

Dear friends, have you ever blamed God when something tragic takes place? Have you ever asked, “Why would a God of love, our Creator, permit this?” Or “Why has this happened? It’s beyond my comprehension?” I came across a passage in **John 9** that has helped me greatly. As I saw Jesus’ answer in **9:3**, I was astounded by His statement: **“It was neither that this man sinned, nor his parents; but it was so that the works of God might be displayed in him.”** God is able to use whatever (even pain and death) anyone is going through to display His works.

We saw in **6:28-29**: The people asked after He had fed the 5000, **“What shall we do, so that we may work the works of God?”** Jesus answered and said to them, **“This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent!”** God doesn’t ask us to understand, just believe, trust. He is good, loving, all-powerful, all-wise, does only right. He wants us to rest, accept, based on who He is. Let’s get to know Him well. Begin with believing in Jesus as Lord.

This brought to mind a passage that I’ve loved from the past: **Ex. 3-4**. In these two chapters, Yahweh told Moses that he was His man to deliver the Israelites from their slavery in Egypt. Moses started coming up with excuses: “Who am I? Who are You? What can You do? I’ve got this problem with my mouth. Send someone else!” God answered each issue: “Certainly I will be with you.” “I AM WHO I AM!” That was God’s OT name, YaHWeH! Then He had Moses throw his staff down and it became a snake. Then He made Moses’ hand leprous and then restored it. Finally, let’s **read Ex. 4:10-12**. “I have this problem with my mouth; I’m not eloquent; I am slow (heavy) of speech and slow of tongue.” Whether his problem was stuttering or his tongue was too big for his mouth or whatever, Moses felt this disqualified him to do what God had told him to do. Yahweh’s answer? **“Who has made man’s mouth? Or who makes him mute or deaf, or seeing or blind? Is it not I, Yahweh?”** I am so impressed with Yahweh’s answer! “I take responsibility!” He said. This has been one of the most reassuring passages I’ve ever studied! If we struggle with this (like all of us have or are), let’s continue to get to KNOW Him. **Rom. 6:1-14** says to KNOW THE FACTS (6:1-10), CONSIDER (BELIEVE) THEM TRUE (:11), AND PRESENT OUR BODIES TO GOD (:12-13). If ‘whatever’ displays the works of God, what more could we ask? “I’m with you. I AM Yahweh. I can do whatever is needed and use whatever is going on. I made your mouth. Go!” Know! Consider! Present! He produces!

Now let’s look at **John 9:1-12**. How are we as Christians to make sense of a world which is under the power of sin and death, a world which is perishing, blinded by Satan himself, and who chooses to not believe in Jesus/His word? The only thing which can make things clear in such a world is the coming of Light, the Light of the world (**9:5**, see **8:12**). Remember, we are seeing these remarkable statements coming from Jesus: “I am the Bread of Life & I’m the Light of the world.” He’ll go on to state 5 more truths that help us understand Him. In this passage, He’s stressing that He’s the Light of the world!

Read 9:1-14. Notice **:14**, it’s a Sabbath when He opened this blind man’s eyes. That will be the charge brought by the religious leaders: “He made clay;

He did ‘work’ on the Sabbath.” Earlier in **5:18**, Jesus was accused of breaking the Sabbath and also making Himself equal with God. Also see **8:19,42,58**.

In that context we come to **John 9. :1** **As He passed by, He saw a man blind from birth**. This man was afflicted from birth. As we read other passages (**Mt. 9:27-31, 11:5, 12:22, 15:30-31, 20:29-34, 21:14, Mk. 8:22-25; Lk. 4:18**), we realize Jesus had healed other blind persons. On this day, in that setting, within 6 months of His death and resurrection, Jesus saw another man who had never seen; he was blind from birth. Born blind, the man had never looked on the Sea of Galilee, seen flowers, seen his parents. He had never had sight.

:2 **And His disciples asked Him, “Rabbi (Teacher), who sinned (missed the mark), this man or his parents, that he would be born blind?”** Basing their question on **Ex. 20:5, 34:7, Dt. 5:9**, and **Num. 14:18**, the man’s blindness was interpreted both by the disciples (**:2**) and by the authorities (**:34**) as evidence of sin. Yes, while sin may be a cause of suffering, as clearly indicated in Scripture (**5:14, 8:11**), it is not always the case (see **Job 1-2, 2 Cor. 12:7, Gal. 4:13, here**).

