



## John 9:3

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

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### Lessons, Lord-willing:

- 12.27** [Review] Love God and love your neighbor: Jesus tells a story about a good Samaritan [82]
- 1.17** Jesus receives little children [84]  
Mark 10:13-16
- 1.24** Jesus seeks the lost: Jesus tells stories about lost sheep and lost coins [85]  
Luke 15:1-10
- 1.31** A faithful father welcomes back his lost son: Jesus tells a story about a lost son [86]  
Luke 15:11-32
- 2.7** Jesus is glorified in the raising of Lazarus [87]  
John 11:1-44



When a person settles it biblically, intellectually, and emotionally—that God has ultimate control of all things, including evil, and that this is gracious and precious beyond words—then a marvelous stability and depth come into that person's life, and he develops a "**God-entranced world-view.**"

— John Piper

## Dear Parents,

Today we learned about the ninth chapter in the Gospel of John—the story when Jesus, who is called the Light of the World, gives sight to a man born blind!

The disciples passed by a man who was born blind and asked Jesus, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" The disciples were functioning under false misconceptions about suffering. Their first assumption was

that all pain and suffering is directly related to sin and human choice. And then the disciples use the false dichotomy: *who sinned – the man or his parents?*

But Jesus the all-knowing Son of God, intentionally uses this situation to teach his disciples the more God-centered way to understand suffering in this life.

more on **2**

“If pain sometimes shatters the creature’s false self-sufficiency, yet in supreme ‘Trial’ or ‘Sacrifice’ it teaches him the self-sufficiency which really ought to be his—the ‘strength, which, if Heaven gave it, may be called his own’: for then, in the absence of all merely natural motives and supports, he acts in that strength, and that alone, which God confers upon him through his subjected will. Human will becomes truly creative and truly our own when it is wholly God’s, and this is one of the many senses in which he that loses his soul shall find it.”

— C.S. Lewis, *The Problem of Pain*

### Other Sources on Suffering:

Job

The Problem of Pain  
by C.S. Lewis

Desiring God —  
Appendix 3: Is God  
Less Glorious Because  
He Ordained That Evil  
Be? (*Jonathan Edwards  
on the Divine Decrees*)  
by John Piper

The Son of God suffered unto the death, not that men might not suffer, but that their sufferings might be like His.

— George MacDonald, *Unspoken Sermons, First Series*

There are definite correlations between sin and pain (most commonly termed: punishment); however, not all pain is directly connected to sin. [If you haven’t read through the whole book of Job, it’s a great place in Scripture to find people wrestling with the problem of suffering and to see God’s response to man’s wisdom.] However, if our concept

of suffering in the life of a Christian is limited to being equated to punishment, then not only do we have a severely stunted world-view, but we dishonor Christ and his words by refusing to think biblically about suffering. We will also miss out on praising God through the unique blessing of suffering and being conformed into the image of Christ.

say that this man’s pain was planned in advance so that **God** would be glorified! Did Jesus not care about the years prior to this day that this man suffered through his disability? Why didn’t God heal the man born blind earlier? Was Jesus not powerful enough to have done so?

All of these questions are important to ponder, but they conceal one devious presupposition: *God is man’s debtor for good pain-free health, instant answered prayer—and above all—God must conform to man’s definition of love.* We must examine our thought life and hold it up to Scripture, submit to Scripture, then find freedom in truth.

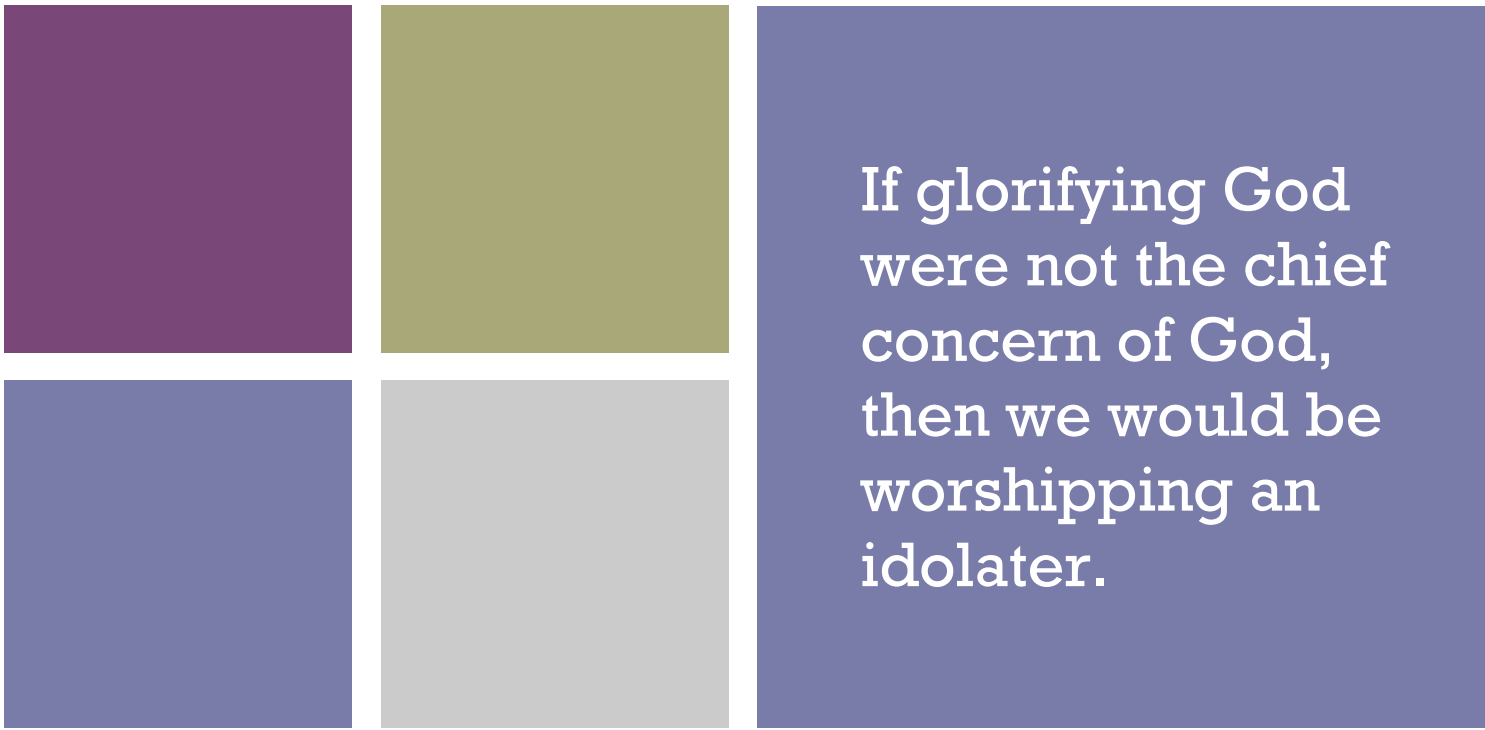
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## theodicy

