

UPPER ROOM ADULT BIBLE STUDY

“The Gospel of John”

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Lesson 37: John 9:1-41 “When Bad Things Happen...” (Part 1)

As he passed by, he saw a man blind from birth. ² And his disciples asked him, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?”

³ Jesus answered, “It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him.

- a. “who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?” – the rabbis taught that, people who were born disabled or with birth defects, were God’s punishment for the sins of the parents. The prophets, however, taught that each person was responsible for his/her own sin – and the consequences of it. Jesus’ disciples are confused about which position to take.
- b. “It was not...but that the works of God might be displayed in him.” – Jesus offers a third perspective: that God has chosen that person or that situation, through which He will demonstrate His glory! In other words, God will demonstrate His greatness in and through that person’s difficulty.
 - a. When “bad things” happen, we are tempted to view them through the lens of ‘rewards or punishments,’ as the rabbis taught.
 - b. We tend also to think only of the imposition these things place on the person suffering with them.
 - c. Jesus offers to idea that God has a ‘divine purpose’ in allowing these difficulties in people’s lives – so that He might work a greater purpose through them. Sometimes, we are given a glimpse of that purpose, but often God’s workings are beyond our sight!
 - d. So, how might believers respond in faith, when ‘bad things’ happen?
 - i. **2 Corinthians 12:8-10.** *a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass me, to keep me from becoming conceited. ⁸ Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me. ⁹ But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. ¹⁰ For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong.*
 1. “Bad things” shift our focus to God’s strength, in our weakness.
 2. “Grace” is power.
 - ii. **Hebrews 4:14-16.** *Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold*

fast our confession. ¹⁵ For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. ¹⁶ Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

1. We don't realize we need "mercy" until we're helpless.

iii. **Romans 8:18.** For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.

1. **Comment:** When 'bad things' happen, our trust is in the God, who sent Jesus to be our Savior (His ultimate act of love toward us!). If something 'bad' happens to you, with God's help, you might say a prayer: "Lord, work through this situation to show others your glory." The emphasis is on what God will do, through it; not on how you will show God's glory!

⁴ We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming, when no one can work. ⁵ As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world." ⁶ Having said these things, he spit on the ground and made mud with the saliva. Then he anointed the man's eyes with the mud ⁷ and said to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" (which means Sent). So he went and washed and came back seeing.

- a. "while it is day; night is coming" – Jesus refers to the time He is with His disciples as "day" in which He, the "light" is in the world.
- b. "Then He anointed the man's eyes with the mud" – Using His own saliva, Jesus formed a mud salve, which He applied to the blind man's eyelids.
- c. "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" – the pool was fed by a spring, which flowed to create a pool nearby.
- d. "So he went and washed and came back seeing." – the miracle of Jesus' giving the blind man his sight – was an obvious example of God manifesting His glory – through the life of the man.

⁸ The neighbors and those who had seen him before as a beggar were saying, "Is this not the man who used to sit and beg?" ⁹ Some said, "It is he." Others said, "No, but he is like him." He kept saying, "I am the man." ¹⁰ So they said to him, "Then how were your eyes opened?" ¹¹ He answered, "The man called Jesus made mud and anointed my eyes and said to me, 'Go to Siloam and wash.' So I went and washed and received my sight." ¹² They said to him, "Where is he?" He said, "I do not know."

- a. "Is this not the man who used to sit and beg?" – post-miracle chaos ensues!

¹³ They brought to the Pharisees the man who had formerly been blind. ¹⁴ Now it was a Sabbath day when Jesus made the mud and opened his eyes. ¹⁵ So the Pharisees again asked him how he had received his sight. And he said to them, "He put mud on my eyes, and I washed, and I see."

- a. "They brought to the Pharisees the man" – priests, together with other temple authorities were often the authenticators of miraculous healings.
- b. "Now it was a Sabbath day when Jesus made the mud" – Uh oh! Jesus, once again, did a good deed on the WRONG DAY!

¹⁶ Some of the Pharisees said, "This man is not from God, for he does not keep the Sabbath." But others said, "How can a man who is a sinner do such signs?" And there was a division among them. ¹⁷ So they said again to the blind man, "What do you say about him, since he has opened your eyes?" He said, "He is a prophet."

- a. "This man is not from God, for he does not keep the Sabbath" – the Sabbath held such high esteem for the Pharisees, who drew their beliefs from the rabbinic teachings. Their conclusion was to contradict Jesus' divinity, not on the basis of the miracle, but on the basis of His doing work on the Sabbath.
- b. **What were the origins of the Sabbath regulations, and why were they so important to the scribes and Pharisees?**
 - a. The 7th day of the week, (Shabbat) translated as "a day of quieting the heart."
 - b. Caananite and Babylonian cultures revered the 7th day in fear of angering their gods; only the Israelites looked at it as a day of joy!
 - c. Strict adherence to Sabbath laws gradually evolved through Israel's history, linked to fears of losing Jewish identity and "chosen-ness" through the years of exile in Babylon/Persia.
 - d. The 400 years of "no word from the Lord," post Malachi (prior to John the Baptist), various sects arose with each having different emphasis on observing the Sabbath (some rigid; some looser). The Pharisees were one of the sects, which emphasized rigid obedience.
 - e. Sabbath restrictions on labor were intended to mandate a day for communal worship, celebration, and rest from the work week. Jesus' mercy-work on the Sabbath reflected God's original intent, that the Sabbath was a gift given out of God's love for people.
 - i. **Mark 2:27.** And he (Jesus) said to them, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. ²⁸ So the Son of Man is lord even of the Sabbath."
- c. "How can a man who is an (open) sinner do such signs?" – ironically, everyone who was sighted, were spiritually blind to what Jesus was doing!