

## JESUS HEALS A MAN BORN BLIND

John 9:1-12

Key Verses: 9:3-4

*“Neither this man nor his parents sinned,” said Jesus, “but this happened so that the works of God might be displayed in him. As long as it is day, we must do the works of him who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work.”*

In today’s passage, Jesus heals a man born blind. Jesus teaches us how we can overcome fatalistic elements in our lives. In Jesus, we can turn even what appears to be a misfortune into an opportunity to glorify God. May God help us to know why and how we can display God’s glory in our lives!

### I. SO THAT THE WORKS OF GOD MIGHT BE DISPLAYED (1-5)

When you see a handicapped person begging in subway station or on street, what comes to your mind? When this happened to Jesus’ disciples, a question arose in their minds. Look at verses 1-2. *As he went along, he saw a man blind from birth. His disciples asked him, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?”* The blind man was begging at the roadside. It was a pathetic sight. The disciples felt sorry for him. But to Jesus, it was an opportunity to teach them truth about human suffering.

**First, “Who sinned, this man or his parents?”** The Jews considered birth defects such as blindness as curse from God. The Old Testament seems to suggest that parents’ sins could cause the suffering of their children (Ex 20:5; 34:7; Ps 79:8; Isa 65:6,7). However, the disciples’ question, “Who sinned, this man or his parents?” revealed their fatalistic view of life. They had witnessed the mighty work of God through Jesus and heard the message of the hope of the kingdom of God. But when they saw the blind man begging at the roadside, they could not help but feeling sorry for the man. They did not understand why this man had to be born blind. It seemed unfair that this man had to suffer for a lifetime. They asked Jesus, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?” (2) Their question raises one of the fundamental questions of mankind: What is the cause of human misery? The Jews thought that human suffering was God’s punishment for someone’s sin. So the disciples asked, “Who sinned, this man or his parents?” This question implied that if it was not his or his parents’ fault, then it was God’s mistake. They assumed that all human misery is caused by God’s punishment for sins. They did not know the heart of God. In the Bible, we learn that God sometimes punishes peoples and nations for their sins. But he does not always punish us for every sin we commit. If that were true, no one in this world could escape God’s wrath. What was Jesus’ answer to their question?

**Second, “this happened so that the works of God might be displayed in him”** (3-5). *“Neither this man nor his parents sinned,” said Jesus, “but this happened so that the works of God might be displayed in him”* (3). Jesus says that there is no direct correlation between suffering and sin. We should not despair and feel hopeless about

our human condition no matter what the situation may be. Instead, by faith, we should view it as an opportunity to display God's glory in our lives. Jesus said something similar in John chapter 11. In Bethany, there were two sisters named Martha and Mary. Their parents had died when they were young. They had a brother named Lazarus whom they loved dearly. One day Lazarus fell sick and was dying. Martha and Mary sent for Jesus with the message, "Lord, the one you love is sick." They expected him to come running to help their brother, because they knew how much Jesus loved them. Upon hearing the message, however, Jesus said, "This sickness will not end in death. No, it is for God's glory, so that God's Son may be glorified through it" (Jn 11:4). Jesus told them that even a terminal illness was an opportunity to display God's glory. We learn that man, whether he is a healthy rich man or a blind beggar, is created to live for the glory of God.

Jesus said, "...*this happened so that the works of God might be displayed in him.*" He taught that the blind man was born with a purpose, that is, to display God's glory in his life. Each person's life must display God's glory because each of us was created in God's image to glorify God. The first question in the Westminster Shorter Catechism is: "What is the chief end of man?" Do you know the answer to the question? It is: "Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever."

I know a UBF missionary couple whose lives have displayed God's glory. They have two handsome, healthy sons. But their third child was born with a severe case of Down's syndrome. She is now almost 30 years old but with the mental capacity of a little child. All these years, this couple had to suffer silently to take care of a daughter who remains handicapped. But they never complained to God. Instead, they have cherished her as God's most precious gift to them. Someone said that these missionaries became "saints" because of their daughter. In this way, their lives have displayed God's glory.

Many people, however, live for their own glory. When we live for our own glory, we become selfish and miserable. Ernest Hemingway (1899-1961) worked hard and won the coveted Nobel Prize in literature. But soon afterwards he committed suicide. No one really knows why. However, spiritually speaking, he lived for his own glory. So he found no real meaning in life. Even his Nobel Prize did not give him a true meaning. When he had no meaning in life, he had no strength to go on with his life. So he ended his life with a rifle.

Some people say, "I am so miserable because of my poor human situation." Many people in Asia and Africa may say, "We are very miserable because we are not rich like Americans." Some American teens may think that they are miserable because of their broken family situation. The man born blind in this passage must have thought he was the most miserable creature because he could not see. He could not see the beautiful flowers in spring and the blue skies in fall. He could not see his mom's lovely face. His eyes were there only to shed tears. But spiritually speaking, he lived in darkness, not because his eyes were blind but because he did not live for the glory of God.

