

That We May Know Him

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Primary Scriptures from John 9:1-11; Genesis 2:7; Genesis 3:9-19; Romans 5:1-5

- I. Introduction
 - a. Our lives are filled with things not going our way.
 - b. There are frustrations and failures.
 - c. Equipment breaks down.
 - d. There are difficult relationships.
 - e. Ministry opportunities seem to come at the most inconvenient times.
 - f. Sometimes we ask, “Why does it have to be so difficult?”
- II. Who sinned?
 - a. Disciples understood there is a connection between sin and suffering
 - b. It should be patently clear that, in a perfect world, all of our body parts should work. We might surmise that God gave us eyes that we could see His wonderful work of creation and give Him glory. This man could not see, and thus could not experience God or His work in some manner. What causes separation from God and His perfection is sin. In other words, it seems an entirely logical conclusion to make, to say that it is because of sin that this man was born blind, separated from God in some measure.
 - c. The disciples’ understanding of God, however, was somewhere on the level of Job’s friends, namely that for every evidence of brokenness, there must be a direct connection to sin of the parties involved in some way. It seems to be a strong tendency for people to be reductionist. That is people tend to reduce explanations to that which is most easily understood and fits within their limited framework.
 - i. Already knowing how Jesus responded to the disciples’ question, we might chuckle at their naiveté, but it is not far removed from our experience.

- ii. Is it the drunken driver's sin that leads him to swerve off the road into a tree? Yes. Is it the lazy person's sin that is driving him into poverty? Yes.
 - iii. Is it the sin of the promiscuous woman that led her to contract AIDS? Is it that same sin that led to her child contracting AIDS from birth?
 - iv. Even in 1 Corinthians 11:28-30 we read _____. So some Christians were taking communion, and because of taking their sin lightly became sick, and some died.
 - v. I will mention in passing that it seems most difficult to help someone who is in their predicament because of their own doing. But that is precisely what God does for us.
- d. The choices offered to Jesus by the disciples were a false dilemma. For one example, we know there are times when someone sins against one or many and causes great harm. Think of Stalin. But that option does not seem to be in play here.
 - e. The disciples knew there must be a connection to sin, but couldn't make that connection.
 - f. Jesus addresses the false dilemma with letting them know that the reason for this man's blindness from birth was not due to specific sins of his or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him.
 - g. That's good, but it leaves us with more questions, some rather disturbing. Is it then just God's selfish desire through Jesus to be glorified, and this poor creature has suffered all these years without personal benefit? Frankly, God, being the creator of all things, would be completely just in doing so.
 - h. We cringe at such a statement because we have some sense that this man's life has worth. Well, it does have worth specifically because God gave it worth, first by creating him in God's image.
 - i. So to understand this situation more fully we need to go back to the beginning. In Genesis 2 we read of man being created from the dust of the earth in the image of God. There is the origin of man's worth.

- j. In Genesis 3 we read of the first sins of the human race. We also read that things are going to be tough because of it, and they will not work as smoothly as they did before sin entered the world. Namely, with sin entering the world, brokenness entered the world as a consequence – not just people, but everything else.
 - k. So there is the sin connection. It was Adam’s sin that has brought about all sorts of brokenness in this world. Some brokenness happens to us, and some happens because of us, but all of it is opportunity for God’s work to be manifest. When you grasp that one truth, you will see the brokenness out there in a completely different way. However, I do not want to mislead you into thinking that every situation will end up like it did with this blind man. What I can say is that somehow, someday, God will be glorified in it.
- III. Knowing God
- a. I will submit to you then that Jesus’ answer speaks to far more than just this particular blind man’s situation. Jesus is actually answering that great question that has been asked so many times, namely, if God is good and all powerful, why does He allow evil and suffering? Answer? That the works of God might be displayed in the lives of broken people.
 - b. We are told in John 17:3, “This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.” So the highest and best goal for man is to know God. Sadly, many times our highest and best goal is comfort, or our next meal.
 - c. Knowing God is not merely being acquainted with Him any more than you say you actually know a person with whom you only have a casual acquaintance.
 - d. Even when we have had close friendship or marriage with someone, we only know them to a certain depth, but not entirely. And they are finite beings, and imperfect, and not purely good.
 - e. So to know God must be our ultimate pursuit. Knowing Him in as much of His fullness as our finite beings can absorb.

- f. Now, if man had never fallen, if we simply were created in a perfect world and never saw the disasters that have come as a result of sin, then we would never know God as:
 - i. Savior
 - ii. Redeemer
 - iii. Healer
 - iv. Judge
 - v. Sustainer (we would not experience weakness and so would not understand His sustaining power)
 - vi. We wouldn't know His great power for us and His great power against His enemies.
 - vii. We wouldn't know Him as a victorious conquering King.
 - viii. We wouldn't know of His great mercy or His great patience.
 - ix. We wouldn't know of His tender lovingkindness in the midst of our suffering.
 - x. We would not know the incarnate Son of God for there would be no need for Him to come in the flesh.
- g. Some see a fallen world as a mistake that God did not intend, and now He is trying to make the best of a bad situation. This belief is greatly mistaken and is denigrating to God because it essentially states that there are things beyond His control.
- h. Jesus' answer to the disciples opens our eyes to see that the whole reason brokenness fits within the ultimate plan of God is that those who belong to God will know Him far more robustly than we could have any other way.
- i. Specifically applied to the blind man, he came to know Jesus in a way others around him could not.
 - i. The way in which Jesus healed him was to form clay from the dust with his spit. Reminiscent of Adam's creation from the dust, this is the re-creation of this man's eyes from the dust.
 - ii. We were not present when God created Adam, but this act by Jesus shows us that He was, and was fully involved. He thus gives the people watching proof that He is creator. Thus this

man's life-long affliction became a stage for Jesus to show Himself to be God, the Savior of the world.

