

The Lord Heals A Man Who Was Blind From Birth

John 9:1-12

John 9:1-12 - *"Now as Jesus passed by, He saw a man who was blind from birth.*

² *And His disciples asked Him, saying, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?"* ³ *Jesus answered, "Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but that the works of God should be revealed in him. ⁴ I must work the works of Him who sent Me while it is day; the night is coming when no one can work. ⁵ As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world."*

⁶ *When He had said these things, He spat on the ground and made clay with the saliva; and He anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay. ⁷ And He said to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" (which is translated, Sent). So he went and washed, and came back seeing.*

⁸ *Therefore the neighbors and those who previously had seen that he was blind said, "Is not this he who sat and begged?"*

⁹ *Some said, "This is he." Others said, "He is like him." He said, "I am he." ¹⁰ Therefore they said to him, "How were your eyes opened?" ¹¹ He answered and said, "A Man called Jesus made clay and anointed my eyes and said to me, 'Go to the pool of Siloam and wash.' So I went and washed, and I received sight." ¹² Then they said to him, "Where is He?" He said, "I do not know."*

Background Notes

At first glance, the question that the disciples asked the Lord sounds kind of stupid, right? *"Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?"* (v2) If the man was blind from birth, how could it possibly be the result of *his own* sin? You don't sin before birth! Well, believe it or not, the idea of an unborn child sinning in the womb does appear in some early rabbinical writings! So, from the disciples' perspective, and from what appears to be their way of thinking in their culture at that time, it was not such a ridiculous question.

The idea that the man would be born blind because of his parents' sin came from a misinterpretation of the Old Testament Law, which said that the iniquity of the fathers would be visited upon the children to the third and fourth generation (Exodus 20:5 or Exodus 34:7). In that statement, God didn't mean that a child's physical problem was a result of a specific sin committed by the parents or grandparents. No. He meant that sin has a trickle-down or a ripple-out effect that will have a negative influence in the family for generations. Take divorce, for example. You can't divorce "in a vacuum." Divorce (or any other transgression of God's standards) doesn't affect only one or two individuals. Many other people are affected. A broken family has far-reaching effects, even for generations.

Why did the Lord choose to heal this blind man by mixing his saliva with clay and pasting it over the man's eyes? From early Jewish writings we know that a rabbi's saliva was highly esteemed. Remember, in Mark 7 the Lord used saliva when He healed the man who couldn't speak or hear, and in Mark 8 He used saliva when He healed the blind man of Bethsaida.

Furthermore, the touch of the Lord Jesus was important for this handicapped man. Did you ever notice that people generally tend to avoid touching handicapped people? The same situation was true in those days. However, the Lord

purposely reached out and **touched** many of the sick and handicapped people He healed. We need to remember this point. We should be more willing to reach out and touch or embrace handicapped people. Many of them desperately need to feel a human touch and a human embrace.

There may be many other reasons why the Lord healed the blind man in this way. We should always ask, “Why did the miracles happen the way they did?” And, “Is there any teaching associated with this miracle?” One of the commentaries I read suggested that maybe the Lord using clay here parallels God’s original act of creating man out of the dust or clay of the earth.

The man was sent to the pool of Siloam to wash (v7). The Pool of Siloam is still there in Jerusalem today! Fresh water still flows from the Gihon Spring through Hezekiah’s tunnel (built in about 700 BC) to the Pool of Siloam.

Doctrinal / Teaching Points

1. Bad things do happen to “good” people.

A few years ago, Rabbi Harold Kushner wrote a book entitled When Bad Things Happen To Good People. His motive for writing the book was good, but unfortunately his conclusions were unbiblical. Rabbi Kushner wanted to dispel the incorrect idea the disciples had, and some people today have, that when something “bad” happens, it’s because God is punishing the person for a sin that was committed - or that God is “taking His pound of flesh” in retribution for transgressions. That certainly isn’t true!

Unfortunately Rabbi Kushner came to the wrong conclusion - that God is not fully in control of what happens in this world, and that He can’t prevent evil from happening! Kushner concluded that the only thing God can do in a bad situation is to pick up the pieces and bring comfort and peace to the suffering individual.

Evangelical author Warren Wiersbe wrote a rebuttal to Kushner’s book: When Bad Things Happen To God’s People.” Wiersbe takes the biblical position that when “bad things” happen, even to so-called “good” people, **God has not lost control** of the situation! God is still on the throne! He’s still sovereign! But sometimes He **allows** “bad things” to happen for His good purposes. God is not the **source** of the bad things. There is evil in this world. However, God permits bad things to happen, even to so-called “good” people. And such is the case of the blind man here. (Of course, from the biblical perspective, **no one** is “good” – read Romans 3! So that’s why our doctrinal point has quotation marks around the word “good.”)

