

I would have put the small acorn on the fragile vine and I would have put the big pumpkin on the sturdy oak.

About that time, the wind blew and an acorn fell out of the tree and hit the college student right on the head. The boy mopped his brow, looked at his father, and said, Dad, thank God it wasn't a pumpkin.

Now, God knows what he is doing. Sometimes his activities may seem to be contrary to our way of thinking. But he moves in the realm of eternity. And we move in the realm of time. And therefore, we cannot understand that God is dealing with us. He works in different ways with us.

For you know a thousand years are to God like one day. Now a thousand years to us is a long time. In fact, 70 years is a long time. But to God, time is different. A thousand years is like one day. Now somebody has figured this thing out and they have said that a thousand years is to God like a day, then it can also be said that 40 years is to God like one hour. For there is 24 hours in a day and 24 into a thousand results into about 40. Now if a thousand years to God is like one day, then 40 years to God is like one hour. So now, if I am 40 years old, as far as God is concerned, I have only lived an hour. And if you have lived 80 years, you have lived only two hours. Now, I think I have been here a long time. But God says you have been on earth just

Often see - Brief Excerpts of work
 Cross on Mt. Fuji kills 124
 89 W/S - Dozens of children left
 suffering

"THE SIGNIFICANT SIN"

John 9

INTRODUCTION:

It is not unusual to receive the question as to why a certain individual suffers. Quite often the person will ask, is God now punishing me for something I have done. And quite often people believe that this thing or that happens because there has been some sin. And why we suffer, what is the price, of this. The Bible is full of illustration concerning this matter. Long before Jesus' day the people had been taught that everything that happened was the direct act of God. They believed that the storms, the earth quake, the wars, the sickness -- all of this came at God's command. And to believe that anything could happen which God did not command would be to lessen his power. Therefore, if God was good why then was it that his children should suffer.

Now if you saw a father punishing his child, you would reason that either the father is mean or delights in seeing his child suffer, or that the child has done wrong and that a reasonable punishment is the obligation of the father. So this question came concerning this blind man's suffering.

Now Jesus did not accept their theory because they came to Him with the idea that he had sinned or his parents had sinned. A blind man sitting by the way side begging Jesus that he might help him. Now what is the cause of this tragedy. Why is this man blind. Who is to blame. What sin was committed. These people asking these questions did not concern themselves with anything about helping this man. The man did not become blind, he had been born blind. Now who had ever seen this man who had never seen the sun rise or set. This man had never had the privilege of looking into the face of his loved ones. He had never had the privilege of seeing a beautiful rose. He was helpless. He was dependent upon others, now why this misery.

You will notice how the disciples were bound to the past. They reflected that sin had caused the blindness. And their attitude was current in that day.

In the Old Testament we find the story of Job. And they felt that all suffering was the cause of sin. And here was a good man, upright in the sight of God, and God reminded Satan of his spiritual hero. But yes, said Job, he is a pretty good fellow but you have a fence around him. And God said he does not have fences around believers and he gives his permission and the Devil began to work on Job. And this thing happened, the other, his possessions were lost, child

ren were killed, his wife was confused, he lost his health, and somebody said then, a group of deacons came to see him. You read about three coming to see him and whoever these visitors might have been, they attributed his suffering to what -- to sin. Job knew that he was right with God and there are many reasons why people suffer other than sin.

Jesus talked to his disciples about this matter.

You will realize that we think differently from God.

And God does not think as we think. Now we think that all suffering is of sin. And God does not think in this way.

It reminds me of a story which I heard about a Christian

farmer. His son had opportunity of going to college. He returned home after his Freshman year at college and his

father and son were standing under a tree on the farm and the father began to question him about his experiences that

year at the university. The boy said, well Dad, I enjoyed my first year at school, but you know, I studied biology.

And I learned a great deal of things, many things that upset

me. Well the father was curious to know what troubled his son. Well, the boy replied, Dad I have discovered that God

"made the world wrong." For example, look at this strong oak

tree under which we stand. And God placed a little small acorn on it and looking to our right at the big pumpkin,

and God placed it on a fragile vine. Now, had I been God,

Father's will. The words of Christ was the works of Him who sent him. I must work he said.

Here is his opportunity, he will work while it is day.

