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The Work That Must Be Done

John 9:1-4

Intro: We are entering into a new section of John's Gospel, one that has a different emphasis and scope of the previous section. In fact, there are some verses in the 1st chapter that accurately summarize the first 12 chapters of John (1:11-12). John has described Jesus the true Light (v9) and the coming of the Light to His own appropriately describes the content of ch1-4. "His own did not receive Him" aptly describes the section we just completed (5-8). The chapters we're about to study (9-12) now deal with the "as many as received Him" for their emphasis is on Jesus calling out a people of His own, in spite of and in the midst of the growing hostility of the religious leaders of Israel. This new section is distinct from the previous one for in the last section we saw Jesus being rejected by His own people, where as now, Jesus, tho still being rejected by His people, begins to call out a new people unto Himself.

The differences between ch8 and 9 are also distinct. In both chapters, Jesus makes the declaration that He is the Light of the world. In ch8, the effect of the Light was to make the creatures of darkness run; while in ch9, the effect of the Light was to call forth life and produce growth in those which the Father had planted the seed of saving faith. So, as we progress through this section just remember, there is still hostile opposition to Jesus but there is also faith.

1- The first thing we should notice here is the calm demeanor of Jesus. Remember, the last verse of ch8 says that Jesus had just passed by a highly agitated group of religious men (authorities no less) that wanted to execute Him by stoning for perceived blasphemy. The stoning attempt was a serious matter that most people did not walk away from. Most people that escape certain death by seconds or inches usually need to take a moment to gather their wits before they carry on but not Jesus. Within a few moments, having just removed Himself no more than a good stone's throw away from certain death, we see Jesus stop to fix His attention on a blind beggar sitting near the temple gate.

Most of us in the same situation would hardly have eyes for a beggar. We'd

be looking over our shoulder to see if we're being followed and scanning the crowd ahead of us to find the quickest way out of Dodge! But not Jesus! He was quite aware of the hatred the Jews had for Him and the evil they were determined to do to Him. But here's the thing – none of that fazed Him one bit! Jesus was not shaken or disturbed at all by the very real attempt on His life.

Instead, we find Him calm, cool and collected, acting with complete disregard for His enemies and their hatred.

This verse teaches us something important about the God we serve and what we should know about our God is that nothing frustrates Him. Man's hatred cannot frustrate Him and man's sin cannot frustrate Him. Instead, God always accomplishes His purposes. He is sovereign over all things and He will save by grace all whom He has called to Himself. God wasn't caught off guard by Adam's sin and He's not shocked or surprised by anyone else's sin. God sees the end from the beginning and so is never frustrated by unseen events because there are no events that are unseen by Him from the start. Thus, nothing can defeat or ever will defeat His purposes.

Here's the encouraging thing: Jesus said, "I will build My church." This is His purpose in this age and He is building it! Now, if God's purposes cannot be frustrated (and they can't be) then if we make God's purposes our purposes, we cannot be frustrated either. Is your life frustrating? Do you seem to be getting no where? Then trade in your goals for God's purposes and frustration will disappear and life will take on new meaning. If you're working for God, then your work will bear fruit and Jesus will be glorified and you'll fulfill the purpose for which you've been created and saved.

2-3- We should also notice that the disciples, those who walked closest to Jesus the longest, were not quite on the same page as He was. Jesus looked on this blind man as someone who needed help. The disciples simply regarded him as an unsolved riddle. They showed no interest or inclination in helping the man; after all, he was born blind so... No, they seemed quite satisfied in using the cause of his condition to launch into a theological debate. After all, that's what Bible school students are really good at: discussing and debating, it's a lot easier to do than working or serving.

Now, while we might disparage the disciples for their callousness towards

the man, we can't fault them for their question because it points to the problem of human suffering. From a purely human perspective, suffering presents a divine dilemma: If God were good, He would wish to make His creatures perfectly happy, and if God were almighty He would be able to do what He wished. But the creatures are not happy. Therefore God lacks either goodness, or power, or both. That's the problem of suffering in a nutshell and without divine revelation, it's unanswerable.