Bad things **do** happen to God’s people, but we know that God can overrule in the situation and use the bad things to accomplish good things in His plans for an individual’s life. Romans 8:28 says, *“And we know that in all things God works for good to those who love Him, to those who are called according to His purpose.”*

Notice that Romans 8:28 does **not** say that **all things that happen are good**. We know that all things are **not good** – sometimes they’re very bad. And these bad situations can be very difficult to handle. But the verse says that **God is working all things together for our good**. He can overrule and He can work for good **any** situation - and that includes bad things like sickness, injury, and even death. Although God may sometimes allow bad things to come into a believer’s life for discipline, or to wake us up if we’re straying. But **He always allows bad things for a good purpose**. God wants to accomplish “good” things in our lives and character as believers.

The point that the Lord made to the disciples was that this man's blindness was **not** the result of some specific sin. God had **allowed** the man to be born blind that good might come of it. It was part of God's sovereign plan that the Lord Jesus would miraculously heal this man. God had planned this miracle! So, understood correctly, with the quotes around "good," we can say that the Bible definitely teaches that bad things do happen to "good" people.

2. Mankind is spiritually blind from birth.

In the healing of this blind man, there is a spiritual picture of salvation. Remember, ***there are spiritual lessons and spiritual truths associated with all the miracles of Jesus Christ!*** What are the spiritual lessons in this miracle?

1 Peter 2:9 says that believers have been brought out of darkness into God's marvelous light. So in the healing of this blind man, who was brought out of physical darkness into physical light, we have a wonderful spiritual picture of believers being brought out of spiritual darkness into spiritual light.

The man was born blind. The Bible teaches that all mankind is spiritually blind from birth. We are born with a sinful nature. We are sinners because we commit sins, and we sin because we are sinners from birth. That is what the psalmist, David, meant in Psalm 51:5, "*Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me.*" The point in Psalm 51 is that the sinful nature goes all the way back to conception!

It's not pleasant to think of cute little babies as sinners, but they are. It's only a matter of time before that sinful nature manifests itself. To share a quote I heard in a sermon: We all were once "vipers in diapers"!

Mankind is spiritually blind from birth.

3. Salvation requires a "Naaman-like" faith.

In 2 Kings 5, a Syrian general, Naaman, had leprosy, and he came to the prophet Elisha desiring to be cured. Elisha told him to go and dip seven times in the Jordan River. At first Naaman said, "I'm not going to do that! Dip in the muddy Jordan? I'm an important man! Can't you give me something better to do?" But finally Naaman went in faith and did what the prophet told him to do - and he was cured.

I think that we have the same picture of faith here in John 9. The Lord didn't put the clay on this man's eyes and immediately pronounce him healed. No. He sent the man to wash in the Pool of Siloam. The blind man had to trust the Lord, and go in faith to obey the Lord. The Lord didn't transport him - He didn't even lead him by the hand. The man went in faith. Maybe people laughed at him, stumbling to the pool with eyes pasted over with clay - but in faith he went anyway! It's a great picture of obedience and faith! Salvation requires a "Naaman-like" faith.

Practical Applications

1. Let's "make hay while the sun shines"!

You've heard that common expression before, right? Farmers cut long grass and allow it to dry in the hot sun before baling and storing it in a barn. They have to get the work done "while the sun shines." Now let's apply this in a spiritual way.

In verses 4-5 the Lord said, *"I must work the works of Him who sent Me while it is day; the night is coming when no one can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world."*

The Lord's point here was that He must complete His assignment during this time of His earthly ministry, because the time was coming when He would leave this earth and go back to Heaven. So, during His time on earth, He was efficiently and effectively doing the work that God the Father had planned and ordained for Him to accomplish.

Now an application: We believers have a limited time on this earth before going to Heaven, so - let's "make hay while the sun shines"! Let's do the job the Lord has assigned to us. For example, in Matthew 5, the Lord Jesus said that believers are the "light of the world," and we are to let our light shine before this world. We don't have forever to let our light shine here on earth, so let's make hay while the sun shines.

I'm convinced that some of us - maybe all of us - will realize too late that we didn't take advantage of the prime time that the Lord has given us, and the many opportunities the Lord has given us. Let's not allow that to happen. Let's make hay while the sun shines!

2. Our neighbors should see a difference in us!

"Therefore the neighbors and those who previously had seen that he was blind said, 'Is not this he who sat and begged?' Some said, 'This is he.' Others said, 'He is like him.' He said, 'I am he.' Therefore they said to him, 'How were your eyes opened?'" (v8-10). The neighbors knew that something had changed, and it became an opportunity for the man to witness about how the Lord had healed him.

Do our neighbors see a difference in us? Do they see enough of a difference to ask what makes us different? Or do they just see us as "nice people"? Other people should see a difference in us because our lives have been touched and changed by Jesus Christ.

And they shouldn't see what they would consider to be a negative difference! They should see a positive difference – more joy, more neighborly interest, more caring and more loving attitudes - so much so that they will want to know what makes us different. Our neighbors should see a difference in us!