And I think this speaks to us that if we are going to do anything for Christ, we have to do it while it is daytime, while there is opportunity to do it. Because there will come a time when you will not have opportunity to be busy for Christ, to worship, to work, to serve for His glory. Night will come when no man can work. And when night comes, there is a certainty that certainties is coming nearer and nearer that the sun will go out. And you cannot work at that time.

v.5 In Verse 5, he said his business was to lighten up the world. And this he had in reference to this man who was sick.

v.6 Now in Verse 6, Jesus goes about to cure this man. The circumstances, the questions here about his sin, and Jesus began to address himself to the opening of this man's eyes. He did not defer this, here was a good opportunity and he was going to take advantage of it. He prepared an eye sauve for the cure. Now he made clay there was no water near by. He made this application and placed this ointment upon the eyes of the blind man. He spread this out and dabbed it on his eyes like a physician. Now to magnify his power to make a blind man to see, he said to him (this man), I want you now

about 60 minutes. Now that is the way God measures time and God never hurries up anything. And I think many times our generation is moving pretty fast. And Jesus would say to us, come aside, I have somewhat to say to you.

As we consider this problem tonight, the significant sin, I do so under three or four heads. First questions about a blind man's sin. Verse 1-7. Second division among the religious leaders concerning his sin, Verse 8-34. Third the disposition made by Jesus of his sin. Verse 35-41. And fourth the eternal answer to his sin.

I. Questions/About A Blind Man's Sin. Verse 1-7.

v.1 In verse 1 here is a pity case about a blind man and Jesus passed by and saw a man blind from his birth. The first words speak truly to our hearts that here is a man who had been abused perhaps in word and in deed through the years. And Jesus did not miss an opportunity to do good. He was always ready to help someone and this blind man was in public. It seems that if someone could help him, it would be doing a favor because then he would be able to make a living for himself. He would not be a burden to the neighbors and this would be a generous thing on the part of Christ. Yet Jesus was willing to show mercy unto this man but the other people did not see it this way.

The condition of this poor man was very sad. He was blind and he had been that way in darkness all of his life. And certainly he would have given a great deal to have been able to see the beauty of a day. But he had been deprived of even the sunlight, of all these days and years. And of course someone needed to have mercy upon him. And to have power upon him. Jesus had compassion for this man and Christ saw him as no man before had looked upon him.

V.2 In Verse 2 the question which the disciples put to their master when they looked upon him. Is it probable that Jesus told them the poor man was blind. Or that they knew this from common thing. Anyhow here is an odd question. Who sinned. This man, or his parents. And the question certainly was not with a great deal of love as they take it for granted, that there must have been some sort of sin and now he is being punished for it. This was thought to be that there was some sort of wickedness involved. These people thought surely this man was guilty of some outstanding sin. Just so, as in the case of Job, he was a great sufferer.

It was an unnecessary question because it certainly reflected upon his parents. What was this to them. Or what good would it do them to know it. If Jesus should say that it was because of their sin and punish them for something

they had committed, even before this man had been born. Was this man's soul condemned because there had been some sin. Of course we read in the Bible that the wickedness of the parents will be visited upon the children and that is a good reason for parents and for others to see that they confess their sins lest this be visited upon their children.

V.3 In Verse 3, we find that this question will bring forth the reasons and Jesus said now this man sinned. Here Christ knew the secret. And here are two things which he said. I want you to get them. First that they are not always suffering because of the punishment of sin. That human suffering, the large share of it, maybe not because of sin at all. We must take heed of the judgment which we make upon people to say that they are sinners because they suffer.

Second, Jesus said, that they are sometimes intended purely for the glory of God. The manifestation of his works -- God has authority over all his creatures and the right and he can make these serviceable for his glory. To glorify himself, and this blind man was blind in order that he might glorify God. God intended in him to show and to declare his glory. To make himself to take notice of it. Those who regard it as an ordinary course of things will certainly be amazed at this.

V.4 Verse 4, he gives his reason for his readiness to help. I must work the work of him that sent me. I am here to do the

And he told them about this man Jesus, who had power to do this. And they wanted to know where he was.

13/ In Verse 13, they brought him to the Pharisees, they brought him before the great court. And some think they brought him in with a good design that they might somehow get light concerning Jesus. But it is hard for us to believe this.

14/ Verse 14, they objected here to the Sabbath Day to working this miracle on the Sabbath Day and curing this man.

15/ Verse 15, there was a trial and examination. Really here is an interrogation. They interrogated him about the cure. They doubted whether he had indeed been born blind in Verse 16. They demanded proof, they did not believe this. Now there are men today who will quarrel with the clearest truths when they want too. They call the parents of the man in who received sight -- this they did hoping to disprove the miracle.

