

Light on the Mysteries of Life

Dr. J. B. Buffington

Take your Bibles and turn to John 9:1-5: *And as Jesus passed by, he saw a man which was blind from his birth. And his disciples asked him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind? Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him. I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.*

Our Father, in Jesus' name, there are hurting folks in this service today, I am sure. There are folks, Lord, with questions, problems, and seemingly no solutions. Spirit of the Living God, would You fill me to speak words of light to them? Use my mind to reason; my heart, Lord, to reach out; Lord, my spirit to commune with you. Take me, I pray, and make me a blessing. If there is one person, Lord, that is unsaved, may they come out of the darkness of sin into Thy marvelous light. Some are in the dark concerning Your will. Some are in the dark concerning perplexing problems in life. Lord, move. May the light shine on the mysteries of life today. In Jesus' name, Amen.

I am going to call my message "Light on the Mysteries of Life." Our Lord, in the eighth chapter, said "I am the Light of the world." He said it again in the ninth chapter. Our Lord Jesus Christ, in the book of John, is presented in the first chapter as the Light of our physical world. In Genesis, God said: *Let there be light: and there was light.* Christ Jesus is the Light of our physical world. He is the Light of our moral world. We saw that in our study of the religious Pharisees as they brought the woman caught in adultery to the Light. The Light shown on them as well as on her. He is the Light of our moral world. He is the Light of the religious world. In the eighth chapter, we saw the religious leaders who were blind leaders of the blind as the Light shown upon them and revealed their unbelief. He is the Light of the temple. He is the Light of the religious world. Today, He is the Light of the world of mysteries, the mysteries of life. Wherever there is light, the Lord stands, for He is the Light of the world in all of its facets. John, under the direction of the Holy Spirit, selected the miracles that are recorded in the gospel of John as credentials to the Messiah. He closes the twentieth chapter with these words: *And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: The other Gospels have other miracles, but he said, "Now, these are select." But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.* They are not written to satisfy our curiosity. They are written to give His credentials as Messiah and lead to personal reception of Him as our personal Savior. Those are His credentials. Now, one of His signs or credentials was that He would restore sight to the blind. In Matthew, when John the Baptist was in jail, he began to doubt, "Hey, I am the forerunner of the Lord. What am I doing in jail?" He sent one of His disciples to Jesus to ask the question, "Art thou He that should come or do we look for another?" This is the answer that Jesus gave to that disciple to take back to John: *Go and shew John again those things which ye do hear and see: The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them.* He said, "Those are my credentials. Tell him again." God assured His servant. The Light must have a receiver. He shown on the religious leaders, and they did not receive the Light because they were spiritually blind. Turn to John 15:22-25. The Light revealed their blindness. They claimed to be able to see. They are blind by choice. It is bad to be blind by choice. It is bad to be ignorant by choice. 2 Peter talks about the sceptics of the day concerning the coming of our Lord, and said this: *they willingly are ignorant of.* . . . It is awful to be ignorant if you do not have opportunity for an education. But, it is terrible to be ignorant by choice. "I don't want to know." These men were blind by choice. Listen to what our Lord said in John 15:22: *If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloke for their sin.* (The Light shown) *He that hateth me hateth my Father also. If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin: but now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father. But this cometh to pass, that the word might be fulfilled that is written in their law, They hated me without a cause.* The liberal does not have any grounds for his being liberal and doubting the Word of God. The Light has shown. The problem is in his heart. He is blind by choice. In 2 Corinthians 4, God's Word declares that the Gospel has not failed. Why do

