

AM 2 Corinthians 12:7-10 God's power shown in a broken world

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[0 : 00] The story of Jesus healing the man born blind. So John chapter 9, beginning at verse 1.

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

We must work the works of God. Him who sent me while it is day. Night is coming when no one can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.

Having said these things, he spat on the ground and made mud with the saliva. Then he anointed the man's eyes with the mud and said to him, Go wash in the pool of Siloam, which means sent.

So he went and washed and came back seeing. 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? Some said, It is he.

[1 : 24] Others said, No, but he is like him. He kept saying, I am the man. So they said to him, Then how were your eyes opened? 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. They said to him, Where is he? He said, I don't know. They brought to the Pharisees the man who had formerly been blind.

And that was a Sabbath day that Jesus made the mud and opened his eyes. So the Pharisees again asked him how he had received his sight. And he said to them, He put mud in my eyes and I washed and I see.

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. So they said again to the blind man, What do you say about him since he opened your eyes? He said, He is a prophet. The Jews did not believe that he had been blind and had received his sight until they called the parents of the man who had received his sight and asked them, Is this your son who you say was born blind?

[2 : 44] How is it that he does he now see? His parents answered, We know that this is our son and that he was born blind. But how he now sees, we do not know.

Nor do we know who opened his eyes. Ask him. He is of age. He will speak for himself. His parents said these things because they feared the Jews.

For the Jews had already agreed that if anyone should confess Jesus to be Christ, he was to be put out of the synagogue. Therefore his parents said, He is of age.

Ask him. So for the second time they called the man who had been blind and said to him, Give glory to God. We know that this man is a sinner. He answered, Whether he is a sinner, I do not know.

One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see. They said to him, What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?

[3 : 46] He answered them, I have told you already and you would not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you want to become his disciples? And they reviled him saying, You are his disciples, but we are disciples of Moses.

We know that God has spoken to Moses, but as for this man, we do not know where he comes from. The man answered, Why, this is an amazing thing.

You do not know where he comes from, yet he opened my eyes. We know that God does not listen to sinners, but if anyone is a worshipper of God and does his will, God listens to him.

Never since the world began has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a man born blind. If this man were not from God, he could do nothing. And they answered him, You were born in utter sin, and would you teach us?

And they cast him out. Jesus heard they had cast him out, and having found him, he said, Do you believe in the Son of Man? He answered, And who is he, sir, that I may believe in him?
[4 : 54] Jesus said to him, You have seen him, and it is he who is speaking to you. He said, Lord, I believe. And he worshipped him.

Jesus said, For judgment I came into this world, that those who do not see may see, and those who see may become blind.

Some of the Pharisees near him heard these things and said to him, Are we blind also? Jesus said to them, If you were blind, you would have no guilt.

But now that you say we see, your guilt remains. May God bless that reading of his word to our hearts. From God's word in 2 Corinthians 12.

2 Corinthians 12. I'm going to read verses 7 to 10. 2 Corinthians 12.

[5 : 56] Verses 7 to 10. This is the Apostle Paul, and he's describing how he had an illness, or some problem.

We don't know what it was. And how God dealt with him, and helped him to cope with it. He'd been describing the wonderful things he had seen.

And he says, So to keep me from becoming conceited, because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass me, to keep me from becoming conceited.

Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me. 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 in my weaknesses, so the power of God may rest upon me. For the sake of Christ, then I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecution, and calamities.

[7 : 14] For when I am weak, then I am strong. May God bless this reading of his word to all our hearts.

Let's bow in prayer. Father, Father, open your word to us now. As the hymn writer would say, Bless thou the bread of life, dear Lord, to us this morning.

As we read it and look at it together, make it live, Lord. And help me as I preach. Be with us, we pray.

In Jesus' name. Amen. I sat beside an old lady in a hospital in Aberdeen and listened as she told of her pains and her problems and the fact that she probably wasn't going to get home because she was too old and too frail.

