

Expository Thoughts On John - JOHN 9:1-12

by J.C. Ryle

Transcript

Healing a Man Born Blind

Now as Jesus was passing by, he saw a man who had been blind from birth. His disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who committed the sin that caused him to be born blind, this man or his parents?" Jesus answered, "Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but he was born blind so that the acts of God may be revealed through what happens to him. We must perform the deeds of the one who sent me as long as it is daytime. Night is coming when no one can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world." Having said this, he spit on the ground and made some mud with the saliva. He smeared the mud on the blind man's eyes and said to him, "Go wash in the pool of Siloam" (which is translated "sent"). So the blind man went away and washed, and came back seeing.

Then the neighbors and the people who had seen him previously as a beggar began saying, "Is this not the man who used to sit and beg?" Some people said, "This is the man!" while others said, "No, but he looks like him." The man himself kept insisting, "I am the one." So they asked him, "How then were you made to see?" He replied, "The man called Jesus made mud, smeared it on my eyes and told me, 'Go to Siloam and wash.' So I went and washed, and was able to see." They said to him, "Where is that man?" He replied, "I don't know."

The chapter we now begin records one of the few great works of Christ which John has reported. It tells us how our Lord gave sight to a man who had been "blind from his birth." Here, as elsewhere in this Gospel, we find the circumstances of the miracle narrated with peculiar fullness, minuteness, and particularity. Here too, as elsewhere, we find the narrative rich in spiritual lessons.

We should observe, first, in this passage, how much sorrow sin has brought into the world. A sorrowful case is brought before us. We are told of a man "who was blind from his birth." A more serious affliction can hardly be conceived. Of all the bodily crosses that can be laid on man, without taking away life, none perhaps is greater than the loss of sight. It cuts us off from some of the greatest enjoyments of life. It shuts us up within a narrow world of our own. It makes us painfully helpless and dependent on others. In fact, until men lose their eyesight, they never fully realize its value.

Now blindness, like every other bodily infirmity, is one of the fruits of sin. If Adam had never fallen, we cannot doubt that people would never have been blind, or deaf, or mute. The many ills that flesh is heir to, the countless pains, and diseases, and physical defects to which we are all liable, came in when the curse came upon the earth. "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin." (Rom. 5:12.)

Let us learn to hate sin with a godly hatred, as the root of more than half of our cares and sorrows. Let us fight against it, mortify it, crucify it, and abhor it both in ourselves and others. There cannot be a clearer proof that man is a fallen creature than the fact that he can love sin and take pleasure in it.

We should observe, secondly, in this passage, what a solemn lesson Christ gives us about the use of opportunities. He says to the disciples who asked Him about the blind man, "I must work while it is called today--the night comes, when no man can work."

That saying was eminently true when applied to our Lord Himself. He knew well that his own earthly ministry would only last three years altogether, and knowing this He diligently redeemed the time. He let slip no opportunity of doing works of mercy, and attending to His Father\

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