitfulness of riches, that the life of the gospel gets choked out, and dies w/i them.
- 4) Good soil—hearts that God has prepared, so that they receive the gospel, which then comes to life & bears spiritual fruit.

They have been plowed, watered, & cared for by the divine husbandman, so they're ready to nurture spiritual life.

The blind man in Jn 9 had a “good-soil” heart, that God had carefully prepared to receive the gospel of salvation thru Jesus X.

Usually that preparation takes time, as it did in this man's case.

Few of us experience conversion as Paul did, whom God knocked off his horse, blinded him, spoke to him from heaven, then saved him, all in a matter of minutes.

For most of us, faith progresses more gradually, from an initial glimpse of God's light of truth, to full-on perception of His light.

We may not even be sure when it finally happened.

We're just sure that it did, somewhere along the way.

God prepares some people's hearts through tragedy, others through blessing; but in the case of the blind man, He had used both.

1st, tragedy—The man had been blind all his life, & a beggar most of his life, but it had kept him from getting caught up in many of this world's evil ways.

More importantly, it had humbled him.

God had used his hardships to tear down any resistance in his heart, that pride might otherwise have built up.

Sharing the gospel w/ such people can bear eternal fruit.

They may be depressed/sick/weary/downcast & ready to hear about salvation thru faith in X because God has used trouble to churn up the soil and prepare their hearts.

They are people like the blind man in Jn 9, and people like the woman at the well in Jn 4.

But for people like Robin Williams, hardship just oppresses/hardens their hearts, & often there's no one to give them the gospel, and plant its seed in their hearts anyway.

2nd, blessing—Jesus had unexpectedly healed the man's eyes as a gift of God's grace, leaving him ready to believe anything X said.

Many a person has looked back on God's goodness, enriching his life w/ common grace, & he has been prepared to believe in the Truth, once he received it.

3rd, bitter hardship—the blind man had experienced the heartless rejection of some religious leaders when he refused to agree w/ them, that Jesus was a sinner.

They excommunicated him from the synagogue.

But that too had prepared his heart, by closing his mind to the authoritarian words/dictates of loveless religious officials as a means of salvation, & increasing his longing for the genuine love that only X can give.

Principle #2—God Takes the Initiative in Our Salvation

When the man’s heart was fully prepared by God, the Lord sent him a Messenger w/ the Gospel—Jesus Himself.

[John 9:35a]=> *“Jesus heard that they had put him out, and finding him...,”*

God finds us—we don’t/can’t find Him.

Rom 3 says=> *“There is none who seeks for God”* (3:11).

In the case of this man who was born blind, Jesus Himself took the initiative, tracked him down, found him, healed his spiritual eyes, & declared to him the Truth of the gospel.

The Jewish leaders had clearly rejected this man & cast him out, but the Savior of lost men went to find/save him.

If God didn’t take the initiative to go in search of our souls,

we could never be found/saved because *“the god of this world [Satan] has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of*

Christ” (2 Cor 4:4).

The unsaved “*walk in the ways of darkness*” (Prov 2:13), *
“*substitute darkness for light & light for darkness*” Isa 5:20,
“*participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness*” Eph 5:11,
belong to Satan’s “*domain of darkness*” Col 1:13, and
have no fellowship w/ the Light—God Himself (I Jn 1:7).
They are lost in darkness & need a Savior who can bring
them out of it, & into the light.

**Jesus takes the initiative to go/find/save those who are lost in
the darkness, & cannot find their way, to save
themselves.**

He described Himself that way in Luke 15 when He told the
parable about a shepherd of 100 sheep, who left 99 of them
in the open pasture to go/find the one he had lost.

Lk 15:5=> “*When he has found it, he lays it on his
shoulders, rejoicing.*”

In the case of the blind man, Jesus had to literally find him.
He had given him physical sight, & now in His compassion
& love, He was going to give him spiritual-sight/life.

Principle #3—God Confronts Man With the Light of Truth

He sends His own people to those whose hearts He has prepared,
to confront them w/ the truth of the gospel.

[Verse 35b]=> “*...finding him [the blind man], He [Jesus] said,
‘Do you believe in the Son of Man?’*”

**This prob. isn’t the evangelistic method most Xns would
use=> Going to someone, & before even introducing
themselves, asking “*Do you believe in the Son of Man?*”**

But Jesus took the direct approach, confronting this man w/ a question that was at the very heart of his soul's spiritual neediness, & at the heart of his own eternal destiny;

A question which the man didn't fully understand.

Amazingly, Jesus didn't even define terms, but just put the issue out there, getting the man's attention, & getting him to thinking along the lines of Truth.

