

THE HEALING OF THE MAN BORN BLIND
(John 9:1-41)

¹ And as *Jesus* passed by, he saw a man which was blind from *his* birth. ² And his disciples asked him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind? ³ *Jesus* answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him. ⁴ I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work. ⁵ As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world. ⁶ 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, ⁷ 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. ⁸ The neighbours therefore, and they which before had seen him that he was blind, said, Is not this he that sat and begged? ⁹ Some said, This is he: others *said*, He is like him: *but* he said, I am *he*. ¹⁰ Therefore said they unto him, How were thine eyes opened? ¹¹ 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. ¹² Then said they unto him, Where is he? He said, I know not. ¹³ They brought to the Pharisees him that aforetime was blind. ¹⁴ And it was the sabbath day when *Jesus* made the clay, and opened his eyes. ¹⁵ 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. ¹⁶ 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. ¹⁷ They say unto the blind man again, What sayest thou of him, that he hath opened thine eyes? He said, He is a prophet. ¹⁸ 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. ¹⁹ And they asked them, saying, Is this your son, who ye say was born blind? how then doth he now see? ²⁰ His parents answered them and said, We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind: ²¹ 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. ²² 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. ²³ Therefore said his parents, He is of age; ask him. ²⁴ 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. ²⁵ 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. ²⁶ Then said they to him again, What did he to thee? how opened he thine eyes? ²⁷ 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? ²⁸ Then they reviled him, and said, Thou art his disciple; but we are *Moses'* disciples. ²⁹ We know that God spake unto *Moses*: *as for* this *fellow*, we know not from whence he is. ³⁰ 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. ³¹ Now we know that God heareth not sinners: but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth his will, him he heareth. ³² Since the world began was it not heard that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind. ³³ If this man were not of God, he could do nothing. ³⁴ They answered and said unto him, Thou wast altogether born in sins, and dost thou teach us? And they cast him out. ³⁵ *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? ³⁶ He answered and said, Who is he, Lord, that I might believe on him? ³⁷ And *Jesus* said unto him, Thou hast both seen him, and it is he that talketh

with thee. ³⁸ And he said, Lord, I believe. And he worshipped him. ³⁹ And Jesus said, For judgment I am come into this world, that they which see not might see; and that they which see might be made blind. ⁴⁰ And *some* of the Pharisees which were with him heard these words, and said unto him, Are we blind also? ⁴¹ Jesus said unto them, If ye were blind, ye should have no sin: but now ye say, We see; therefore your sin remaineth.

There are seven miracles in the gospel of John. Although Jesus performed literally hundreds of miracles, so many that John says all the books in the world could not contain them, (John 21:25) there are only seven miracles recorded in this gospel. We have already seen:

1. Jesus turned water in to wine.
2. Jesus healed the nobleman's son.
3. Jesus healed the lame man.
4. Jesus fed the five thousand.
5. Jesus walked on water and calmed the storm.

Now we come to miracle number six. And in our text for this morning we have the account of the healing of a very desperate man. And we are going to look first at this man's condition.

I. The man's condition

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

John 9:1

The first thing that we notice is that he was a man. He was not a child, but he was an adult. We don't know how old he was. But we do know according to the testimony of his parents that he was "of age." (John 9:21)

Not only was he a man, but he was a blind man. He couldn't see. He lived in a world of total physical darkness. Every day he groped around for some sense of where he was. The simplest tasks were difficult or even impossible for him. I am sure he was dependent on others for many things.

But we learn something else about this man. He was blind from birth. He had never seen the world at all. He had never seen the light of day. He had never seen his own parents. He had never seen his own reflection in a mirror and he didn't even know what his own face looked like. He could only learn of the world if someone described it to him and then it was left to his imagination.

But we learn even more about this man. He was a beggar. (v.8) He was reduced to sitting at the city gates and begging for a coin here and there. Perhaps he begged daily for his food. And

he sat there with his hand out hoping that someone might have pity on him and give him a bite to eat.

And we see also that he was known in the community. (v.8) His pitiful condition was known by his neighbors. That is, those who came by each day and those who lived near him were well acquainted with his beggarly condition. They saw him sitting and begging every day.

