

A Man Born Blind

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 12 June 2011

Preacher: Jonathan Smith

[0 : 00] what we're going to do tonight is just look very briefly hopefully at a big theological issue that comes out of this text that i think we really need to deal with we can't just brush it aside so we'll look at that theology and then we'll just move straight through to five conversations that this man who was born blind and is healed by jesus five conversations he has after he's healed which show us the progression of his faith from being really weak to being really strong it's a progression that takes him from referring to jesus as that man to referring to him as his lord and worshiping him so it's a cool thing to be able to see in the pages of john this progression of faith and hopefully we'll be encouraged in our faith as well so first of all this issue of theology i don't know about you but one of the most heart-wrenching things that you can experience and see is the suffering of children little children who are suffering badly it's just heart-wrenching and i remember when india was born um my daughter india uh just back in january renee had done a really great job through 12 hours of labor but when india was eventually born she wasn't breathing too well and and so she was only getting 70 percent of the 100 percent of the oxygen that she should have been getting so they took her away and this is a really big deal renee really wanted that that immediate contact if you're a mom you know what i'm talking about that immediate contact with the baby straight after the birth and so unfortunately that couldn't happen india had to be wheeled uh upstairs to the nICU and um and put in a glass box and attached with all kinds of wires and whatever and renee had to stay in the room and i would go up and visit with her and sit down with her and she was only there for a matter of maybe 24 hours there are other babies there who'd been there for six months so uh it's not as heart-wrenching as as uh i'm sure the experience of those parents but i remember sitting and looking at her in this box only a couple of hours old and and feeling so helpless and just having my heart wrenched uh watching her suffer in that way not being able to breathe and being attached to all these things i remember just thinking why is this happening because when you uh envisage this great event this first birth as it was for us everything tends to go so well and then in reality uh it wasn't going so well and so i remember thinking why is this happening what have we done wrong why is she suffering in this way and so tonight we're going to come face to face with a man who has suffered far worse than what india suffered in the 24 hours we're going to find someone who suffered uh in a tremendous way from birth in a similar way he was born and there was some kind of defect some kind of disability he was born blind and in that culture that was a an intense disability he couldn't work he couldn't earn money he couldn't be independent he literally had to beg for everything and i take it he he made enough to to survive this man has been through some intense suffering all the days of his life it doesn't say how old he is but we imagine that he is uh getting on in years and uh least old enough to be late teens early 20s and he's been suffering through this blindness that he was born with check it out verse 1 and 2 read along with me as jesus was passing by he saw a man blind from birth his disciples questioned him rabbi who sinned this man or his parents that he was born blind they're asking the same question that i was asking really in the nicu that day why why has this happened we live in a world of cause and effect we want to ask the question why why has this come about and they're asking the question who has sinned

was it this kid somehow sinned in the womb maybe to be born blind is he being punished for something that happened even before his birth or was it that his parents maybe they were involved in some kind of idol worship or or some kind of sin that would affect the next generation why is it what's the cause and effect Jesus I wonder if you think that that's a legitimate question is that a legitimate question to ask who sinned that this happened I actually think that it is a legitimate question to ask I think it is for a couple of reasons first of all ultimately all suffering all disability all illness is a result of sin right before there was sin that came in Genesis 3 there was no illness no suffering no blindness nothing wrong with the world and it was a result of sin that brought this suffering into the world blindness came when sin came so in that way all suffering is a result of sin that kind of makes the question legitimate additionally ultimately God decides who is born blind and who's born with sight we know this from the Old Testament reading that we had earlier on tonight remember God speaking with Moses Moses complaining about this job that God's giving him to go and speak to Pharaoh and God's response is who made man's mouth I can make you speak he goes on to say who makes anyone blind or seeing God decides God decides who's blind and who sees see it in the Psalms as well it's a beautiful Psalm that you'll see quoted on many baby photos you know God God formed me in my mother's womb he knit me together that's true of all of us God pieces us together and is in his sovereignty that covers disability that covers blindness so yes I think it's a legitimate question the question is is it a helpful question and that of course it's not it's not a helpful question because first of all it completely lacks compassion I mean they're walking along Jesus has noticed this man Jesus is always on the lookout for people he can have compassion on he notices this man born blind and standing there in front of him presumably the disciples ask a very intellectual very academic very theological question who sinned it's not very compassionate question wasn't how can we help this man it was who sinned if you're like me and maybe you're a theological kind of guy and you like you live in the world of ideas and you love going to Bible college and reading commentaries and doing that kind of thing we're really in danger of becoming like these guys the disciples we ask why we want to get to the heart of you know the nuts and bolts of how God works we're going to say that Jesus isn't so interested in that he's far more interested in compassion the other reason I think that this is a really unhelpful question is just what we've seen in the last few years with so many natural disasters there's always someone who's trying to tell us that this is a result of the sin of this nation or that nation or you know a tsunami strikes and it's a result of sin in those countries that are affected or Haiti the earthquake comes and it's because they're such a pagan nation or you know the floods hit and it's because we pass some abortion laws or something like that and you hear this a lot and people are very willing to come forward even pastors are willing to come forward and and say look this is the judgment of God I think that's really really really really really unhelpful

