

MARCH 21, 1993

THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD

Of all of our senses, the ability to see is treasured more highly than any other. The ability of the eyes to receive light and transmit signals to the brain is a mystery to most of us; however, we use this marvel everyday in just about everything we do. If you have ever been in total darkness, then you know how helpless you feel and you can really appreciate even a tiny bit of light. Jesus used the terms "light" and "darkness" to contrast "good" and "evil" in His teachings. In 165 B.C. the temple in Jerusalem was rededicated after Judas Maccabaeus led a successful revolt. This event was (and still is) marked each year by a festival called Hanukkah in which extra lights are lit in houses and places of worship. Jesus was in Jerusalem at the time of this festival which is also called the Feast of Lights. The Bible tells us to "be instant, in season and out of season," and certainly Jesus did that by using the opportunities He found to convey the message of the nature and love of God as He taught the people that He was the Light of the World.

JOHN 9:1-7 The Jews had just attempted to stone Jesus for claiming to be equal to God. As He was leaving the temple area with His disciples, they saw this man who was a blind beggar in his regular position near the temple. He was apparently well known to those who came to the temple, most knew that he had been born blind. The disciples asked what we would think was a strange question: "Who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" We have no concept of prenatal sin; however, they may have been thinking about what some of the pagan religions taught about reincarnation. Perhaps they thought that something the man had done in a previous life had caused this situation. The Word of God does not support such a belief and teaches that we are "appointed once to die and then the judgement." The idea that the sins of the parents can affect the life of their children makes us uncomfortable; however, this is a reality. Kids born to drug addicted parents or to mothers who drink during their pregnancy certainly are affected by what their parents have done.

Jesus was quick to deny that sin had anything directly to do with the situation. Regardless of the situation or why it happened, it is possible that God can redeem the worst of conditions and bring good out of them and in the process bring glory to His name. We might wonder how such a tragedy of a man being blind from birth could bring glory to God? It can't, unless one of God's people will reach out and touch the person at the point of his need. This was what Jesus did and set the example for us to follow.

According to the prophecy in Isaiah about the mission of the Messiah, it is God's will that "the blind should receive their sight, those that grieve should be comforted, that the sick should be healed, and those in prisons of their guilt and shame should be set free." In order for the works of God to be shown, it is necessary that we be about the job of doing the works of God. This is why we were saved (see also Eph 2:8-10).

We see also in the words of Jesus the urgency of the work to be done. We need light in which to work. If Jesus is the Light of the World, then we must make sure that we are walking in His light so that we can accomplish the job. If we ignore Him and attempt to do even "good works" in our own strength or for the wrong motives, then we will be ineffective in getting anything of lasting good done.

Jesus then demonstrated the works of God. He took action that provided a focus for faith. This point of focus was what the mud pack was about. I doubt there was anything medicinal about the mud, but was something that called for some action on the part of the man to demonstrate the

genuineness of his faith. "Go wash in the pool of Siloam." What happened? Faith plus action equals results. He came away seeing.

JOHN 9:8-12 When we respond in faith to the words of Jesus, our lives will be changed and those that know us will notice the change. They will ask why there is a difference. This is our chance to share what Jesus has done in our lives. The man that was healed did share quite naturally and did not require any training in "how to witness." He just told what had happened to him.

Sometimes when you do share what God has done in your life, there will be persecution. For the blind man that was healed the persecution came from the Jewish leaders that saw an opportunity to discredit the name of Jesus. A lesson for us is that when we are persecuted for Christ sake, it is not a personal attack on us as much as it is an attempt to discredit Jesus. How could they discredit Jesus? Jesus had mixed the clay and spittle on the Sabbath and this "broke the rules" about what could and could not be done on the Sabbath. This is an excellent example of how people who get caught up in their own importance can be blind to everything else around them. You would think that they would rejoice with the man who was healed! But, No! They only wanted to prove the rightness of their position. The man who was healed was not very cooperative with them in their efforts to have him declare Jesus to be a "sinner." He said, "All I know was that before I was blind and now I can see." In their frustration to disprove the miracle that had happened the Jewish leaders excommunicated the man. They escorted him out of the temple and told him to not come back. Such action was pretty important news and word quickly came to Jesus of what had happened.

JOHN 9:35-38 The man had never seen the One who healed him. Even though the society had rejected the man, he found acceptance in the Kingdom of God. This is the Good News of the Gospel. Acceptance is very important to people. How many of you would bother to come to this meeting or to any gathering if you felt as if you were not accepted for who you are. So many people in the world feel rejected and this leads to many of the problems that we experience in our society.

Many were looking on as Jesus talked with the man and among the crowd were the Pharisees. Jesus then spoke so that they could hear.

JOHN 9:39-41 The purpose of Jesus' coming into the world was to redeem mankind; however, His very presence brings judgment because He is Light. Judgment occurs when He is present. He can be present in His word or in a believer and judgment happens. If others can see Christ in you, then they will change their behavior when they are around you because of the judgment that the presence of Jesus brings.

Many of the sayings of Jesus seem paradoxical. He said that He came so that the blind could see and that those who could see were made blind. The Pharisees thought the common people were blind because they could not see the significance keeping all the rules. They erroneously thought that this was the way of salvation. On the other hand, the Pharisees themselves would not consider refocusing their sight on the basic truths that Jesus taught and they were, for all practical purposes, blind to those truths. To admit that they had something to learn would have hurt their pride. They asked, "Are we blind, also?" Jesus went right to the point of the matter in His answer to them. He said, in effect, that if they could not see that their behavior would not be sin; however, in their case, it was a matter that they would not see. This is sin.

The message is clear to us that we should respond to the light that we have and not refuse to see what the word of God teaches. Then we can walk in that word in obedience by following the Light of the World.