At some time or another, every human experiences suffering. Every child causes pain simply by being born. Many live with chronic pain and some people live to inflict pain. All suffer pain. Eventually all experience death. Now, while it is true that all suffer, it is also true that not all suffering is alike. A Christian and a non-Christian suffering from the same incurable disease may appear to endure the same experience but the Bible teaches that the 2 are not equal. From God's perspective, the unbeliever (at best) suffers without purpose and at worst, suffers at the whim of Satan. For the believer, an all-wise heavenly Father permits suffering in a carefully controlled situation so that He can accomplish a desired purpose in their life. The Book of Job teaches this clearly

While the disciple's question was valid, we must also recognize that it sprang from two very incorrect assumptions:

1) pagan assumption: suffering in this life is often retribution for sin committed in a previous life (reincarnation). This view was common in the 1st century and even bled into Judaism. If you find that hard to believe just consider the fact that in our own "enlightened" day and age, people who claim to be Bible-believing Christians employ certain beliefs and practices that at best are merely gross superstition and at worst, a sanctified form of witchcraft. Nowhere does the Bible support the idea of reincarnation, it always teaches instead that the issues of eternity are settled for each individual during the course of their own, single lifetime. "Only one life, twill soon be past..."

2) erroneous assumption: the suffering of the blind man was caused by the sin of his parents. This was entirely possible. Sins of parents can be visited on their children. Venereal disease can cause blindness in newborns. Drug and alcohol use during pregnancy can and will adversely affect the unborn child. But, in this case, Jesus says that neither the man's sin nor that of his parents caused his blindness but that the glory of God might be revealed in

him.

It may be hard to hear but the clear teaching of vs3 is that God allowed the man to be born blind so that at this particular moment in his earthly life Jesus might come to him and cure him and that, as a result, God might receive glory. Having said this, Jesus then sets about miraculously restoring the man's sight. Do you think this disparages the character of God? Far from it! It reveals His love and grace towards this man. "He spent most of his life in the dark, how horrible!" On the contrary, it's a small price to pay to see the glory of God first hand and respond with saving faith. Remember, there were thousands of Jews with perfect sight that never saw Jesus for who He truly was like this man did. So, who really got the short end of the stick in that scenario? Certainly not this blind man.

The 1st thing we learn from this passage is that there are no pat answers to the question of human suffering. There are answers, of course; just no simple or easy ones. We also cannot say, as some foolishly do, that it is the right of every believer to be healthy. That's complete nonsense. Neither can we say that specific suffering is always the result of some specific sin. God does not sit in heaven just waiting to smite His people when they sin. God is love. All His children can testify to the fact that they have sinned many times and have not reaped the fruit of that sin. God has been gracious in many ways. He is tender and patient with us.

If God has a purpose in everything, then what are God's purposes in suffering? Well, some suffering is corrective: God sends some pain into our lives in order to get us back on the path He's set before us. Just like spanking, some suffering is given to teach Christians that sin is wrong and to teach them obedience ([Heb 12:5-7, 11](#)). When faced with suffering, ask God if it's intended for correction. If so, confess, repent and turn back to the path set before you.

Some suffering is constructive: God chips away the things in our lives that are displeasing and begins to form the character of Jesus within us. Like a sculptor with a rough block of marble, God is little-by-little, shaping us into the beauty image of His Son. The difference is, we have feelings and can shrink back from the strokes of the sculptor, delaying the revelation of that image in our own lives. Suffering is a factor of growth in the lives of God's children.

Finally, as in our text, the purpose of some suffering is so that the grace of God might be revealed in the believer's life. This was true of both Job and Lazarus. Both were sinners and had no doubt experienced both corrective and constructive suffering but the specific suffering that was recorded in Scripture from them was the kind that brought glory to God. In Job's case, God's glory was revealed in the demonstration, seen by Satan and all angels, that Job didn't just love the Lord for what he could get out of Him but because the Lord was worthy to be loved and obeyed. This was true regardless of what happened to Job personally. Ultimately Job was vindicated and blessed.