The main issue on which Jesus focused was not the man's theological understanding, but rather his will=>

Was he willing to place his trust in the Son of Man?

This question was personal/confrontational=> "*Do **you** believe?*"

This is what many people need—Robin Williams needed someone to ask him that question.

They are spiritually wounded/dying inside, & they may not have much time left for eternal decision-making.

Many actually need a sermon less at that point than they need for someone who cares, to personally/pointedly apply to their hearts as individuals whatever truth they may already know.

They need someone like you to bind up their wounds, spiritually, and give them hope by asking "*Do you believe in the Son of Man?*"

Then to tell them what that means, when they ask.

What exactly *did* Jesus mean by this question?

I'll answer that by explaining 2 terms=>

1st, “*Son of Man*” is a designation of Messiah found in Dan 7;

So Jesus was declaring that He was the Messiah.

*“I [Daniel] kept looking in the night visions, And behold, with the clouds of heaven One like a **Son of Man** was coming, And He came up to the Ancient of Days And was presented before Him. / And to Him was given dominion, Glory and a kingdom, That all the peoples, nations and men of every language Might serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion Which will not pass away; And His kingdom is one Which will not be destroyed”*

(Dan 7:13-14).

Every knowledgeable Jew must have believed this was a prophecy about the Messiah, in Daniel’s vision.

Both in Dan 7, & in the context of Jesus’ words in our own text, “*Son of Man*” is virtually equivalent to the titles “Messiah,” “Lord,” & “Son of God.”

So Jesus was essentially asking the man in our text if he recognized in Him the Messiah, the Son of God, who could solve all his problems—of both body/soul—because He was God in human flesh.

This title “*Son of Man*” also has special significance in John’s Gospel, because it means that Jesus, as a Man, is fully qualified to become every other man’s Judge. In Jn 5 Jesus said that God=> “*gave Him authority to execute judgment, because He is the **Son of Man**”* (Jn 5:27).

2nd, “*believe in* [into]” means to put our implicit trust in Jesus, identifying ourselves so closely with Him that we are (to use the NT term) “in X.”

So Jesus was saying, in essence, to this man, “You know that I can/have healed your physical blindness, because I am the Messiah, the Son of God.

“Now will you entrust your soul and your whole self to Me?”

The man had believed in Jesus as a Prophet, but faith in Him as a Prophet was not going to save his soul.

Saving faith has to believe in Him as the “*Son of Man*” and thus the omnipotent/divine “*Son of God.*”

So saving faith is entrusting oneself & one’s soul to the Second Person of the Godhead, God-incarnate, the Lord Jesus X.

Just like creation, the re-creation of saving a soul is something only God can do—so if Jesus weren’t God, the Son of God, He couldn’t do it.

I’m not sure the healed blind man had all this figured out, but he knew Jesus was a Prophet & he attributed the limitless power of God to Him, as a prophet who could heal even blindness.

So he was on the verge of making an unqualified, unhesitant, whole-hearted decision to entrust himself & his-wellbeing to this One who had healed his eyes.

*** Principle #4—Man Chooses to Open up His Heart to Christ**

Last time we discovered in this man’s dealings with the Jewish religious leaders, how sarcastic he could become.

He had prob. often adopted a tough/independent/self-sufficient demeanor, in order to avoid being taken advantage of, as a blind man.

He didn’t want anyone thinking of him as weak/gullible/needy.

But now we see the opposite attitude in his dealing w/ Jesus.

He has set aside all his tough defensiveness & opened up his heart to learn whatever Jesus might teach him.

His spiritual eyes were opened, his heart was prepared to hear truth, & he was ready to believe anything X told him.

Jesus had asked if he believed in the Son of Man; now=>

[Verse 36]=> “*He answered, ‘Who is He, Lord [better translated “Sir” here, since he doesn’t yet really know who Jesus is, never having seen Him], that I may believe in Him?’*”

When a person begins to enquire about Jesus, he is taking an initial step, that can lead to saving faith.

It can be (as it was in this man’s case) the expression of a heart that realizes just how spiritually lost/needy it is, needing a Savior.

The man Jesus had healed was not only prepared to believe, he wanted to believe.

If there was a real Savior/Messiah available, who could/would save his soul, he wanted to know about him, because his own religious leaders had proven unworthy of his trust.

Faith in Jesus is the 1 & only, and unalterable requirement for salvation.

