

Sidetracked

10/28/25

Years ago, there used to be a class called Verbal Judo that was a requirement that students had to take for Criminal Justice. One of the objectives was training someone how to de-escalate a situation. One of the methods was to get the subject causing issues to be sidetracked onto something else. I knew of an officer (true story) that had to go to a residence to question a subject about a past crime that was committed. While inside, the subject started to become angry and started to become verbally aggressive. The officer started to whirl in a circle, which caused the subject to stop talking. The officer then told the subject that they were going to start over in a better way. The officer got the subject sidetracked. Instead of taking, the subject was trying to figure out what the officer was going. I would never do what the officer did, but it worked for him. Many years ago, retail had issues with a group of people who would get in line at the cash register and as they were getting checked out, they would try to get the cashier confused by talking about things that would distracted them. Then they would say about items with wrongs prices and try to get the cashier sidetracked which caused them to ring wrong items or not ring items up at all to save money. Some would sidetrack the cashier so they would give back the wrong amount of money. Then, there are emergencies. We could be in a restaurant eating and suddenly, someone is having a heart attack or choking on their food and no longer do we see eating our food as important. We come to the realization what is important – life itself. Maybe we have been living the good life and have become sidetracked on how fragile life really is. The devil is good at doing the same with us. He will get us sidetracked from actually doing God's work to doing things that mean nothing for the Kingdom of God. He'll get us sidetracked during prayer and during worship. Go to a big church and watch all the people who are busy looking at their phones during worship and I don't think everybody is looking at Scripture through their phone. We have a job to do today as Christians and that means we must focus on Jesus and keep focused on the mission He has called us to.

Let's look at some Scripture from John that can paint good picture of this in John 9: 1-12, "9 As Jesus was walking along, he saw a man who had been blind

from birth. ² “Rabbi,” his disciples asked him, “why was this man born blind? Was it because of his own sins or his parents’ sins?”

³ “It was not because of his sins or his parents’ sins,” Jesus answered. “This happened so the power of God could be seen in him. ⁴ We must quickly carry out the tasks assigned us by the one who sent us.^[a] The night is coming, and then no one can work. ⁵ But while I am here in the world, I am the light of the world.”⁶ Then he spit on the ground, made mud with the saliva, and spread the mud over the blind man’s eyes. ⁷ He told him, “Go wash yourself in the pool of Siloam” (Siloam means “sent”). So the man went and washed and came back seeing!⁸ His neighbors and others who knew him as a blind beggar asked each other, “Isn’t this the man who used to sit and beg?” ⁹ Some said he was, and others said, “No, he just looks like him!” But the beggar kept saying, “Yes, I am the same one!”¹⁰ They asked, “Who healed you? What happened?”¹¹ He told them, “The man they call Jesus made mud and spread it over my eyes and told me, ‘Go to the pool of Siloam and wash yourself.’ So I went and washed, and now I can see!”¹² “Where is he now?” they asked. “I don’t know,” he replied. (NLT – www.biblegateway.com)

Last week, we talked about Jesus being in Jerusalem for the Festival of Shelters and Jesus is still in Jerusalem for this story. As Jesus and His disciples are walking along, they come across a blind man – part of the Lord’s plan. The disciples asked Jesus an interesting question. Had the sins of the man or his parents caused his blindness? If you want a good example of people that were distracted from doing the mission of the Lord, it was the disciples. Jesus had already healed a man that couldn’t walk in chapter five. Before this event, Jesus already feed five thousand people with a small lunch and He walked on water. So, the disciples have already seen the miracles of Jesus. It would make sense that the first words out of their mouth would be telling Jesus that this man needs healed. The disciples had become distracted from what Jesus could do for this man. Instead, the disciples were more concerned about doctrine than the healing. They were more concerned about the cause than the cure. In other words, we see the evidence that the disciples had no compassion for the people around them. Jesus did have compassion and He was focused on fixing and healing the pain of these people. Jesus saw a real need here. Plus, I believe Jesus knew this man’s character and as

Jesus said in verse 3 that this happened that the works of God might be displayed in him. The disciples were focused on wanting to know what sins caused this man's grief. How often do Christians focus on the sins of the people instead of praying for them or trying to help them to see how deadly sin really is because we don't want them to spend eternity in Hell? This blind man was a beggar that most people saw every day. The good news here is that Jesus took notice to the real need of this man.

Then we read that Jesus heals this man by mixing spit and dirt to make mud that went over the man's eyes. Then, Jesus told him to go to the Pool of Siloam which was a major water source for Jerusalem and wash the mud off his eyes. Jesus usually required some work from those being physically healed. The man did as Jesus commanded and he went home seeing. This man was focused on obeying the command of Jesus. I bet he didn't stop along the way to talk to people; he went straight to that water.