And we learn that his parents were still living and they knew of his awful condition. (John 9:28)

It was widely suspected that this blind man was either a sinner himself or that his parents were sinners and that his blindness was a punishment for sin. The disciples of Jesus thought so (John 9:2) and the Pharisees thought so. (John 9:34) And so his reputation in the community was that he was a sinner being punished by God.

Since this man was a beggar, it can be assumed that he was a very poor man who probably came from a poor family because his parents could not support him. As such, he was a burden on society. He was non-productive. He could not provide for himself and he had nothing to offer anyone. As far as his neighbors were concerned he was worthless and good for nothing. And I doubt that this poor blind man had any friends in the world. You will notice that his neighbors didn't call him by name. They simply called him "he that sat and begged." (v.8) It is doubtful if they even knew his name.

But in spite of all these disadvantages, this man had one advantage. Though he had many disadvantages; though he had evil circumstances beyond his control; though he was born blind; though his life was full of misery in many ways; he had one great advantage that even he didn't know about.

I am sure there were many times when this man wondered if there was any use of living. He must have cursed his circumstances a thousand times. Lonely day after lonely day he must have thought there was no hope for him. But there was one great advantage which he never contemplated - he was chosen by God before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless. (Ephesians 1:4) He was predestinated unto adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself. (Ephesians 1:5)

What he didn't know was that when God the Father chose a people in eternity past, God chose him. And when God chose him, he gave him to his only begotten Son as an inheritance. And when Christ came to this world, he went about the business of gathering in his elect and saving them.

Isn't it interesting how God many times chooses the low things rather than the high things.

But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty. And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea. And things which are not, to bring to nought things that are.

I Corinthians 1:27, 28

And we find in our text that God chose this blind man, not only as a vehicle through whom to demonstrate his great power, but also as a vehicle through whom to demonstrate his eternal grace. For we see at the end of this account that this poor, blind beggar not only received his physical eyes, but also he received his spiritual eyes and he believed in Christ and worshipped him. (vs. 35-39)

We have seen the man's poor condition, and now we consider,

II. The occasion of the healing.

It seems that Jesus healed this blind man shortly after the Feast of Tabernacles was concluded and Jesus was still in Jerusalem teaching. You remember that humanly speaking, Jesus was about to be stoned to death. (John 8:59) In fact, the Jews had picked up the stones and while they had the stones in their hands, Jesus somehow passed by them.

It says that he hid himself. Now we don't know whether this was a miraculous hiding or whether he hid behind the pillars of the temple. But in some way he hid himself and he went out of the temple. It says he went right through the midst of them. It appears in some way that he blinded the Jews that had the stones in their hands so that they couldn't lay hands on him. Isn't it interesting that Jesus blinds some and gives sight to others!

But, he went out of the temple in Jerusalem and miraculously escaped "and so passed by." (8:59) And as he passed by, he encountered the blind man. Note how Jesus was finding his elect even when he was in flight for his own life. Jesus was on the run. The Jews were right behind him with stones in their hands and Jesus stopped for a poor blind beggar on the side of the road. And from this we learn that Jesus was always looking for opportunity to do good. He never had his eyes closed to any opportunity to work the works of the Father. And when he saw this beggar, he quit his running and he stopped to assist him.

III. The compassion of Jesus

A. He saw him. (He took note of him)

Many passed by this beggar without seeing him at all. They passed by as if this man was not even there. Others may have given him a glance, but with no concern for him in the least. Others looked at him, but they looked at him with the eyes of scorn and derision and they wondered who sinned, this man or his parents.

But when Jesus passed by, he looked upon him with a different kind of a look. It says in our text that Jesus saw him. But when Jesus saw this man, he saw him with an eye of compassion.

We should learn from this that to be compassionate is the very nature of God. Compassion is one of his great attributes. Just as God is omnipotent and just as He is omniscient, God is also compassionate. And aren't we glad that God is a compassionate God! Where would we be if God were not compassionate.

Note: One of God's consistent expressions to Israel in the Old Testament was compassion. They would sin over and over again and would suffer great punishments but ultimately God would look down on them and he would deliver them. But what quality in God prompted him to deliver such sinners? Often the Bible says something like this. "He looked upon their affliction and he had compassion on them." He took note of it, as to assess their pitiful condition and he was moved with compassion and he acted on their behalf.