- * In Jn 3, Jesus Himself said=> *“God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that **whoever believes in Him** shall not perish, but have eternal life”* (Jn 3:16).
- * Jn 6=> *“This is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and **believes in Him** will have eternal life, and I Myself will raise him up on the last day”* (Jn 6:40).
- * Peter told Cornelius=> *“Of Him all the prophets bear witness that through His name everyone who **believes in Him** receives forgiveness of sins”* (Acts 10:43).
- * Paul preached the same message=> *“**Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved**”* (Acts 16:31).

Ironically, there are people who want to believe in Jesus, but who can't believe that just believing in Him, is enough.

Until the HS persuades them to the contrary, they will continue to think that there must be more to it than simple believing.

They would actually prefer that you give them something difficult to do, so that their souls might be saved=> Penance, good-works, a sacrifice, a religious quest— anything by which to prove their worthiness to receive eternal life.

But not only will those things not help, they're actually hurtful, because they circumvent the essence of the gospel=>

receiving salvation as an undeserved/unearned gift of God's grace, by simply believing in Jesus—and in Him alone.

The man Jesus had healed was ready to believe in the Son of Man, but he wasn't sure who He was, so Jesus told him.

*** Principle #5—Jesus Reveals Himself to a Person's Heart**

[Verse 37]=> *“Jesus said to him, ‘You have both seen Him, and He is the one who is talking with you.’”*

In verse 35, Jesus had asked the healed blind man if he believed in “*the Son of Man*” (the Messiah); in verse 36 the man had asked, “*Who is He, Sir?*” and now Jesus answered, “*You have... seen Him*” (the Messiah).

What a statement that is—on several levels=>

1st, the man had seen Messiah because Jesus, the Messiah, had healed his eyes so he could see.

2nd, the word “*seen*” is a special word that means not only to glance at, with one's eyes, but to correctly perceive as well.

Not only had Jesus healed his physical eyes, He had healed his spiritual eyes, so that he was able to perceive that Jesus was the Son of Man.

This man saw in Jesus, thru the H.S., what most people who could see, never saw in Him—the Messiah.

The difference was his faith, as Jesus had said to the Jews of Galilee (Jn 6:36)=> *“I said to you that you have seen Me, and yet do **not believe.**”*

They had seen Him w/o really seeing who He was, due to their lack of faith.

Still today—when a person opens up his heart to X, in order to believe in Him & love Him, Jesus reveals Himself to that person’s heart, by the H.S.

In Jn 14, Jesus promised, *“He who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and will **disclose** [emphanizo] Myself [manifest, make known, or reveal Myself]to him”* (Jn 14:21).

Just as He did w/ this man whose eyes He had healed, Jesus makes Himself known to us, as an object for our faith/love. He is the One in whom we must believe.

While it’s true that the H.S. reveals X to our hearts, testifying of Him to us inwardly, His primary revelation of Jesus is found in the Word.

We couldn’t believe in Him, if we didn’t know about Him, or had nothing more than inward feelings about Jesus to go on.

Our faith is based on facts revealed about Him in Scripture.

As Paul told the Romans (10:17)=> *“Faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the **word** of Christ.”*

You must first hear/know what it is you are to believe, before you can believe it—otherwise your faith is vain.

Believing in nothing more than your own believing can accomplish nothing.

But if anyone reads the Bible's words about Jesus w/ an open mind & a willing heart, God's Spirit will testify to his spirit that it's all true/reliable.

Jesus said (Jn 15:26)=> "*The **Spirit of truth** who proceed from the Father, He will **testify** about Me.*"

He also said (Jn 7:17)=> "*If anyone is willing to do His will, he will **know** of the **teaching**, whether it is of God or whether I speak from Myself.*"

Charles Spurgeon once told of a man who believed what the church believed.

When asked what his church believed, he answered=>

"It believes what I believe."

"Then what do you and the church believe?" he was asked.

"We both believe the same thing."

Spurgeon added, "That is not the kind of believing that can save the soul. It is through the knowledge of Christ that we are saved."

How much knowledge of X must we have, to believe in Him?

The blind man clearly didn't have a fully developed Christology.

But he knew enough about Jesus X, both from OT

messianic prophecy & his own direct acquaintance w/ our Lord, so that he could confidently entrust his eternal soul to Him.

As we'll soon see, he also knew enough about Jesus to worship Him.

Specifically, he understood that Jesus fulfilled all the OT prophecies he knew about the Son of Man (Messiah). He also realized that Jesus was the Son of God, & that in X's healing him, he had experienced God's mercy/grace.

Jesus had revealed Himself to the man, & he had believed in Him.

May that be true of each one of us as well.

*** Principle #6—Man Places His Faith in Jesus**

[Verse 38a]=> “*And he said, ‘Lord [a title of God], I believe.’*”

The eyes of this man's heart, having been opened by the H.S., knew who Jesus was, & he placed his faith/trust in Him.