Why is there still suffering today? Sometimes because of our own personal sin; because of someone else’s sin (babies born with AIDS, people because of leaders’ sins; generations of children have suffered the consequences of a previous generation’s disobedience); because we’re Christians; just because we live on a sin-scarred earth; as a result of an accident (Fanny Crosby). As Christians we understand sin and death are the result of Adam’s sin, which affects the whole human race. The disciples must have thought somehow this man may have sinned in his mother’s womb! Look at Jesus’ answer in **:3!**

:3 **Jesus answered, “It was neither that this man sinned, nor his parents; but it was so that the works of God might be displayed (made clear) in him.”** Jesus doesn’t deny that people suffer, but in this case, He immediately rules out the man’s personal sins and the sins of his parents, or even the indirect results of Adam’s sin. Someone wrote: “Even the most holy woman may have cancer. Or one of the finest men may in his old age, have softening of the brain and lose his reason.” Even as Christians, because we still live in these bodies of flesh where sin still dwells, we can sin. But look what Jesus makes clear: This was an opportunity of showing what God can do, and of course it was also a sign pointing to Jesus’ Messiahship and that He’s the Son of God (20:31). Jesus states that it’s an opportunity, not a disaster, an opportunity to do God’s work and bring glory to God. For the writer, Jesus’ miracles were always a sign of the glory and power of God, and that believing in Him anyone may have life in His name (**20:31**). It is a comfort to be aware of these facts when we or others suffer. Remember **Ex. 4:10-12**. YaHWeH/Jesus’ life displayed!

:4 **“We must work the works of Him who sent Me as long as it is day; night is coming when no one can work.”** This was an opportunity to work the works of God, not to probe around in the past and try to find out who is guilty. The issue is to use this opportunity to ‘do’ the works of God (see **7:17**; it’s those who ‘do’ the Father’s will who are pleasing to Him) and to help the man.

Note the emphatic position of the pronoun ‘We’; His disciples, we, all of us. **As long as it is day** conveys a sense of urgency. **Night is coming**: a reference

to taking advantage of every opportunity. Make the most of our opportunities. He's teaching us that we are given only so much time. We must be active in doing this work while it is day (**Rom. 13:11-14, Eph. 5:15-18**). Seize the opportunities! It's still daylight! :5 **"While I am in the world, I am the Light of the world."** Jesus moves to 'work the works of His Father' based on who He is (Light of the world) and what is needed with the time He has.

:6-7a **When He had said this, He spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and applied the clay to his eyes.** Jesus had earlier used saliva in the healing of a deaf man who spoke with difficulty (**Mk. 7:33**) and a blind man (**Mk. 8:23**), but only here did He 'make' clay of the spittle. The blind man would have heard the 'spit', and the touch of a friendly hand would have been reassuring. I don't imagine that man had received too many 'touches', especially since most of the people thought his blindness was the result of sin!

:7a and [Jesus] **said to him, "Go (a command), wash (another command) in the pool of Silōam" (which is translated, Sent).** In terms of washing in water, the prophet Elisha told Naaman to dunk 7 times in the Jordan river (**2 Kings 5:10**). In terms of the Jordan river & the pool of Silōam, they weren't "magic water!" In Naaman's and this case, the commands were tests of faith and obedience.

The pool of Silōam. King Hezekiah in the OT, fearing a siege by the Assyrians (**2 Chron. 32:1-5, 2 Kings 20:20**), had this underground conduit built to ensure a continual supply of water. It was about a third of a mile long. This pool lay at the southern end of Hezekiah's tunnel. Located near SE corner of the city wall, water for the water-pouring rites at the Feast of Booths was drawn from this pool. As far as we know, Jesus never sent anyone else to that pool to wash. The 'method' of healing this man was not the important issue. The 'Person who heals' is the important issue. The Light which banished the man's darkness was the Light Jesus was. Jesus had not even told him that he would be healed but had merely commanded him to go and wash.

