

JESUS HEALS A MAN BORN BLIND

John 9:1-12

Key Verse: 9:3

“Neither this man nor his parents sinned,” said Jesus, “but this happened so that the work of God might be displayed in his life.”

In the last passage, Jesus taught the Jewish religious leaders that he is the Messiah. Jesus revealed that he is God, saying, “...before Abraham was born, I am!” This truth would set them free from the power of sin and death. But they became angry enough to stone Jesus, and he slipped away. In today’s passage Jesus heals a man born blind. We learn, most of all, how to overcome fatalism and live for the glory of God.

First, “who sinned?” (1-2).

Look at verse 1. “As he went along, he saw a man blind from birth.” We might think that Jesus needed quiet time after dealing with the religious leaders. However, Jesus noticed a blind man as he went along. Immediately, Jesus’ heart went out to him, as though he was the only person in the world. Jesus was full of God’s compassion. Jesus’ own life was in danger, yet he was mindful of this needy person.

On the other hand, Jesus’ disciples must have been in shock. They had seen a fierce conflict between Jesus and the religious leaders. They probably struggled hard to hold on to Jesus’ teachings. Perhaps they remembered Jesus’ word that everyone who sins is a slave to sin. They were sure that the religious leaders would all die in their sins and go to hell. Nevertheless, when Jesus had to slip out of the temple and go away, they felt somewhat defeated. They felt the power of darkness was too strong. When they saw the man born blind, it looked like another evidence of the power of sin in the world. They said to Jesus, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?” Their question reflected typical Jewish thought and it was full of fatalism.

The disciples assumed that the man born blind was being punished because of sin. It was the typical Jewish viewpoint, and it was actually rooted in their belief in God’s sovereignty. They thought that since God was sovereign over all human beings’ lives, there was no accident. If someone was born with a defect, God allowed it to happen. They could only conclude that it was God’s punishment. But this blind man’s case presented a challenging theological issue. Whose sin was he being punished for? Moses had clearly taught that God punishes children for the sin of their parents (Ex 20:5; 34:7). This was part of the covenant theology of the Israelite people (Ps 79:8; Isa 65:6,7). So it seemed that this man was being punished for his parents’ sins. On the other hand, Ezekiel taught that God punishes each person for his own sins (Eze 18:19,20). David acknowledged that he was a sinner from conception in his mother’s womb (Ps 51:5). So could it be that the man born blind had committed some terrible sin in his mother’s womb that required God’s immediate punishment. Or perhaps God foresaw that he would be a sinner in the future and blinded him in advance to prevent him from watching bad movies or playing violent video games. Anyway, the disciples were very fatalistic about the power of sin.

Fatalistic thinking has always been a problem for mankind. To Hindu people, in nations such as India, tragedies are regarded as punishment for evils that were done—either in this lifetime or a previous one. Since suffering is punishment, it should not be interrupted. Therefore, to help a suffering person is to thwart justice, while letting other people suffer is a kind of virtue. Christians, too, can fall into fatalism. When William Carey stood up and said he wanted to go to Asia as a missionary, a church elder said, “Sit down young man. If God wants to save those heathens he will do it by himself, without help from you.” Sometimes we confront people who think like this. They tell us to stop fishing on the campus because only God can draw people to himself.

Many are fatalistic because of personal problems. One lady used drugs while in college. After meeting Jesus she stopped completely. Still, if she can’t remember something, she wonders if her brain was permanently damaged. Then she feels washed up. Another lady is beautiful, intelligent and highly motivated. But in her teens she had a bad experience out of her curiosity. Sometimes the devil uses this to make her doubt God’s love and despise herself. Then she becomes helpless. One man has a great talent to sing. He is also friendly and compassionate. But his education level is not as high as others. He often feels like a dummy when highly educated people converse around

him. To make matters worse, his boss called him “stupid.” At that time, he was almost overwhelmed by fatalism. Perhaps everyone has a fatalistic element. That is not the problem. How we deal with it is the problem.

Second, “that the work of God might be displayed” (3).