And she would say, I don't know why this is happening to me. I always try to do what is right. I always try to help people.

[8 : 35] And you see, she was thinking the same way as the disciples were in this incident that we read together from John's Gospel.

they were walking along and they met, saw the man born blind and Jesus healed him. Somebody must have pointed him out to Jesus that he had been blind from birth.

And seeing him, as the disciples saw him, it led to a theological discussion. Why was this man born blind?

You see, the disciples felt, as many people did, and indeed as this lady in Aberdeen did, if I do the right thing, if I try and help people, then life will be kind to me.

Sin brings suffering, was the logic. The man who suffers must have sinned. Or his parents must have sinned. So they bring the question to Jesus.

[9 : 44] Why is this man blind? Did he sin before he was born? Some Jews thought this was possible. Did his parents sin? Is that why he's suffering?

Our Hindu friends nowadays would say that he had probably, he had been evil in a previous life.

And he was sent back blind to pay for his sins. All three ideas are based on the wrong assumption. And that is that there's a direct link between specific sin and an individual suffering.

As my lady in Aberdeen showed, she kind of felt that too, didn't she? Do the right thing and life will be kind for me. Sin and you will suffer.

But the assumption is wrong. And suffering comes, it comes to us all. And we might wonder, are we being punished for something?

[10 : 56] Even Christians might think this way. Why? Why this, Lord? And I want to think about suffering and I want to think of, put three general principles to you this morning about suffering,

trouble and pain.

First of all, they are the result of sin. Okay? They are the result of sin. They were not there in the original creation when the Lord made the heavens and the earth and he looked at it and he saw that it was very good.

There was no suffering then. No sickness or pain. But we know that when Adam and Eve fell, that brought the curse of sin, that brought the sin and suffering and pain and all the symptoms of our fallen world into the world.

So suffering and pain are the result of sin. But the second thing I would say is that we can expect suffering and illness and pain in this world.

We're not in paradise. We live in a fallen world. A groaning world. When Job said man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upwards, he was right in one sense.

[12 : 26] Difficulties are a part of life. And being a Christian will not provide us with an easy time. In fact, as Christians, we may have more difficulties than an un-Christian.

We might face persecution and rejection for our faith. So we mustn't be surprised when we are tried with troubles and hardships.

But the third thing is, and I want to say is that illness, suffering and problems are not necessarily the result of a specific sin in anyone's life.

The blind man's condition had nothing to do with sin in his life or his parents' life. It was, as Jesus said, so that the power of God could be shown in his life.

And so it is, it's not clear, it's not possible or clear or wise to blame, to say to someone who's suffering, you're suffering because you must have sinned, must be something in your life.

[13 : 40] That is not a conclusion that we can draw. Now there's some incidents when maybe you can't see the link between sin and suffering.

For example, if I go to the pub and get drunk, come out and stumble in front of a car and get knocked down, there's a clear link between sin and suffering. If I smoke cigarettes and get lung cancer, there's a clear link between what I'm doing and the sin or the sickness.

But in general, in general, there's no direct link between sin and suffering. In most cases, you can't see. The believer, trying to live for God, gets sick just as the unbeliever does.

The committed Sunday school teacher who could be hit with a bus just as often as the man down the street who never comes to church. The committed elder who can be made redundant just like a man who never comes to church.

Sickness and the problems of life are here and like the rain they come to the good and to the bad to the believer and to the unbeliever.

[15 : 07] So, what can we see then in this parable here? I want to look at this passage and I want to speak of four things that can help us either when we find ourselves suffering or when faced with the suffering of others.

First thing we're going to see is that suffering can be a means of showing the power of God in our lives. Secondly, we're going to see that the power of God can be seen through us as we seek to help others.

And then also the power of God can be seen as we courageously expect accept our suffering and suffer to the glory of God.

and we must always remember that God is in control. In our passage verse 3 Jesus says it was not that this man sinned or his parents but that the works of God would be displayed in him.

