

John 9
1-19-2014

Inherited Sin

This is a chapter unique in the Gospels, in that it is primarily from the view of the unnamed man who is healed by Jesus. The event begins with the disciples coming to a blind man, and asking Jesus “who sinned” that the man should be born blind. The idea that sickness was only the result of sin was popular throughout the Old Testament (as we see with Job’s friend accusing Job of sin based on his suffering), and into this passage now.

The idea that sin is punished in this life is not an accurate representation of scripture. Though many have attempted to identify all suffering with sin, it simply does not work with Scripture. The penalty of sin is the death of the soul¹. While there are consequences to sin, those consequences cannot be perceived as the wage or punishment of sin. The wages of sin are imputed ONLY to the person guilty of sin; God makes it clear in Ezekiel that to believe otherwise was an offense to His divine justice:

Ezekiel 18:2-4 "What do you mean when you use this proverb concerning the land of Israel, saying: 'The fathers have eaten sour grapes, And the children's teeth are set on edge'? As I live," says the Lord GOD, "you shall no longer use this proverb in Israel. Behold, all souls are Mine; the soul of the father as well as the soul of the son is Mine; The soul who sins shall die."

The inheritance of the wages of sin is a false doctrine, although one which is commonly believed, as propagated by Augustine of Hippo, and later by John Calvin. However, there are many examples of the inheritance of the consequences of sin. The consequences of sin are various, and affect many people, and may not affect the sinner at all. The consequences of sin are not divine justice, but something that allows us to see in nature that is harmful.

God told Adam that the day He ate of the tree of knowledge, he would die². As God does not lie, we know that the day he ate, he died. However, since he did not die in the flesh, we can conclude this was a reference to the death of his soul before God³. Subsequently, God removed Adam from the Garden to prevent his physical life from immortality⁴. Over 900 years later Adam died in the flesh; this death was passed on to his descendants, and it affected the whole of creation⁵.

The Blind Man

After Jesus places the mud in the eyes of the blind man, the events follow the blind man rather than Jesus. We need to remember several important points from here on: first, the man does not know the identity of the one who healed him, apart from the name Jesus; second, Jesus did not tell the blind man to confess him before others. What the man does know is that he was told to wash, he did, and now he can see.

¹ Romans 6:23

² Genesis 2:17

³ James 5:12; Matthew 10:28

⁴ Genesis 3:22-23

⁵ Romans 8:20

The miracle occurred on a Sabbath, as did the other miracle of healing in chapter five. Thus, the Pharisees want to interrogate the man healed. His testimony is simple, and does not change. However, we see the blind man begin to make some necessary inferences from what he does know.

There is a division among the Pharisees as to what is occurring. This division has been around for years now, as it was mentioned by Nicodemus in chapter three. To those who believe, it is clear that a sinner could not work such signs. To those who disbelieve, the Sabbath issue is the evidence of Jesus' evil intentions. There is also the question of the miracle itself; it is not believed by the Pharisees. His parents are called in to testify to this, but to nothing else; they fear the threat of being cast out of the synagogue for calling Jesus the Christ.

Finally, the blind man is interrogated a third time. He has already concluded in verse 17 the obvious: whoever this Jesus is, He is a prophet. When the Pharisees confront the blind man about his conclusions, and say that they do not know where Jesus is coming from, the blind man seems unable to hold back his astonishment. It is simple: a blind man cannot be healed without the power of God, therefore, this Jesus is the Christ. Since God does not hear sinners⁶, Jesus cannot be the sinner they suppose.

The blind man gives us an important fact that tells us that Jesus is no mere prophet, but The Prophet, The Christ. Even the blind man recognizes that it is remarkable that he is the only one who seems to realize: NO ONE HAS EVER IN HISTORY BEEN RESTORED OF BLINDNESS. Lepers have been healed in times past by prophets⁷; the dead have been raised⁸; people have been miraculously fed⁹. But no one has ever had their sight restored. Yet the Scriptures were clear that the Messiah would do just this:

Isaiah 29:18 In that day the deaf shall hear the words of the book, And the eyes of the blind shall see out of obscurity and out of darkness.

Isaiah 35:5 Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped.

Isaiah 42:7 To open blind eyes, To bring out prisoners from the prison, Those who sit in darkness from the prison house.

Isaiah 42:18 Hear, you deaf; and look, you blind, that you may see.

The result is not the acceptance of clear logic, of scriptural soundness. Instead, it is the pronouncement of inherited sin, and the total rejection of clear testimony. The man who could see is cast out.

There are not many people in Scripture who were sought out by Christ. When Jesus hears of the man's ejection, He seeks him out. "Jesus asks him if he believes in the Christ; the man tells Jesus that He need but identify Him, and the man would believe. When Jesus identifies Himself, the man worships Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God.

In a finally note to this conversation, Jesus applies the metaphor of blindness and sight to the recognition of sin. Those who know that they are sinful can be healed. But those who refuse to "see" there sin remain blind. It reminds us of the allegory of Jesus as a physician:

⁶ Isaiah 59:2

⁷ II Kings 5:14

⁸ I Kings 17:22

⁹ I Kings 17:16

Mark 2:17 When Jesus heard it, He said to them, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance."

The Pharisees seem to understand his point, and ask Him if they are blind then. Jesus replies in the affirmative. They are blind to their own sins; as such, they cannot be healed by Christ, and will ultimately die in their sin¹⁰. The Prophet Isaiah saw the rejection of Christ by many of the Jews, and described it in just this language:

Isaiah 6:9-10 And He said, "Go, and tell this people: 'Keep on hearing, but do not understand; Keep on seeing, but do not perceive.' Make the heart of this people dull, and their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and return and be healed."

One of the most remarkable events in the Bible, and we never know the man's name.

¹⁰ John 8:24.