

- I. Did someone's sin cause this man to be born handicapped?
- A. Today we are going to begin looking at one of John's longer stories, the story of Jesus healing a man born blind. It begins in John 9:1-10:21.
1. John handles this story a bit differently than his other stories. He begins by telling the story of Jesus healing a blind man in John 9:1-7.
 2. In vs 8-12, John presents the healed man's neighbors' response to the healing.
 3. In vs 13-34, John presents the Pharisees responses to Jesus' healing of the blind man.
 4. And in vs 35-41, John talks about Jesus response to the blind man and to the Pharisees.
 5. Then we move on to John 10:1-18, where Jesus presents a parable and an explanation of the parable that is intended to affirm His deity, and in so doing, explain His ability to heal the blind man.
 6. And finally, in John 10:19-21, John concludes this story by presenting the divided response of the religious leaders to Jesus and the healing.
- B. John 9:1-12 . . . As [Jesus] passed by, He saw a man blind from birth. [2] And His disciples asked Him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he would be born blind?" [3] Jesus answered, "It was neither that this man sinned, nor his parents; but it was so that the works of God might be displayed in him. [4] We must work the works of Him who sent Me as long as it is day; night is coming when no one can work. [5] While I am in the world, I am the Light of the world." [6] When He had said this, He spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and applied the clay to his eyes, [7] and said to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" (which is translated, Sent). So he went away and washed, and came back seeing. [8] Therefore the neighbors, and those who previously saw him as a beggar, were saying, "Is not this the one who used to sit and beg?" [9] Others were saying, "This is he," still others were saying, "No, but he is like him." He kept saying, "I am the one." [10] So they were saying to him, "How then were your eyes opened?" [11] He answered, "The man who is called Jesus made clay, and anointed my eyes, and said to me, 'Go to Siloam and wash'; so I went away and washed, and I received sight." [12] They said to him, "Where is [this Jesus]?" He said, "I do not know."
- C. Pray

II. Whose sin caused this man to be born handicapped?

A. John 9:1-3 . . .

1. As [Jesus] was walking, He saw a man blind from birth – this is the only story in the four Gospels of Jesus healing someone who was born with handicapped. There are only two other healing stories of someone born handicapped, and they are found in Acts.
 - a. Acts 3:1-2 . . . Now Peter and John were going up to the temple at the ninth hour, the hour of prayer. [2] And a man who had been lame from his mother's womb was being carried along, whom they used to set down every day at the gate of the temple which is called Beautiful, in order to beg alms of those who were entering the temple.
 - b. Acts 14:8-10 . . . At Lystra a man was sitting who had no strength in his feet, lame from his mother's womb, who had never walked. [9] This man was listening to Paul as he spoke, who, when he had fixed his gaze on him and had seen that he had faith to be made well, [10] said with a loud voice, "Stand upright on your feet." And he leaped up and began to walk.
 - c. I am not sure what the significance is of Jesus healing someone born handicapped, but what we can see is that God's ability and willingness to heal is not limited to those who become sick or disabled during their lifetime. Therefore, just as Peter, John, and Paul looked to God to heal someone born with a handicap, so we can ask God to heal those who are born with some handicap.
2. And His disciples asked Him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he would be born blind?"
 - a. Our tendency is either to complain, blame, or look for some explanation as to why something bad has or is happening to us.
 - (1) In Judaism, and in some groups within the Body of Christ today, the first and foremost explanation for bad things happening to someone is sin – their sin. But in some cases, as we read here, the parent's sin was a possible reason.
 - (2) We should not be surprised at this, for it is common in our culture to blame our parents for some of our problems.
 - (3) My point is that according to their national and religious culture, and even the words of Jesus, the disciples were not asking a wrong question, just not the right question.
 - b. But what is the right question? Historically, Judaism taught that birth defects were the result of sin – either the sin of the one born with a defect, or the sin of the parents.