He believed into a personal relationship w/ Jesus, and he was saved, just as God's Word promises=> “*Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved*” (Acts 16:31).

This was a man who had prob. learned to be cautious about believing anyone, because blind people can be taken advantage of by those they gullibly believe in.

But he believed in Jesus w/o reservation.

He confessed to Jesus w/ his mouth, his faith in Jesus Himself.

We do the same, in personal/grateful/confident acknowledgment of His gracious work in our hearts.

We don't say, "I hope I believe," nor "I think I believe."

We place our souls in X's hands & say definitively, "I believe in You, Lord Jesus," w/o equivocation.

If you can't do that, don't go to sleep tonight until you can/have.

If you're not a believer in Jesus, you're an unbeliever, &

He said, "*He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does **not believe** has been **judged already**, because he has **not believed** in the name of the only begotten **Son of God***" (Jn 3:18).

*** Principle #7—The Believer Worships His Newfound Lord**

[Verse 38b]=> "*And he worshiped Him.*"

Anyone who realizes Jesus is the Son of Man who will judge

all men, & the Son of God who saves men's souls, & has saved his soul, will inevitably worship Him, based on that realization.

When Jesus' disciples realized that, as they were about to drown

at sea, & Jesus miraculously hushed the wind & the waves

they laid down flat on the bottom of their boat, knowing

God was in their boat, and had to be worshiped.

That's exactly what the healed blind man did.

"Worshiped" (*proskuneo*) means to lie flat before someone in obeisance.

He lay flat on his belly on the ground before Jesus, as an act of worship.

Someone: “For me, it would be too embarrassing to do that in public! Besides—I’d get my clothes dirty.”

Maybe so, but this man had the advantage of having been blind all his life, and he, like Chas. Spurgeon, found great joy/delight in humbling himself before his Healer/Savior/Lord, worshiping Him.

True Xns love to glorify their Savior, however they can. Let’s treat our own hearts to a little grateful/loving worship of our Savior, right now.

“The Wonders of Salvation”

August 17, 2014

Text: John 9:35-38

1. How does one become a Christian? That is the subject of today’s text, and it is illustrated by a man who was born blind.

As we consider the account of Jesus’ second encounter with the man born blind, we learn seven principles about the process by which anyone becomes a true Christian...

*** Principle #1—God Prepares the Heart**

2. The blind man in John 9 had a “good-soil” heart that God had [18 prepared] to receive the gospel of salvation thru Jesus Christ.

Matt 13:18-23

*** Principle #2—God Takes the Initiative in Our Salvation**

[John 9:35a]

3. God finds us—we don’t and [12 can’t] find Him.

Rom 3:11; II Cor 4:4; Prov 2:3; Isa 5:20; Eph 5:11; Col 1:13; I Jn 1:7; Lk 15:5

*** Principle #3—God Confronts Man With the Light of Truth**

4. He sends His own people to those whose hearts He has prepared, to confront them with the truth of the [14 gospel].

[Verse 35b]

5. “*Son of Man*” is a designation of [16 Messiah] found in Daniel 7.

Dan 7:13-14; Jn 5:27

6. “*Believe in*” means to put our implicit [12 trust] in Jesus, identifying ourselves so closely with Him, we are “in Christ.”

*** Principle #4—Man Chooses to Open up His Heart to Christ**

7. The man set aside all his tough defensiveness and opened up his heart to

[12 learn] whatever Jesus might teach him.

[Verse 36]

8. Faith in Jesus is the one unalterable [24 requirement] for salvation.

Jn 3:16; 6:40; Acts 10:43; 16:31

9. The man Jesus had healed was ready to believe in the Son of Man, but he was not sure who He was, so Jesus [10 told] him.

* **Principle #5—Jesus Reveals Himself to a Person’s Heart**

[Verse 37]

Jn 14:21

10. As He did with this man whose eyes He had healed, Jesus makes Himself known to us as an object for our [12 faith] and love.

Rom 10:17; Jn 7:17; 15:26

11. How much knowledge of Christ must we have, to believe in Him? The blind man knew enough about Jesus so that he could confidently [16 entrust] his eternal soul to Him.

* **Principle #6—Man Places His Faith in Jesus**

[Verse 38a]

12. This man believed into a personal relationship with Jesus, and he was [12 saved] just as God’s Word promises.

Acts 16:31; Jn 3:18

* **Principle #7—The Believer Worships His Lord**

[Verse 38b]

13. This man, like Charles Spurgeon, found great joy in humbling himself before his Savior and Lord, [22 worshiping] Him.