i'm not saying that it is definitely not true you see in scripture that god sometimes does respond to sin with this or that punishment but i'm saying it's really unhelpful to pronounce that judgment as a mere man or woman without having the inside of god to see his purpose we can never point to anything any suffering any sickness any disaster and say this is the judgment of god we can't can't do it and jesus doesn't do it check it out with me jesus response is so important verse three neither this man nor his parents sinned jesus answered this came about so that god's works might be displayed in him we read that again neither this man nor his parents sinned this came about this blindness from birth came about so that god's works might be displayed in him now listen your theology your understanding of god will dictate how you respond to jesus answer in a big way your theology how you understand god will influence and dictate how you respond to jesus statement look at me if you believe that god's highest concern is for your health and for your happiness then you will not like what jesus has just said if you believe that god's greatest concern what he's most interested in is your health and your happiness then you will not like what jesus just said but if you believe that god's greatest concern his highest concern though he has compassion for everyone if you believe that his greatest concern is for his own glory for his own works to be seen to be great then you will understand what jesus says you may not understand it fully but you'll understand what he's trying to say that god is most interested in showing himself to be great that's what scripture teaches us that above all else god wants to be worshipped god wants us to look at him and say how great are your deeds how marvelous are your works so jesus says this blindness that was came about from birth came about so that god's works might be displayed in him i want to close this theology section but i really want us to get three things really clear and you can talk to me more about this you can talk about in your community groups if you're part of one if you're not see me and we'll plug you in but three things that you need to acknowledge first of all all suffering all suffering is a result of adam's sin in the garden genesis 3 there was no sin there was no suffering there was no illness or disability before that point everything that is broken now is broken as a result of adam's sin adam and eve in the garden number two jesus is more concerned in this situation with compassion over explanation like i said there's a tendency in some of us to be so caught up in

explanation and ideas and theology that we miss the compassion i mean have you have you in your experience spent more time talking about suffering than you have trying to alleviate it that's a big question that's not the heart of jesus at work jesus is so concerned with compassion number three god's purpose in your suffering is that his works will be displayed god's purpose in your suffering is that his works will be displayed and i'll add this whether you're healed or not he wants to show his greatness in your suffering whether you are healed or not in this guy's situation today hallelujah is going to be shown in healing jesus is going to heal him and god's works are going to be displayed in that healing but for others of us god's works his greatness is best displayed in patient trust and perseverance in the midst of suffering perhaps for the rest of our lives sometimes it's in healing i wonder if you pray for healing enough we should be praying every day for healing every time you hear that someone is sick pray for healing i don't buy this you know i'm not going to go there we don't have time but listen pray for healing pray for healing god is a healing god right pray for healing god sometimes heals people and that's how his works are displayed but his works will be displayed also when you're not healed if you continue to trust in him and persevere got one biblical example uh second Corinthians chapter 12 remember paul he talks about a situation like this uh second Corinthians 12 7 to 9 says paul writes to keep me becoming uh conceited because of these surpassing revelations that he's been experiencing to keep me from becoming conceited there was given me a thorn in my flesh we don't know what it was i think god doesn't tell us because he wants it to represent all suffering right it's a thorn in the flesh it hurts it's painful it's frustrating the thorn in the flesh was given to me a messenger of satan to torment me three times i pleaded with the lord to take it away from me but he said to me my grace is sufficient for you for my power is made perfect in weakness did you catch that he prays for healing three times god says no not this time i healed the man that was born blind i'm not going to heal you paul because my greatness my works my power will be demonstrated in your weakness and your perseverance three things let's just get this right all suffering is a result of adam and eve's sin in the garden there was no suffering and sin before then number two jesus is more concerned with compassion over explanation do your theology right read your books but make sure you're taking compassion on people as you do it number three god's purpose in your suffering is that his works will be displayed whether you are healed or not

