Encountering Suffering – The Man Born Blind

I won't believe in a God who allows suffering, even if she, he or it exists. Maybe God exists. Maybe not. But if he does, he can't be trusted. Rob in an interview

If God is God, he's not good. If God is good, he's not God. You can't have it both ways, especially after the Indian Ocean catastrophe. Ron Rosenbaum

In a universe of blind physical forces and genetic replication, some people are going to get hurt, other people are going to get lucky, and you won't find any rhyme or reason to it, nor any justice. The universe that we observe has precisely the properties we should expect if there is, at bottom, no design, no purpose, no evil, no good, nothing but pitiless indifference. Richard Dawkins

The abundance of evil, and the extent to which so much of it seems gratuitous, compels the thinking person to question the coexistence of a good God with a world of evil. Ravi Zacharias

And it is only as God seems more remote – a God who is all-loving only in the abstract, not in the sense of having suffered and died for us to rescue us from evil – that he seems unbearably callous in the face of pain. In short, theism without certainty of salvation or resurrection is far more disillusioning in the midst of pain than is atheism. When suffering, believing in God thinly or in the abstract, is worse than not believing in God at all. Tim Keller

As he went along, he saw a man blind from birth. **2** His disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?"

3 "Neither this man nor his parents sinned," said Jesus, "but this happened so that the works of God might be displayed in him. **4** As long as it is day, we must do the works of him who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work. **5** While I am in the world, I am the light of the world."

6 After saying this, he spit on the ground, made some mud with the saliva, and put it on the man's eyes. **7** "Go," he told him, "wash in the Pool of Siloam" (this word means "Sent"). So the man went and washed, and came home seeing.

8 His neighbors and those who had formerly seen him begging asked, "Isn't this the same man who used to sit and beg?" **9** Some claimed that he was.

Others said, "No, he only looks like him."

But he himself insisted, "I am the man."

10 "How then were your eyes opened?" they asked.

11 He replied, "The man they call Jesus made some mud and put it on my eyes. He told me to go to Siloam and wash. So I went and washed, and then I could see."

12 "Where is this man?" they asked him.

"I don't know," he said. John 9

[13] They brought to the Pharisees the man who had been blind. [14] Now the day on which Jesus had made the mud and opened the man's eyes was a Sabbath. [15] Therefore the Pharisees also asked him how he had received his sight. "He put mud on my eyes," the man replied, "and I washed, and now I see."

[16] Some of the Pharisees said, "This man is not from God, for he does not keep the Sabbath."

But others asked, "How can a sinner perform such signs?" So they were divided.

[17] Then they turned again to the blind man, "What have you to say about him? It was your eyes he opened."

The man replied, "He is a prophet."

[18] They still did not believe that he had been blind and had received his sight until they sent for the man's parents. [19] "Is this your son?" they asked. "Is this the one you say was born blind? How is it that now he can see?"

[20] "We know he is our son," the parents answered, "and we know he was born blind. [21] But how he can see now, or who opened his eyes, we don't know. Ask him. He is of age; he will speak for himself." [22] His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jewish leaders, who already had decided that anyone who acknowledged that Jesus was the Messiah would be put out of the synagogue. [23] That was why his parents said, "He is of age; ask him." John 9

[24] A second time they summoned the man who had been blind. "Give glory to God by telling the truth," they said. "We know this man is a sinner."

[25] He replied, "Whether he is a sinner or not, I don't know. One thing I do know. I was blind but now I see!"

[26] Then they asked him, "What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?"

[27] He answered, "I have told you already and you did not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you want to become his disciples too?"

[28] Then they hurled insults at him and said, "You are this fellow's disciple! We are disciples of Moses! [29] We know that God spoke to Moses, but as for this fellow, we don't even know where he comes from."

[30] The man answered, "Now that is remarkable! You don't know where he comes from, yet he opened my eyes. [31] We know that God does not listen to sinners. He listens to the godly person who does his will.[32] Nobody has ever heard of opening the eyes of a man born blind. [33] If this man were not from God, he could do nothing."

[34] To this they replied, "You were steeped in sin at birth; how dare you lecture us!" And they threw him out.

[35] Jesus heard that they had thrown him out, and when he found him, he said, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?"

[36] “Who is he, sir?” the man asked. “Tell me so that I may believe in him.”

[37] Jesus said, “You have now seen him; in fact, he is the one speaking with you.”

[38] Then the man said, “Lord, I believe,” and he worshiped him.

[39] Jesus said, “For judgment I have come into this world, so that the blind will see and those who see will become blind.” John 9

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[40] Some Pharisees who were with him heard him say this and asked, “What? Are we blind too?”

[41] Jesus said, “If you were blind, you would not be guilty of sin; but now that you claim you can see, your guilt remains. John 9

Jesus lost all his glory so that we could be clothed in it. He was shut out so we could get access. He was bound and nailed so that we could be free. He was cast out so we could approach. And Jesus took away the only kind of suffering that can really destroy you: that is being cast away from God. He took that so that now all suffering that comes into your life will only make you great. Tim Keller

Contrary to what might be expected, I look back on experiences that at the time seemed desolating and painful, with particular satisfaction. Indeed, I can say with complete truthfulness that everything I have learned in my seventy five years in this world, everything that has truly enhanced and enlightened my existence, has been through affliction and not through happiness, whether pursued or attained…This, of course is what the cross signifies. And it is the cross, more than anything else, that has called me inexorably to Christ. Malcolm Muggeridge

He giveth more grace when the burdens grow greater,
He sendeth more strength when the labors increase;
To added affliction He addeth His mercy,
To multiplied trials His multiplied peace.

When we have exhausted our store of endurance,
When our strength has failed ere the day is half done;
When we reach the end of our hoarded resources,
Our Father's full giving is only begun

His love has no limit, His grace has no measure,
His pow'r has no boundary known unto men;
For out of His infinite riches in Jesus,
He giveth, and giveth, and giveth again. Annie Johnson Flint