- (1) For example, we read in Genesis 25:21-23, “Isaac prayed to the LORD on behalf of his wife, because she was barren; and the LORD answered him and Rebekah his wife conceived. [22] But the children struggled together within her; and she said, ‘If it is so, why then am I this way?’ (*As the children grew in Rebekah’s womb, they struggled with each other. The implication is that Rebekah saw this as a sign that something bad was going to come from her pregnancy – even though her pregnancy was an answer to prayer. So in essence, Rebekah is thinking that if this pregnancy is going to result in bad things happening, why did God grant her the ability to conceive?*) ... So she went to inquire of the LORD. [23] The LORD said to her, ‘Two nations are in your womb; and two peoples will be separated from your body; and one people shall be stronger than the other; and the older shall serve the younger.’”
 - (a) Based on this scripture, Jewish rabbis concluded and taught that Esau committed some sin while in his mother’s womb and therefore God punished him by making him serve his younger brother.
 - (b) The rabbis went on to use this text to teach that birth defects were, therefore, either the result of the child sinning in the womb or the result of the parents sin.
 - (c) And the rabbis supported this teaching with Psalm 58:3, which says . . . “The wicked are estranged (*from God*) from the womb; these who speak lies go astray from birth.”
 - (d) So my point is that the culture encouraged the disciples’ question of “Who sinned?”
- c. But as I have already said, this is not the right question. But if it isn’t, what is the right question.
 - (1) In the OT, we read in Deuteronomy 11 & 28, that God promised blessings (*peace, health, and prosperity*) if Israel obeyed and lived righteously, and curses (*loss of peace, health, and prosperity*) if they disobeyed and lived sinfully. Therefore, these two chapters provide an OT confirmation that trouble, sickness, and suffering can be the result of sin.
 - (a) However, the story of Job, who had many bad things happen to him, is an OT confirmation that bad things are not always the result of sin.

- (b) As you recall, it was not Job's sin that brought troubles and tribulation into his life, but rather God's challenge to the devil that Job's faith could not be shaken.
 - (2) In the NT, Jesus connects sin with being lame. We read this in John 5:14, where Jesus said to the lame man He had just healed, "Behold, you have become well; do not sin anymore, so that nothing worse happens to you."
 - (3) And also in the NT, Paul confirms the link between sin and bad things, including sickness and death, in writing to the church at Corinth. We read in 1 Corinthians 11:27-32, "Therefore whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner, shall be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord...But a man must examine himself, and in so doing he is to eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For he who eats and drinks, eats and drinks judgment to himself if he does not judge the body rightly. For this reason many among you are weak and sick, and a number sleep. But if we judged ourselves rightly, we would not be judged.
 - (4) In other words, the NT provides a clear link between sin and bad things happening to us.
- d. However, the NT also includes Jesus' response to the disciples concerning the man born blind.
- (1) And in this case Jesus said, "It was neither that this man sinned, nor his parents; but it was so that the works of God might be displayed in him."
 - (2) What I want us to see is that our sin is the cause of bad things happening to us **SOMETIMES**, but not always.
- e. Therefore, the question to ask is, "What is God doing?"
- (1) Maybe there is some sin God wants you to deal with.
 - (2) Maybe there is something God wants to teach you through a sickness or disability.
 - (3) Maybe God is providing a set of circumstances in order to build your faith and contentment with Him and in Him.
 - (4) And maybe God's only purpose, in your time of trouble, is to bring glory to Himself – some how, some way?
- f. Regardless of the answer to the question, "What is God doing?" we know that God causes all things to work together for good when we love Him and live according to His will. Therefore, the end result brought about by God will make the time of suffering well worth it. So ask God the right question, and wait for God to bring

about His great good in your life – because the rewards of the good God brings far outweigh the cost of gaining those rewards.

- B. John 9:4 . . . We must work the works of Him who sent Me (God) as long as it is day; night is coming when no one can work.
1. There are three truths in this short statement that I believe we are wise to consider.
 - a. First, in relation to living the Christian life, the works that we do are to be God's works, not our own. Their focus is to be the accomplishment and fulfillment of God's purposes, not our own. And they are to be God honoring, not self-exalting.
 - b. Second, time is a limiting factor on how much we can do for God. A time is coming when no one can do any more works of God in this world. Therefore, make good use of the time you have.
 - c. Third, in saying that His work here on earth would only last for a time, Jesus was contradicting a popular Jewish belief that when the Messiah came He would rule over Israel forever.
 2. With those three truths in mind, I want to make a few comments about each one, beginning with the first, which is, in relation to living the Christian life, the works that we do are to be God's works, not our own. Their focus is to be the accomplishment and fulfillment of God's purposes, not our own. And they are to be God honoring, not self-exalting.
 - a. The first thing I want us to see here is that Jesus is not talking only about Himself, but all who belong to Him and follow Him and live for Him – and that includes believers today.
 - b. And yet, Jesus is our example in relation to doing the works of God. He is our example in quality of character, in attitude, in prayer, in zeal, in submission and obedience, in the anointing of the Holy Spirit, and in self-sacrifice.
 - (1) For example, Jesus humbled Himself and not only became human, He – who is God – became a servant, even to the point of serving us by dying for us. His submission and obedience were not given grudgingly or of necessity, but willingly, for He laid down His own life. And He was holy in all His behavior – even when reviled, falsely accused, tortured, and unjustly put to death in one of the cruelest ways possible.
 - (2) He learned the high, personal cost of obedience through what He suffered. He was anointed with the Holy Spirit. And what He did, He did to glorify His Father and not Himself.

