

Teaching Points

John chapter 9 is wholly taken up with Christ's miraculous healing of a man born blind as well as the ensuing conflict between the man, his parents, his neighbors, and the Pharisees. For tonight, we're just going to consider the miracle itself.

This is the sixth "sign" in John's gospel. As with the other miracles recorded so far, this instance of Christ healing a man born blind is instructive. In many ways this miracle depicts the misery of the human condition and the saving power of Christ.

Let's consider the setting. Jesus and His disciples walk by a blind beggar. It appears this man was born in this condition. This man suffered from a debilitating physical ailment AND he was relegated to the life of a beggar. Basically, this man lived in a deplorable condition both physically and socially.

To make matters worse, Christ's disciples talk about the man as if he were a vile sinner suffering punishment from God. **"Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?"** Imagine the shame and discouragement he experienced if he heard them asking this question.

Discussion Questions: What do you make of the disciples' question? Is the assumption that his blindness was punishment for sin correct? Where did they even get this notion?

Thoughts: *Their question is based on the assumption that bad things happen to bad people. It's not that far from the theology presented by Job's friends. When Job suffered, his friends assumed he must have done something wrong to deserve punishment from God. That's how the disciples talk about this man. To them, the only way a man could be born blind is if he or his parents were guilty of sin. This is not a right assumption. In a few verses we'll see Jesus correct their understanding.*

Scripture teaches us that you cannot judge someone's standing with God based on prosperity or suffering. There are hard things that happen to godly people (see Job) and there are good things that happen to wicked people (see Psalm 73). It's wrong to reason from someone's external circumstances to the condition of their heart.

Jesus makes it abundantly clear that this man's suffering was not punishment for sin. **"Neither this man nor his parents sinned..."** This is really important. Sometimes we feel like our suffering is God punishing us. This man's story is a clear demonstration that there's more to the story. God certainly disciplines His own children. But there are other reasons He for the difficulties we experience.

In verse 3 Jesus says that this man's physical affliction is SO THAT the works of God may be revealed in him. This is a profound concept. God caused this man to be born blind SO THAT Christ could heal him; thereby demonstrating the power and glory of God.

This is an incredibly helpful concept to steady us when we suffer. There is no purposeless pain. God never wastes any suffering. In fact, Scripture teaches us that God works all things together for good - including our suffering (Romans 8:28). This man's blindness is part of God's glory shining in his life.

In verse 4 Jesus again declares Himself to be the light of the world. He just said this back in 8:12. Think of the picture here. A man who suffered in physical darkness from birth is about to receive sight through the healing power of the great I AM. This man may have had an unpleasant experience being born blind - but God is going to use him as a great testimony.

Discussion Questions: Can you think of any ways that this man's physical affliction illustrates spiritual realities?

Thoughts: *There is a strong contrast here between the darkness of this man's blindness and the brightness of Christ as the light of the world. Here is the dark and the light. And, just as John said back in chapter 1, the light shines in the darkness!*

This man's blindness is a good illustration of the effects of sin. Scripture describes unregenerate man as blind, deaf, and dead. We can't see the glory of God shining in the face of Christ. We can't hear God's word (see 8:43). And we can't come to God in our own strength (see 6:44). Furthermore, this man's blindness is a permanent condition. There was no cure for his ailment. This means he had no human hope of ever being healed from his miserable state. The same is true for sin!

After reiterating His identity as the light of the world, Jesus goes on to heal the man. His method is very interesting. Verses 6-7 describes Christ using spit and clay to anoint the man's eyes and then commanding him to go wash in the pool of Siloam. The man can't see Christ - but he can feel His hands anoint his eyes and he can hear His instructions to go wash.

Notice the man's obedience. He does exactly as Jesus tells him. And he's not disappointed with the results! This is no natural remedy. Spit, clay, and water don't have the ability to cure blindness. But Christ is able to do anything - and He often chooses to use small things and weak things so that it's obvious the power comes from Him.

Imagine the great joy this man experienced when he saw for the first time. It's impossible to describe what this sensation would have been like. His life would never be the same!

Discussion Questions: Can you think of any ways that this man's physical healing illustrates spiritual realities?

Thoughts: *Christ has the power to open the eyes of the blind. This is true physically AND spiritually. We need someone who has power over sin and unbelief. Jesus is that person. Opening the eyes of this physically blind man is a relatively small miracle compared to opening the eyes of a blind sinner. In other words, Christ's power is demonstrated in an even greater fashion when He takes away the stony heart of an unbeliever and gives them faith.*

You would think that this miracle would be cause for great joy amongst the man's acquaintances. Sadly, that's not the case. Next time we'll see how much trouble this stirred up as everyone tried to process what just happened.

Prayer Focus

Thank God for light. We have His Son. We have our eyes opened. And let's also pray that God will open the eyes of others who are still blind and unbelieving.