After the blind man's healing, people ask the man about his healing. He tells the people that a man named Jesus healed him. We have to remember that the man was blind during his first meeting with Jesus. In verse 13 that we didn't read, the people took the man to see the Pharisees. Again, Jesus did the healing on the Sabbath and it appears this made the people mad. Instead of celebrating that a blind man that was born blind was healed by a miracle, they are distracted by the extra laws that the Pharisees had added onto the laws that God had given to the people. These people had no true compassion for their fellow man. Jesus healed a poor blind man and all the people and disciples were worried about was the man's past sins and that Jesus did a no-no on the Sabbath. I'm sure glad we're not like them today.

Now, the Pharisees come into the picture and let's go to John 9: 28-34, "²⁸ Then they cursed him and said, 'You are his disciple, but we are disciples of Moses! ²⁹ We know God spoke to Moses, but we don't even know where this man comes from.'³⁰ 'Why, that's very strange!' the man replied. 'He healed my eyes, and yet you don't know where he comes from?' ³¹ We know that God doesn't listen to sinners, but he is ready to hear those who worship him and do his

will. ³² Ever since the world began, no one has been able to open the eyes of someone born blind. ³³ If this man were not from God, he couldn't have done it." ³⁴ "You were born a total sinner!" they answered. "Are you trying to teach us?" And they threw him out of the synagogue. (NLT – www.biblegateway.com)

The Pharisees are in the same boat as the people and disciples are. They are in the boat called distraction. They could care less that this poor blind man was no longer blind because of the miracle done by Jesus, the Son of God. They were so focused on themselves and the laws they added to God's laws, they were more concerned about Jesus healing on the Sabbath. It's like watching someone drown in a lake and not helping them because there is a sign near by that states "no swimming". The Pharisees have no compassion for this man and because of that; satan distracts them by helping them focus on the law and themselves. I'm sure they didn't like Jesus getting praise from people as well. However, the once blind man wasn't distracted. He had more knowledge and understanding than the Pharisees. He knew that this miracle could not have been done without the help of God. In fact, the once blind man states that if Jesus was not from God, he couldn't have done the miracle. What a true statement from this once beggar on the street. The sad part of this story is how the disciples, some of the people, and the Pharisees had no compassion for physical part of this man. In fact, they threw the man out of the synagogue. The Pharisees didn't care about the physical healing of this man, and I guarantee you they didn't care about the man's soul, but Jesus did.

In John 9: 35-41 we read, "³⁵ When Jesus heard what had happened, he found the man and asked, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?^[a]"

³⁶ The man answered, "Who is he, sir? I want to believe in him."

³⁷ "You have seen him," Jesus said, "and he is speaking to you!"

³⁸ "Yes, Lord, I believe!" the man said. And he worshiped Jesus.

³⁹ Then Jesus told him,^[b] "I entered this world to render judgment—to give sight to the blind and to show those who think they see^[c] that they are blind."

⁴⁰ Some Pharisees who were standing nearby heard him and asked, “Are you saying we’re blind?”

⁴¹ “If you were blind, you wouldn’t be guilty,” Jesus replied. “But you remain guilty because you claim you can see. (NLT – www.biblegateway.com)

Jesus finds the once blind man and it appears the Pharisees follow the once blind man in the hopes to find Jesus. Anyway, Jesus finds the once blind man and starts to talk to him just as He did with Nicodemus, the women at the well, and the man who couldn’t walk. Most of the people didn’t even have compassion enough to care about the man being blind, but Jesus had compassion not only for the blindness of the man, but also compassion for his soul. What love and compassion Jesus shows here. Jesus was not distracted from doing His mission – healing people and going to the cross. We must not allow ourselves to become distracted in serving Jesus. Our culture is good at distracting us. The Pharisees were distracted by being legalistic. They were so distracted; they forgot how to have compassion for their fellow man. The once blind man was not distracted. When he saw Jesus for the first time, he worshiped him. The Pharisees and the once blind man had to make a choice about Jesus.

We have to keep in mind that we have only a limited time to make a choice about Jesus. This goes with everybody on this earth. Time is so short. We must pray for the lost and to allow His Spirit to shape and mold our own spirit and soul. If we go back to verse 4, we read this, “As long as it is day, we must do the works of him who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work. While I am in the world, I am the light of the world.” Jesus would not allow himself to be distracted from doing the work of His Father. Let’s make sure we don’t allow ourselves to be distracted from doing the work of the Lord. The night is coming and let’s follow the light.

NLT Life Application Study Bible. Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.: Wheaton, 1996