- iii. As for the blind man, he then knew Jesus as the one Who, in the face of his completely impossible situation, his life of misery and outcast, re-created him, first physically with his eyes, then spiritually. He was transformed – Jesus was his healer! He did not spend time then questioning Jesus about why he had been blind all those years. He began to rejoice in a tremendous way, knowing personally the kind and tender mercies of God, while others around him coldly discussed whether or not a miracle just occurred.
 - j. It is that direct experience of God, through trials, that allows us to know Him in deep and magnificent ways. A number of kids that grow up in Christian homes are envious of those people with testimonies of being saved from grievous sin. For some of those kids, there is a selfish desire to have such a testimony so that people will ooh and ahh over it. But for others, I think they have a sense that they don't know God as their strong redeemer who has broken their bonds and set them free. They want to know God more, but have not had to face the deep trials that will help them to do so. This situation can become a parental dilemma and must be addressed wisely.
 - k. On a camping trip I was on years ago a lady expressed to me that she was hoping something would go wrong because that's what makes for the most memorable trips. It bears saying that we should not go looking for trouble in order to know God. This thinking is akin to what Paul addresses when he asks, should we sin that grace may abound? Of course not. We do not need to go looking for trials because Jesus tells us that in this world you will have tribulation.
- IV. While it is day
- a. I need to back up now and examine what Jesus said before healing the man. Jesus mentioned that the reason this man was born blind was so that the works of God would be displayed in him. In other words, because of this man's brokenness, there was a work of God

that needed to be done there. Here is an illustration of Ephesians 2:10 which mentions there are works prepared beforehand by God for us to do. This work was prepared beforehand for Jesus to do.

- b. Jesus then states, “We must work the works of Him who sent Me as long as it is day; night is coming when no one can work. While I am in the world, I am the light of the world.” Jesus worked diligently, unceasingly while on this earth – as the light of the world – during the day, namely while He was alive on this earth. When night came (that would be the darkness that covered the earth at His crucifixion), His work was done; He could work no longer.
 - c. Likewise, our life is our day. We must work the works of God, that is those works prepared by God for us to do, while it is day, while we are alive, for we cannot do them when we are dead.
 - d. Throw off lethargy, laziness, procrastination, and diversion to do that work. When you’re dead, you’re done and you will go to your reward. Psalm 90:12 states, “So teach us to number our days, that we may present to You a heart of wisdom.”
 - e. Jesus showed us that the works of God include entering in to the lives of broken people and ministering as He leads us. When you enter into the lives of broken people, you enter into the realm of knowing God in ways that you would never know Him otherwise.
 - f. Of course each of us is broken in some way or another. None of us wants to be broken. We are broken in different ways. As a matter of fact, our brokenness is customized to us. It is for us to seek the Lord regarding those things, that He would do a work in us, that we would know Him.
- V. Knowing Him through trials
- a. In Romans 5 we heard Paul say that we ought to “exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance.” The reason tribulation brings about perseverance is because we learn through the tribulation God’s faithfulness, His love, His timing, His goodness, and His wisdom. So, as we know Him better in those ways, we are better able to persevere in life.

- b. James states, “Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials.” Is he serious? How do I do that? Keep your eyes fixed on the greatest goal. Remember? Knowing God. Then know that God has arranged these trials in such a way that going through them will open your eyes to know God in ways or at depths you have not done so in the past.
- c. But what if I don’t like trials? I don’t know of anyone who does. I certainly don’t like trials, but when I come to the place of realizing that God has orchestrated these things for my good, I put my trust in Him and walk with Him through the trial. I am pleased on the other side when I know Him more. I can’t say that I understand the specific reasons for all trials, but I know our trials are for accomplishing the purpose of God that we know Him more.
- d. What about death, our final trial? Psalm 116:15 states, “Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His godly ones.” God will not waste the death of His godly ones in letting it be a useless event. Furthermore, because death is not our end, we can live our lives exuberantly. Paul states this in 1 Corinthians 15:53-58. What a great day! On the other side of death we can look back at death and then say, “O Death, where is your victory? O Death, where is your sting?” It is because of that reality that we can rejoice in our work here that God gives us to do, knowing that it is not in vain.

VI. Conclusion

- a. So remember the goal, to know God.
- b. Look at brokenness, not with frustration and despair, but as an opportunity for the works of God to be displayed.
- c. Beware of sloth, distraction, and diversion which will steal much time from you, time that could be had entering into that which God has prepared for you to do.
- d. Pray that you would have the mind of Christ, namely that as He came to a lost and broken world that despised Him, you would be willing to go as well.