19/ In Verse 19, they put the question to them. Now is this your son, do you say that he was born blind, are you sure of it. How then do you know that he now sees. They certainly questioned these parents, about how often these parents had looked upon him. They were sorry for their child's blindness, they wished perhaps that maybe he had never been born. But they were not ashamed of their child.

to go to the pool. You will take note here that when God made the first man, he made him out of clay. He made this world. He moulded man out of the dust of the ground. And now he is going to open this man's eyes and again he uses this same clay, same dust. This has wonderful connection with Revelation 3:18 in which Christ says that the people needed to buy eye sauve so they might see.

You remember Paul in his conversion, he was blind for three days. And at last the scales fell from his eyes. And he had spiritual sight.

V.7 We read in Verse 7 about the directions given. He was to go and wash in the pool of Siloan. Christ would hereby try and test his obedience. That there to wash his eyes and he would receive his sight. This pool was supplied with water from Mt. Zion and was significant as coming from the throne of the kingdom of the house of David. Christ sent him to the pool and in obedience he went to wash. And he came seeing. You remember Caesar said I came, I saw, I conquered. Now here was a man blind from his birth. Now whether or not these were cataracts which had grown over this man's eyes, we cannot say. But Jesus merely used this lump of clay, and he washed, and he was made healed. Instead of talking about why the man was blind, Jesus set out to help him. He went about doing good. Some people are so busy

explaining things that they do not have time to do much for Jesus. He might have preached a sermon that day about temptation or about sin. He might have talked about human sympathy or about the parents of this boy. But instead of this he began by trying to transform his life. He tried to meet his needs.

There is a legend that a man was caught in a bed of quick sand. Confucious saw him and remarked, there is evidence that men should stay out of such places.

Buddha came by and said let that life be a lesson to the rest of the world.

Mohammed said about the man, alas, it is the will of Allah.

The Hindu said to him, cheer up friend, you will return to earth in another form.

But when Jesus saw him he said, give me your hand brother and I will pull you out. Now if we come to speculate and argue about how Jesus was going to heal this man, we will go away disappointed. But we come to him and see that here is a need. And the Bible tells us that God so loved this world that he sent his son to do this, to save men. Some people are so busy condemning sin that they have no time to do anything about it, Jesus was so busy saving the sinner, that he didn't have time to go around

doing a lot of condemning about it. And he healed this blind man. He spat on the ground and made clay of spital, anointed his eye. Now it seems like an unreasonable command, the pool was hard to get too, the washing might irritate his eyes, but this is the way that God deals with all people.

He went, this was a requirement of faith, he washed, this was symbolic of cleansing. As Naaman who was required to wash. He came seeing, his eyes were opened, he could see. He had assurance because he could say, one thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I can see. And this is the same thing that Jesus requires, and we offer in the way of an invitation. We invite you to come and to accept Christ in the forgiveness of your sins to find salvation. You must respond, you must do something.

II. Division Among Religious Leaders Concerning His Sin, Verse 8-34.

V. 8 In Verse 8, we read that the neighbors had lived near that place and knew that he had been blind. They could not but be amazed when they saw that here was this man with his eye sight. A common beggar.

9 Verse 9, some of them inquired whether or not this was the same man. Others could not think that it was possible. That this was the blind man.

10 Verse 10 and 11, now how were your eyes opened they said.

all of this is put in to give balance to the composition. And so, he tried to explain to him this, and then the man thanked him. He said, you know, I believe that this -- I understand this. That this is part of my life as a composer uses the score and these various things.

"Not now, but in the coming years, it may be in a better land. We'll know the meaning of our tears, and there someday we'll understand.

God holds the key, he knows the way. He guides us with unerring hand. Someday through tearless eyes we will see, and there, up there, we'll understand.

A man was traveling in China and he lost a valuable briefcase. In it he had his Bible, he had his notes, and he had an address book -- the names of his friends that had helped him in his work. He began to think. Well, I have lost my Bible. Then he said, but I haven't lost my Lord. I've lost my notebook but I haven't lost my message. I've lost the addresses but I haven't lost my friends. May God always help us to realize that his ways are different from ours and though we may lose a lot of things, we may lose our health, and yet, we haven't lost God.

God works in most mysterious ways his wonders to perform." He plants his footprints on the sea, and rides upon the storm.

And we should not be ashamed today of any infirmity which might be. Because this boy was born this way and he had the sympathy and love of his parents.

21/ Now they accused Christ in Verse 21 of being a law breaker. In Verse 23, the reason why they were cautious was because they feared the Jews. Not because they would give any honor.

23/ In Verse 23 the penalty that was to be inflicted upon him for this crime was that he was to be put out of the church. How sad that sometimes even in the house of God, things like this exist. And so they were arguing over the power of God. And they put this man out of the church and there was a great debate as to whether or not he was a sinner.