:7b **So he went away and washed, and came back seeing.** The man does not protest but he immediately took Jesus at His word and obeyed (**7:17**). And he came back seeing!! The man had been blind from birth (:1) and yet saw immediately (:7)! He obeyed Jesus' commands. His going and washing were in themselves acts of faith in Jesus.

Now we may ask, "Where did Jesus get His power since He wasn't acting as God on earth but as a man dependent on God?" The Bible says His power was granted Him by the Father (**Lk. 5:17, 11:20, Acts 2:22, 10:38**) and demonstrated through Him by the Holy Spirit (**Lk. 4:1,14, Mt. 12:28**).

:8-9 **Therefore the neighbors, and those who previously saw (discerned, from the word theater) him as a beggar, were saying, "Is not this the one who used to sit and beg?" :9 Others were saying, "This is he," still others were saying, "No, but he is like him." He kept saying, "I am the one!"** Even the man's neighbors and those who had known him as a beggar were debating, "Isn't this the one who used to sit and beg?!" They found it easier to believe in a case of mistaken identity than in a miraculous healing. Others were saying, "This is the beggar!" Others, "No, but he's like him!" They weren't sure it

was the same man whom they had known. But the man kept declaring, "I am the one!" I think this is so funny! You can see the man standing there, not begging any more, and everyone is making an evaluation of him. He's standing there, repeatedly saying, "I'm the one!"

:10-11 **So they were saying to him, "How then were your eyes opened?" :11 He answered, "The man who is called Jesus made clay, and anointed my eyes, and said to me, 'Go to Silōam and wash'; so I went away and washed, and I received sight."** In reply to their question, the man can only refer to the man Jesus. That's all he knows about Him: "He's a man. He anointed my eyes and commanded me, 'Go and wash'. I went and washed. And I received sight!!" The man had heard Jesus' name, but he knew nothing more about Him.

:12 **They said to him, "Where is He?" He said, "I do not fully know (3609a)".** "Where is this man, Jesus?" The man did not know where Jesus was, &, having never seen Him, could not have identified Him in any case. In the following verses, :13-34 deal with the man. Not until :35 does Jesus reappear. Jesus once again met a needy person where he/she was. He does the same with us.

What can we learn from this? (1) Jesus knew who He Himself was (Light), and what He was here to do. May we know who God has made us (holy ones, saints), and what we're here to do (His will). Our spiritual gifts and hearts for a certain ministry are helpful in discovering what we're here to do. (2) The restored-sight man just told his story. He simply shared what he knew about Jesus: "He's a man, He told me to go and wash. I did what He commanded me to do, and I received my sight. There's nothing else I can say." We all have stories we can share with others about how Jesus has worked with us. I pray we do. Just the Truth, only the Truth! The Truth is enough! (3) May we take advantage of the time we have and the opportunities we're given to 'work the works of God' and be involved in other's lives as our Lord gives us those opportunities. May we do these 'good deeds' strengthened with power by the indwelling Holy Spirit (**Eph. 3:16**). Only then will we see 'eternal' results. I've really enjoyed sharing these Biblical truths with you. I'm already looking forward to the 'end of this story' in **9:13-41**.

I've been reading Philip Yancey's Where Is God When It Hurts? 1990 edition. I believe it's one of the best books on how to respond to someone when he/she is hurting and also how to respond when you're the one hurting. I also believe it reveals how much God loves us and how He understands when a person is hurting, no matter the cause. Jesus and therefore the Father love us and understand our hurt/pain. Whether it's helplessness or fear or lack of purpose or hopelessness or rejection or even death, Jesus understands because He experienced all these! HE, the great I AM, is the answer to whatever is causing the hurt. Where is God when it hurts? In His love and understanding, He's present with us. He is the only solution to impossible situations. Let's point the hurting ones to Him. If I'm the one hurting, let me understand: Jesus loves me and He completely understands what I'm going through because He's experienced it also. May I trust Him, based on His character, in all circumstances! "Jesus and Father, thank You for Your love & understanding."

What have you learned from this study that is personally helpful? Joel