people not believe? Well, some choose not to believe. Paul writes: *But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.* Folks are blinded by Satan concerning the Person of Christ, and they are blinded by choice. These blind leaders of the blind thought that they could see. Turn back to John 9 as John comes to the close of the chapter dealing with this man born blind. Verse 39: *And Jesus said, For judgment I am come into this world, that they which see not might see; and that they which see might be made blind. And some of the Pharisees which were with him heard these words, and said unto him, Are we blind also? Jesus said unto them, If ye were blind, ye should have no sin: but now ye say, We see; therefore your sin remaineth.* They said, "We see." He plainly presented the evidences of His credentials. He showed by His power that He was indeed God manifest in the flesh, and they did not believe it. Why did they not believe it? Because they were blind. They were blind by choice. There is a story of a mining explosion in West Virginia. The explosion plunged the trapped men into total darkness. When the rescue team managed to get a light through to them, one of the young men finally said, "Well, why don't they turn on the light?" They all looked at him in amazement, and then they realized that the explosion had blinded him. In the darkness, he did not know that he was blind. The light revealed to him and to them that he was blind. The Light shown. It is evidence to you and me of who Jesus Christ the Son of God is. Why do not these folks believe? They are blind. They are blind by choice and blinded by Satan. He said, "I am come that those who claim to see (and religious leaders claim to see but refuse the Light, and in refusing the Light, they confess their blindness.) might be blind, and those who know they cannot see might receive their sight." That is the little parable, but here He is talking about this man born blind and these religious leaders of the blind. Jesus passed by a man who knew he was blind, and Jesus gave him physical eyesight. Then spiritual eyesight came progressively as he responded to the Light. In John 9, there is more in the text than just the credentials of the Messiah.

Consider the setting of the sign. It was a Sabbath day. Verse 14 points that out. *And it was the sabbath day when Jesus made the clay, and opened his eyes.* He also healed a paralytic on the Sabbath day in John 5. The Sabbath day became an excuse for the blind Pharisees to find fault with what Jesus Christ did. The object of our Lord's vision as He passed by was a man. What do you see when you pass by? The demoniac of Gadara — The crowd saw a wild maniac, a problem. They could not chain him. The Devil saw a slave. The Lord saw a man. The disciples saw a theological discussion. Our Lord saw a man. He saw a man made in the image of God. God's Word says to call no man common or unclean. Why? All men without exception are made in the image of God. Sin has disfigured that image, but God's Son looked at that man and knew what he would have been had it not been for the fall. You and I sometimes see little glimpses of this, and we ought to see the glimpses of this. We see somebody really in the pit of sin, and God saves them. Then, you see another person. You see that person more like what God designed them to be than ever before because of the work of the Spirit of God in his life. None of us will see what we really will be until we meet the Lord in the air and are made like Him. Jesus saw this man made in the image of God. He saw a human being. He did not see a number. He did not see a statistic. He saw a human being. He saw a blind human being. He saw frustration. He saw helplessness. He saw deprivation. He had never seen the sun. He had never seen the face of his loved ones. He had never seen the beautiful handiwork of God Almighty. Not only that, but from birth, this man had never known what it was to see. You and I cannot imagine that. I suppose losing your eyesight can be the most terrible thing. I think that I would rather lose the ability to hear than the ability to see. Sometimes, we are astounded by where folks are and where God brings them. I think about Helen Keller. It would be interesting for you to look in the *World Book* and read about Helen Keller. Helen Keller was born and grew up blind and deaf and unable to speak. Blind — she cannot see. Deaf — she cannot hear. Dumb — cannot talk. Can you consider? How in the world would you reach a person shut in to voice and shut out from light? How could you reach a person and communicate with a person like that? Through the patient work of a dedicated person, she was able to make a meaningful contribution, a world-wide contribution to teaching, an inspirational example. Listen to her. She writes this concerning an experience that happened to her when she was six years old. "For six years, no communication." She writes and records her endless days of anticipation and despair waiting for someone to draw her out. Then she describes the day she met the person who would