This man's suffering was so that God's power could be displayed. And this happened here by a double miracle. The man's blindness was healed that was the first miracle and the second miracle was the man came to trust in Jesus.

[16 : 42] He met Jesus. So first of all then Jesus touched the man made some clay and put it on his eyes and sent him away and the man washed and became came back seeing.

You might say now why did Jesus do this this time? Why didn't he just touch the man's eyes and the man could see as he did at other times?

Well we don't know do we? I don't think anybody really knows but perhaps a simple lesson of this would be to realize that God doesn't work the same way with us all.

The way he works in my life may be different from the way he works in your life. He is not obliged to work in an identical way with us all but here through this putting on the mud and getting it washed off the man was healed.

God's power was displayed in his life and we praise God for this example of God's power at work. We praise God every time somebody gets healed in hospital when the doctors are able to heal us or to help us.

[18 : 00] It's God who heals us really. If God hadn't made our bodies to heal then the doctors couldn't do anything for us. So we praise God when his power is seen through doctors.

But Jesus' enemies were there. Pharisees, the Jews as they call the leaders of the nation and they weren't pleased at all with this miracle.

They said look, this man has healed the blind man on a Sabbath and you shouldn't do any work on a Sabbath not even heal a blind man.

You see Jesus had broken one of their man-made rules and they were very keen on their man-made rules and because of their narrow religious view they couldn't see the finger of God at work in front of them.

And they sat down and discussed how can a sinful man heal a blind man? And they could come up with no answer. They could come up with no answer. And because they wouldn't believe, because Jesus didn't fit in with their way of thinking, they wouldn't believe.

[19 : 27] you know, sometimes we wish we could have some spectacular miracles. If there's a blind man healed in Dumfries or somebody raised from the dead in one of our Sunday services, people would believe, wouldn't they?

People would believe. But no, here, we see that even a clear miracle that they couldn't deny, did not convince these people, that Jesus was the Christ.

And if you remember when Lazarus was healed, brought back from the dead, and the people were following Jesus because of Lazarus' healing, or bringing back from the dead, and the same leaders of the Jews, they wanted to kill Jesus, and they wanted to kill Lazarus as well.

so a big miracle does not bring us to God. Our hearts are hard and dead. We're blind in our sins. We need to be made alive in Christ. This man was doubly blind, physically blind, and spiritually blind.

[20 : 50] But Jesus healed him. Jesus healed him. And he met Jesus later on, and came to trust him and follow him.

Jesus told us that he came so that the blind would see. And those who thought they could see would become blind, and that's what's happening to the Pharisees here.

They thought they could see, so they weren't interested in Jesus, and they just became more and more blind, more and more blind. Two miracles here, first of all.

The miracle of the man seeing, and the miracle of the man coming to know Jesus. And so, this is the greatest miracle.

The second one is the greatest miracle. Bringing people to spiritual life, isn't it? And God is doing it all the time in our world.

[21 : 57] People are coming to know Jesus, new life in Jesus, new birth. The physical miracle, bringing him his eyesight, would only last for a little while.

This life, whereas the spiritual opening of his eyes was something that was going to benefit him for all eternity.

So God's power was seen in healing. The second way that God's power is seen through suffering is it is displayed in our lives by enabling us to courageously accept our suffering and to bring glory to him in our weakness.

Now we read in 2 Corinthians about Paul. We don't know what was wrong with Paul. People used to say, when he's with us, he's weak, but he writes powerful letters, doesn't he?

Now, had Paul a stutter? Was that his problem? We don't know. Or was he kind of short sighted and he couldn't see what was going on?

[23 : 16] But whatever it was, it made people kind of despise him a bit when they saw him. But his letters were powerful. And God showed him how to cope with his thorn in the flesh, whatever it was.

He prayed for healing and he was not healed. He prayed three times for healing and he was not healed. Instead, he got that wonderful promise that when I am weak, then I am strong.

And how wonderful it is when we are enabled to show in suffering our confidence in God.