- c. This is our example of working the works of God. And if more of us would follow Jesus' example, fewer of us would be mixed motivated so that we do God's works partially for God and partially for our own benefit and glory.
 - d. You see, anyone can do good works, but not everyone involved in good works is doing God's work or seeking God's glory.
 - e. So how do we come to that place of being like Jesus in doing the works of God for the sake and glory of God?
 - (1) In writing to Timothy, Paul tells us what we must do, that is, what the path is to doing God's work for God.
 - (2) We read these words in 2 Timothy 2:20-21, "Now in a large house there are not only gold and silver vessels, but also vessels of wood and of earthenware, and some to honor and some to dishonor. [21] Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from these things, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified, useful to the Master, prepared for every good work."
 - (3) You see, the first and foremost way to being prepared for every good work, the first and foremost way to being useful to the Master, the first and foremost way to being set apart from others for the Master's use, and the first and foremost way to being a vessel for honorable use is to devote yourself to removing from your life whatever it is that dirties you and makes you a vessel for dishonorable use!
 - f. This does not mean that other things are not helpful, such as education and experience, nor does it mean that the pursuit of godliness is more important than service.
 - (1) But it does mean that service is never to be treated as more important than godliness – for godly service comes out of a godly life, not a Bible college education or seminary or a church training program.
 - (2) And when you pursue godliness before and along with service, you will be honest and humble enough to see any mixed motives that may enter into your godly service.
 - g. The truth I am seeking to convey is that serving God by doing the works of God is a comprehensive activity made up of a serious pursuit of godliness AND a willing, cheerful, and self-sacrificial doing of good works – inside the church and outside the church.
3. The second truth I spoke of related to vs 4 is this, time is a limiting factor for how much we can do for God. The day is coming when no

one can do any more works of God in this world. Therefore, make good use of the time you have.

- a. Paul said it this way in Colossians 3:17, “Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of (*for sake of, to the glory of*) the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father.
 - b. And we read in Galatians 6:9-10, “Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary. [10] So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith.”
 - c. The point is simple. We have only so much time, and once that time is over, there is no more opportunity to do the work of God. To do God’s work for God’s glory, always keep your pursuit of godliness one step ahead of your service. And to get more done, make wise use of the time you have, for you will never regret having done so – though you probably will regret not doing so.
4. The third truth I wanted us to consider is this, in saying that His work here on earth would only last for a time, Jesus was contradicting a popular belief among the Jews that the Messiah would come and rule over Israel forever. Jesus said spoke similar words in John 7:33 and John 12:35-36.
- a. The truth I want to point out is that culture has a powerful influence over how we think, and how we make sense of life, and how we make choices – especially significant choices. This is both good and bad. It is good when the culture is a godly culture, such as should be found in the church. It is bad when the culture is an ungodly culture such as is found everywhere in the world.
 - b. In our travels overseas, we were reminded of the powerful cultural influences that played themselves out in how the people lived – and this includes their openness to God and Christianity.
 - c. We may think we are free of such influences, but that is a lie, for culture – both national and religious is just as powerful here as anyplace in the world. We may not face death for converting from Islam to Christianity, but we face other formidable cultural foes should we live a whole-hearted godly life.

III. Conclusion

- A. So ask yourself, what cultural influences, be they from the world or from the religious system are leading you away from living for God as you ought? It may not be easy to find the answer, but you can ask God for insight and wisdom, and you can talk with others to discover what they see about such influences in their lives.