do just that, a life-long friend and teacher Anne Sullivan. Now, blind man, listen to her describe the darkness and the life that she lived and was born in. I quote: "Have you ever been at sea in a dense fog when it seemed as if a tangible white darkness shut you in and the great ship tense and anxious groped her way toward the shore with compass and sounding line and you wait with a beating heart for something to happen? I was like that ship before my education began, only I was without compass or sounding line and had no way of knowing how near the harbor was. 'The light! Give me light!' was the wordless cry of my soul. The light of love shown on me in that very hour. I felt approaching footsteps (She did not hear; she felt.). I stretched out my hand as I supposed to my mother. Someone took my hand, and I was caught and held close in the arms of her who had come to reveal all things to me and more than all things else, to love me." Now, you think of a six year old who cannot hear, cannot see, and cannot talk. What a condition! Then God sent somebody. God did something and used her worldwide as a tremendous inspiration. Your situation may be dark, but God is able to bring light in the darkened places. Our Lord saw a man blind from birth. Not only that, He saw not a subject for theological discussion that the disciples saw. He saw and had perfect knowledge of all the circumstances of his life, his upbringing, and his ancestry. He knows you. He knew Simon Peter. When Andrew brought his brother to Jesus, Jesus said, "Thou art Simon." He knew him perfectly. He knew not only Simon, but He knew Nicodemus and read his heart and said, "Ye must be born again." He knew the woman at the well as He probed into her heart and brought her sin to light in order to save her soul. He knew the paralytic at the pool when He said, "Sin no more lest a worse thing come upon you." He knows you and me, our background as we are and always have been. The Psalmist wrote of it in Psalm 139: *O LORD, thou hast searched me, and known me. Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off. Thou compassest my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways.* Then he talks about God. God knows you thoroughly. He knows you better than you know yourself. He knows your circumstances better than you know your circumstances. He understands. He cares. *And as Jesus passed by . . .* And He saw this man with perfect knowledge. He saw a man. He saw a blind man. He saw a blind man from birth, but He saw a beggar. He saw a man reduced to the lowest form of living — a beggar. He was not a professional beggar. There are professional beggars. I saw them on a trip to Jerusalem. Outside the garden gate there are those who do all sorts of contortions to rouse pity and to cause you to give to them. We were instructed not to give because it would start a riot because of the mob that comes. In pagan lands there are parents who have little children, and they break their legs and break their arms and let them heal that way so that they will be professional beggars. People see twisted limbs and are moved to give to them. This was not a professional beggar. This is a beggar because he is blind. There was nothing else left for him to do. There is nothing said about him seeing a thing in the world. Possibly long ago, he gave up all hope. Possibly long ago, he lost everything, and there he sits with his little hat or his cup. He sits in silence and sits in his darkness and sits in his problems. He sits and wonders about the indifference because he had become part of the fixtures on that street. Everybody knew he would be sitting there, but they passed by just like they would pass by a gate. Jesus saw a man reduced to the lowest form of living, an object of poverty and pity, a beggar. It is bad enough to be blind, but he was a blind beggar with nothing left but a cup and a hat to ask for alms. Jesus had a vision, and He took action and compassion. He took the initiative. The blind beggar did not say anything. Nobody called our Lord's attention to this man. He did that Himself. Do you understand that God takes the initiative? When Adam sinned, Adam was not taking the initiative. Adam was running from God. Immediately, God came in the garden: "Adam! Where art thou?" Jesus said: *For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.* When you and I go out, we are going out in the name of Somebody Who is taking the initiative to get people saved. He goes. He knocks at the door. He seeks and seeks. *For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.* His vision called for action not a discussion. *I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day . . .* What an opportunity!

Turn back to John 9 and let us look at the question of the disciples. What a tremendous question! This question has been asked through centuries, this question of evil in a moral world. Why in the world? And where did it originate? And where did it come from? *Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind?* Now, when they asked that question, they had a limited vision. They did not see very far.

