

Day 206, John 9

by David Servant

David Servant explores the theological implications of the healing of the blind man in John 9, emphasizing God's sovereignty and the call to compassion for the afflicted.

Scripture: Exodus 4:11, Isaiah 53:4, Luke 14:13, John 9:3, John 9:30

Topics: "Divine Sovereignty", "Healing Ministry"

Description

David Servant delves into the intriguing question of whether God preordained the man to be born blind so Jesus could heal him, exploring different interpretations of John 9:3-4. He discusses the implications of Jesus' response to his disciples, clarifying that neither the man's sin nor his parents' sin caused his blindness, but rather it was for the works of God to be displayed. The sermon reflects on the mystery of why some are born with disabilities, suggesting that it may test the compassion of those who can see and hear, drawing parallels to Jesus' teachings on serving the poor and afflicted.

Transcript

Did God preordain that this man of whom we read today be born blind so that Jesus could one day heal him? That seems to be what the text is saying in 9:3-4.

There is, however, one other possible interpretation. There were no capital letters and periods in the original Greek that would indicate where sentences started and ended. So translators do their best when adding them. Notice also that the words "it was" in 9:3 are italicized (in the NASB), which indicates that they were not in the original text and were also added by the translators. Thus 9:3-4 could be translated, "It was neither that this man sinned, nor his parents. But, in order that the works of God might be displayed in him, we must work the works of Him who sent as long as it is day."

If this translation is correct, then it could be said that Jesus fully answered His disciples' question. They asked if the man or his parents' sin was responsible for the birth defect. Jesus said it was neither. Then, He implied that it was not the work of God that the man was born blind, saying, "But, in order that the works of God might be displayed in him..." The idea is that healing blindness is God's work, and making people blind is not His work.

If it was not the work of God that the man was born blind, then we could pin it on the devil, as many would like to do. That does not, however, alleviate every struggle we might have with this passage, as it still begs the questions, "If Satan is responsible for birth defects, why doesn't God stop him?" And, "If Satan does

possess that ability, why does he afflict some and not others?" Ultimately, we all struggle with why some children are born with birth defects, just as Jesus' disciples. They had narrowed down the potential explanations to two, of which both, according to Jesus, were wrong. If the man's own sins were the reason he was born blind, then he would have sinned while still in his mother's womb. And if his parents were the reason, then God was punishing a child for his parents' sins, something He forbade Israel to do and something He said He does not do (Deut. 24:16; Ezek. 18:20).

God once said to Moses, "Who has made man's mouth? Or who makes him dumb or deaf, or seeing or blind? Is it not I, the Lord?" (Ex. 4:11). Yet God did not explain to Moses why He made some deaf or blind. So we are still left wondering. I have wondered if God makes some deaf or blind to test the compassion of those of us who can hear and see. Jesus said, "When you give a reception, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed, since they do not have the means to repay you; for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous" (Luke 14:13-14). For this reason, the ministry of Heaven's Family has a special fund that exists just to serve very poor and handicapped believers in developing nations.

Although we don't have all the answers, we can rejoice that Jesus healed this man who was born blind. It resulted in his salvation. We can also rejoice in the many others whom Jesus healed during His earthly ministry and throughout the last 2,000 years, and we can rejoice for His many promises regarding healing found in Scripture. The Bible says that Jesus bore everyone's sicknesses and diseases (Is. 53:4-5; Matt. 8:17).

What an interesting contrast we observe between the former blind beggar and the spiritually blind Pharisees. The simple understanding of average people often trumps the educated reasonings of the spiritual elite. I love his short sermon to the Pharisees:

Well, here is an amazing thing, that you do not know where He is from, and yet He opened my eyes. We know that God does not hear sinners; but if anyone is God-fearing, and does His will, He hears him....If this man were not from God, He could do nothing." (9:30-34).

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