that's theology i want to move on to the five conversations that this man has really insightful conversations we're just going to pick our way through the rest of this chapter we're going to see how god works powerfully in his heart as he's worked powerfully in simon's heart you heard earlier he's worked powerfully in my heart as well let's look at it number one before we do that we don't want to skip the best bit okay hang on just a sec verse six and seven after he said these things jesus spit on the ground made some mud from the saliva and spread the mud on his eyes go he told him wash in the pool of saloon which means sent so he left washed and came back seeing he is healed born blind years and years of blindness and begging jesus makes some mud i think kind of imitating or sorry not imitating but um reflecting back on his role in creation genesis 1 he makes this mud he also does it to really tick off the pharisees as we'll see in a minute um but he spreads on his eyes and he goes and washes and he's healed now after he's been healed he has these five conversations and he starts out with a really weak faith and he grows into a really strong christian and you're going to see again john's purpose chapter 20 verse 30 and 31 in recording this for us is that this man will see jesus to be the messiah to be his god and in the same thing he wants for us so number one the beggar and his neighbors this conversation verse 8 to 12 you're going to follow along with me right the way through he says uh john writes his neighbors and those who formerly had seen him as a beggar said isn't this the man who sat begging some said he's the one no others were saying but he looks like him he kept saying i'm the one therefore they asked him then how were your eyes opened he answered the man called jesus made mud spread it on my eyes and told me go to siloam and wash so when i went and washed i received my sight where is he they asked i don't know he said and so this first conversation is him arguing with his neighbors some of them think oh no that is the guy that was blind others say nah it just looks like that guy can't be him right he was born blind this has to be some kind of miracle for this to be true and so he insists no no really really it's me i've been healed and the interesting thing is notice he says refers to jesus as that man jesus if you look at the context uh of this passage right throughout the book of john john has revealed to us that people are a little bit uneasy in approaching jesus or talking about jesus because they're worried about the jewish leaders of the day they're scared of them because of their association with him and so you'll notice in chapter three nicodemus comes to jesus by night after dark he doesn't want to be seen during the day with jesus and it's the same in this chapter this man's parents will distance themselves from jesus because they're afraid of the jews and it's probably what's going on here as well that man jesus that i don't want to be too closely associated with i really really resonate with this because this is my story as well in primary school particular um i was terrified petrified that anyone would find out that i went to church just petrified every time that something came up i'd pass someone in the school ground and they went to the church as well i just cringed that they might bring something up in front of my friends i remember one time we went to the church um i was part of a sort of a history class and my granddad was taking the tour and he kept referring to me being part of the church and i