The Bible says: *Where there is no vision, the people perish*: If you and I stood out in the front and saw somebody hit by an automobile, our immediate reaction would be to run to their aid. A blind man would not see that person hit by an automobile, and he would not move. But, you and I can see. These people should have been able to see. They did not see what Jesus saw. They saw a theological problem and a question. Here is the thing. Why is this fellow here? How did he get there? And what is the cause? They considered him as a theological problem instead of an object for mercy. It is easier to discuss who is to blame than to minister to the present need. God does not want us to turn our back and look backward trying to find out who is to blame but to minister today to human needs. It was an inappropriate discussion. They asked this question in the very presence of this blind man. They were indifferent to his presence which would reduce him to unfeeling and a conscienceness of being unimportant as they would discuss a sale of a camel or anything else. *Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents . . . ?* That was very inappropriate. It was a misguided question and an opinion. "Sin," they said, "is behind blindness somewhere." Now, there is a prosperity gospel today that tells if there is anything wrong in your life it is because you do not have faith and there is sin in your life. That is a lie. That is a prosperity gospel. "If you were totally right with God, you would never be sick." That is a lie. Some of God's choicest people spend their life in poor health. Now, sometimes sin does bring that, but let us look at this question: "Master, who did sin? Did he sin?" Now, the pagans believe in reincarnation. This was a congenital disease — blind from birth. "He probably sinned in some other form of life, and he was sent back into this world with this disease because he sinned somewhere else." Now, you understand the problem in India. You think of the millions in India. The problem of India is not an economic problem. The problem of India is religious or a problem of worship. Here are cows, and here is grain. The cows are sacred. They believe in reincarnation. That cow might be my great grandpa. That cow might be my great grandmother. I cannot kill the cow because the cow is sacred. "We don't kill the cow that may be our ancestors, and the rats also may be our ancestors." Here is reincarnation. The rats eat the grain, and the cows eat the grain, and the people starve because of a foolish idea about life. You have never began or lived anywhere else contrary to what a cult tells you. The only person who has lived somewhere else was Jesus Christ the Son of God Who was God and made the heavens and the earth and stepped out of eternity into time. Yes, He was here before the earth came into being, but you and I had our beginning at the moment of conception. Here is a question, "Well, did he sin?" The pagans around him believed in reincarnation. "Well, did he sin?" Some Jewish rabbi has taught that the unborn could commit sin while in the womb, and his kicking indicated his sinful state. Now, some mothers might feel like that would be the case. Some rabbi said that this is an indication that this creature held inside a woman's body has a sinful nature and that is the reason he is doing all this kicking. Did he sin? Did the parents sin? Well, Mosaic law taught the possibility of inherited sin. Exodus 20 talks about the sin of idolatry: *Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me*; There are children that are born into this world blind because of drug use. There are children that are born with birth defects because of alcohol, because of venereal disease. That is a possibility that things can come from their parents. Not here. "Who sinned?" Well, his parents did not sin, and he did not sin. "Who sinned? You have to find sin somewhere because sin has to be there." Well, yes and no. I remind you that there is an inescapable law and an inescapable connection between sin and suffering. If you sin, suffering is connected with it. No wonder the Bible said, "Fools make a mock at sin . . ." If we laugh at sin, we are fools. All the heartache, all the tears, all the physical affliction has come because of this terrible, awful thing that comes by sin. Sin and suffering are inescapable in Siamese twins. Why? Because of the fact: *Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned*: Now, where did this thing come from? "Who sinned?" Yes sir, Adam sinned and poisoned the whole human race. Every last one of us trace our genealogy back to Adam. You and I are a dying race. That is the command in Genesis: . . . *for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die*. The consumption is dying. It is an act and a process. That act and that process began the day Adam sinned. The day Adam sinned began a process of deterioration. He headed for a grave. Yes sir, Adam sinned. One thing that is certain is there is sin somewhere but not where these disciples are asking. Job's friends sat down and said, "Now, Job, you are a hypocrite. You would not suffer like this if you were right with God. Job, you are a liar." And, you

pointed at the person and said, "That person must be wicked to suffer so much." Not so. James said: *But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.* Now, I want to read to you a passage of Scripture. Listen to it carefully. God assumed responsibility for His world. He does not cause everything, but God permits things to happen. There is nothing that happens in this world that God does not first of all permit. The moment that you allow something to happen that God does not permit, then you have taken God off of the throne. God is ruling and reigning, and God is in charge, and God does not have ulcers. God has said to His people (I cannot comprehend it. I cannot understand it.): *And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.* Now, that is some verse. I have not read Exodus. I want to read another passage before I read Exodus. Psalm 76:10: *Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee: the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain.* If I understand that passage of Scripture, God said that He would make the very wrath of man praise Him. He will make the atheist listen. He will make all that Madeline Murray O'Hare has done praise Him. And the remainder of wrath, God said, will restrain. God will not allow anything to happen on this world in your life and my life that God will not use to ultimately praise Him and bring good to us. Now, that is some God! Turn to Exodus 4. God is an all-wise God. He has never made a mistake. God is an all-powerful God. God can do anything in His holiness. God is a holy God. God is love. God is eternal God. God is omni-everything. Look at what he says to Moses: *And the LORD said unto him, Who hath made man's mouth? or who maketh the dumb, or deaf, or the seeing, or the blind? have not I the LORD?* He said, "I make the deaf, the dumb, the blind, and the seeing." Does that mean that God makes some people blind, some people dumb, and some people crippled? No, He is not saying that, but He is assuming responsibility for this earth. This is His earth. He is sovereign, and in His sovereignty, He claims responsibility. "Yes, I could have made Adam with no possibility of sin. I could have made a robot." When he made Adam, He knew Adam would sin. When He made Adam, He knew of the fall out by Adam's sin. He knew all of it, and yet He did it anyhow. God assumes responsibility for His creation. The Devil came at Job and told God, "You have built an hedge about him. I cannot get at him." All the things that were wrought on Job's life, God opened the gate and said, "Okay, I will let you in." The Devil could not touch his body until God opened the gate and said, "Okay, I will let you touch his body." Brethren, this morning, God reigns in Heaven. He is the only one capable of reigning. He knows all the facts. He knows all the details. He knows it from the beginning. He knows the end from the beginning. The God of all power, all wisdom, all knowledge, all love, and all holiness, runs the universe. He allows Satan to run to and fro. He allows all of this. He permits it, but He permits it in His sovereignty and His wisdom and is determined that *Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee: the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain.* Who sinned? God assumes responsibility.