Now they were questioning the power, the divine mission, and the divine miracle of our Lord. Verse 32. That this man had worked a true miracle. They cut him off from being a member of the church of Israel.

III. The Disposition Made By Jesus Of His Sin. Verse 35-41.

35/ In Verse 35-38 we find how he dealt with the blind man. And in Verse 39-41 how he dealt with the Pharisees. And as we think of these friendly discussions among their neighbors and acquaintances in Verse 8-12 with such simplicity

they were surprised. And we are surprised that they doubted.

And they appealed their judgment to the religious leaders and they took note that it was done on the Sabbath Day and they prepared them to work about him. Either we must admit that Jesus did no wrong in making the clay and doing this on the Sabbath, they said, or we cannot afford this, we must be right about the Sabbath. He must be wrong. He must be a transgressor.

They attempted to get unfavorable opinion about him.

What sayeth thou of him, and this God sent man. Let us jump on these facts and these details. Call his parents in and obtain witnesses against him. Then the man is recalled and all of this round of opinion they deal against him. And ask him to give God praise. We know that this man is a sinner they said. Give up your foolish story. It must be false, deny it, tell the truth, and give God the glory. We know that such a thing could not happen to a man who is a sinner. And the debate about that still goes on. But the blessed experience of this man, one thing, I know, they might cross-examine him about all the details again in Verse 26 and 27 and try to break down his argument but here upon we see that he stands up against this even though they would put him out of the church.

As Jesus made a disposition of the sin of this man, we

find that there was rising appreciation of Jesus by this man.

First, he thought of him as a man in Verse 11.

Second, he thought of him as a prophet in Verse 17.

Third, he thought of him if this man were not of God, he could do nothing, Verse 33.

Finally, he confessed that this was the son of God in Verse 35 and 38 and he worshipped him. Jesus dealt with this man's sin.

I read of a business man who was a wonderful Christian, was sick, sent to the hospital, began to ask questions, of a preacher. He was quite discouraged. He did not understand why he should be sick. He said, tell me, what am I doing here. Have I been misbehaving. I could not justify my illness. And he said, you know me, you know that I've been faithful to the church and to Christ. And now the doctor says I must remain in bed for nine months. I just don't understand. Now the preacher tried to explain to him some of the Bible and tried to satisfy his mind, he prayed for him and tried to help him realize that it was something like music. That a composer who prepares a composition of music, he uses different kinds of notes, he uses a 16th note, he uses an 8th note, then he puts in a quarter rest, and sometimes he'll put in a half a rest, and

well ordered world. We get hit in the battle of life, the wounds we get, we suffer.

The law of gravitation is something that seems to be heartless and yet we know that it brings suffering. Destructive fire, all of these things bring people down to grief.

Suffering sometimes is the price we pay for belonging to one another. We are part of a family. Here we are, tied up in a church family, closely tied. If one member suffers, all members suffer with it. If one member rejoices, all members rejoice. And how wonderful it is to look into the eyes of those who rejoice.

Then what would Jesus say in giving us the eternal answer to this man's sin, or suffering.

I think first he would say we should expect to come.

This does not mean that we are going to seek it but it does mean that we face the facts of life in this world. We cannot

hope to avoid all the struggles and all the suffering and all pain. Ours is a world of conflict and in this world

we may have our heartaches and we may as well know that if a boy is going to play football, he without his wisdom and without the knowledge will get hurt. And there is the opposing team, they are not going to be gentle, there are going to be hard knocks, in the best of it.

I think Jesus would say to us, accept it. As Paul said

Ye trembling saints, fresh courage take. The cloud you so much dread, is filled with mercy, and will break with blessings on your head.

Blind unbelief is sure to error, and scant his work in vain. God is his own interpreter and he will make it plain.

IV. The Eternal Answer To This Sin.

Here is a man who had spent the entire night in darkness. People had concluded that something was wrong. Who did sin and here was a problem.

But let us understand tonight that this problem of suffering is that of the atheist. Yes, he will suffer. It is the problem of the believer, he will suffer. And since we believe that God is the creator of all things, and since we believe that God is almighty, and since we believe that He has power in this world, then we must know that this will come. Even to our Lord who said, My God, My God, why. And it seems at times we ask the same question. How can we explain it.

Now some of these people that day said first, it was because of sin. This man was suffering, and was born in sin. And therefore suffering as a sinner. This was proof positive, that he was a sinner, and his suffering wouldn't have been like this. There is enough truth in this somehow

to keep this alive.

For we know that there are some who do suffer because of sin, to say that all great sufferers are all great sinners is certainly false. And to say that all suffering is otherwise, would be false too. We have all known good men who have suffered. While we have watched bad men prosper.