[20 : 17] was just the blood was draining and i hated it hated it wanted to distance myself from that didn't want to be different didn't want to suffer persecution from being associated with the church or with jesus or whatever and that's kind of where he is at the moment in that first conversation let's move on to the second one it's verse 13 to 17 the beggar and the pharisees verse 13 they brought the man who used to be blind to the pharisees the religious leaders uh the day that jesus made the mud and opened his eyes was a sabbath so again the pharisees asked him how he received his sight he put mud on my eyes he told them i washed and i can see therefore some of the pharisees said this man is not from god for he doesn't keep the sabbath but others were saying how can a sinful man perform such signs and there was a division among them again they asked the blind man what do you say about him since he opened your eyes he's a prophet he said so now it's the pharisees who are arguing about what's happened here some of them think well jesus can't have done this miracle because he's a sinner he's broken the sabbath i think deliberately to provoke them uh right so he's broken the sabbath in making mud he could have just said the word he made mud instead okay uh and and he's provoked them and they've responded well he's a sinner he broke the sabbath he can't have healed him others are saying well you can't do something like that you can't perform a miracle like that unless you've been sent by god so they're kind of confused and so they say to him verse 17 what do you say since he opened your eyes and he responds he's a prophet before he was a man now he's a prophet something is going on in this man's heart this man that was born blind something is happening to him he's being converted now he's saying he's a prophet which means he's been sent by god he's got some kind of uh power from god he's been sent by god to do these great things again i really resonate with this this was me in high school so i kind of accepted the fact that people would know that i go to church but now i wanted to distance myself from the real kind of evangelical people right the people who actually believed in the bible and creation and all that rubbish um i thought at the time right i i wanted to distance myself from those people so i i kind of took on the um church is beneficial to kind of help your personality develop and you can interact with people and it's social and jesus well he he was a kind of prophetic um he he said you know you know do not murder and a few other things um and so in that way he's kind of a prophet so i kind of aligned myself a little bit more with him in high school a little bit more accepted and that's kind of what's happening with this guy now he's not just that man jesus he's the prophet jesus third conversation the pharisees and his parents verse 18 to 23 follow with me the jews did not believe this about him that he was blind and received sight until they summoned the parents of the one who had received his sight they asked them is this your son the one you say was born blind how then does he now see we know this is your uh we know this is our son and that he was born blind his parents answered but we don't know how he sees and we uh don't know who opened his eyes ask him he's of age he will speak for himself his parents said these things because they're afraid of the jews since the jews had already agreed that if anyone confessed jesus as messiah he would be banned from the synagogue this is why his parents said ask him so back in verse 19 uh these religious leaders say to the parents is he a son was he born blind how does

he see and they answer in verse 20 and 21 he is our son he was born blind we don't know we don't know what happened and john says well they actually did know they just didn't want to fess up to it they didn't want to align themselves with jesus they didn't want to appear to be one of his followers and i don't think john's written it like this to really kind of beat down on the parents i think he really just wants to highlight the faith and the courage of this young man the faith that he's growing into that he's really progressing a lot faster than his parents are i'm going to see in a second the way that he speaks to the pharisees shows incredible courage he's starting to own this faith that jesus has given him so the fourth conversation we'll see it now the beggar and the pharisees the blind man and the pharisees verse 24 to 34 so a second time they summoned the man who had been born blind and told him give glory to god we know that this man jesus is a sinner he answered the man that was born blind whether or not he's a sinner i don't know one thing i do know i was blind and now i see it's the power of simple personal testimony against unbelief they don't believe this has happened and he says in response i don't know what's going on but i was blind and now i see and i think that translates perfectly to spiritual blindness we sing that in amazing grace right it's taken straight out of this passage i once was blind but now i see and this is what we can do in our own experience when you come up against unbelief like the unbelief of the pharisees you have a powerful weapon in personal testimony don't underestimate or undervalue the power of personal testimony you can relate your story as simon has tonight and it will it will resonate with people if you speak genuinely and from your heart this is what he does this is what i did some of you know i became a follower of jesus when i was overseas and up to that point lived very waywardly i came back from overseas and told my friends really for the first time uh since primary school high school failures now post high school told them with joy unashamedly that god had saved me that jesus was my king and my lord and my savior and they responded really negatively i mean it meant that they knew it meant that i wasn't going to go out with them as much drink hard and do these kind of things and so they were really down on it and trying to convince me that it was dumb and it was just an american kind of redneck thing that i picked up from overseas or whatever and you know what what did it for them not that one of them did become a christian actually but not that many of them did you know what really got them off my back was just being able to say listen this is my personal testimony this is what jesus has done in me and you will see now the change that he has affected in my heart and the way that i live and they couldn't argue with that i was less selfish more compassionate more willing to help others and not so eager to get ahead myself it was the power of personal testimony that spoke to the truth of my conversion it's the same with him and these pharisees now let's keep going verse 26 then they asked him what did he do to you how did he open your eyes i already told you he said and you didn't listen he's got great courage this guy why do you want to hear it again you don't want to become his disciples too do you this guy's a legend like just that's a great line is that a great line that's a great line i kind of wish this guy became a disciple like they kicked out judas and had this guy instead that's a great line