Look at Jesus’ answer. Verse 3 says, “‘Neither this man nor his parents sinned,’ said Jesus, ‘but this happened so that the work of God might be displayed in his life.’” Jesus did not regard all human misfortune as a result of sin. At the same time, Jesus knew that this man had suffered a lot. But it was not because of sin. It was preparation to receive a great blessing. Now God was going to display his glory through this man. Jesus was full of hope. There is no fatalism in Jesus. Jesus saw in everything the opportunity to glorify God. It was because Jesus’ life purpose was to reveal God to the world. We can overcome fatalistic thinking when we have a clear life purpose to glorify God. God made us to live for the glory of God alone. We are truly happy when the work of God is displayed through us, no matter what our human condition. We must examine ourselves. Are we living for the glory of God?

In order to live for the glory of God, we must meet the holy God personally and be changed in our inner man. For example, Isaiah was once a despaired prophet. He wanted to serve God, but when he looked at his nation he saw only the drinking problem of young men and the foxy behavior of young women. The land looked dark and hopeless. Then he met the holy God in the temple. He heard the cherubim singing, “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty. The whole earth is full of his glory.” He realized that God’s glory was shining all around him. But he had not seen it because of his sin of despair. He cried out, “Woe is me. I am ruined.” But God had mercy on him. God sent an angel who touched his lips with a live coal and burned away his sin of despair. Then Isaiah could see clearly that God reigns over Israel and all the nations of the world. Isaiah could see the whole earth was full of God’s glory. Then he wrote the most exquisite Messianic prophecies in the Bible.

There is a woman of faith in Chicago UBF who lives for the glory of God. A long time ago, she made a commitment to serve God in UBF even though her husband goes to another church. She was lonely, but she enjoyed fellowship with one other American shepherdess. Then one day that shepherdess followed her husband somewhere else. It was a moment of decision. At that time, Shepherdess Carmen Tedeschi decided to go through the narrow door and continue her life of faith in UBF for the glory of God. It has not been easy for her. But she has been a faithful stewardess of God’s work in UBF for the last 25 years.

Michael and Kitty Wang made a decision to move from California to Utah to take over the Utah UBF ministry after Missionary Jung Il Han’s departure. It was a decision to please God. Since they made that decision God has been with them. God enabled them to remain in the land and serve his work and purpose. They are weak, but God is strong. God enabled them to hold Sunday worship service every week without fail. For this, Michael spends two nights preparing the Sunday message. For this, Kitty persuaded Michael to buy an electronic keyboard that costs \$500, not the cheap one that was only \$100. Then Kitty taught herself how to play the keyboard, though she had never played before. God also enables them to carry out one-to-one Bible studies with Utah State University students. God blessed their family with a beautiful daughter, Elizabeth. God has raised a beautiful UBF house church in the Mormon country of Utah. May God use them as the lamp of God.

There is a young man whose father stopped attending worship service. His father also has discouraged him from coming to church any more. But this young man has faithfully studied the word of God to learn of Jesus. His decision to live for the glory of God is costly. But through it he is growing as a man of God. We can overcome fatalistic thinking and be truly happy when we decide to live for the glory of God.

Third, “we must do the work of him who sent me” (4-5).

Look at verse 4. “As long as it is day, we must do the work of him who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work.” Here Jesus used the word “we.” Jesus’ disciples must work with him. We have no time to indulge in fatalistic speculation. We must do the work of God while we have life. This involves making practical choices. We must choose to prepare Bible study material instead of watching television. We must choose to go fishing on the campus instead of shopping at the mall. We must decide to speak up about Jesus, instead of remaining in the comfort of anonymity. One young man thinks that since he is under 40 he is young. He hopes to finish school and marry a woman of God, but he has no sense of urgency; he is still under 40. Yet every day that passes is gone forever. Time

must be used wisely according to God's purpose. The fleeting things of the world perish. Those who indulge in them become worthless. But the man who does the will of God lives forever. He has true joy and absolute meaning of life. May God help each of us to use our time wisely by investing it in the work of God.

