

Who Sinned?

“As he went along, he saw a man blind from birth. His disciples asked him, ‘Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?’

‘Neither this man nor his parents sinned,’ said Jesus, ‘but this happened so that the works of God might be displayed in him.’”

John 9:1-3 (NIV)

Our Lord tells us that the blind man’s affliction was so the “works of God might be displayed in him.” What “works of God” were seen in the man born blind?

Surely the fact that the man had not cursed God for his affliction gave God glory. When someone submits to the difficult providence of God and seeks to move ahead in life, that gives God glory. A rebellious spirit shames both the sinner and the God Who made him.

But for year in and year out – as the blind man accepted his sorrowful station in life – he was making a statement by his submission to the difficult providence of God. He was saying that God should be trusted when life goes against you as well as when everything is good.

It is one thing to say, “God is good” when He blesses

you and yours. However, if you say, “God is good” when life goes against you, then you have truly made a powerful statement.

Apparently this man found grace to accept his difficulties and get on with life. His faith in the notion of God being good – when it appeared that God had been mean to him – was a wonderful statement about the Lord.

Jesus made a fine statement about the man’s moral character when He insisted that the blindness was not due to sin – as many people assumed. The leaders of the temple were not as charitable when judging the man – as seen in John 9:34!

The man born blind is an excellent example of how God allows some people to suffer for years with no indication that they are greater sinners than the rest of humanity.

But when God is honoured as the person suffers without complaint, then God does indeed receive glory. The one suffering demonstrates the adequacy of God’s grace under trial. The one suffering shows that they believe in a coming day when their sorrow will all disappear. Their faith in God’s promises about the future brings Him glory.

When you and I accept difficulties without complaining we exalt God. It is true that we exalt God when we sing hymns of praise to Him. But the really great praise of God comes when our sorrows make us so weary we cannot sing. In those tragic times God is most beautifully praised by our quiet acceptance of what we do not understand.

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