When the trials of life and the difficulties at work or at home, when illness or financial hardship or whatever, when they come, when we show our trust in our Heavenly Father, when Jesus' strength is made perfect in our weakness.

People looking at us, you see, should say, how come these Christians cope so well with sickness and disaster? how come they don't complain and moan or become bitter like the rest of us?
[24 : 44] And the answer, spoken or unspoken from us, will be, his strength is made perfect in my weakness. My Heavenly Father is faithful and he walks with me through the dark valley.

The hymn writer wrote, With mercy and with judgment, my web of time he wove, and I, the Jews of sorrow, were lusted by his love.

I'll bless the hand that guided, I'll bless the heart that planned, when throned where glory dwelleth in Emmanuel's land. Having Jesus with us in our suffering, in our illness, in our family troubles, doesn't mean that they become easy.

Suffering is always suffering. Pain is always painful. Mental confusion or turmoil is terrible. And they hit us all at some time or another.

But Lord, the Lord helps us hold on to him. We say, when Lord will you lighten this burden? When will you lighten my darkness?

[25 : 56] in the middle of it, we hold on to the fact that our Saviour is with us and will give us strength for the day, each day.

So, God's glory is seen in the way Christians cope with suffering. Thirdly, the power of God is displayed through our work to alleviate suffering.

in verse four there, Jesus says, we must work the works of him who sent me while it is day. Night is coming when no man can work.

Now, we've got a short day to work for Jesus, however long our lives are. We've only a short day. A short day to make him known, a short day to show to a watching world what it is to be a Christian.

And it is in our caring, our working, to ease suffering, that people see the love of God through us.

[27 : 01] God heals the broken hearted, he cares for the orphan and the widow, he feeds the hungry and visits the sick. And he does a lot of this work through us nowadays.

There was an old chorus which we used to sing, which says he has no hands but our hands to do his work today. And there's certain truth in that.

And what an amazing thing it is when the church, the Christian church, when his love is shown through reaching out, caring and working for the good of society, showing the love of God in our care and our concern.

And fourthly and finally, in the darkest period, when all seems lost, when our lives seem to be falling apart, whatever they are, problems on the farm, sickness, health, we need to remind ourselves that God is always in control.

The blind man, he had no hope of ever seeing. He was a grown man, but he was blind so that Jesus could demonstrate God's power through him.

[28 : 35] There is a purpose in his blindness. And so, always in our lives, God is in control. and he will turn that sorrow to good when that pain comes and we react to it to give him glory.

He gets the glory. When we are healed through the work of the doctors, we praise him for what he has done for us. And we know that in all things, in all things, God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

If he has allowed us to be brokenhearted, he will bind up the broken heart. If he has allowed us to be wounded, he will heal my wounds. If he lets darkness go on and on and on, we know he walks with us through it.

Because even though we walk through the valley of the shadow of death, we need fear no evil, for you are with me, and he is with us. His rod and his staff, they comfort us.

You see, in the darkest hour, God is in control. So if we asked, why this suffering? Why does God allow it?

[30 : 01] Well, it's part of our groaning world. It's a result of sin, but you usually can't link it to sin in someone's life. God shows his work in miraculously sorting out our needs, sometimes in our days, through the doctors and the nurses.

God shows his love and his glory by enabling us to patiently endure through our suffering. And our needy world gives us work to do, to go out and do our Father's work while we have time and bring him glory there too.

And even in the darkest hour, our God, our Jesus, is in control. May God bless his word to us all this morning.

Let's pray. Father, we thank you for your word. We thank you indeed that even in the darkness, even in the pain and the suffering, we can rest on you. stand with us and walk with us, Father, through the, when we pass through the waters of trouble, you've promised to walk through them with us and we praise you, Father.
[31 : 23] Pray, Lord, that you'll write your word in our hearts today, that it might encourage us, that it might help us as we face the unknown and the troubles and trials of life together.
Thank you, Lord, in Jesus' name. Amen.