When faced with suffering, we must consider these 3 possibilities. If it's corrective: repent; if it's constructive: ask God to make you more like Jesus. If it's for God's glory: ask God to keep you faithful so that you can show Satan, his ilk and everyone else that you are willing and happy to allow God to do whatever He pleases with you. Prove Satan wrong by believing God is always right and good.

4- Finally, we come to the heart of our text and the Lord's ministry. Here, Jesus speaks about His work and, in so doing; He gives us direction for our own work. Now, the disciples had just asked Him an important theological question. Jesus didn't ignore the question but neither did He enter into a long, deep discussion of it. He answered their question briefly; all the while He was preparing to heal the man born blind. Spurgeon gives insight as to the lesson here: "The Savior has greater respect for work than He has for speculation." Questions are good. There are answers to such questions and Jesus gives them. But, there's an eternity to ask and answer questions. What counts right now is to work, for the time to work is limited and workers are few. God sent Jesus to work. He was determined to do that work. If you're a Christian, God's given you work to do. The conclusion here is that you should set about doing that work with the same determination Jesus had.

The first thing we notice here is the necessity of working. Jesus said, "I must work..." This necessity of working is found all through His ministry. In fact; it's the first thing He's recorded saying (Lk 2:49), "Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?" Jesus was compelled to work by His obedience to the Father but also because of man's great need. Everywhere Jesus looked, there were sheep to be gathered and souls to win. Because

Jesus loved lost humanity, He went out of His way to work for them.

Second, we notice that Jesus didn't cherry-pick the work that He needed to accomplish. He wasn't selective or "choosy." He said, "I must work the works" meaning, "I must do all of them." There was preaching and praying to be done, rebuking and suffering, even dying. Whether they were appealing or not, Jesus was determined to do them all.

Third, there's a limit to the time allotted for work. Jesus said, "I must work...while it is day." That's significant since He is the timeless God. He existed in eternity past and will throughout eternity future. If anyone could've postponed work, surely it was Jesus. Yet, He's concerned for the moment and aware that the moment was passing. If that's true for Jesus, how much more true is it for us who are entirely creatures of time and for whom time is quickly passing!

Time is passing. We're here today but there's not an ounce of assurance that we'll be here tomorrow. Death may come, or sickness or simply changing circumstances – regardless of how, the opportunities for service that we have today may be over. Even if our situation doesn't change, the time of opportunity might pass for the one we should be bringing the gospel to or serving in some capacity. A preacher doesn't preach to the same congregation for long. A Sunday School teacher only has a limited time per week and a small window of opportunity before the children grow up and move on. Parents only have about 18 or so years to teach their kids the ways of God and build Christian character in them.

Finally, night is coming. We should begin consider the end of things on a grander scale, historically. Sure, there's an end of life for each of us but the night comes in history too; meaning that the opportunities for work a particular age offers can come to an end. There are great opportunities for Christian service today but how long will they last? Who knows but that a new dark age may soon be upon us? One theologian put it this way, "The barbarians are coming!"

Paganism has taking over the sciences, obfuscating scientific fact for opinion and misusing new discoveries. Paganism has taken over our media, politics, society in general and the culture as a whole. We can even plot the advance of paganism within organized religion to the point where it's nearly

impossible to distinguish the “Christian” life style from that of the average unbeliever. The barbarians are no longer at the gates, they’re in the highest seats in the land.

The night is coming, that’s true. Jesus said it is coming, and we can sense that it’s so. But that’s not all we can say. The night is coming? Yes! But Jesus is also coming. The barbarians don’t have the future to themselves. The Lord is returning to judge the barbarian and receive His own unto Himself. One day we must stand before Him. That’s our hope. We rejoice! Still, we recognize that it’s also a day of reckoning. Have we worked for Jesus? Have we invested those talents that He has given us? God grant that we may and that one day we may hear Him say, “Well done, good and faithful servant.”

Are you suffering? Rest in God’s sovereignty and take comfort in His love and compassion. He is not frustrated by anything, so we shouldn’t be either. Is Jesus your example for Christian service? Do you desire to obey God? Do you see the great need of the lost around you and do you love them enough to go out of your way? The time to work is short, the night is coming: we must be about our Father’s business. 😊