all right um that's why john has remembered it and written it down for us so we'd laugh you don't want to become his disciples too do you they ridiculed him you're the man you're that man's disciples but we're moses disciples they're referring to him as that man we know that god has spoken to moses but this man we don't know where he's from this is an amazing thing the man told them you don't know where he's from yet he opened my eyes great sarcasm we know that god doesn't listen to sinners but if anyone is god fearing and does his will he listens to him throughout history no one has ever heard of someone opened the eyes of a person born blind if this man were not from god he wouldn't be able to do anything you were born entirely in sin they replied are you trying to teach us then they threw him out incredible courage something phenomenal is happening in this guy's heart that man to a prophet now to standing up and courageously defending this man jesus he's really on his way to conversion he's going to get there in the next conversation it's great example of standing up for jesus standing up for his experience of jesus he's taking on the religious elite no one did that particularly not someone who'd been a beggar their entire life and so they can't handle his courage they can't handle what's happening to him and so they expel him this is a big deal he got kicked out of this church you can go up the road to another church it wasn't the case for them this is a massive deal to be expelled from the synagogue so now let's look at the final conversation i want us to look at number five jesus and the man who was born blind verse 35 and 38 read it with me when jesus heard that they had thrown the man down he found him and asked do you believe in the son of man who is he sir that i may believe in him he asked jesus answered you have seen him in fact he is the one speaking with you i believe lord he said and he worshipped him and that's the last we hear of this guy it's the last we see of him he says i believe that you're the messiah and he falls down and worships him as his god and we never hear about him again it's an amazing thing that god has done in his heart to take him from a man born blind a beggar on the street receives his sight and then goes a full circle through distancing himself from jesus to acknowledging him as someone great to defending him against those who would come against him and then finally to confessing him as lord and worshiping him as god it's an amazing transformation of his heart so i just want to finish tonight ask you three questions do you defend back up before we even get there do you trust in jesus do you believe that god is at work for his glory in your suffering in your circumstance whether you're healed or not do you trust him romans 8 28 again it encourages us as believers that all things are working for our good even your suffering do you trust jesus then are you willing to defend jesus this man showed great courage more courage than i've ever shown

when i've come up against opposition he stepped out and he defended jesus he defended him as the messiah who he is he defended his works he defended what jesus had done in his own life i know that you guys come up against this all the time whether it's at uni or at school or at work you're constantly going to be coming up against people who want to dismiss your church attendance or dismiss the guy who you worship so my question is can you follow his example can you defend jesus and i don't just mean with apologetics and theology and book knowledge but with your personal testimony as he does if not work on that finally do you worship jesus the last thing we see here for this man is that he falls down and worships jesus he's come full circle he's been saved so tonight are you here to worship jesus bigger question throughout the week are you there to worship jesus is it just a sunday night thing or is it an everyday thing are you constantly saying to jesus throughout the day you are my lord i trust you i'm gonna live for you if you're here tonight and you're not worshipping jesus because you're not a believer then take another look at the man who healed this man who was born blind the compassion of him the power of him and i would beg you and implore you and plead with you to do as he did to fall down and worship him for who he is he's the lord he is god and he's done everything that needs to be done in order to save you and to save me it's a wonderful thing to be able to walk through this series with you and just see jesus at work not just in miraculous signs but in the hearts of those people who are there to witness them and our prayer every week and we gather together at 5 30 and we pray every week that people here tonight will see the works of god from his work and we'll see the works of god in changed hearts like mine like simon's like so many others and we'll respond by saying my lord and worshipping him too so that's what i'm going to pray for right now if you're not a christian if you can't say yes to that question you're not worshipping jesus then i want you just to hear my words now to to wrestle with them to think on them and if you'd like to speak to one of us after the service you just come and speak to us if you want to pray with someone after the service you go through to the old church if you want to learn more about jesus you're not ready yet to commit yourself to him then i want you to join a community group everyone's welcome whether you're a christian or not and these are the places where you can wrestle with this further all right i'm going to pray for us now father thanks for this the example of this really really amazing man who was born blind who lived his life as a beggar heard jesus say that his blindness was given him so that god's works might be seen who didn't rebel and reject that idea but gladly accepted jesus healing i pray that we would be like that man to trust in the sovereignty of god

even in our suffering we thank you also for the example of that same man who though at first he was unsure about jesus progressively put more trust in him was willing to stand up for him and in the end bowed down and worshipped him i pray that we would be like that man with that kind of faith father please give us a simple faith a simple trust that you are good that you've done everything that needs to be done to save us and then i pray that our response would be one of worship for you are our great god and king and i pray these things in jesus good name who meno