Oh how we covet the Lord's compassion on us! We are nothing more than helpless beggars in our own right. We often find ourselves standing by the side of the road, helpless in our human condition. And we also are blind beggars seemingly with no hope under our own circumstances of life. And perhaps our only hope is that God would look down and see our distress and have compassion upon us and would deliver us from our distress. And we have this hope because our God is a compassionate God.

But let me say that God's compassion is not indiscriminately set forth. We are not to presume upon it as though we are universally entitled to it.

I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy and I will have compassion upon whom I will have compassion.

(Romans 9:15)

God's compassion is bountiful, but it is given out selectively. And in our text Jesus chose to be compassionate to this poor man.

Now I want you to notice in our text that Jesus saw this poor blind man, though the blind man could not see Jesus. I suspect this poor man was completely unaware that this day was any different from any other day. He was simply sitting there begging. He sat in despair like any other day in his blindness. Yet, this day, Jesus found him.

Did you know that Jesus finds those who do not seek him.?

Consider Saul of Tarsus. Saul was every bit as blind as this man on the side of the road. Only Saul's blindness was spiritual. Saul could not see. He was blinded by sin. He was blinded

by his Judaism. He was blinded by his religious fervor. He was blinded by hate and a thirst for blood. And Jesus came by one day and chose to be compassionate to Saul.

It is interesting many times how God shows compassion. In Saul's case, Jesus knocked him down to the ground. And this shows that those who think they stand must first be made low. And then, Jesus blinded Saul. Those that think they see must first be shown their blindness, before they are given spiritual sight. But notice in the case of Saul that Jesus came to him and found him.

I am sought of them that asked not for me: I am found of them that sought me not:

Isaiah 65:1

We don't really find God, but rather, He finds us. We don't come to know Him until He first knows us.

But now after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God . . .

Galatians 4:9

IV. The discussion with the disciples

The disciples asked Jesus, "Who sinned, this man, or his parents?" This question is based on a false premise – that suffering is always equated to sin; that he who suffers most, must be the greatest sinner. And this is what Jesus' own disciples thought.

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

John 9:2

This question reflects a theological ignorance on the part of the disciples. What about Job? Did they never read the story of Job? Job was a righteous man, and yet, he suffered.

And the Pharisees had the same theological error. (see v. 34) You would expect ignorance from the lost Pharisees, but not so much from Jesus' disciples.

The Scriptures teach that we are all born in sin. There is none righteous, no not one. And so, if there were a one-to-one relationship between sin and suffering we should all have great suffering. We should all be laid up in a sick bed somewhere with sores from head to toe if suffering was the pure payment for sin. But we are not all laid up. We are not all covered with sores. We are not all blind.

Matthew Henry had a paragraph describing how we should view the sufferings in the world. Here is the way we tend to view them:

When they happen to us, we tend to view them as trials. When they happen to others, we tend to suspect that they must have sinned against God.

Matthew Henry suggests it should be just the opposite. When afflictions happen to us, we should first examine ourselves whether they are chastisements and corrections. We should be hardest on ourselves and to repent if there is any sin that may be bringing the affliction. When we see affliction in others, not knowing their heart, we should graciously view them first as trials unless we have some good reason to believe they are punishments for sin.

V. Christ's answer to their question

Jesus taught that this man's condition had nothing to do with his sins or his parents' sins. Though sometimes suffering does occur due to sin (John 5:14) and though sometimes the sin of parents is visited on the children (Exodus 20:5) this man's condition was in order to manifest the works of God. (John 9:3)

Now some might say, "What a price to pay! Thirty years of blindness in order to make the works of God known." But God is sovereign over all his creatures. He can do as He pleases. If He ordains some of us to less suffering, then we must say that God is kind. If He ordains some of us to more suffering, they cannot say he is unjust. God is supremely righteous and good and who can question the work of his hands? (Rom.9:13, 14) What grander purpose could anyone have than to be designed for the very purpose of bringing glory to God even if it involves suffering and affliction?

For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

(II Cor. 4:17)

But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy.

(I Peter 4:13)

So this man's suffering was in order that the works of God might be manifest. What attributes of God were manifest in this matter? First, we see His justice in making sinful man liable to such calamities. Anything God brings upon is well deserved. None of us can say that we have been dealt with unjustly. In fact, we deserve far worse than we have received.

But also, we learn that God is sovereign and that He does as He pleases.

Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonor.