noun (pl. **-cies**)

the vindication of divine goodness and providence in the view of the existence of evil.

Jesus responds to his disciples’ incorrect theodicy and says, “It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him” (9:3). To be frank however, at first glance it seems a bit unloving for Christ to



If glorifying God were not the chief concern of God, then we would be worshipping an idolater.



## John 9: The Light of the World gives light to blind eyes

### Jesus heals a man born blind from birth

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

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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 do not know."

They brought to the Pharisees the man who had formerly been blind. Now it was a Sabbath day when 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 on 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 sights?" And there was a division among them. So they said to the blind man, "What do you say about him, since he has 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? How then 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?" 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?"

Jesus initiates spiritual healing of blind eyes; we receive sight by his grace through faith. This is the essence of *monergism*: God made us spiritually alive when we were completely powerless in our spiritual deadness.

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

— John 9:39

And they reviled him, saying, "You are his disciple, 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, and yet he opened my eyes. We know that God does not listen to sinners, but if anyone is a worshiper 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." They answered him, "You were born in utter sin, and would you teach us?" And they cast him out.

Jesus heard that 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?" Jesus said to him, "You have seen him, and it is he who is speaking to you." He said, "Lord, I believe," and he worshiped 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 also blind?" Jesus said to them, "If you were blind, you would have no guilt; but now that you say, 'We see,' your guilt remains." [John 9, ESV]

## Dear Parents continued...

Freedom in Scriptural truths and correct biblical understanding of God is far sweeter than relishing incorrect yet comfortable untruths about God. The process of ridding the mind and heart of untruths in exchange for truths is a painful yet worthwhile process guided by God's grace. Scripture is clear (and this is a measly list compared to the staggering clarity found in the whole of Scripture):

- **God is not man's debtor.** He does as he wills. Exodus 4:11; Isaiah 45:7; Amos 3:6; Daniel 4:35, "[God] does according to his will among the host of the heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay his hand or say to him, 'What have you done?'"

- **God cares and does not enjoy peoples' pain.** Matthew 6:26; Lamentations 3:33; Ezekiel 18:32, "For I have no pleasure in the death of anyone, declares the Lord GOD; so turn, and live."

- **A caring God doesn't elicit comfortable pain-free existence of his children.** Matthew 10:16-39; Mark 8:34-35; 2 Timothy 3:12, "Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted."

- **God is not subject to man's timetable.** Job 1:21-22, 34:12; Psalm 115:3, "Our God is in the heavens; he does all that he pleases."

- **God's definition of love is far superior to man's and we must submit to God's; in doing so, we will experience true joy.** Romans 8:28-37; Ephesians 1:5-6, "In love he predestined us for adoption

through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace."

Knowing these difficult but beautiful truths about God should cause us to worship him. Think about what the inverse to these truths would conclude: *All pain is pointless because God is powerless to intervene and man's only hope is in human attempts to improve the putrid and spiritually dead condition of the world around us.* That sentence reeks of blasphemy and arrogance! If glorifying God was not the chief concern of God, then we would be worshipping an idolater.

### This Week's Community Life Key Themes:

- **God is all-powerful;** nothing is too hard for Him. He can give sight to the blind.

- **Faith pleases God.** The blind man trusted Jesus. It's worse not to see who Jesus is and not to believe in Him than it is to have physically blind eyes; not believing in Jesus is true blindness; Jesus seeks out people to worship Him and believe Him (v.35-38).

- **God is sovereign;** He is in control of everything (even a man's blindness v.3).

- **Man needs God.**

- **Everything Jesus did was for the purpose of glorifying God.**

*God it is so humbling to come to your Word and discover your sovereignty and love is greater than we had previously thought. Give us grace to swallow and love difficult doctrine to glorify you in truth, Amen.*

Dear Parent,

I enjoy teaching your children about Jesus and playing with them on Sunday mornings. Harvard Avenue Baptist Church is committed to connecting people to Christ, and this passion is not to the exclusion of children. In fact, the Children's Ministry is dedicated to partnering with parents in teaching children about Jesus. However, we are only that: partners. You have a wonderful roll in your child's life, to raise your child for God's glory, Deuteronomy 6:4-9 style. This bulletin is designed not only to inform you of what your child is being taught at Harvard, but also to encourage you in your endeavors to bring up your child in the ways of the Lord everyday of the week.

In Christ,  
Beka

"He established a testimony in Jacob and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers to teach to their

children, that the next generation might know them, ...so that they should set their hope in God and

not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments."  
Psalm 78:5-7



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