

A Man Born Blind

John 9:1-41

John, chapter nine, relates the encounter of Jesus with a blind man, a man blind from birth. The Lord's own disciples wondered about the cause of the man's infirmity. Did he sin? Or was his blindness the result of his parents' sin, in either case presumably before birth.

The Lord was able to give them the true answer to their question. This had happened in order to display the work of God and thereby advance the kingdom of God. The man had been born blind to accomplish the purposes of God. In this case the man would be healed, but sometimes healing is withheld to accomplish God's purpose. Eight year old Fanny Crosby, who wrote many hymns still sung today, said this about her blindness,

*O what a happy soul am I! Although I cannot see,
I am resolved that in this world contented I will be.
How many blessings I enjoy that other people don't.
To weep and sigh because I'm blind, I cannot and I won't.*

This man's blindness was to have been a symbol of the spiritual darkness that plagues mankind. Israel was to have been a light to the nations. She failed to accomplish her calling from the Lord again and again. Now the true light had come into the world. And Jesus, as the light of the world was dispelling the darkness.

In this case the Lord would heal the man of his physical blindness, demonstrating his power to remove spiritual blindness from all who come to him by faith. The change in the man was apparently quite spectacular. The difference seen in him was so great that some of his neighbors wondered if in fact it was the same man. This is true in the spiritual realm as well. When a person says along with John Newton, "I once was blind but now I see," and there is no evidence of real change, of genuine transformation, we must be skeptical of their healing. And when we see a great difference in the life of someone, who once did not obey the Lord but now seeks his kingdom and his righteousness, we may be encouraged to believe that Jesus has indeed passed that way.

It was the religion of the Pharisees that kept them from seeing the truth of the man's healing. They knew that it was the Sabbath. No work was to be done on the Sabbath. Was not healing work? Whatever were the motives of their heart in resisting Jesus, they took him to task in a very legalistic way for a breach of the commandment of God. The Lord who had created the Sabbath for man, and not man for the Sabbath, was in their midst. But they presumed themselves to be the arbiters of right and wrong and missed the truth that one greater than the law was among them.

The man's own parents were lacking in courage, and half hearted in their support of him. They could not rejoice in what had taken place for fear that they would lose their place in society. Is it not true that there have been those who piously pray for a person's conversion only to discover that they really don't like the person as well after conversion. Salvation changes people.

The greatest miracle was not the healing of the man's body. He came to realize

at first that Jesus of Nazareth was at least a man from God, and that the objections of the Pharisees had to be spurious. But he was to come to a greater appreciation of the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus asked him, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" This was a reference to Daniel's prophecy of the Messiah's coming and of his right to reign and be worshiped.

"Who is he, sir that I may believe in him?" Thus he questioned the Lord. The Lord's reply was enough to call him to faith and worship. "You have seen him, and it is he who is speaking to you." We are told that he said, "Lord, I believe, and he worshiped him. The man was no longer the victim of physical and spiritual blindness. Sadly, the Pharisees, who were convinced that they knew everything, were left in spiritual darkness.