(Romans 9:21)

Ah, but we also see His great compassion in healing this poor blind beggar.

But thou, O Lord, art a God full of compassion, and gracious, longsuffering, and plenteous in mercy and truth.

(Psalm 86:15)

And Jesus went forth, and saw a great multitude, and was moved with compassion toward them, and he healed their sick.

(Mt. 14:14)

And of course, we see here His awesome power over the forces of nature, and blindness in particular. Physical blindness is nothing to Jesus. He can cure blindness in an instant. Just as he can cause the lame to walk, he can cause the blind to see. Jesus created the forces of nature and he can also override them any time he pleases.

Now according to this passage, Jesus healed this man for a very specific reason. It was the Father's will. (v.4) Had it not been the Father's will Jesus would have passed him by for Jesus came to do the will of the Father.

We see from our text that Jesus had very specific work to do. (v.4; "the works") He did not do work in general, but he did work in particular. His works were ordained by the Father and these are the works that he did.

And we see that Jesus had much work to do. He came to do the works of the Father. (see John 21:25)

And these works were not optional for Jesus, they were mandatory. He said, "I *must* do the works of him that sent me."

When Jesus came to this earth it was the time of his earthly work. It was the day of his work. There were many things to do while it was day. This shows that even Jesus had an appointed time to do his work on earth. Night (death) was coming after which his work would be done.

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

John 9:5

The business of Jesus was to enlighten the world. (v.5) This certainly shows that He is the source of truth. If it is anyone's business to enlighten the world, then that person is very special. And of course, Jesus was very special. He was the creator of the world. He was the originator of all truth. And therefore, He is qualified to enlighten the world. Furthermore, he is the example for all to follow.

And now we see the method of curing the blind man. (v.6)

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.

John 9:6

Now Jesus could have merely spoken the word and the man's eyes would have been opened. (see Luke 7:1-10 where Jesus healed the Centurion's servant at a distance) But Jesus chose another method. He spat on the ground and made moist clay and rubbed it on the man's eyes. He made an ointment of dirt and his own spittle. And He daubed the clay on the man's eyes.

It is interesting that the same hands that made the world and everything that is in the world gently spread the clay on the man's eyes. Not only is he the creator of the world, but also he is the tender physician who heals our wounds. And notice that Jesus put the clay on the part that was infirm. In like manner, when the heart is sick with sin, Jesus circumcises the heart.

Why did Jesus use such crude methods? Perhaps it was to show his sovereignty over his own methods. Jesus was not compelled to work miracles in any single way. He can do as he wishes. Perhaps it was to show that his ways are not our ways. Dirt placed on the eyes usually blinds, but in this case, mixed with fluid from Christ himself, it brought sight.

He told the blind man to go wash. Perhaps this was to give the man a chance at obedience. We are told to come to Christ. We are told to believe in him. And obedience is a necessary part of the salvation experience. And Jesus told this man to go wash. The washing perhaps was designed to show that the cure for spiritual blindness involves a washing of regeneration and a cleansing from sin.

Now Jesus told the man to go wash at a specific place – the pool of Siloam. The pool of Siloam was fed by Mt. Zion which, spiritually, is the source of all blessing. The pool of Siloam had long signified the throne of the kingdom of David and thus pointed to the Messiah. The pool of Siloam, being interpreted, means Sent. Christ being the Sent One, Jesus in effect was sending the man to himself for cleansing.

And lastly, we see the result of this miracle – The man came seeing

Note the understatement of the Scriptures. This man came seeing for the first time, Undoubtedly he came leaping and rejoicing. But the Scriptures simply say, "He came seeing." There is no doubt that he came with quite a bit more excitement than is recorded here. It is evident that he caused a great stir in the city for his healing was widely acknowledged. But, the Scriptures simply say, "He came seeing." And from this we learn, Jesus doesn't have to loudly proclaim himself, his works speak for themselves.

And we find that Jesus not only healed the man's eyes but he saved him as well.

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.

(John 9:35-38)

DOCTRINE TO BE LEARNED

Everything that happens in this world is by God's design.

The reasons behind God's providence are sometimes known only after a long time and sometimes are never known.

Everything that happens in this world is first and foremost to bring glory to God.

Sometimes our suffering is necessary to bring glory to Him.

God has promised that all things work together for good to them that love God.