I believe that some of these people that day felt that suffering was just fate. They felt that it was his number. Like the people in India today, if you suffer it comes from natural results or of the world. And it is because men are reaping what they are sowing. And it is all wrapped up in faith. And if certain things are going to happen, that's the reason for it. And I remember talking just the other day to a man about this and he said, well if you are going to be killed, you'd be killed anyway. That is if here was a storm coming and you had the opportunity to get out of the way and you did not. Well, whichever choice you made, it would happen both ways.

I suppose there were some in the third place who deny the reality of these evils in that day, as in the day in which we live. There are those who say that sin is not real. There are yet others who say that suffering is not real. For there is the belief as Miss Eddy traces it, that this is just an error of the mortal mind. And if you get in

the right position, that all pain is going to disappear. And that it is only a matter of the mind, you just shut your eyes to suffering. And there is nothing to it.

But this man and the disciples wanted to know why he suffered. They wanted to get an answer to it. While we as Christians do not believe God to be evil, when we come to the fork of the road, we can turn either to the right. We have a choice to make. Now having that choice, some of us miss use the power and we make the wrong choice. And sometimes these wrong choices bring on suffering. This does not mean of course that everyone who suffers has made a wrong choice. Jesus made it plain to this blind man and did not suffer because of sin, nor because his parents sinned. There are some who suffer because they are bad.

Most of the suffering in this world is born of sin either on the part of individuals or of the group. As individuals and as groups we should make right choices. Then such of our sickness in our mind and body could be avoided no doubt.

We must realize again that God makes suffering possible. It does not mean that he is the direct author of it. People suffer, good people suffer because sometimes Fathers and Mothers suffer because their children pay no attention and are not obedient unto them.

Suffering is sometimes the price we pay for living in a

to Timothy, that we cannot do otherwise. We must suffer, we must go on and spend our days fighting.

This is a note of greatness. That we should rise above this.

And Jesus said to this man, it is a great trust. If you are called upon he says, this will be a signal honor for you. To carry this for the glory of God. And to use it in that way.

Paul found his true experience when he said, we know that to them that love God, all things work together for good. Now we may not understand why we suffer. This

(particular heartache) that may be yours, it may be mine.

But we can understand if we will believe and remain within God's will. That this will come out.

Oh joy that seeketh me through pain. I cannot close my heart to thee. I trace the rainbow through the rain and feel the promise is not vain. That morn shall tearless be. And with this blind man, there was hope when Jesus came for he was not to remain a sufferer, he was not to remain in blindness and darkness, but he was to receive sight and light and have fellowship with him. And if we believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, if we trust our lives to him, he in turn will bring us into that Heavenly light. The significant sin is ably dealt with by Jesus.

(Continued from cover)

It reads:

The fire, Lord, not the scrap heap.

I hung it there to remind me of a story. There was once a blacksmith who had great faith in God in spite of a lot of sickness in his life. An unbeliever asked him one day how he could go on trusting in a God who let him suffer.

"When I make a tool," the blacksmith answered, "I take a piece of iron and put it into the fire. Then I strike it on the anvil to see if it will take temper. If it does, I can make a useful article out of it. If not, I toss it on the scrap heap and sell it two pounds to the penny. Maybe God tests us like this. When suffering has come my way, I know that I've come out the better for it, so much so that I can honestly say, 'Put me in the fire, Lord, if that's what it takes, just don't throw me on the scrap heap.'"

I like this story because it suggests a creative way of looking at things that seem to be pure disaster. It



To illustrate this story, Guideposts sent artist William Hofmann to the radio studios of CBS in New York where he sketched Arthur Godfrey during one of his daily radio broadcasts. On the cover, Hofmann has caught Godfrey in a familiar pose; left, Mr. Radio picks out a tune on his banjo.

Suffering

tells me something about this stubborn hunk of iron and the fires through which I personally have passed.

My first fire came when I was 28 years old. I had a radio announcing job in Washington, D. C., then, and I liked to take the night shift so that during the day I could drive out to the old Congressional Airport and fly a Franklin glider.

I was headed there one bright September morning in 1931, driving a 1926 Chrysler on narrow Riggs Road, when suddenly a truck coming the other way crossed the center line and hit me, head-on. It happened so quickly there wasn't time to touch the brakes or turn the wheel. I remember the sound of crashing glass, the sight of a hot engine on the seat beside me and then nothing more for a full week.

The two guys in the truck came away with scratches, but when the police found me in the ditch beside the road they thought I was dead.

At the hospital a team of surgeons put back the pieces: four broken ribs, a hole in