Look at verse 5. "While I am in the world, I am the light of the world." Jesus' heart was burning to reveal God to the whole world. Jesus knew that the darkness was widespread. But Jesus was determined to reveal God to the whole world. Jesus had a spirit of world conquest. At the time, Jesus was working in one corner of one nation. But Jesus was working for the whole world salvation. As we know now, It would happen through his disciples. They would be influenced by what Jesus said and did at this moment. Later they would reveal God to the world through preaching the gospel and raising disciples. Like Jesus, beginning from where we are, we must fight the darkness with a heart for world conquest. The daily battles that we fight and win on our campuses or in our working places, are part of a worldwide campaign to shine Jesus' light on all peoples. We pray for our brothers and sisters in North Korea. They have been living in an atmosphere where the truth has been suppressed. The one true God has been replaced with a sinful human idol. They are malnourished both spiritually and physically. May Jesus' light shine upon them and lead them to God.

Fourth, "spit and mud faith" (6).

Verse 6 says, "Having said this, he spit on the ground and made some mud with the saliva, and put it on the man's eyes." Jesus not only taught theory to his disciples, but he also put into practice his teaching. Jesus demonstrated to them how to be a good shepherd in this situation. Jesus could have healed the blind man in many ways. But he chose to spit on the ground and make some mud with the saliva and put it on the man's eyes. One reason he did this was to teach his disciples faith. He wanted them to learn "spit and mud faith." He wanted them to display their shepherd heart, creativity and wisdom in an impossible situation until they overcame it by faith. In Dr. Peter Kim's lecture last week, we learned many things. He said that sheep want to see a shepherd's sweat and tears. Sheep want to see a shepherd's blood. Not only sheep, God also wants to see a shepherd's faith in action. Those who have faith and a shepherd's heart can experience a miracle.

At the beginning of this year, Shepherd Joseph Horvath fellowship was in deep distress because they felt too old to engage in campus mission. But Shepherd Joe prayed and received Genesis 1:31a as their fellowship key verse. "God saw all that he had made, and it was very good." He began to see his old coworkers with God's eyes. He recognized each one's goodness before God. He began to send encouraging e-mails and to make positive phone calls. Gradually the spirit of the fellowship revived. Now several young Loyola girl students come regularly to Bible study and worship service in the fellowship. When everything seems impossible, we must have spit and mud faith.

Fifth, the man's faith and obedience (7-12).

Look at verse 7. "'Go,' he told him, 'wash in the Pool of Siloam' (this word means Sent). So the man went and washed and came home seeing." Let's think for a minute about the blind man. He had been listening to the conversation. When the disciples spoke, he felt bad, like he was some kind of science experiment or theological test case, not a real human being. But when Jesus spoke he heard the voice of his good shepherd. Jesus did not condemn him or his parents as sinners. Jesus had hope for him. He trusted Jesus' shepherd heart. When Jesus put mud on his eyes, he was not upset by it. He knew Jesus was not like the mischievous boys who put fake coins in his cup. Jesus really loved him and wanted to help him. When Jesus told him to go and wash in the pool, he simply went in obedience to Jesus' words. It was because he trusted Jesus. When he trusted and obeyed, he was healed.

The man who had been blind was suddenly able to see. Sunlight flooded into his eyes and into his inner man as well. He had been touched personally by the Messiah and received the love of God in his soul. His life problem had been healed. He had a new life and a new future. He must have been dancing and singing and praising God as he made his way home. His neighbors began to ask, "Isn't this the blind beggar?" Some claimed that he was. Other said, "No, he only looks like him." But he himself insisted, "I am the man." He had endured much shame and contempt as a blind beggar. It might have been a temptation to say, "No, I am not the man," or to be quiet. But he insisted, "I am the man." He knew that Jesus had healed him for the glory of God. He wanted to live up to his life purpose to glorify God.

There was a new spirit and courage in the man that his neighbors had never felt before. He began to sound like somebody. His neighbors did not like it. They demanded to know how his eyes were opened. Look at verse 11. “He replied, ‘The man they call Jesus made some mud and put it on my eyes. He told me to go to Siloam and wash. So I went and washed, and then I could see.’” The man simply told the facts. When he obeyed Jesus’ word, he was healed. Jesus had given sight to a blind man. We must also testify about what Jesus has done for us.

In this passage we learn that we must have a clear purpose of life to glorify God. Then we can overcome fatalistic thinking and find the way to please God in any situation. We must make daily choices to live up to our life purpose. And we must practice spit and mud faith. As we do so, may God make each of us a blessing in having 1,000 one-to-one Bible studies in Chicago UBF this year.