Now, let us look at the Master's answer in John 9:3: *Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him. I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work.* Now, listen carefully to what He did not say. He did not say that the man or his parents had never sinned. That is not so. *If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.* He did not say that this man had not sinned nor his parents, but that was not the reason why he was born blind. He did not say that there was not a law of retribution. There is a law of retribution. He said to that paralytic He healed: *sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee.* There is a law of retribution, but this man is not blind because of a law of retribution. He did not say there was reincarnation. He ignored it because it is not true. It is not in the Bible. The Bible does not teach that. He did not say that the man was made blind deliberately so that many years later God would perform a miracle. He did not say that. He did not say, "God, I made him blind." He did not say, "I made him blind so one day I would come along and make him to see." He did not make him as a theological guinea pig. He did not do that. He did not give them the answer they wanted. "Who sinned?" He said, "That is not your problem, and I am not going to tell you." He did not give them the answers. God does not give you all the answers. You demand answers, and God will give you a revelation but not an answer many times. God never gave Job the answer. "God, why did

I lose my ten children? Why did I lose my health and my wealth? Why?" Then you have the match between his friends as they try to tell why they accused Job of hypocrisy. For thirty-eight chapters, they go back and forth and back and forth. Then, all of the sudden, God appears on the scene. He begins to ask Job question after question. "Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Where were you when this morning star sang for glory? Where were you when I laid the foundations of the deep?" He asked Job, I suppose, a hundred questions. Job could not answer any of them. Finally, Job says: *I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.* What was He showing Job? He was saying, "Job, I am not going to give you the why's, but I run the universe. If I can run the universe, I can run your life." That is what He showed him. "Job, if I can run this vast universe, I can run your life." What is it? He was shut up to faith in Jehovah God. *Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him . . .* He did not give answers, but He did give a revelation of Himself. Now, I do not know why my wife and I lost three babies prematurely. I do not know why I stood at the bedside of a five year old boy dying of cystic fibrosis. I stood with the parents. All of the sudden, blood just gushed out of his nose and mouth. I watched the little five year old die. I do not know why a thirteen year old who sat behind me in the choir went out and committed suicide. I do not know. I do not know why a little girl who road on our bus route had a little baby, and that little baby is blind. I do not know why a missionary spent twelve years to minister to African people. He went to college and seminary and graduate school and medical school and went to Africa and was dead five days later and never touched a patient. I do not understand that. I do not understand about a member of our church whose daughter and three grandchildren were all murdered, and I led four coffins to the cemetery. I do not know. God knows. You are in trouble when you try to tell why. You do not know. He did not say that the man was a spiritual guinea pig. The Lord said that He was the potter and we are the clay. Wait a minute. He is not a potter as a hobby. That is His vocation. He is not playing with us. We are clay, but we are clay with feelings and clay with a will and clay with a mind. He is the potter to mold us and to make us. He is not playing with us. God does not play with human beings. Woe be unto the individual that uses them as play things. Look at verse 3. In the original manuscripts of our Bible, there was no punctuation. Translators supplied punctuation. Punctuation is not inspired. The chapter divisions are not inspired. Sometimes you will have a subject and a chapter division comes right in the middle of it. Chapter divisions and punctuations are not inspired. They are supplied. A man wrote about this verse of Scripture and the punctuation: *Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents (colon): but that the works of God should be made manifest in him.* The man said, "Since there is no punctuation in the original manuscript, we are free to read John 9:3-4 this way: *Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents (period). But that the works of God should be made manifest in him. I must work the works of Him that sent me while it is day.*" That has an all-together different implication concerning this man. Now, this verse says: *that the works of God should be made manifest in him.* Actually, He is saying this: "This simply furnishes an opportunity to do the works of Him that sent me. That is why I came." He began His ministry in Luke 4. He went into the temple, the synagogue, took the Scriptures and began to read: *The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised,* He said, "This is why I came. This furnishes an opportunity for me to show the works of God in this blind man." Now, God raised Pharaoh up. He did not make him wicked. Pharaoh was wicked. By the way, stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. You say, "I'm stubborn." That is wicked. "I'm stubborn." Yes sir, you read what 1 Samuel 15 says about stubbornness. God told Pharaoh: *Let my people go.* He said, "I am not going to do it." God said, *Let my people go.* Pharaoh said, "I am not going to do it." Ten times, God said, *Let my people go,* and every time, Pharaoh said, "I am not going to do it." Every time He said it, Pharaoh's heart was hardened. You can take a rebellious child and tell him to do something. What happens? You do not make him rebellious. Your command brings out his rebellion. Every time you tell him to do something more, he gets more rebellious. You are not making him rebellious. Your command is. God was hardening Pharaoh's heart, but every time He gave a command, Pharaoh said, "I am not going to go." God said, "Okay, I will tell you what I will do. I will just use you as a display in my power. You are not going to do it. Then, I will just show you what I can do." God used him as a display of the power of God. He did not make him wicked. God did not make this man blind. He said, "It will