When I first became a Christian in the late 1970s, I read several books written by a Japanese Christian writer named Ayako Miura (1922-1999). Her writings helped me to see things with spiritual eyes. She was suffering from a serious illness that kept her bedridden for several years in a whole-body cast, meaning she could not move anything except her eyes. People around her thought she was a miserable creature because of her condition. But she did not wallow in her self-pity. Instead, she became a source of blessing to many fellow patients and visitors at the hospital. With a smile on her face, she encouraged and helped many people to come to know God. She displayed God's glory despite her seemingly hopeless situation. I used to feel pity for a person like that just because I had a healthy body. But she helped me to realize that the one who was really sick and needed help was a person like myself. There are many people with a perfect 20/20 vision and gorgeous body, but fail to display God's glory in their life because of their sins. I pray that God may help each of us to look at our situations from God's point of view and live a life of faith to display God's glory.

**Third, the time to do the work of God.** Look at verses 4-5. *“As long as it is day, we must do the works of him who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work. While I am in the world, I am the light of the world.”* In this allegory, “day” refers to life in the present world, and “night” refers to life after death. Jesus says that God gives each person a lifetime to work hard to display God's glory. For some people, this time is long. For others, it is rather short. But each person is given an opportunity to display God's glory. And sooner or later, the night of darkness is coming, when no one can work. God has given us the gift of life and it is our decision to display the glory of God or to waste it away.

In verse 5, Jesus declares, “I am the light of the world.” Jesus was about to open the eyes of the man born blind. But first, he wanted to teach his disciples that the ultimate healing would come when a person can see Jesus with his spiritual eyes that he is the light of the world. Physical healing is only temporary. When we go through sufferings in life, we desperately ask God to improve our human condition. But Jesus wants us to have more than a temporary fix on our problems. He wants us to have the ultimate healing. He wants us to open our eyes to see that he is the light of the world.

When a person accepts Jesus in his or her heart, he drives out all the dark elements in the person's heart and fills it with hope and vision in God. So the Apostle John, pointing to Jesus, said: “The true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world” (Jn 1:9). The blind man was in utter darkness. But when he accepted Jesus into his heart, he could see the light of Jesus, as we will find out in the second half of this chapter. Those who accept Jesus have the light of life. They know what they are doing, they can see where they are going, and they can be truly happy in Jesus.

## II. JESUS USED SPIT AND MUD (6-12)

Look at verses 6-7. *After saying this, he spit on the ground, made some mud with the saliva, and put it on the man's eyes. “Go,” he told him, “wash in the Pool of Siloam”*

*(this word means "Sent"). So the man went and washed, and came home seeing.* Jesus really wanted to heal the blind man. Jesus understood his sorrow. Jesus saw the tears flowing down from his blind eyes. Jesus' compassionate heart went out to him. But Jesus didn't have anything with him. He had no medical instrument. He didn't even have a cup of water. Humanly it was not possible for him to heal the eyes of a man born blind. But Jesus did not give up. Look at verse 6 again. *"After saying this, he spit on the ground, made some mud with the saliva, and put it on the man's eyes."* He used his own saliva and the mud on the ground to make something to put on the man's eyes. Jesus found a way to heal the man, somehow and anyhow. Most of all, Jesus made a personal connection with the man by touching his eyes with his hands. Jesus could not look into his eyes when he spoke to him. But he expressed his personal love for the man through his healing touch.

What can we learn from Jesus' healing of the blind man? Jesus taught his disciples how to overcome the fatalistic way of thinking in their hearts. Jesus taught them how to overcome fatalism to be a good shepherd. Once Jesus wanted to feed 5,000 hungry people but he had no money and there was no supermarket nearby. But he blessed the five loaves and two fish that Andrew brought to him and used them to feed the large crowd. It was an expression of his shepherd's heart. Jesus had nothing. But when he had a shepherd's heart, he could feed the 5,000 people with five loaves and two small fish.

Similarly, Jesus healed the blind man with his own saliva and the mud on the ground. It sounds very comical. But this teaches us how we can overcome fatalism. No one can overcome his fatalistic element of life by just sitting around and begging for others' sympathy. Jesus' healing also reveals his shepherd's heart for mankind. Of course, Jesus could have opened the man's eyes by simply speaking a word or snapping his fingers. But he showed his shepherd's heart by spitting on the ground, mixing his saliva with mud, and applying it on the blind man's eyes. A shepherd's heart can open even the eyes of a man born blind!

What was the blind man's response? Because of his handicap, he must have been very sensitive to what others did and said to him. What do you think this man felt when he heard Jesus spitting? When Jesus put the mud mixed with saliva on his eyes and told him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam," the man could have cried out, "This is an insult! Even you make fun of me! I am not dirty; I'm just blind!" Amazingly, he simply obeyed Jesus' command, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam." When he went and washed, his eyes were opened. Here we learn that we can experience the grace of God by obeying the word of God. This man accepted the word of Jesus as the divine voice of God. He saw the light of Jesus through his blind eyes and obeyed the word of Jesus. Then Jesus could open his eyes.

Do we want to be healed from our spiritual blindness? Then we should hear and obey the divine voice of Jesus, "Go, wash at the pool of Siloam." When this man obeyed, his eyes were opened. When he obeyed, he could see the Son of God, Jesus Christ. Jesus

has a great shepherd's heart for each of us. He is willing to open our eyes. But we must hear his voice and obey. Then we can see the kingdom of God, and we can enter the kingdom of God.

Today, we learned how to overcome fatalism in Jesus. We learned that the purpose of our life is to display the glory of God. Jesus is the light of the world. There is no fatalism as long as we remain in the light of Jesus. May God help each of us to do works of God faithfully before night comes!