furnish me an opportunity to show the power of God and the works of God in his life.” That is what God said. What is your problem today? It furnishes an opportunity for God to do something. It is an opportunity for faith. God has His own reasons why He allows sickness and disease and death and suffering. There was a man that had cancer. God sustained him for years. He said, “When I went to the hospital for surgery, I received hundreds of letters from people. Out of those letters, there were several who professed to tell me why God let this happen to me. The only trouble was that I do not think that anyone of them knew. God does not always reveal to us why He permits things. I believe this. God never does nor suffers to be done but we would ourselves could we but see through all events and things as well as He.” God has His way. He does not propose to tell us reasons. He asks us to walk with Him by faith through the dark times. A dear friend of mine died Friday. He lived with rheumatoid arthritis. It was severe. He had to go to Arizona for three months every year. He could not stand being in and out of the hospital. I have never known such a sweet temperament of a man and yet a spirit that was indomitable that he stood and hurt and ached and lived in pain. I do not remember any complaints about his pain. I do not remember seeing anything bitter towards what God was doing. I will show you how a man will serve God and be sweet about it. Even though his suffering hurt, he kept on serving God. God did a tremendous work in his life. Fanny Crosby blinded at the age of six weeks by improper medical treatment wrote over 8,000 hymns, and at eight years old, she wrote this, “What a happy soul am I. Although I cannot see, I am resolved that in this world contented I will be. How many blessings I enjoy that other people don’t. To weep and sigh because I am blind, I cannot. I won’t.” She was eight years old. A Scotch minister said to her, “I think it is a great pity that the Master when He showered so many gifts upon you did not give you sight.” Her rebuke came quickly, “Do you know that if at birth I had been able to make one petition to my Creator, it would have been that I should be born blind?” “Why?” asked the surprised clergyman. “Because when I get to Heaven, the first face that shall ever grab my sight will be that of my Savior.” She wrote the songs, “When I See My Savior First of All,” “Blessed Assurance,” and many others. I could go on. Bill Rice camp for the Deaf. How did it come into being? Bill Rice and his wife had a daughter that was deaf. There was no place to send her. It drove him to find a solution to minister to the deafness of his daughter, and out of that you have the largest deaf ministry in all the world. It came out of a mystery of life. Camp Joy is a place where boys and girls begin to live. Dr. Lee Roberson and his wife lost a little girl named Joy. Out of that deep sorrow and grief comes Camp Joy where thousands of boys and girls have heard the Gospel; and because they have heard the Gospel, they are going to Heaven. God has His way. God has His purposes. What is our attitude? Turn to James 1. Our attitude is not “Why?” but “What?” James as he talks about folks who have lost their houses and lands because of persecution, he began to write in James 1:2: *My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience.* He is simply saying that God is at work in your life. He has a purpose. Trust Him. Count it all joy. Do not try to find out why. Look at the purpose. God has a purpose for allowing these things to do something for us and with us and for His glory and honor. Our attitude should not be “Why?” but how to act. Let me just name some things. Some parents live wicked lives. I am not talking about venereal disease in a sense. They live wicked lives. One day they got saved. They had been serving the Lord faithfully for years, and God gives them children. The children grow up. One of the children becomes wicked. Then the guilt of the parents: “I lived a wicked life back there, and God is getting even with me.” No sir. When God saved you, He did not put you on probation. He said, . . . *having forgiven you all trespasses . . . their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.* If you live like the Devil and your children were growing up at that time, you set a wrong example and then you got saved. When you get saved, you do not do away with the wrong influence that you had on those children. That is there. “But, hey, we sinned back there. We did not have any children. Then we got married. It has been years. I knew my sin would find me out.” Your sin did not find you out. . . . *their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.* If that be so, what about Saul of Tarsus when he talked about all his suffering in 2 Corinthians 12. He had had Christians put to death. He was a great persecutor, but never one time in all of his suffering do you hear him having a guilt trip. “Hey, I am getting what I dished out.” Not on your life! He talked about what God used to strengthen Him to be a ministry out of weakness made strong. Never one time was there false guilt. God delivers some from guilt. Turn to 1 Peter 5. Not “Why?” but how to act. Freedom from false guilt and then the knowledge. 1 Peter 5:7:

Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you. I hope I can tell this right. I heard it this week. Dr. Bill Pennell watched his pastor in his Baptist church in Decatur, Georgia. He went to school with a young man. This young man finished school and was pastor of a good church. He had a teenage daughter. The daughter came down with a brain tumor. He called the elders and the deacons in. He had the whole church praying for his daughter. They anointed her with oil, and they prayed. He just knew God would heal her. God did not heal her. She died. He just knew that God would heal her. He came to the pulpit and said, "Brethren, I just cannot preach. I just cannot preach." His church said, "Well, you just go off for a while. Preacher, we understand." He went off and took his wife. He did not take his Bible with him. He went off trying to get a hold of this thing. "God heard prayer and God answers prayer." The church prayed for his daughter and anointed her and she died. He could not handle it. The weeks went into months, and he could not handle it. Finally, he came back home to resign the church and get out of the ministry. "I am going to do something else. I cannot preach anymore. I cannot pastor anymore. I want to get out of the ministry. He came back and went into his study at home and opened his Bible. He just flipped it open, and a page opened, and he glanced down. What he saw was the Gethsemane experience, and these words leaped up at him like fire: *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* He looked again, and the words just lit up: *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* He said, "The revelation hit me. You do understand. You do care." God got a hold of his heart. Why did this happen? I do not know, but in the midst of it, he found out that God cared. God loved him. He went back to his pulpit to preach. What do you think he preached on? "He Cares for You." He did not give any explanation, but the conscienceness of a God Who came down into this world and whatever happens that He cares for me. He cares for you. What is your handicap today? What is your frustration today? What is your mystery today? What is your limitation today that eats at you and destroys you and ridicules you and taunts you? What are you to do? Quit trying to get answers and respond. Do not worry about what happened or why it happened, but, "God help me to get out of this what you want me to get out of it." As you do that, understand that He cares for you. Understand that your handicap furnishes an opportunity for God to do something for you. He may not remove the handicap, but He does something for you and through you and out of you . . . *that the works of God should be made manifest in him.* There was a young man over in the book of Judges who was born out of wedlock. His name was Jephthah. He was the son of an harlot. How would you like to face life like that? Kicked out of his own house, called a bastard, illegitimate, despised, rejected, out in the world. I open the book of Hebrews to the roll call of faith, and I find the son of an harlot in the roll call of faith. I find a woman, Rahab the harlot, in the roll call of faith. It does not make any difference where you are or where have been or where you sit, Jesus passed by. It furnishes an opportunity for Him to glorify God and do something for you where you are and no matter who you are.